

International VIEWPOINT

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Nicaragua : The role of the trade unions
South Africa : How effective the repression?
Bolivia : Another major battle

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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Hard times for internationalism

WE STILL don't know how many contributions and new subscriptions have come in response to our campaign. That is because our small staff has been overwhelmed with getting the magazine rolling again and in setting up the machinery for extending the campaign. It is an indication of our problems. We will announce where we are in the next issue.

But we do know that the contributions and new subscriptions have been coming in more slowly, and that is a bad sign. We estimate that over the summer between 1,200 and 1,500 US dollars came in in contributions with about 60 new subscriptions. That is a good start but still a long way from the 4,500 US dollars we hope to collect by the end of the year, and the very modest goal of 100 new subscriptions we projected.

The pressures on us are increasing. First of all, about 60 per cent of our income is in US dollars and British pounds and all our expenses are in francs. Over the past six months, both the dollar and the pound have lost a third of their value against the French franc. Moreover, French postal rates have gone up again. As our back page indicates, in a period of international crisis, the capitalist governments try to make international exchanges more difficult.

In these conditions, it becomes harder to maintain and develop a fully international magazine. *IV* is in fact about the only example of such a publication. In order to keep going, we have to gain wider support. And that is only possible if those who share our viewpoint make a special effort to explain the importance of the magazine and convince those they work with to support it actively.

The collusion of the imperialist governments in trying to put more political restrictions on international travel is only another illustration of the need for a special effort in these days to build communications among the international workers' and socialist movement.

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Mass movement resists the state of emergency

FOLLOWING CLASHES between demonstrators and the repressive forces of the regime, a general strike was called in Soweto on September 4. It was a notable success, being described as the biggest action of this sort in the township since the student uprising of 1976, which initiated the new upsurge of the Black masses in South Africa.

The Soweto general strike had a major impact on economic activity in Johannesburg, reducing trading activity by 27 per cent and work in the manufacturing industry by 38 per cent. This protest illustrates the reactivation of the anti-apartheid movement and the breadth of the resistance to the repressive measures instituted by the state of emergency. The following article aims to draw an initial balance sheet of the mass movement under the state of emergency.

TONY ROUX

Three months after the establishment of the state of emergency of June 12, it is hard, because of the censorship, to get an exact picture of the extent of the arrests. In mid-August the South African government published a list of 8,500 names of people jailed for at least 30 days.

Nonetheless, this figure does not include people already released or those subsequently arrested, nor those who had not yet served a full month in detention at the time the list was drawn up.

What appear to be the most realistic estimates put the number of people jailed at one time or another since June 12 at between 12,000 and 14,000.

Studies done by independent institutes, even on the basis of incomplete lists, made it possible to get a better idea of the extent of the wave of repression. At the end of July, after seven weeks of the state of emergency, the tempo of arrests had reached one every seven minutes, or 200 a day.

On the basis of a study focused on 4,000 names, a group of researchers at Witwatersrand University showed that a third of these arrests involved people with a known political affiliation. And of those, three quarters belonged to community, political or educational associations that were mainly affiliated to the United Democratic Front.

In all, 139 township community associations have been targeted by the

repression. The Transvaal region suffered the worst. An independent study group, the Labour Monitoring Group, put forward the figure in late July of 2,700 trade-union members and 320 trade-union leaders arrested.

Youth account for about 25 per cent of those imprisoned. It is estimated, therefore, that 3,000 people under the age of 16 have been jailed because of the state of emergency. A lot of them are between 12 and 15.

So this time the repression is more sweeping than the one carried out at the time of the state of emergency decreed on July 23, 1985, and suspended on March 7, 1986, which led to the arrest of about 8,000 people. In the first month of the recent state of emergency, the number of people arrested topped the number arrested in the first month of the 1985 crackdown by 60 per cent.

The South African regime has thus in its own way acknowledged the mass movement that has grown considerably over these last years and rooted itself in the workplaces and the townships. In order to make a significant impact on this movement, the repression has to strike still deeper.

Consequently, the wave of arrests reached out to the rank-and-file activists of the civic associations, political organizations and unions, with the objective of striking deep enough into the mass movement to paralyze it.

For example, in East London, the Duncan Village Residents' Association suffered a disruption of its work going all the way down to its street committees, after the arrest of 200 to 300 of its members.

For its part, the commercial workers' union (CCAWUSA), a member of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), had several of its leaders and members questioned and jailed. This went so far that in Pretoria and Johannesburg rank-and-file unionists had to take over the union headquarters directly in order to maintain a centralized functioning of the unions in these two cities.

Despite the severe blow that the Botha government has just dealt it, the mass anti-apartheid movement has not been crushed under the steamroller of the state of emergency. It remains vigorous and active and is reorganizing. In the first place, a part of the leaders and key members of the organizations, with the benefit of the experience of being arrested in the previous state of emergency, managed to escape the police raids and go underground. Second, after an initial disarray and surprise, the activist networks regrouped in forms suited to the new situation.

The union leadership called systematically on its members to take the places of the leaders and shop stewards arrested and to mobilize to maintain the union's work in the plants.

COSATU's demands

COSATU put forward several demands to that end, calling for the release of jailed union leaders and activists; for the right to refuse night work, without having to take a cut in wages, if it were considered dangerous because of the curfew; for the right for shop stewards' access to the means of communication (telephones, telex) in the factories for union activity; the right to two hours a week for union meetings during working hours and so on.

COSATU's journal, the first issue of which came out in August, wrote in this connection: "The bosses' leaders from FCI and ASSOCOM [the two major employers' associations] have in general agreed to these demands. Many unions have taken them up and have won some, or all, of the demands." (1)

So, for example, the CCAWUSA workers, who went on strike spon-

1. 'COSATU', issue no. 1, August 1986, p. 2. [For details of the launch of this journal see 'International Viewpoint' No. 104, September 15, 1986].



Street scene in South Africa (DR)

taneously to protest against the arrest of their leaders, succeeded in winning important partial victories for such objectives. In Johannesburg, one of these workers explained, "We negotiated with our bosses during the strikes and demanded time off to run the union. About 10 companies agreed to give two shop stewards two weeks off to work at the union office. The bosses paid us for one week and the union for the other. After two weeks were up some of us got permission to carry on. Others have joined us later. Next week we have to go back." (2)

The roots and democratic structure of the COSATU unions reinforced its capacity to resist the biggest repressive attack it has faced since its founding. In its initial period, COSATU experienced an important growth in membership.

To cite only a few examples, the metalworkers' union (MAWU) ran a recruiting drive that brought in 14,000 new dues-paying members in the first six months. Today MAWU has 50,000 members. The membership of the National Union of Miners (NUM) also increased by 80,000 in seven months, reaching the figure of 180,000.

COSATU's journal described the present situation of the confederation as follows:

"The police have wide powers to interfere with our organisation. This has meant some breakdown in communication nationally and regionally. But COSATU lives on and grows each day. In all the major industries membership has grown very fast since the formation of COSATU. Membership in the metal industry has increased by 30%; in the shops by 50%; in the mines by 80%. Unions in the food and chemical industries have gained over 10,000 members each. And about 18,000 workers

have paid up in the textile, transport and paper industries. COSATU has grown stronger because our structures are democratic. Because we believe in democratic control. Because we fight for workers' needs." (3)

Of course, there is more to the state of COSATU than numerical membership growth, which is real enough. Major difficulties have shown up in certain regions or industries over the way of applying the founding congress decisions concerning the structuring of the movement and the merging of the unions in each industry.

Unity grows with influence

In the Eastern Cape province, the setting up of regional executive bodies of COSATU has already been postponed twice because of differences among the unions over the rules for representation and election of the leaders.

In textiles, there was even a split recently in the National Textile Workers' Union (NUTW), after three of its shop stewards formed a rival union, the TAWU.

These problems are not limited just to peculiarities in various regions or industries, although this aspect has its importance. They are more generally the reflection of debates that run through COSATU. But over and above these particular cases, unity seems to be growing apace with the influence of COSATU.

While they have not destroyed the mass movement, the various restrictions linked to the state of emergency have considerably reduced its opportunities for open work. But it has been precisely public initiatives — demonstrations, mass

funerals, rallies — that have been the forms of expression of the anti-apartheid mass mobilization over these last two years. Since June 12, on the other hand, there has been a marked slowing in the tempo of such actions.

Nonetheless, resistance to the state of emergency has been organized in other forms. The work of the civic associations in the townships has often been maintained. This is indicated by a report from Alexandra, a township north of Johannesburg, where the Alexandra Civic Association (ACA) is active.

The opportunities for meetings have, to be sure, been limited to those times when the police are not patrolling the township. A number of ACA leaders are wanted and forced to stay in hiding, often outside the township. But not all the leaders have been arrested, so the ACA is able to maintain a certain activity under the state of emergency. This was attested to by one of its leaders, who said that the police "have picked up many of the youths and some executive members, but not the key people One thing is certain, there are a lot of activities. Although organisations operate under great pressures, they are carrying on very, very well." (4)

On the same theme, the publicity secretary of the UDF, Murphy Morobe, now underground, said recently:

"We are still intact and able to hold meetings at national level. But the UDF power base is at the local level, where there is more intimate contact with the community." (5)

For its part, after a series of strikes, sometimes spontaneous, to demand

2. *Ibid.*, p.3.
3. *Ibid.*, p.10.
4. 'Weekly Mail', Johannesburg, August 29, 1986.
5. 'Weekly Mail', August 22, 1986.

the release of jailed unionists, the union movement seems to have set its sights on more limited objectives, focusing mainly on securing the jobs and wages of jailed activists.

Conflicts occurred for example in the auto sector in Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage between the automobile workers union, NAAWU, which demanded full pay for its jailed members, and the managements of the multinationals. General Motors offered 50 per cent of wages, Volkswagen 60 per cent and Ford 60 per cent.

The debate between COSATU and the Federated Chamber of Industries (FCI) on the eve of the one-day strike called by the confederation on July 14 was indicative both of the ambiguous attitude of the bosses toward the state of emergency and of the determination of the trade unionists. The FCI in fact tried to get COSATU to go back on its decision by arguing that it was against apartheid.

Some bosses would have liked to see a veritable common front arise between a section of the bosses and the union movement in the name of combating the government's repressive moves.

Sidney Mafumadi, assistant general secretary of COSATU, responded to the bosses' argument by saying that the confederation considered it "high time that employers took an unequivocal stand on the conflict in South Africa If one has listened to the State President when he announced the declaration of the state of emergency, he said its principal aim was to restore business confidence by bringing radicals to book We know very well that the state is there to protect private property and that employers could force the state to change if they wanted to." (6)

COSATU's tactic has been to use its capacity to bring pressure to bear on the bosses to win demands that undermine the effects of the state of emergency, or else make the bosses pay economically for their intransigence. In so doing, they exploit the well-known divisions in the bourgeoisie over the future of the apartheid system and the best means of overcoming it. But if the bosses interpret the regime's present repressive offensive in different ways, few voices have been heard from this quarter firmly condemning it.

The Labour Monitoring Group took note of this in concluding a study on the question, stating, "in sharp contrast to the high-sounding claims in support of civil rights in the FCI Business Charter, employers have been largely silent on the state of emergency." (7)

This study looked at 114 firms employing 45,000 workers in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV)

region. It produced the following results: 50 per cent of the bosses questioned said that the state of emergency had not modified production relations; 13 per cent even thought that they had been improved. Only 37 per cent thought that it had had a negative effect.

Moreover, the index of business confidence produced by ASSOCOM went up slightly in June 1986. This led Gordon Waddel, a representative of the FCI, to say that "there is a view held, I suppose by the majority of business, that the state of emergency was necessary and desirable to restore law and order." (8)

Many examples could be cited to illustrate the way in which the bosses have taken advantage of the state of emergency and the restrictions it places on trade-union and political activity by the Black masses.

The managers of the national enterprise SASOL recently informed the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, CWIU, that it intended implementing its wage offer, regardless of whether the unions agreed. At the same time, all meetings of COSATU were banned in the region where the factory is located, thereby reducing the capacity of the union to react.

Bosses press home their advantage

A company belonging to the Anglo-American Corporation, the Rand Scrap Iron and Metal (RSI), decided to break off all negotiations with MAWU in reprisal for a go-slow. Chamber of Mines President Clive Knobbs openly recognized that the state of emergency meant additional constraints on the NUM during negotiations.

Thus, the independent Black trade unions face at the same time the restrictions of the state of emergency and offensives by the bosses trying to take advantage of it and change the relationship of forces in the factories. This explains COSATU's insistence on the need to relaunch trade-union activity in the plants.

Despite the growing exasperation of the Black workers goaded by repression, the July 14 strike was only a limited success. The action had an impact mainly in the Port Elizabeth region, and to a lesser degree in the Transvaal.

This outcome no doubt owed to the difficulties of communication among the various trade-union structures arising from the repression and to the limited time left for building the strike.

In fact, the state of the trade-union movement cannot be judged just by

this action. As a commentator wrote in the Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* of July 18:

"In terms of the Congress of South African Trade Unions' strategic goal — a symbolic show of strength to put pressure on employers and the state to release detained unionists and lift the state of emergency — Monday's day of action was a failure.

"However, it will have its most negative effect if it masks the fact that unions have taken effective action during the Emergency and successfully achieved limited targets — such as the release of unionists or agreement by employers to meet certain demands."

While it has slowed the tempo of anti-government protests and muffled them, the state of emergency has not diminished the fighting spirit of the Black masses. Mobilizations are continuing on various themes and in various forms, illustrating the extent of anti-apartheid sentiments in the Black population.

Nonetheless, coordinating and centralizing these actions remains very difficult. However, this situation does leave open the possibility for the appearance of local hot spots in individual townships or factories, and even the multiplication of such focuses of conflict.

In a general sense, apartheid and its structures objectively unify all of these mobilizations, even if they are far from developing in a coordinated way.

For example, in a series of townships rent boycotts are underway. But they often reflect very disparate levels of commitment. In general, these actions are to protest against higher rents or to denounce the management of the townships by the Black representatives of the councils set up by the regime to run the Black ghettos.

Such rent boycotts have a destabilizing effect on some of the institutions of apartheid, which increases the problems of the Blacks who have agreed to collaborate with the regime.

In all, 38 townships and 300,000 families are affected by rent boycotts, at a cost of 30 million rands a month to the state [one rand equals about 40 US cents]. In these townships, the rent boycotts are about 60 per cent effective.

In the region of Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) alone, the rent boycotts have already cost the state 188 million rands. A still more concrete example is that of Soweto, where the council collects no more than 3 million rands for a total of

6. *Weekly Mail*, July 11, 1986.
7. *Weekly Mail*, July 4, 1986.
8. *Ibid.*

75,000 families, when it should be collecting 9 million rands. (9) This movement has also extended to towns located in the Bantustans, such as Mdantsane in the Ciskei.

The regime has reacted by staging operations to evict tenants who have not paid their rents. This is what led to the confrontations in Soweto on August 26, which resulted in a rapid and renewed rise of tensions in this township.

Seizing this moment to relaunch the mobilization, at the beginning of September the UDF and the union movement called for a 24-hour general strike in this vast ghetto. The action was a notable success, 86 per cent effective, according to the Labour Monitoring Group, which described this strike as "the most significant" of those organized in Soweto over the last ten years. (10)

For some time, moreover, the Botha government has been pre-occupied with finding an adequate counter to the rent boycotts in the townships. Given the failure of the policy of using the Black local authorities of the councils as intermediaries, the regime's last card seems very often to be evicting the tenants.

A government document entitled "Strategy for the collection of rental and service charges" to be followed by the regional bodies combining representatives of the bosses, township councils, the police and the army — the Joint Management Centres (JMC) — advocated an intransigent attitude toward the rent boycotts: "No acknowledgement through negotiations must be given to revolutionary groups or organisations." (11)

This situation in the townships, which has already led to the rout of 40 councils, illustrates the isolation of that layer of Blacks that agreed to participate in the regime's institutions.

Just recently, moreover, after the people of his municipality boycotted his stores, the mayor of Tembisa, Lucas Mothiba, resigned. He was also accused of being the local instigator of the conservative Vigilante groups. On relinquishing office, he said:

"I resigned because of the realisation that the Black local authorities were politically and economically non-viable Unless the government subsidises 90 per cent of black needs, the whole system will collapse. The government should release Mandela and other imprisoned leaders, unban the people's organisations and negotiate with the authentic leaders of the people, not those at local level." (12)

Forced to retreat because of the boycott of his stores, the resignation of the mayor of Tembisa reflects the pressure on this layer of Black collaborators from the powerful democratic aspirations of the masses. This

illustrates that any "local option" that would involve opening more room for political participation by Blacks in institutions at a municipal or regional level, without breaking fundamentally from the principal of separation of the races at the national level, is doomed in advance.

Resistance to the government's measures also remains firm in education. A month after the re-opening of the schools on July 14, 300,000 pupils — 20 per cent of the total of 1.7 million Black pupils — had not complied with the new formalities of re-registration. The new rules require pupils to have identity cards to enter school premises and permit the government to assign pupils arbitrarily to schools and scholastic levels.

In an attempt to impose these rules, the regime has set up screens around the schools and put security guards at the access points, who can call on the police forces for help. But as a COSATU communique pointed out: "The DET [Department of Education and Training] is turning schools into prison camps to try and contain the anger and resistance, but it is these 'prison camps' that are now becoming a powderkeg, a time bomb." (13)

Class boycotts

Where schools have been closed as a result of refusal to re-register pupils, parents and teachers have organized to demand their reopening. In other places, pupils formally registered have nonetheless refused to accept the new setup and have protested against the presence of security forces by boycotting classes.

In the Orlando West neighborhood of Soweto, at the Matseke high school, the teachers have protested against the fact that the security forces went to the point of accompanying the boys and girls to the toilets.

This attempt to pacify the high schools has already given rise to sporadic clashes between pupils and police, notably in mid-August in Soweto. Calm is thus far from returning to the high schools, despite the extent of the repression applied to achieve this objective.

Other forms of resistance are persisting as well, such as the boycott of white stores that has been going on in Port Elizabeth for many months now.

But in recent weeks perhaps the most resounding demonstration of the determination and militancy of the Black masses has been the rebuff dealt to the policy of the South African government and its local

collaborators in Kwandebele.

Since May 22, the Kwandebele Bantustan has been the scene of a veritable mass uprising against the South African government's decision, endorsed some years ago by the Bantustan's legislative assembly, to set independence for this coming December 10. This meant in fact withdrawing South African citizenship from the 400,000 inhabitants of Kwandebele.

Since the spring, 160 people have died in clashes between the Bantustan's security forces and their auxiliaries, the Mbokhoto vigilantes, on the one hand and the protestors on the other.

After these three months of agitation, the Bantustan authorities find themselves totally isolated in the face of the opposition, which unites traditional chiefs, teachers, civil servants and radical militants.

A few weeks after the Bantustan's minister of the interior and the main leader of the vigilantes, Piet Ntuli was killed when his car exploded, the Kwandebele legislative assembly declared against independence.

The hall in which the deliberations took place was full of oppositionists who came to put pressure on the members of the assembly. This prompted a reporter to write that this presence was not without influence on "the fact that not a single dissenting voice was raised for 'independence' — an idea which had wholehearted support in the Assembly only three months ago." (14)

Finally, also worth noting is the resumption in recent months of armed actions by the African National Congress (ANC). The regime itself has been churning out reports of clashes between the police and army and armed groups of the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC.

It is to counter the infiltrations of armed commandos that the regime has armed the white farmers in the border areas. It seems, on the other hand, that the flow of arms to opponents of apartheid within the country has increased. AK 47's have been turning up in the hands of anti-apartheid demonstrators, both in the Crossroads clashes last spring and recently in the August 26 demonstrations in Soweto.

Despite the growing repression it faces, the struggle against apartheid is still displaying dynamism in its various forms of organization and activity. This diversity is one of the factors that complicate the problems

9. 'Weekly Mail', August 15, 1986.

10. 'Weekly Mail', September 4, 1986.

11. 'Weekly Mail', August 1, 1986.

12. 'Weekly Mail', August 22, 1986.

13. 'Weekly Mail', July 25, 1986.

14. 'Weekly Mail', August 15, 1986.

of centralizing the struggles and uniting the forces fighting the regime.

The diversity of the forms of mobilization and organization has no doubt been somewhat accentuated by the repression. But fundamentally, it reflects the social diversity of the camp of the oppressed and exploited, as well as very strong regional peculiarities in South Africa.

For example, the state of emergency has not had the same character everywhere. Among other things, the Natal supreme court has twice stood up to the regime by condemning and rescinding some of its repressive measures. In the Western Cape region, the restrictions on the activity of 119 unions and extra-parliamentary organizations were lifted after COSATU appealed to the courts.

Such peculiarities affect all the opposition forces and, in the last analysis, reflect the unevenness in the development of the mass movement. In these conditions, achieving unity is no doubt a complex task and more difficult today than before the state of emergency.

Nonetheless, certain circumstances linked to this period of intense repression can enrich the debate on this question in the future. One example is a decision by activists imprisoned at the Diepkloof prison in Johannesburg belonging to rival organizations — the Soweto Students' Congress (SOSCO), linked to the UDF, and the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM), linked to the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO). Put in the same cells, these young militants, who on the outside had clashed with each other, sometimes violently, decided to make a tactical alliance for the duration of their imprison-

ment.

In declaring the state of emergency, the Botha government set itself a number of goals at the same time. On the one hand, it sought to stem the decline in the political influence of the National Party over its traditional electoral base. This decline had been reflected by some electoral setbacks and, above all, by the steadily growing impact last spring of initiatives by extreme-right formations.

From this standpoint, the firmness of the South African government toward the opponents of apartheid is doubtless sufficient to reassure, at least temporarily, those worried about maintaining the status quo. To crown the operation, Botha may even have planned to hold snap elections to consolidate the turnaround in the attitudes of white voters. At least, he recently hinted at that.

However, in equipping himself to wage a serious repressive drive against the mass movement, Botha also aimed at bringing the anti-apartheid movement to a standstill and substantially lowering the level of political and social agitation in the townships and factories. He sought to keep the mass movement from getting a second wind and to break the radicalizing momentum that had been building up in it for almost two years.

In this way, Botha expected to gain the means to force both the local employers and the international community to accept his repressive policy. He could dangle before the bosses the economic advantages that they could get from it. And he knew that he could count on an understanding attitude on the part of the main leaders of the Western powers.

So the state of emergency is not,

therefore, a mere hiccup in an otherwise serene, gradual policy of reforms. However, to get rid of the apartheid rules rendered obsolete by the changing needs of capitalist accumulation and do so at the least political cost — these are still the terms of the government's calculations.

But Pretoria has drawn the lessons of the difficulties it has run into in trying to divide the anti-apartheid movement in a cold way and thereby to give rise to a current of Black moderates representative enough to provide an effective cover for its policy. This is what explains the regime's nervousness today.

Paradoxically, the state of emergency has demonstrated both the undiminished capacities of the regime for repression and its military superiority, on the one hand, and, on the other, the political impasse in which the ruling National Party finds itself. Its "reformist" manoeuvres are failing to defuse the mass anti-apartheid movement, while at the same time arousing discontent among its traditional poor-white electoral base.

The National Party congress reunited the party behind the government but it offered no solution for the crisis of the regime. The government is still unable to get out of its pattern of trying to steer a course, by following its nose, between more and more massive repression and less and less credible proposals for institutional adjustments.

Such contradictions were reflected in the National Party Congress in August. This third congress in the 70-year history of the party confirmed the limitations Botha was to put on "reforming" apartheid in an attempt to balance off the conflicting pressures on his government.

Speaker after speaker got up at the congress to reaffirm their intention to maintain certain central aspects of the apartheid policy, notably in education, housing, assignment of racial groups to their own areas and political representation on racial lines.

One such speaker, Gerrit Viljoen, minister of education and development aid, was to specify: "The whites are not on the point of capitulating to pressure from abroad. Whites have the will and the power to maintain internal security and law and order, while proceeding with essential, acceptable reform through negotiation." (15)

The terms in which this reform policy is put drastically limit its effect. But it was on this basis that general agreement was restored in the National Party. Given the scope of its crisis, this peace will probably not last long. □

15. Ibid.



Thirteen may be Pinochet's unlucky number

THIRTEEN YEARS after the US-backed coup that saw the bloody overthrow of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government on September 11, 1973, the country of Chile remains crisis-ridden in all respects – politically, economically and socially. (1)

The thirteenth anniversary of General Augusto Pinochet's regime was marked by anti-government demonstrations, violently attacked by the police. But these events themselves were overshadowed by the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Pinochet, and the subsequent imposition of a new state of siege, wide-ranging arrests and a number of oppositionists murdered by unidentified "death-squads" in retaliation.

This article looks at the background to these events and the implications for the life-expectancy of the Pinochet regime. *International Viewpoint* will carry a report shortly on the aftermath of the imposition of the state of siege.

M JAVIER

"From abroad Chile looks tiny, violent, isolated and growing poor in every sense . . . its internal situation has been stretched to the utmost limit . . . [The] rational way out cannot be other than an agreement with the military so that they fulfil their responsibilities and show political will to open up the transitional process . . . [They] promised to restore the democratic institutionality to the country but have not done so. They must do it now, before it is too late." (2)

This is Christian Democrat President Gabriel Valdes' curious and twisted logic about Chile's crisis and the solution he and his party favours. Obviously, the old and seasoned politicians know the country faces stark choices and sense the advent of dramatic events. Accordingly, they are getting in line to offer their services to any "American solution" which may be on the cards, being painfully aware of the dangers inherent if they seriously take up and lead the struggle to get rid of the dictatorship themselves.

Their response comes at a moment of deep political crisis and against the background of increasing social unrest. Lately, the news broadcasts have reported extensively on the discoveries of arms caches (eight

tons of it!) in the northern provinces, as well as alarmist reports of 267 acts of "terrorist violence" in the first six months of this year. There was national and international indignation at the savage killing of Rodrigo Rojas Denegri, an 18-year-old Chilean who was visiting the country from Washington and participated in an anti-government demonstration. He and his friend Gloria Quintana were "doused with petrol by members of the security forces, set alight then dumped by the roadside". (3)

The United States – Pinochet's staunchest ally – has been making noises and signals of growing concern. John Galvin, the general in charge of the US army's southern command, said in the August 17 edition of *El Mercurio*: "The [Chilean] armed forces' professionalism is a characteristic that will help the country in the transition toward a democratic government".

Politically, the country is dominated by an atmosphere of *fin de regime*. Scandals of all sorts are being suddenly uncovered by interested parties within the establishment itself. Two navy NCO's who deserted revealed at a press conference that they had been assigned by the security services to spy on diplomatic missions in Santiago. They said they had already spied on

the Spanish, Uruguayan and Venezuelan embassies, and that the network they worked for was preparing to carry out similar operations in the British and American embassies.

August 19 saw the spectacular kidnapping of Colonel Mario Haeberle, apparently by the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (MRPF). Although the colonel was held for only a few days, and then released unharmed, the event sent shock waves throughout the government and shattered the confidence of the regime.

Two weeks previously, the MRPF held a semi-clandestine press conference in Santiago, to which foreign journalists were invited, to announce that two army conscripts had decided to join the armed struggle against the regime. They had taken such a dramatic step because they were "tired of being used to repress the people". The two desertions were recognized by the army in a brief press communique two days later.

The military dictatorship is also deeply divided around a judicial investigation of the activities of a Joint Commando during 1975-1976, allegedly headed by ex-junta member and now retired air force General Gustavo Leigh. The Commando's purpose was the extermination of the main clandestine leaders of the Communist Party. The ad-hoc designated judge, Carlos Cerda, issued arrest warrants against Leigh and 39 other men, two of them civilians, who are accused of being responsible for the death of ten leading members of the Communist Party in 1976.

Military hierarchy divided

It is reported that there are serious splits within the military hierarchy as to the best way to confront this affair. Some want to manoeuvre it out of existence by means of granting an amnesty to the culprits; others, more sensitive to the reduced social base of the regime, would prefer to have a tightly stage-managed trial in order to improve the regime's ugly image. Regardless, there have been no arrests to date.

Another investigation by the judiciary is also besieging the embattled regime. Mario Martinez Rodrigues, leader of the Santiago University

1. See "Pinochet's regime facing new crisis", by Jair Gil *International Viewpoint* No. 85, October 28, 1985.

2. 'ASPI' (independent review of the Chilean left) No. 186, August 1986.

3. 'Financial Times', September 2, 1986.

Student Federation, was found murdered on a beach near Santo Domingo, 100 miles from Santiago. Martinez was a member of the Christian Democratic Party. The circumstances of his death have not yet been uncovered.

The regime's sense of political direction seems to be somewhat lost, except for Pinochet's firm belief that he is indispensable for the maintenance of law and order through a system he and his cronies euphemistically call "protected democracy". The pomp of official ceremonies has increased simultaneously with the arrogance of his closest aides, to the despair and embarrassment of some of its supporters both at home and abroad. Pinochet's strength lies not so much in his, or his government's, political ability or strategy, as in the weakness and division of the opponents of the regime.

As the crisis deepens, social unrest grows, and supporters of the regime abandon the ship before it sinks, the variegated spectrum of political organizations jockey to put forward their *propuestas* (proposals).

Thus, in the first two weeks of August, most of the tolerated political parties made sure that their *propuestas* went public. The Democratic Independent Union for example — the most recent formation of all, led by ultra-rightist and former staunch supporter of the dictatorship, Jaime Guzman — advanced 24 points for "action on the economic, political, cultural and social fields in order to help overcome the difficult present moment". The Christian Left gave the press the text of "Political bases toward the formulation of a common proposal for transition". The Democratic Alliance — a coalition of right-centre political parties organized around Christian Democracy — put forward the proposal of a plebiscite in order to define a "true transition to democracy".

Following from this the rest of the political parties have contributed their own proposals or clarified their position vis-a-vis those that have already been made public. Eduardo Loyola is a spokesperson of the Partido Socialista-Almeyda, one of the public factions that have split from the Socialist Party. Loyola disassociated his party and the Popular Democratic Movement (MDP, a coalition around the Communist Party which includes the MIR, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left) from statements made by Andres Pascal Allende, general secretary of MDP, about the need for an armed popular rising as the only way to overthrow the dictatorship. At the same time Loyola made appeals to the "leaders of



Popular demonstration in Chile in 1984 (DR)

political parties representing all sectors of society" to reach a broad agreement to "end with the dictatorship once and for all". (4) Devoid of rhetoric, Loyola's statement concretely means agreement to negotiate with the military, but they must push Pinochet aside first.

Luis Corvalan, general secretary of the Chilean Communist Party (PCC), advances their *propuesta* as follows: "Our party is ready to sit around the table with the rest of the opposition parties till white smoke comes up, till a *propuesta* comes up". He added that, like the other opposition parties, they were in favour of a dialogue with the armed forces and that this was an important point of coincidence with them. Summing up his governmental formula, Corvalan says that what is important is that there is a government of transition. "We make no question of being part of such a government... [but it] would be a consensus government." (5)

Corvalan's position has been consistent. In issue number 105 of the *African Communist* (second quarter 1986), he wrote that should a clearly bourgeois-oriented democracy replace the dictatorship, although a government of this type "will be unable to lead the country out of the crisis, let alone meet the urgent need of the masses" the PCC will support such an administration provided it did not go against the people. In the same article he further explains that it "would not be impossible to reach agreement with the armed forces on condition that the tyrant be removed."

It would appear, therefore, that the

lack of unity of the opposition parties is precluding the formation of a broad-based coalition to present a serious challenge to Pinochet.

"Christian Democracy will have neither agreements nor political alliances of any sort with the Communist Party or the MIR" — this was the emphatic declaration of Arturo Frei to *La Tercera* newspaper on August 17. Arturo Frei is a leading light within Christian Democracy, and has quite an influence, being the nephew of deceased ex-President Frei.

Arturo Frei puts all the blame for the inexistence of an agreement to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy on Pinochet, who, he argues, has systematically rejected such a course with the civilians. To Frei's mind the main problem Chile is facing at the moment is the deepening social polarization and the steady course towards confrontation. Thus, his recipe for the transition is as follows: "We, the politicians, have the responsibility not to develop thoroughgoing or excessively ideological [political] programmes." Marx was right — history does repeat itself, once...

To the political crisis in Chile must be added the economic dimension of the problems facing the regime. The debt hangs around the neck of the economy like a dead weight. Loans in Chile were essentially used to support an overvalued exchange rate and a rapid increase in imported manufactures. Concretely, this meant

4. 'APSI' No. 186, August 1986.

5. *Ibid.*

a sheer squandering of economic resources that led to the destruction of a large section of the country's manufacturing capacity. All went reasonably well until 1982 when the flow of bank loans dried up. This had a devastating effect on important sections of small industry and the petit-bourgeoisie, let alone on the poor.

For example, the truck owners' union (notorious for its role in aiding the 1973 coup d'état) is at present split three ways on how best to face the crisis of indebtedness affecting thousands of its members. Many blame the situation on the economic policies of the government. Alberto Quinteros, the leader of one of the currents, put it bluntly: "Our members have had their trucks confiscated or auctioned and many have committed suicide in desperation". (6) Another of the currents has joined the newly-formed Christian Democratic-dominated Civic Assembly.

The Civic Assembly is the latest of the organizations set up by the Christian Democrats designed, unsuccessfully so far, to outflank the left in the terrain of mass mobilizations. In fact, it is their consistent failure in this regard that most worries the ruling class, the seasoned politicians, and particularly American imperialism. They all realise that so long as some degree of economic and political reform is not introduced to defuse social unrest, the social base of the regime and that of the traditional parties will just increasingly wither away, to the benefit of the left as a whole.

It is the growing radicalization, the self-activity and self-organization of shanty-town dwellers, secondary and university students, women, trade unions and youth which, despite some ups and downs, has certainly been strengthened. This is having a dramatic effect on the overall relation of forces to the detriment of the ruling class.

Pinochet's stubborn clinging to strictly authoritarian methods, and his desire to have a legalized life tenancy has become a liability to the ruling class as a whole. But their fear of the social and political process that may be unleashed leads them to capitulate to Pinochet at every important juncture, paralyzing them.

On the other hand, the masses' lack of an adequate leadership and the bankruptcy of the existing one prolongs the crisis and furnishes the government and the political organizations of the ruling class with a lease of life that the social and political dynamics of the situation do not warrant. □

6. 'El Mercurio', September 17, 1986.

Cooling-off period for Syria in Lebanon

THE BOMBING raids carried out by the United States against Colonel Qadhafi had repercussions in the region that went far beyond the borders of Libya.

Salah Jaber, a leader of the Lebanese section of the Fourth International, talked to Gerry Foley on September 10 about new developments regarding Syria's intervention into Lebanon, in the context of changes in the regional and international context following the US attacks.

Question. What is your balance sheet of Syria's attempt to pacify Lebanon?

Answer. It's useful to look at the situation of Syrian politics in the light of events since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982. (1)

From then until early 1984 saw a first phase of developments, during which Syria was excluded from direct influence on the Lebanese government, represented by President Amin Gemayel, and was replaced with the direct sponsorship of the United States. They were represented on the spot by US troops, who were part of the multinational forces in Lebanon. Still under the impact of the Israeli invasion, the Syrian regime waited to see how the situation would develop and what the response of the Gemayel government would be to the new situation.

After the turning point of the conclusion of the Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty in May, 1983 — which was considered to be a direct challenge against the Syrian government — the Syrians gave a green light to the bourgeois Muslim opposition forces in Lebanon to launch their attack against the government and against the presence of the multinational forces. From early 1984 onwards, following the victory of this offensive launched and backed by the Syrians, the multinational forces had to withdraw and Gemayel had no choice but to turn to Damascus. This opened up a new phase, with the Syrian regime having a renewed direct influence, if not hegemony, over the Lebanese central government.

From here until the end of 1985 there were intensive attempts by the Syrian government to reach a form of compromise between the contending

bourgeois factions in Lebanon in order to stabilize a pro-Syrian government, a pro-Syrian state. This seemed to reach a peak in 1985, after the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the major part of Lebanese occupied territory. At this time, Syrian control seemed to be stronger than ever. The first reaction against this Syrian hegemony in the Christian camp was defeated — this was the first rebellion led by Geagea. Hobeika took control, officially, of the so-called Lebanese forces — the fascist Christian militias — with a new politics of cooperating with the Syrians.

These events created the conditions at the end of 1985 for the Syrian regime to take an important, qualitative step forward in its drive to reach a compromise allowing it to stabilize a pro-Syrian government in Lebanon. That was expressed in December, 1985, by the conclusion of a treaty between the three main contending military factions — the Shiite Amal, and Druze led by Walid Jumblatt and the Christians led by Hobeika.

Shortly afterwards the whole thing collapsed with a new turn-about in the Christian camp, which put Geagea in control of the Lebanese forces again, and with the ousting of Hobeika and his people on January 15, 1986. At the same time this gave a mortal blow to the agreement signed in December 1985, and to the Syrian hegemony over the Christian camp.

The situation then reverted to a resemblance of the period before 1984. That is, the Christian camp

1. See "The political terrain after the Israeli withdrawal", interview with Salah Jaber, 'International Viewpoint' No. 73, April 8, 1985.

again looked to be under US influence very clearly, contesting Syrian hegemony and in opposition to the pro-Syrian forces. Even Israel itself was again directly interfering in Lebanese politics through Geagea, who is well-known to have links with the Israelis.

There are some differences between Gemayel's forces — including the Kataeb Party — who are pro-American, and Geagea's militias which are slight, but which can be important. Even recently, some clashes have occurred and can blow up again at any time, because these are rival forces within the Christian camp who sometimes have differing political lines. Gemayel is very opportunistic, but basically submissive to classical bourgeois interests, whereas Geagea can be accurately described as a fascist in the Lebanese context.

Going back to the situation from early this year onwards, the first violent reactions of Syria were translated into car-bombings in the Christian areas. After this it appeared as though the Syrian government decided to cool down. This was in the context of the regional situation, including the US bombing raids on Libya, and increasing warnings given by Israel to the Syrian regime with very strong rumours of war on the Israeli side. (2) This led to the recent talks between Christians and Muslims in the Lebanese government which aimed to conclude some truce. But even this very modest aim is apparently very difficult to attain.

Q. What does Gemayel and his government really represent at this point?

A. The Gemayel government represents two things. As an official government, its strength stems from the support it has had until now from the Christian section of the legal army,

which cannot be neglected as a military force. It is relatively well-armed, given that the Lebanese government and the US have put special emphasis on strengthening this army since 1983. In Lebanon it's also an important fact that Gemayel is still the official president of the country, which can make his authority useful either to the US or to the Syrians as an official cover for any political moves. In addition to these two factors, Gemayel has his own militia, mainly in one part of the Christian area, which is traditionally his base. These are the three sources of his power.

As regards popular support, Gemayel has none at all because he's very much discredited and his reputation as a corrupt man is very strong in Lebanon.

Q. But to what extent is he still a card for the Syrians to play, do you think?

A. He rebelled against the Syrians when they were preparing the agreement of December, 1985, not so much because of the content of the agreement as that it was done without him. At that time Gemayel was left on one side as the Syrians dealt directly with Hobeika. He collaborated with Geagea's overthrow of Hobeika and since then links seemed to be severed between Gemayel and the Syrians.

When it became clear that Hobeika was out, the Syrians hopes and calculations which had been built on the Hobeika leadership of the Lebanese forces collapsed. With the latter appearing to become an irreversibly anti-Syrian and even pro-Israeli force, Gemayel became again — in the eyes of the Syrians — the only possible interlocutor of the Syrians in the Christian camp. This led him to make new proposals to the Syrians which in

turn led to renewed friction between himself and Geagea's forces, which I referred to earlier. The Syrian regime had the choice then of either pushing their own supporters in a drive to oust Gemayel, to launch a new stage in the war, or their present politics of cooperating even if they have not yet decided to have direct talks with Gemayel.

The fact that the government met with the Muslim pro-Syrian and the Christian pro-Gemayel ministers, and that this could not have been done without a Syrian decision, is significant. This is in the framework of what I called a cooling down period, chosen by the Syrians at that stage because it seemed to them too dangerous to let the situation blow up right now in the present international context.

Q. Have there been significant changes in the relationship of forces among the Muslim groups in this period?

A. Concerning the Sunni Moslems, they are the weakest confessional group of all in Lebanon because traditionally they used to consider Yasser Arafat's Fatah as their armed wing, but then they were kicked out of the country by the Israelis and the Syrians. What used to be considered as a Lebanese Sunni armed organization, mainly the Murabitoun, have been crushed by the pro-Syrian forces — not only because of Syrian decisions, but also as a result of rivalry between the Druze militias, the Shiites and the Sunnis, the Murabitoun. Excepting Sidon in the south of the country, where there are local so-called Nasserite armed organizations which have good links with the Syrians and the rest of the pro-Syrian forces, there are no other Sunni organizations.

In Tripoli in the north, the fundamentalist Sunni forces which dominated the town were crushed by the Syrian military in 1985 in alliance with leftist parties which had been previously kicked out of the town by the same Sunni fundamentalists. The main figures today in the Sunni milieu are the traditional bourgeois figures, like Rashid Karami, who are desperately weak. They have no autonomy, and no basis for autonomy of any kind.

On the Shiite side, the new factor after Amal established its overwhelming hegemony over the Shiites in 1983-4, has been the development of the fundamentalist wing, the Khomeinist wing, which is directly linked to Iran. This tendency, the

The El Amal office in Beirut (DR)



2. See "A new war on the horizon", interview with Michel Warschawsky (leader of the Israeli section of the Fourth International), 'IV' No. 103, July 14, 1986.

Hezbollah, witnessed some real developments last year and in recent months. Various factors may explain this phenomenon. On the one hand, the Syrian politicking, in which Amal took part, collapsed, and so any hopes in this direction on the part of the masses became just impossible.

There is also a very strong deepening of the economic crisis to unprecedented levels in Lebanon. In the country, because of the war situation of more than 11 years, most of the productive sector has been destroyed. Most consumer goods are now imported. Just to give an example of the depth of this crisis, the US dollar against the Lebanese pound went from £4.5 in 1983 to £45 today. You can imagine what this must have meant for the standard of living of a population which has no sliding scale of wages or anything similar, such as exist in France or in Israel, and which can soften the impact of inflation. The gap between the inflationary rise in prices and wages is huge and widening day by day. This is disastrous and we can say this without exaggerating. This disastrous social and economic situation provides a breeding ground for fundamentalist forces to appear as radical and to exploit the despair of the petit-bourgeois population in the absence of any alternative leftist force which can appear credible.

The Lebanese left has witnessed a very sharp decrease of its influence since 1982. The Lebanese Communist Party had an opportunity of reversing this demise in 1984 because of the role they played in the resistance to the Israeli occupation. But they lost this opportunity mainly for two reasons. First, while they played a prominent role in the resistance to

French troops in Lebanon (DR)



the Israelis, they played no role at all in internal politics but continued to tailend Muslim bourgeois forces and the Syrians. So they were part of the general bankruptcy or failure of these politics.

Second, they did not and they do not play a role as a communist party in reacting to the social and economic situation. They organize no action. They are not pointing to the real solutions which can only be a total radical change of the Lebanese economy. You cannot continue in a war situation with such a totally liberal economy — Lebanon's is the most liberal in the world. Bank secrecy and freedom of business, of enterprise in Lebanon is incomparable to anywhere else in the world. All the more so since the war because now there is no state so it's a total mess.

The Communist Party, which is faced by rivalry from the fundamentalists, has been suffering attacks — including killings — from the Hezbollah. Instead of having resolute answers to such assaults, the Party continuously calls for the necessity of strengthening the unity of the national and Muslim front and so on. This position of retreat, and even cowardice in facing the fundamentalists, is also a strong factor in the weakening of the Party and its influence. This even has a marked effect on the rank and file of the Party, which is very much frustrated by the present line and politics of the leadership.

Q. What is the present state of the resistance to the Israeli security zone in the south and the attitude to UN troops?

A. As regards present clashes between UN forces and pro-Iranian Shiite groups in southern Lebanon

— who are mainly French troops — this is more linked to Iranian politics than really to local issues. The decision to make attacks against UN forces came from Iran, along with a statement by the Iranians of a rejection of the resolution that the United Nations decided on the formation of this force. The official explanation of this is that this force is there to prevent Shiite attacks on Israel and should be removed. But this has no chance of convincing the masses in Southern Lebanon, who consider the UN forces as beneficial to them, as a protection against Israeli incursion and as allowing them to live in relatively normal conditions.

The correct demand which could be understood by the masses should, on the contrary, have been the implementation of the United Nations resolution (Number 425), which provided for a deployment of the troops on the southern frontiers of Lebanon, instead of their present deployment north of the Israeli-controlled "security zone".

Q. What's happening around the war in the camps at the moment?

A. The last round of the war in the camps was concluded by direct intervention of Syrian troops, albeit symbolic, for the first time since 1982. Their main role was to put an end to the war in the camps and to guarantee a general stability in western Beirut after months of clashes and bombings. For a few weeks this Syrian intervention was effective in stabilizing the situation, but this won't last very long. It takes more than a few hundred soldiers to get a grip on a situation like the one in western Beirut, especially taking into consideration that even the leaderships of the various militias cannot control them entirely. Even Jumblatt cannot control his own people. After a few weeks of official removal of armed appearances in Beirut, everything is back again.

The presence of the Syrians in the camps until now has been effective in stopping the fighting. Here there is a difference between the Syrians and Amal, although it is minor. The aim of the Syrians is to have the camps dominated by pro-Syrian Palestinians, while the aim of at least the rightist part of Amal is to wipe out any Palestinian armed existence or presence. They don't mind Palestinian civilians, but no armed forces.

The limit put on the camp war by the Syrians is to mainly weaken Arafat. The camps again became a stronghold of Arafat, so the aim was to crush Arafat's armed presence in the camps and to establish more effective Syrian or pro-Syrian control in them. □

The role of trade unions in the Sandinista revolution

THE FOLLOWING round-table discussion among trade unions, from which we are publishing excerpts, was organized in June 1986 by the Nicaraguan daily *Barricada*. This newspaper of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) published the most important passages. The paper invited all the union confederations in Nicaragua, eight in number, along with Carlos Gallo, the Managua region FSLN leader in charge of labor questions. For various reasons, three confederations — the ATC, the CTN and CTN-I — did not take part. The participating organizations were the CGT-I, the CAUS, the CST, the CUS and FO. [See box on page 15.]

MARIA MERRI

The discussion among the trade unionists, which was rather sharp, pointed up one of the thorniest aspects of transitional society — the role of unions in the post-revolutionary period. In a more general way, it posed the question of the role of the working class in such a period, especially in a country where it constitutes a small minority. (1)

Of all the unions represented, only the CGT-I and the CAUS existed before the revolution. (2) These traditional organizations of the workers' movement were thrown into crisis by the victory of the FSLN. The result was that a part of their cadres went over to the CST. All the other confederations, in particular the CST, the largest of them, were established after July 19, 1979.

Owing to the Somoza dictatorship's previous repression, mass trade unions took form at the same time as the new regime. Concretely this meant that almost overnight the CST found itself to be the main trade-union organization in the country. Lacking tradition, experience, and sufficient cadres, the CST had to take up the problems of the transition.

The accelerating decline in the economic situation has hit the workers of the productive sector hardest, in particular in Managua. They have been caught in the gap between wages and prices that opened up in 1984-1985. A layer of wage workers have left their jobs to swell the ranks of those involved in the "informal economy". This included many technicians and skilled workers, who suffered proportionally more from the general

drop in the standard of living.

Moreover, until now the System of Norms and Organization of Work and Wages (SNOWW), which defines skills and the payment for them, has been particularly unfavorable to such workers. It was not unusual to find engineers opening some little business simply because they could make more money that way.

Until the revolution Nicaragua suffered chronic unemployment, and workers — especially skilled workers — are in short supply. In industries such as construction, where demand is very strong, there is a major process of de-proletarianization. A lot of workers go into business for themselves because they know that they can get much better payment for their labor in the contracts they make with the state, in particular in the area of defence, than accorded them by the SNOWW.

Labour productivity has dropped catastrophically. There are political reasons for this: under the Somozista dictatorship, as under any capitalist system, "The workers went to work because they were compelled to do so. For example the vagrancy laws threatened those who refused to work for starvation wages. But most of all, poverty and unemployment were the fundamental mechanisms for forcing people to work." (3) This means of regulating capitalist profitability was undermined by the victory of the revolution.

While the imperialist economic boycott has made its effects felt in all sectors of the Nicaraguan economy, it has wreaked havoc in industry,

with shortages of spare parts, obsolete machinery, maintenance problems, and so on. And this is to say nothing of the lack of foreign currency, which affects raw materials purchases, and energy problems. Sometimes machinery has to be left idle for days.

Generally, a worker's wage includes a fixed rate and productivity bonuses, the latter designed to encourage higher productivity. But because of the material state of their factories, workers are often unable to do their job and therefore to top the production norms and raise their salaries. This situation cannot fail to create tensions, which can lead to conflicts and strikes. The difficulties are made worse because workers get the impression that a lot is being asked of them in the name of their revolutionary consciousness, while others are enjoying a distinctly more privileged situation. They do not fail to feel a certain resentment at seeing the material advantage enjoyed by some technicians for example, whose convictions are a good deal more lukewarm.

Facing a brain-drain abroad or into the informal or private sectors, very frequently the state and the nationalized agencies (the Area of People's Property) try to keep skilled personnel in their jobs — with mixed success — by arguments that have nothing to do with ideology. The inticements include a car, housing and wages often raised above the level fixed by the SNOWW by means of various procedures.

Higher wages not the main demand

However, higher wages are not even the workers' main demand. Of course, in view of the rapid drop in buying power, readjustment is only just and is seen to be so. Facing galloping inflation, the workers greet wage increases of 100 or 50 per cent (as in January and March 1986) with relief, but also with a lot of scepticism. The question on their minds is how much will prices go up tomorrow?

1. The total number of industrial workers in Nicaragua is estimated at 100,000 people, including the workers in the sugar complexes. Nicaragua has about 3 million inhabitants.

2. The ATC was also formed before the revolution, in 1975 from the movement of the agricultural workers for land and better working conditions. It has gone much further than the CST in thinking about the role of unions in a transitional society.

3. Comandante Jaime Wheelock Roman, minister of agricultural development and agrarian reform (MIDINRA), *'Barricada'*, June 2, 1986.

What the workers want more than anything is to be able to have a voice in the running of the plants. That is the main question — a real voice for the workers and workers' management. And this is also the only way to confront and solve some of the problems in industry.

The workers argue that they are best placed to know what happens in detail in the production process. They point to the gains made by the innovators' movement and its exemplary value. Such workers, with practically nothing to work with, have been able to cushion the effects of the blockade by improvising spare parts, repairing machines that would be junked anywhere else, adjusting production to the needs of defence, and so on.

Structures exist in the plants through which workers are supposed to be able to participate in decision-making. But the workers only say that they run up against foot-dragging, bad will, and even outright hostility from state-appointed administrators. They often take a dim view of workers interfering in management, pointing to the cultural backwardness of the working class in Nicaragua.

Of course, you can point to the problem of backwardness. But then how do you explain the fact that it is the union confederation, the ATC, and the agricultural workers (who have traditionally had few educational opportunities) who have gone the furthest in participating in management?

What is at stake in this discussion is considerable, because it is far from being a functional or economic matter; above all it is a political question. How are the new productive relations to be organized? What should workers' power mean concretely within the plant? In the words of FSLN president Daniel Ortega, replacing the "capitalist mentality of plant management" with full and complete involvement of the workers in management is no luxury for a revolution but a necessity:

"If under socialism workers' participation in management is a necessity, since it helps to raise the quality of production, enhance the efficiency of management, and promote the elimination of bureaucracy, while it may be a risk for states in transition, it is just as necessary." (4)

Despite the real difficulties of the situation, the workers are not turning away from the Sandinistas toward other organizations, despite the ultra-leftist demagoguery they generally resort to in an attempt to capitalize on the working-class discontent that does exist.

It should not be forgotten that all the trade-union organizations are

linked to a party, and the union's words are measured against the party's acts. The most glaring case is that of the CGT-I and the CAUS. The credibility of their ultra-leftist language on the trade-union level is largely compromised by the rightist behaviour of the PSN and the PCN. It is hard to reprove the FSLN for its concessions to private ownership and at the same time sign statements with the bourgeois parties in the National Assembly, or refuse to participate in the united May Day celebration demonstrations on the same day with right-wing unions in the provincial cities. (5)

Nonetheless, if this demagoguery has finally made some small inroads, it is largely owing to the attitude of the FSLN, which has taken up the

problems forthrightly, calling on its militants to involve themselves more actively than they had before in the problems of the plants.

In another debate, Carlos Gallo stressed: "The workers must assume supervision and economic management if we are to be able to deal with the crisis. As the FSLN, we think that the masses have to take up the challenge. Workers' management is a principle of the revolution, a right won by the workers." And he added: "Learning to be the masters is hard."

The FSLN's strength also lies in its ability to listen to criticism and to respond to it by drawing the necessary practical consequences. This is one of the aspects of a real workers' democracy. The exemplary pluralism of this debate is another. □

Trade union round table

Carlos Salgado (CGT-I): According to the figures of the Institute of Research and Statistics (INEC), 54 per cent of property in Nicaragua is private. This defines the character of the state. There is no political party of the working class in our country, and it is a bit venturesome to say that the workers and peasants have the power today. The FSLN has not yet managed to go beyond the stage of a national liberation movement, and its leaders themselves say that today they are taking the first steps to transform the Front into a party.

If we look at political parties internationally, we see that their organizational structures are identical. For example, the leaders are elected from top to bottom. The lower bodies submit to the higher ones. The minority bows to the majority.

But in the FSLN there are no structures. All that we know about is a National Directorate of nine members and a Sandinista National Assembly that does not have a decision-making character but simply a consultative one, where the majority is content to apply the decisions emanating from the National Directorate. There is really no expression, no reflection of a political party representing the workers and peasants.

Ronaldo Membreno (CST): First of all, let me briefly review the role of the unions before the triumph of the revolution. Owing to economic,

political, social and cultural repression, and the weak development of capitalism in our country, we cannot talk about a developed union movement before July 19, 1979. Only seven per cent of the workers were organized in unions, divided up among seven confederations that ran a gamut from right wing to progressive to revolutionary.

After 1975, the FSLN became a factor stimulating the forms of struggle of the working class, and the workers went from essentially economist struggles for limited demands to a political-military struggle whose fundamental objective was the seizure of political power. With the revolution, it was we workers and peasants, represented by the FSLN, who took power.

Obviously, new conditions were then created. From an oppressed and exploited class, we became the ruling class in power. Our tasks are not the

4. Ministry of Labor, "Lunes-socio-economico," "Barricada," May 5, 1986.

5. In the wake of the measures taken by the National Directorate after the US Congress approved 100 million dollars in aid for the contras (suspension of 'La Prensa', tightening of the state of emergency, expulsion of Vega), the PSN and the PCN signed a document with three of the Nicaraguan bourgeois parties — the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD) and the People's Social Christian Party (PPSC) calling for the rescinding of the measures and attacking the "hegemonism" of the FSLN in the name of a "real political pluralism, respect for the mixed economy," etc.

same as they were before the revolution. Our first task consists mainly of defending the political power that we have won.

Since 1979, in the National Inter-professional Commission, the CST posed the problem of increasing production and the productivity of labor, the essential precondition for raising the standard of living of the workers, but also the problem of combating indiscipline on the job. All these questions were discussed at the First Assembly for Unity of the Trade-Union Movement, in which all those presently gathered around this table came together. It was there also that we rejected strikes as a form of struggle because of their effect on production.

The role of the unions in the revolution is not a theoretical but a practical problem. Our tasks are before us. What is needed, on the one hand, is to carry them out, and, on the other, to build more energetically real workers' management that will make it possible to monitor production and distribution, to see how goods reach the population. We have to develop and generalize the experiences of the trade-union movement . . .

Coping with the imperialist crisis involves raising the political and ideological consciousness of our members and of the entire union movement. This is not a matter of technique nor one of wages. We workers have to understand clearly that we have to make greater exertions and more sacrifices in order to extricate ourselves from this crisis.

Fernando Malespin (FO): What is the role of the unions in the present period, and how can we characterize this period? The imperialist aggression today has reached a peak with the voting of 100 million US dollars for the contras. This is not only a military problem but also an economic and political one.

What is the role of the various political forces within the country in the confrontation with this aggression? We have to fundamentally distinguish two social classes which are antagonistic and inimical to each other, and see which one of them today is the victim of the aggression. On that basis, what role must the trade-union movement play with respect to this war and these divergent class interests?

Even if numerically the working class is weak, its political role with respect to social problems is precisely what makes it the vanguard class. From this standpoint, the union movement has to offer a working-class answer to various problems, and we think that the primary role

of the unions has to be a fundamentally political struggle against the political aggression of imperialism, which is defending a definite class in this country.

While it is correct to put the emphasis on the tasks of military defence, it is not in itself the participation of a large part of the population that guarantees the class content of the defence. We cannot confine ourselves to setting practical objectives for the proletariat of this country.

If socialism is our goal and our activity has to be oriented in that direction, we would make a grave error in taking such a narrow approach. The political struggle is decisive, and in that connection I would recall that the indefinite suspension of *La Prensa* has been a constant demand of the workers. Finally, the government has concurred with this demand by the workers movement, and this should be stressed . . .

A class characterization has to be made of private property, of production. People avoid posing this question in theoretical terms, but this cannot be avoided. For whom are we producing? The problem of production and productivity has to be looked at from the social surplus product. We cannot fall into the error of demanding work, productivity and production without taking into consideration where the surplus product goes.

Roberto Moreno (CAUS): The trade-union movement and the working class did not get its ideological and political conceptions and corresponding organization on July 19, 1979. The workers' movement, its program and its lines of action, date back well before that. Even when it emerged in 1915, it wrote some glorious pages of history by its political and not merely economic struggles.

Well before the overthrow of

TRADE-UNION CONFEDERATIONS IN NICARAGUA

CST Sandinista Workers Confederation. *Linked to the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Centers of strength: the sugar industry, food, transport, health services, construction, textiles, etc. International affiliations: World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the Permanent Congress for Latin-American Workers' Trade-Union Unity (CPUSTAL), the Latin-American regional body of the WFTU.*

ATC Association of Rural Workers. *Linked to the FSLN.*

CGT-I General Confederation of Labor — Independent. *Linked to the Socialist Party of Nicaragua (PSN, one of the two communist parties). Centers of strength: agricultural workers, services, shoemakers, construction, carpenters. International Affiliations: WFTU and the CPUSTAL.*

CTN Nicaraguan Workers Confederation *Linked to the Social Christian Party (PSC), a small rightist formation. Centers of influence: the services, service stations, certain engineering plants, La Prensa, the private radio stations. International affiliations: the World Confederation of Labor (WCL), linked to Christian Democracy; the Latin American Confederation of Workers (CLAT), linked to Christian Democracy on the Latin-American level.*

CAUS Confederation for Trade-Union Action and Unity. *Linked to the Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCdeN). Centers of influence: the textile mills. International affiliation: WFTU.*

CUS Confederation for Trade-Union Unity. *Linked to the Social Democratic Party (PSD, rightist). Centers of influence: taxi drivers, transport, machine shops, hotel waiters, the Miskitos. International Affiliation: International Confederation of Free Trade-Union Organizations (ICFTUO) the Latin American equivalent of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).*

FO Workers' Front. *Linked to the Marxist Leninist Party of Nicaragua (PMLN, formerly MAP). Centers of influence: construction, agricultural workers, textiles, teachers, health workers, banks.*

CTN-I Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers — Independent, *the so-called Autonomous CTN (a split-off from the CTN). Linked to the People's Social Christian Party (PPSC), a left split from the PSC. Influence negligible. International affiliation WCL, CLAT.*

Somoza, a lot of workers marched in Managua. There were peasant congresses, as well as a trade-union movement led by the CGT-I and the CAUS in 1973-1974, great struggles that awakened the consciousness of the proletariat and served to shake the Somoza regime and undermine it economically.

It is hardly surprising that there have been different manifestations at different periods, certain ones at times predominating. On July 19, 1979, power was taken. It was in the hands of the FSLN, which had the support of all the revolutionary organizations, a support that, for ideological reasons that we all know about, has flagged or disappeared.

We have to start off from the origins of the working class to ask ourselves today what we are going to do or what we are doing. I don't think that this is a practical problem. Seeing it that way would lead us into serious mistakes. One of the objectives of the working class is the seizure of power. How could we take it overnight? In order to build socialism, we have to develop the productive forces.

Today, the productive relations are capitalist. There is a bourgeoisie, private property, a power of capital and wage labor. So, how can we cross the line? First of all, it is necessary to develop the productive forces in order to break with the existing production relations and build others in line with socialism. But that cannot be done overnight.

Jose Espinoza (CUS): I think, for my part, that the title of the debate imposes its own limitations. Without trying to give things too subtle an interpretation, it seems to me that this title demands from participants

"Triumphant Nicaragua will not sell-out, will not surrender!" (DR)



**NICARAGUA
VICTORIOSA
NI SE VENDE
NI SE RINDE**

a prior acceptance of the policy conducted by the leaders of the revolution.

If I were asked what is the role of the unions in a revolution, their role could be defined concretely. The history of the trade-union movement around the world would in itself provide the answer. You can see it plainly in the four corners of the world.

We should ask ourselves if the trade-union policy conducted by the vanguard of the revolution has been fruitful or not. In my opinion, the answer is "no," and I think we can all see this. As an initial example, I would cite the failure of the Trade-Union Coordinating Committee. An attempt was made to give impetus to this project with the admirable slogan "One class, one union." It failed specifically because of the sectarianism of the vanguard, but also because of a chronic lack of labor discipline that it has so far been impossible to overcome.

With respect to workers' rights, this policy has been no better. There has been a lack of trade-union freedom, restrictions on the right to raise demands, elimination of the right to strike as a legitimate means of struggle for trade unionists, and so on.

What are the real causes of the present situation of virtual destitution that the workers are experiencing? The society laments about the imperialist aggression. We are aware of the enormous cost of a continuing state of war. But that does not justify the fact that the leaders or whoever have failed to inform us about the sums collected through the unemployment funds and how this money has been spent.

Likewise, it does not justify concealing the figures on the foreign debt and the projects in which are invested the enormous sums that the state collects in taxes. Nor does it justify giving privileged treatment to some sections of workers through CAT [workers supply centers] cards (1), measures which have not been adequate even to serve the needs of the workers they were supposed to benefit.

Regardless of ideological positions, support for the government's policy or adherence to a party, we know what is happening in the stomachs of our children and companions and we know that the state of the stomachs of some gentlemen are still privileged as they were before.

We have given unconditional support to the work of the Contadora group and we have signed — along with other forces in political life — accords calling for reconciliation of all forces in the life of the nation. (2)

In so doing, we have distanced ourselves from sectarianism, from this single leadership, from politico-intellectual hegemony.

For the unions to really play a decisive role, to be active forces in the revolution, what the revolution needs to do specifically is to free these unions. We are convinced that the workers will produce more and better with freedom. The opposite is being demonstrated by the daily declining production of our factories and countryside. In truth, that is the role of the unions in these dramatic times.

Carlos Gallo (FSLN), Regional Committee III, Managua: Along with some trade-union confederations and some political parties, we think that our present differences concern the transition to socialism. It is the failure to understand this process that makes it more difficult for the revolutionary parties that exist in this country to act in a unified way. Some parties have been misled by the forms the revolutionary state has taken in Nicaragua. They cannot understand the nature of this state.

If this state were not a revolutionary one, a workers' state, we would not have to face a war of imperialist aggression. As for the analysis Salgado makes of the economic structure existing in this country, of the forms of ownership, I would call his attention to the fact that many socialist projects, which have today achieved their final form, began with private ownership proportionally higher than the figure he mentions.

What is decisive here is that it is the state that shapes the economy. That is the essential thing. As a revolution in transition to socialism, we do not need to have all private property confiscated or nationalized in order to move forward and say that what we have here is a workers' revolution.

What points have we touched? Today, the vital sectors of the economy are in the hands of the workers. The bourgeoisie does not control the foreign currency, the banks, the army, or the laws, regardless of certain legal inadequacies the state may have.

We don't think that the bourgeoisie

1. Some of the CAT cards are saved for production workers who have priority for the scarcer products. This measure was designed to benefit the producers at the expense not only of the informal sector but also administrative employees.

2. The Contadora group (Mexico, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela) has undertaken to find a solution to the situation existing in Central America based on a negotiated peace. This effort has been stalled for months and no one expects any practical results in the coming period. The most probable outlook is that this group will gradually fade away.

can reproduce itself in this country, because the main levers of command are in the hands of the revolutionary state, the working people. As for the analysis of the social surplus product that Malespin made, the fundamental problem is not changing the forms of property. What we want to change are the basic patterns of accumulation of the surplus product.

We have to analyze what transforming the rest of private property could bring us. Annually, the surplus product created by this sector is in the order of 8 to 10 million cordobas, which is a pathetically small amount by comparison with our needs.

We have to take as our starting point the class nature of the revolutionary state, which is expressed in the measures prompted by the revolution and the program that we are putting into practice. It is clear to everyone that what we have here is not a bourgeois state. We should analyze the conditions in which the revolution, the workers' movement, the working class are advancing in the achievement of the socialist program in the face of a major crisis of capitalism, perhaps the most profound in its history.

Now, as regards whether or not the FSLN is a party: It is enough to have a revolutionary program and activists in the mass movement to exercise and develop the functions of a party. A Bureau or a Central Committee does not make a party; they are only instruments.

Carlos Salgado (CGT-I): In Nicaragua, capitalist private property is predominant in the economic structure; it accounts for the majority of the Gross Domestic Product. We can conclude from this that there is exploitation and that one of the tasks of the union organizations should be defending the socioeconomic interests of the workers.

I point this out because a lot of comrades persist in the notion that to concern yourself with the socioeconomic conditions of the working people is an eminently economist attitude. Historically, the trade-union movement has had that function. It still does, because you cannot explain the crisis and call for defending the revolution without also defending the working people's interests.

We are in a situation where the workers are demanding a role in administrative management and not just in managing production. Why? Because the idea was put about that the only way for workers to play a role in production and management in the plants was to do more and better work. How are we going to get a positive response from the working masses when they are denied any

role in the programming and planning of production?

For 7 years now the technicians and administrators have shown their incapacity, and it is said that this is because of lack of experience, that they have not yet learned, that they don't have sufficient competence, and so on. Maybe by now we workers have already shown that we are more capable than they are.

You talk about surplus product. I want to talk about taxes. It has been said that capitalist property has been seriously eroded, and through taxation the state is intervening to make sure that capitalism does not reproduce itself.

If we look at the tax system, the situation is quite alarming. Direct taxes paid by the workers remain the bulk of the state revenue. The official figures show that in 1983, out of a total of 13,835 million cordobas taken in by the government, 10,619 million came from direct taxes, because the system is the same as in 1977.

We condemn that approval [by the Reagan administration] of 100 million US dollars for the contras, and this should be an alarm signal for all the political, trade-union and people's organizations. They must form a united front against the intervention. We cannot continue to operate as we are doing. We have to orient the masses, we have to tell the workers that, over and above all the problems and divergent opinions we have about the conduct of the state, that we have to shoulder the burden of defending the revolution.

This problem will not be solved by wages. It is a problem of production, and that is intimately linked to the degree of involvement of the workers in administrative management.

Roberto Moreno (CAUS): The CAUS recognizes the Communist Party of Nicaragua as the vanguard. We are not discussing that because I don't think that would make any sense. Yes, the revolution is under attack because it is a people's revolution. But the workers also have other concerns, such as speculation. For example, the cost of producing a yard of cloth in Fabritex is 400 cordobas, but it costs 3,000 cordobas in the Dinatex stores. (3) If the state gets this difference, and participates in speculation, that's bad; if other sectors get it, that's even worse. Is this a reflection of workers' power? And what about calling workers to assemblies to tell them that it is forbidden to strike? You talk about workers' power, but workers are treated as if they were contras or

reactionaries. You are throwing the workers' movement off balance. I think that the government not only does not escape from reproducing capitalism, but actually reinforces it. With the agrarian reform, you give the right to ownership. But this property — small though it may be — breeds capitalism.

It falls to us to play a central role in this stage of transition so that socialism can triumph. One of the conditions of this triumph is that the working class is in power and that there is a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Ronaldo Membreno (CST): I want to make a proposition to the leaders of the main union federations, on the basis of the tasks that the workers' movement must take on. We want to do this in friendly competition with all the organizations which are agreed on defending revolutionary power, expressed by the integration of workers in the different forms of military defence — even if Malespin attacked the Patriotic Military Service in a veiled way.

Our tasks are: to increase production and productivity, in order to guarantee military defence and supplies to the civil population; to readjust the norms in industry, starting with textiles and metallurgy, so as to assure the best manufactures for the peasants, the towns and for defence; to increase working hours in the countryside so that basic products and products for export can be guaranteed.

We must take another look at the question of qualifications, so that skilled workers can receive a fair salary; we have to reinforce workers' participation in management, not just confining this to simple participation on questions like hiring or redundancy, but increasingly in regard to enterprise planning, and maintenance and repair projects. Management must be evaluated in the light of the accomplishments of these objectives, with the participation of the workers in the plants.

The CST proposes that members of your unions take some places in our national union school, in order that together we can fight above all inefficiency and waste, and so that we can win to the side of the working class administrators who are of bourgeois origin. That is also the role of the vanguard. □

3. The Dinatex chain-store company was abolished by the government in July 1986. This had long been one of the textile workers' demands. This measure was one of a series designed to assure direct sale of factory products to the CAT in order to reduce the middlemen to a minimum and lower prices for consumers.

Awakening of an occupied country

THE ECONOMIC policy being followed by the Honduran government at the prompting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given impetus to a series of mass mobilizations in Honduras, leading in turn to stepped-up repression against a trade-union movement that has been growing stronger and more political.

Honduras, the centre-piece of Ronald Reagan's counter-revolutionary chess game in Central America, is today virtually an occupied country. The presence of several thousand north American marines is promoting corruption and breakdown of the traditional economic fabric.

The 20,000 Nicaraguan contras based in the south of the country, where they have literally driven out the small coffee planters who used to constitute the population of this region, have likewise provoked an increasingly violent antagonism among Hondurans.

This situation is accelerating the growth of national consciousness, in a country that seemed to have the least national feeling in all Central America.

ROBERTO DIAZ

In spite of a notable scepticism in certain sectors, the Honduran workers movement has been following a trajectory leading it from economic demands to struggles of a political character. This is true not only for the opposition section of Honduran trade unionism, but also what is called the "official sector" of pro-government unions.

May 1, 1986, saw one expression of this evolution, when for the first time in many years International Workers' Day was celebrated jointly by the strongest trade-union organizations.

Joining together were the "official" Honduran Workers Confederation (CTH), the General Workers Union, a social-Christian tendency (CGT) and the Federation of Honduran Workers (FUTH). The latter is made up in the main of the most radical unions, which the government denies all legal expression.

These three organizations belong to the National Workers and Peasants Council of Honduras (CONOCH), a body that is a product of the aspiration for unity existing today.

The workers' banners bore slogans of an expressly political character, such as: "No to war, yes to peace", "Yankees out of Honduras, no to the

military accords with the USA", "Contras out of Honduras" and "Azcona's government is unpatriotic — Azcona Hoyo you are a traitor." (1)

The economic policy of Roberto Suazo Cordova's government from 1982 to 1985 has been decisive in this evolution. Like a good pupil of its American counsellors and the IMF, it implemented the well-known anti-popular economic measures that this organization recommends.

Officially it had been assured that only those recently integrated into production would be effected by these measures, such as unprofitable businesses, newly-hired workers, the not yet consolidated middle classes and above all the marginalized urban unemployed population. The measures were only supposed to affect the section of the population excluded from the production process, who moreover do not pay taxes, and those recently incorporated into production. The rest of the population was not supposed to be affected.

But the very depth of the economic crisis led the government to apply this policy equally to the organized sectors, to other layers of workers and even to the middle classes who have political influence and the capacity to

respond.

Repression, sometimes systematic, was the only response of the government. This repression did not only have the goal of immobilizing and neutralizing the professional organizations, but also destroying them.

The repression that was exercised against the trade union organizations was only one aspect of building a "national security state".

This project is the axis of the alliance between Suazo Cordova, the Reagan administration and the section of the extreme-right of the Honduran armed forces led by general Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, who was considered to be Washington's right-hand man in Central America between 1982 and 1984.

The blatantly counter-insurrectionary project of Suazo Cordova/Alvarez Martinez is reflected in the measures taken against the union organizations. These include the occupation of offices by the military, placing leaders imposed by the government at the head of unions, the division of unions and union confederations, the use of the military in factories on strike and the sacking of workers' leaders in reprisal against strikes.

All this is done with the aim of decapitating the trade-union movement. This is to say nothing of the murder of trade-union leaders, their kidnapping followed by their "disappearance" carried out by paramilitary groups. Such actions have often coincided with contract negotiations.

In March 1983, near the town of El Progreso in the department of Yoro in the north of Honduras, two soldiers fired on a group of trade-union leaders, amongst whom was Dagoberto Padilla — president of the union of the agricultural company of Sula (SITRACOAS). Four trade unionists, including Padilla were murdered and three others were seriously wounded.

In March 1984, Rolando Vindel Gonzalez, the president of the union of the national electricity company (STENEE), was arrested in front of witnesses by the National Investigations Department (DNI) in the centre of the capital, Tegucigalpa. The DNI denied all responsibility.

Since then no one has seen the trade-union leader. At the time of his kidnapping he was at the head of a union commission which was negotiating a new collective agreement with the electricity company.

1. Jose Simon Azcona Hoyo, one of the four candidates of the ruling Liberal Party, won the presidential elections on November 24, 1985, with 51.5 per cent of the vote against another Liberal Party member, Oscar Mejia who was supported by the previous president, Roberto Suazo Cordova.

On 9 May, 1986, unidentified individuals turned high-calibre weapons on the president of the packaging industry union (STELSA), Cristobal Perez Diaz, as he was getting out of his car opposite his house in San Pedro Sula — also in the north of Honduras.

A week before his murder, Perez Diaz, who was working with other workers' leaders in some conflicts in the United Federation of Honduran Workers (FUTH) — of which he had previously been the president for the north coast region — had led the May Day procession in his town.

In front of more than 100,000 workers the trade-union leader had accused president Hoyo's government of failing to offer any response to the concrete demands of the FUTH. At the same time, he denounced Honduras' foreign policy and the presence of American troops and Nicaraguan contras on its territory.

At the time of his death, Perez Diaz was sitting on a commission that was negotiating a new collective agreement on social benefits with the regional authorities.

Workers' struggles politicized by repression

Contrary to the hopes of those in high places who have instigated the anti-union repression, its most significant impact has been to politicize the struggles of the workers' movement, which has made substantial advances in organization.

From economic demands it has moved on to fighting to defend trade-union rights, to the demand for the return of the disappeared and the release of political prisoners.

The trade-union movement has also contributed to the formation of new humanitarian organizations — for the defence of human rights, bringing together the families of the disappeared, struggles for peace, and so on — organizations that in turn reinforce trade-union action and promise the appearance of new forms of political struggle.

One of the forms which this politicization of the Honduran workers' movement is taking is the growth of national consciousness in response to the North American military occupation and the presence of the Nicaraguan contras.

It is clear that these two foreign military forces arrived in Honduras after the country became the principal ally of the United States in Central America, and with the blessing of the Honduran authorities.

Those who worked out these plans for Honduras, as well as the Honduran officials who were party to them,

knew that they had to defuse the country's various sectors of political and social opposition.

The struggle for national sovereignty, therefore, has met with official repression against all those who opposed the implementation of the plans.

The Honduran workers' movement was built precisely out of the struggles led against the North American companies which, at the end of the last century, pushed aside an incompetent bourgeoisie.

Today the workers' movement sees clearly that the foreign military presence involves the risk of a war against Nicaragua, not in defence of the national interest but in defence of the interests of the United States.

Consequently, the trade-union leaders stress the fact that the foreign policy of Honduras does not respect the principle of non-interference and self-determination of peoples. Many of them think that as the politicization of trade union struggles deepens the movement will become more unified, encouraging a full involvement of the mass movement.

The appearance of bodies such as the National Workers' and Peasants' Council of Honduras (CONOCH), which brings together unions of different ideological tendencies, points to such a qualitative leap.

The CONOCH was born of the necessity to assert the right of workers to a greater voice in government, after the elections of November 1985 that brought Azcona to power.

But the FUTH and its peasant organization, the National Union of Workers of the Countryside (CNTC), have political potential that scares the more traditional trade-union sectors. This explains why such elements have tried to blame the FUTH for a number of incidents arising from the May Day demonstration in Tegucigalpa seeking to discredit it in the eyes of the workers.

Another notable advance for the workers' movement is the creation of the Coordinating Committee of Popular Organizations (CCOP), closely linked to the FUTH. The emergence of this coordination favours the spread of the mobilization to other sections of the popular movement.

The CCOP is made up of organizations of workers, peasants, women and students, neighbourhood committees, human rights organizations, organizations of political prisoners and so on.

Other union federations have tried in the past to put together similar organizations, but the products of their work were wrecked by repression and by the murder of their leaders, such as Padilla.

The issue of defending national sovereignty has given a political content to the growth of the union movement of the last years. In this context, one might wonder whether the murder of Cristobal Perez Diaz, far from being an isolated incident, does not point to a new repressive offensive. □



New confrontations between the government and the miners

THE BOLIVIAN working class, most notably the miners who have historically been its vanguard, have energetically resisted attacks made over the last few months by the government of Victor Paz Estenssoro, helped along by American imperialism and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The most recent of these attacks took place this summer, culminating in the government's plan to restructure the nationalized mining industry, formalized eventually by decree on August 26. Under this plan, most mines will be closed or privatized. Over seven thousand miners have already been sacked and the jobs of thousands more are threatened.

LIVIO MAITAN

It is too early to make a definitive assessment of recent events, in particular because the results of negotiations between the government and the Bolivian Mineworkers' Confederation (FSTMB) are still not known. But it is clear that the struggles of the Bolivian masses are unfolding in more and more difficult conditions.

In July 1985 President Paz Estenssoro came to power following fraudulent elections and an agreement between his party, the Historical Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR-H) and Hugo Banzer's Democratic Nationalist Alliance (ADN). (1) Immediately after these elections, Paz Estenssoro decreed a new package of measures which enforced those adopted by the previous government. (2) He imposed a wage freeze, abolished state subsidies on basic goods and authorized a "free" floating of the peso against the US dollar. This was a new blow for the standard of living of the masses, which had already fallen considerably for some years. (3)

Initially, Estenssoro's policies had a measure of success, especially in respect of the rate of inflation which was more or less diminished. But this was an ephemeral result. Already, in December 1985, inflation began to climb again although it stayed below previous levels. Robert Gisbert, the finance minister, put forward a plan for an inflation rate of 36 per cent for 1986, which was to go hand in hand with a three per cent rise in

the Gross National Product (GNP). However, the indicators of a new recession were already apparent in the first quarter of 1986 and the rate of inflation reached 50 per cent in June. Previously, the IMF had fixed a ceiling of 85 per cent for the whole year.

These developments could do nothing but provoke struggles. In January 1985, the Bolivian Labour Confederation (COB) had already led a general strike to protest against the economic and social policies of the government. Two months later it was the turn of the teachers, who were on strike for more than a month. Their situation illustrates the living conditions of Bolivian workers. At the time of the strike, the teachers wage was around 30 million pesos a month, close to the minimum wage, and their demand was for 120 million pesos. (4) After the struggle had broken out, the government was willing to give the teachers a 100 per cent rise, recognizing by this token that they could not live on their existing wages. As far as the miners are concerned, they receive an average wage of less than 60 million pesos a month. A leader of the COB, Walter Delgadillo, calculates that they need double this simply to be able to live.

In July, President Estenssoro decided to put an end to the wages freeze. He announced that the monthly minimum wage would be increased from 30 to 40 million pesos, with 33 per cent rises in the public sector. Given that prices had already risen about 30 per cent, the COB ob-

viously thought that these increases were derisory.

In the same month of July, the political temperature of the country rose sharply following the anti-drug operation mounted by the Bolivian army together with United States troops, who raided clandestine cocaine installations. The presence of the US troops provoked strong reactions. It was seen as an infringement of national sovereignty, if not as a prelude to the installation of foreign military bases in the country. There were protests supported by the trade unions. These involved mainly peasants who cultivate cocaine and who would be forced to give it up without any guarantee of an alternative source of income.

Towards the end of July, 21,000 miners began a strike. This was the start of a new wave of workers' struggles. On August 1, workers went on strike in the mining city of Oruro and in Potosi, including workers from the national airline company, LAB, and from the universities. At three days notice, the COB called a 48-hour general strike in solidarity with the miners for August 21 and 22.

Previously, on July 25, there had been a significant test of political forces when the COB had organized a referendum on two questions. Ninety-five per cent of the respondents were for the suspension of the payment of the external debt and against the government's tax reform — a generalized ten per cent value-added tax (VAT), which particularly hit the poor. The government, not at all appreciative of this initiative by the union confederation, denounced it as a fraud. (5)

1. The MNR-H is one of the parties to come out of the MNR, which was brought to power by the 1952 revolution, and whose principal historic leader is Paz Estenssoro. The previous government was led by Hernan Siles Suazo, another historic leader of the MNR. Today, Suazo is the head of the MNR-I (MNR-Left).

Hugo Banzer, leader of the ADN, took power in a military coup in 1971 and remained in power until 1978.

2. On the situation under the previous government of Siles Suazo (1982-85), see in particular the following articles: "A new stage opens" by Livio Maitan, 'International Viewpoint' No. 48, March 12, 1984; "The test of the March general strike", by Andre Dubois, 'IV' No. 74, April 22, 1985.

3. According to estimates in the international press the income per head in Bolivia fell 30 per cent between 1980 and 1985. (See 'Latin America Regional Reports Andean' RA 86-01). This article has drawn mainly from this source, and from 'Latin America Weekly Report'.

4. In July 1986, one US dollar equalled 1.9 million pesos. It will probably be at least equivalent to 2.3 million pesos by the end of this year.

5. According to some estimates, one and a half million people participated in the referendum ('Le Monde', August 30, 1986). But 'Latin America Weekly Report', (86-30, August 7, 1986), gave the much lower figure of 300,000.

In this context Paz Estenssoro's government announced a radical restructuring project for the mining industry, heralding fresh attacks on the working class. A decree issued on August 26 announced that the head office of the nationalized Bolivian Mining Company (COMIBOL) would be closed. The Matilde zinc mine and the Corocoro tin mine in La Paz province were to be closed down for good. Nine other mines were to be sold into private ownership and a further thirteen managed by private cooperatives. However, five of these mines (San Jose, Bolivar, Huanuni, Unificado and Tasna) had already stopped production and another one, Catavi, was also a possible target for closure. The workforce would be reduced by nearly half, so between 12,000 and 13,000 workers were to lose their jobs and consequently their homes. In the eight months prior to August, there had already been between 7,000 and 8,000 redundancies.

New test of strength

A new test of strength began. The miners had already organized a 150-mile march from Oruro to La Paz beginning on August 21, to protest against the massive number of redundancies. More than 5,000 miners took part, often accompanied by their families and by other workers and students who marched with them in solidarity.

On August 26, 40 miles outside of the capital, La Paz, the marchers were stopped by the army. Under the pretext of an imaginary threat of insurrection, the government opted for open repression. The march leaders were arrested, and the rest of the marchers rounded up and dispersed in atrocious weather conditions, without medicines, money or food. It was another moving chapter to be inscribed on the record of the Bolivian working class, already one of the most glorious in the world.

The government proclaimed a state of seige on August 28, and proceeded to arrest labour, political and church leaders in La Paz and five other cities. Around 200 were removed to remote regions of the country. At the same time, La Paz airport was occupied by airforce units and the university was surrounded by the army to prevent students becoming centrally involved in the resistance, as they have in the past.

The day afterwards — August 29 — the COB called a 24-hour general strike in protest at the imposition of the state of siege, which saw the

participation of large numbers of factory and building workers. Big demonstrations were held in several towns. For example, in Cochabamba — a town of 280,000 inhabitants — 15,000 people marched on September 3.

However, the miners could not prolong their resistance. On August 29 the fighting stopped because of the government's preoccupation with opening negotiations with the trade unions rather than with repression. The miners were returned to their home towns from La Paz in army trucks. It is not excluded that the government slowed down the pace of the measures that they intended to impose, and even reduced them in scope somewhat. But it is undeniable that the miners and the working class have suffered a new setback.

The government's plan, insofar as it is realizable, will mean a deepening of current efforts to restructure the Bolivian economy. The mining sector, traditionally the backbone of the economy, has been in decline for many years following unfavourable developments in the world market, and also because of the more and more obsolete nature of Bolivia's productive apparatus. Now this crisis has reached a point of no return.

To give an idea of the extent of the problem, in 1980 the price of one pound of tin was 7.6 US dollars, while today it is less than three dollars. At the same time, the value of exports fell from 650 to 120 million US dollars. Production decreased six-fold compared to its 1976 level, and, in 1985, COMIBOL lost 250 US dollars.

If this collapse of the mining sector and the steady slide of the GNP for some years did not bring about a complete disintegration in the country, it was because of the existence of what is called the "informal sector".

Behind this euphemism is hidden the reality of the cultivation, processing and trade in cocaine, which plays an increasingly decisive role in Bolivia's economy. (6) Any statistics concerning Bolivia should be treated prudently (including those in this article on the "official" economy). This is even more true for the informal economy which is, by definition, underground and therefore the figures concerning it cannot be guaranteed to be accurate. But most sources coincide in their estimate that drug exports will bring in around 600 million US dollars this year (some say nearly a thousand million), while the value of official exports will only be 400 million dollars. The cocaine trade, therefore, accounts for 50 per cent of Bolivia's Gross National Product.

It is evident that such an economic evolution has serious consequences on a social level at a time when the traditional economy is in a state of free-fall. Peasants realize that it is more advantageous for them to grow cocaine than other agricultural products. For workers, condemned to unemployment, they often have no other recourse but to attempt to integrate into the informal economy, including smuggling. Those who are lucky can change their lives. Some miners who work processing cocaine in one night can earn half the monthly wages they would get in the mines. (7)

As has already been said, it is not possible yet to draw a balance sheet of recent events in Bolivia, at least until the results of negotiations between the unions and the government are known. But it seems as though the government will not make an about-turn.

The mineworkers' confederation, the FSTMB, even before this recent crisis, had put forward an alternative plan for the mines composed essentially of the following points: the maintenance of jobs at the level of March 31, 1986 (i.e. 23,370 workers); a 42 per cent reduction in workers' social benefits; a 15 per cent or so decrease in spending on energy; a 50 per cent reduction in technical services and in work contracted out to companies outside of COMIBOL; a massive reduction in general expenses; and a 20 per cent reduction in the costs of running the head office of COMIBOL in La Paz. This is evidently a strictly defensive plan whose eventual implementation would bring about no qualitative changes in prospects.

The developments of the last two months and the blows suffered by the miners risk having very serious repercussions on the whole Bolivian workers' movement. The Latin American workers' movement may also pay a price. This is why solidarity with Bolivian workers must once again be at the top of the agenda. □



6. On the decline of the traditional economy and the growth of the informal economy see — in addition to the sources already cited — articles in 'Le Monde', August 30, 1986, and 'L'Unita', August 29, 1986.

7. The informal economy also had a blow last July following the military operation against drug-trafficking. It was reported that the price of a "carga" (50 kilos) of cocaine fell 75 per cent, and that 150,000 producers were without a means of support. (See 'El Pais', July 30, 1986). But there is no information to contradict the view that this trend, although strong, is only conjunctural.

"Appeal to supporters of the Bill of Rights"

AT THE END of August this year, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) — organizations in solidarity with the Fourth International — were awarded 264,000 US dollars in damages after 18 years of harassment by the FBI. (1)

The following statement on the ramifications of this victory was published in the SWP's newspaper, *The Militant*, on September 12, 1986.

SWP POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

The federal court decision in the case brought against the FBI by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance puts a valuable weapon in the hands of every working-class organization in this country. It is a new weapon, one that can — and should — be widely used to win broader freedoms to engage in political activity.

For the first time, a federal court has declared it illegal for the FBI to use under-cover informers against political activists. In reaching this conclusion, Judge Thomas Griesa has expanded the constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy. This right was conquered by the battles of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and formed part of the basis for the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

As Griesa emphasizes, without the right of privacy, there can be no genuine freedom of association for those whose views and activities are opposed by the government.

Griesa's opinion also marks the first time a federal judge has ruled that burglaries carried out by the FBI to steal or copy private papers or to plant microphones are violations of the Fourth Amendment, which was written to protect the people against illegal searches by the government. The judge, on the same grounds, ruled that the government has no right to tap phones in the name of "national security."

And, for the first time, a federal court has ruled that a surreptitious campaign of disruption operations, whether called Cointelpro or any other name the government might conjure up, is against the law. The sweeping character of the ruling makes it unambiguous that this applies not only to the FBI, but to similar actions taken against any organization by any government cop agency — the immigration cops, the CIA, the armed forces' secret cops, or any other.

The government's political police have carried out these covert activities against the SWP and the YSA and against countless other groups and individuals. Now, all of these practices are illegal.

And such activity by the FBI — or by any other cops — against the SWP or YSA in the future will be in violation of the court ruling. Attorneys for the SWP and the YSA will immediately bring evidence of any such acts to the judge's attention.

And it is not only the SWP and YSA that benefit. To the contrary, every labor union, farmers' organization, or social protest group facing government harassment will now be on strong ground to seek exactly the same relief.

The court ruling provides the SWP

and the YSA with important legal protection. It pushes back the political police. It puts us in a stronger position to pursue the fight for socialism and democracy.

But this decision is also a direct gain for every labor union, every opponent of Washington's dirty contra war against Nicaragua, every organization fighting for women's rights, and everyone seeking to halt racist discrimination and cop violence against Black people.

"The impact of this decision goes far beyond the SWP and YSA," Leonard Boudin, a leading constitutional rights attorney who is the lawyer for the SWP and YSA, told the press the day the decision was released. "This ruling is a contribution to constitutional law, extending important new protections to the rights of all politically active individuals and organizations," Boudin said.

Judge Griesa notes in his decision that the SWP makes no secret of its views. We clearly explain our internationalist and communist objectives and our goal of leading the working people of this country to overthrow the capitalist government and replace it with a government of the workers and farmers, as the Bolsheviks did in Russia in October 1917.

But Griesa rejects the FBI's argument that this fact can be used to justify the FBI's action in violation of the Bill of Rights.

In its September 6 issue, the *Nation* magazine editorially hails Griesa's opinion, accurately summarizing his condemnation of decades of FBI operations against the SWP and YSA: "All in all, it amounted to a domestic contra operation against a 'lawful and peaceful' political organization," he said, "for no reason other than ideological orientation."

A domestic contra operation is exactly what it has been.

Washington insists on keeping its contra war against Nicaragua classified as a covert operation so that as much as possible of the truth about it can be hidden from public view, and so that the operation can be conducted without regard for restrictions imposed on the government by laws and the Constitution.

Exactly the same is true of the FBI's domestic contra war. Even when its existence is known, it seeks to continue to operate in secrecy, run by officials and cop agencies operating above the law. It is this covert side of the political police operation — the truly totalitarian kernel of the state's functioning — that has been dealt a blow by Griesa's ruling.

1. See 'International Viewpoint' No. 104, September 15, 1986, page 25.



By forcing to light important aspects of these underground and illegal police operations, the lawsuit filed 13 years ago by the SWP and YSA has gained ground for the entire working-class movement and for every defender of democratic rights. Hundreds of thousands of pages of secret government files were brought to light, expanding the knowledge of the people of the United States about the nature, methods, and scope of the government's secret police operations.

This suit against the government has already won active support from thousands of individuals and scores of organizations around the country. All those who have been supporters of this fight, and the many more who will now join us, have three opportunities.

First, to use the truths this case has uncovered to educate about the covert operations of the political police — their scope, their nature, their targets, and their deadly threat to democratic rights.

Second, to grab with both hands and use in every possible way the new legal weapon that has been won to extend democratic rights.

And third, to join with the Political Rights Defense Fund — with contributions and statements of support — to help raise the tens of thousands of dollars that will be necessary for the next round of legal battles, in which Leonard Boudin will represent the SWP and YSA.

Judge Griesa's ruling leaves the door open for further restrictions that can be imposed on government interference with political and trade union organization and action. It sets the stage for the next round of legal proceedings. Griesa states in his decision that he will grant the SWP's motion that the FBI and other government cop agencies be permanently barred from any further use or distribution of secret files "obtained illegally or developed from illegally obtained information."

The judge announces that "a further proceeding will be necessary to identify precisely what documents and records fall into this category."

Literally millions of pages of files, in the hands of the FBI and a dozen other federal agencies, are involved.

The forthcoming hearing before Judge Griesa will allow the attorneys for the SWP and YSA to pursue the question of which of these files were gotten illegally, and exactly what should be done with them now. These hearings can be the occasion for carving out still further victories.

This presents an immediate opportunity, which — with continued moral and financial support — we will pursue as far as possible. □

Kinnock's Trade Union Congress

RON TODD, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, summed up the main line of this year's Trade Union Congress (TUC), when, speaking in favour of the resolution which commits the TUC for the first time to support state interference in trade-union rule books, he said: "A vote for the composite is a vote of confidence in the document, in [Labour Party leader] Neil Kinnock, in our own democracy and members."

REDMOND O'NEILL

The week of the TUC was orchestrated around this theme, subordinating all other considerations to uniting behind Kinnock with the aim of winning the next general election. This approach put Kinnock in a powerful position to dictate terms to the congress.

Kinnock's first need was to put the maximum distance between the TUC and the 1985-86 miners' strike — even though that gigantic battle did more damage to Margaret Thatcher's Tory government, including at the polls, than any other event in its entire seven year period in office. Other struggles which "disrupted" the Labour leadership's line for the election were not to be supported. Consistent with this the TUC General Council fought, unsuccessfully, for the resolutions supporting workers fighting at Wapping, and also at Silentnight, to be remitted. (1) These were both carried by very large majorities.

The second of Kinnock's terms was that the trade union movement accept key planks of the Tory anti-trade union laws — and specifically the right of the state to dictate the content of trade-union rule books in relation to ballots over strike action. This was carried in the TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee document and in Composite [motion] One — adopted on the first day of the congress by a large majority on a show of hands.

The third element of strategy adopted was an economic policy organized around a "National Economic Assessment", which is just another way of saying a social contract in the same mould as the one which proved so disastrous under the last Labour government. Its

core is a set of priorities, which it is claimed would first reduce unemployment by one million in two years, second attack low pay and third, only afterwards, set about raising the living standards of the rest of the working class. In other words it proposes to finance Labour's programme at the expense of sections of the working class instead of the capitalist class.

It was this type of catastrophically disastrous incomes policy which allowed Margaret Thatcher to get elected in the first place. More to the point this economic policy will not work at all.

Wage controls divide workers

Unfortunately progressive measures, above all the TUC's historic support for a statutory national minimum wage, are situated within this overall framework. So a policy of a minimum wage, which has enormous potential to unite the working class and draw significant numbers of unorganized workers into the labour movement if fought for decisively, is situated firmly within an economic strategy which counter-posed it to the living standards of other sections of the working class. And wage controls are a sure fire way to divide the working class.

1. *The Wapping and Silentnight disputes are both prolonged strikes against redundancies. On the Wapping printworkers' strike against press magnate Rupert Murdoch, see articles in 'International Viewpoint' No. 97, April 21, 1986 and No. 103, July 14, 1986.*

Describing Kinnock's speech on the second day of the TUC, which was billed as the high point of the week, the Kinnockite journal *New Statesman* eulogised in an editorial under the title "A Prime Minister in Waiting". It declared: "The TUC speech underscored what has emerged as the central Kinnock theme: that organized labour's place would be separate from, and subordinate to, his own as a future prime minister."

The Kinnockite leadership of the trade-union movement established the dominance of its political strategy for the first time at this year's TUC. The fight for a Kinnock-led Labour government is presented as the answer to the problems facing the trade unions.

Membership of TUC affiliated unions has declined to 9.5 million. More significantly the proportion of the workforce in TUC-affiliated unions declined from over 50 per cent in 1979 to only just over 40 per cent today. The Kinnockite majority in the TUC's approach to dealing with this is purely electoralist.

The proposal is that a Labour government should legislate rights to join a trade union, "protection" against unfair dismissals and against low pay — all measures that naturally must be supported. The unions will then recruit on the basis that their role will be to make sure employers carry out these laws. What was not considered was the situation in the meantime of those such as strikers

Striking printworkers at Wapping continue to fight (DR)

at Wapping, those at Silentnight, the miners, or those like the striking Asian workers at Kenure in West London who are fighting for union recognition and decent wages. Nor was the question asked of what is done if Labour is not elected, or is elected but does not carry out its promises, or is elected but bends to employers. Furthermore the demobilization of the labour movement involved in this strategy will not aid Kinnock, but Thatcher.

While the Kinnockite leadership of the TUC attempted to present an acceptable face to the press, two decisive issues — from the standpoint of strengthening the unions for the alliances Labour needs and for the unity of the working class — were not considered at all at this year's TUC. There was no discussion of the self-organization and representation of women and Black people in the trade unions — in order to make them more effective instruments of fighting for women workers and against racism.

These issues simply did not figure on the TUC agenda. This is despite the fact that the number of women in the unions continues to increase, and the growing pressure from women workers for forms of organization and representation that can allow their voices to be heard and influence policy.

Some unions are now discussing the establishment of reserved places for women on their National Executive Committees (NECs). The demand of the Labour women's conference for women to elect the women's section of the Labour Party NEC is paralleled in similar struggles in the unions.

At present the women's conferences, including the TUC women's conference, have little or no power. The women's section of the TUC General Council is not elected by women workers at the TUC women's conference but by the TUC itself. The movement of women into the unions has explosive potential to shake up the present bureaucratic structures of the labour movement. But, despite brave words, the steps being taken to meet the needs of women are completely inadequate. This is a decisive strategic weakness of the trade-union movement.

Similarly there was no discussion of Black organization in the unions. The TUC General Council remains entirely white. Bill Morris, the new Black deputy general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, is the first deputy general secretary of the union for 24 years not to be nominated by the union's executive for either the TUC's General Council or the Labour Party NEC. Yet the combined impact of Labour Party Black Sections, and movements of

Black workers to fight racist employers and organize within the unions, will inevitably put this question of Black self-organization on the trade-union movement's agenda.

The issue of racism, however, did serve as an introduction to the first major current standing outside the Kinnockite consensus at the Congress. This was an oblique reference to the rebellions in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham Black communities made by Eric Hammond of the electricians' union, the EETPU, when he spoke against a resolution opposing the introduction of plastic bullets into British cities. Hammond argued for "events" such as Handsworth and Broadwater Farm to be put down "with all necessary force" and tried to provoke the congress by claiming he could only address it because of police protection.

This debate, as well as that on Wapping — where the EETPU was condemned as the organization which had made Rupert Murdoch's union-busting operation possible — showed the "new realist" right around Eric Hammond and John Lyons to be in a clear minority. The "new realist" right, however, continues to be a distinct and clear political current within the TUC. Their economic strategy centres on improving the living standards of the best paid workers through alliances with the employers and the capitalist class against the poorest sections of the working class. They are resolutely opposed to unilateral nuclear disarmament and strongly pro-EEC (European Economic Community).

The EETPU's approach to unionization centres on deals with the employers, with the union selling the workers' rights to strike in exchange for single-union recognition. It maintains relations with the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM). (2)

Politically this current orients to the Social Democratic Party (SDP)/ Liberal Party Alliance. Lyons is the first member of the TUC General Council who is a member of the SDP. Hammond's EETPU enjoys close relations with the SDP leadership.

On issue after issue it was clear that whilst the Kinnockites held a real majority in the TUC, and have become more politically coherent, nevertheless Hammond, Lyons (and on most issues the engineers' union, the AEU leadership) form a clear and coherent minority.

Whilst the TUC General Council's knuckles were rapped over its failure to deal with the EETPU's scabbing at Wapping, it was also clear that the General Council have no intention of taking on a fight against the trade-union practices and political line of the EETPU — because they themselves



accept parts of it and certainly do not have an effective alternative. On the contrary their line of subordinating everything to a Labour government, and paying for reforms at the expense of different sections of the working class, provides important openings for Hammond and the right to pose as the defenders of skilled workers, in favour of maintaining wage differentials and so on.

Both the Kinnockites and the "new realist" right represent varieties of class collaboration. Both reject an assault on capital — the only way of uniting the working class. But they are today practicing *different* forms of class collaboration. Hammond's policy of defence of skilled workers, direct "no strike" deals with employers, and coalition with the Alliance can directly clash with the policies of returning a majority Labour government and trying to win over the low paid which are being pursued by the Kinnockites.

This political difference is important for the third current seen at this year's congress — and by far the smallest. This was the class struggle current represented by the Arthur Scargill/Peter Heathfield leadership of the NUM and minority forces who look to them in other unions, and their allies in the left-wing Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

Playing into the Tories' hands

Writing in the TUC edition of *Campaign Group News*, Peter Heathfield warned about the TUC: "The danger is that trade-union leaders will respond by saying 'we'll hold tight until the election.' Such a strategy, however, plays into the Tories' hands. If you wait and wait — on the assumption that Labour will win the election — that could result in Margaret Thatcher bouncing back."

The NUM leadership did play an important role in the TUC on a number of issues. The July NUM conference had made headlines all over the world by welcoming Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the South African NUM, to Britain at the height of Botha's crackdown on the trade unions. The NUM also made the running in the debate on nuclear power — where their resolution sponsored jointly with the Fire Brigades Union and the National Union of Seamen was only very narrowly defeated in favour of the General Council's call for a review of nuclear power.

But on the central issue of the Tories' trade union laws and the policy of the TUC, the NUM amendment opposing state interference in the



Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock (DR)

unions was withdrawn by the 28-strong NUM delegation. Scargill and Heathfield were heavily defeated in the delegation — in a vote which united the right and supporters of the Communist Party (CP). As a result the NUM delegation voted in favour of Composite One endorsing state interference, in favour of a separate resolution calling on the TUC itself to draw up guidelines on trade-union democracy, and did not vote on the TUC/Labour Party Liaison document.

This was a severe defeat for the leadership of the union which has suffered most as a result of court interference in the trade unions. It produced eulogies to Mick McGahey in the capitalist press, and signalled an intensification of the campaign against Scargill within the NUM — a campaign which unites the CP and the right wing in the union.

Notwithstanding important victories over Wapping, on South Africa, and a very narrow defeat on opposition to nuclear power, the TUC registered the dominance of the "sit tight till the general election" line of Kinnock. It also registered the maintenance of the "new realist" grouping in the General Council. Overall the General Council moved slightly to the right.

The problem the class struggle forces face is to cut into the bloc Kinnock has constructed within the labour movement. Precisely because these forces are a small minority they have to have correct united front tactics to win over Kinnock's supporters on the objectively key questions.

This was seen clearly over Wapping — where the impact of the struggle there, together with support by other unions, isolated the "new realist" right. The same was done

on nuclear power and South Africa — and last year on Justice for Mineworkers. The same must be done on the demands of women and Black people within the labour movement. While it is more difficult to do, the same must be pursued in starting to introduce the issue of Ireland into the TUC — where it has been a forbidden topic for many years. It can also be done on issues of international solidarity such as Central America.

On these and other issues the aim must be to force united action by the class struggle forces with those supporting the Kinnock line in the unions — and particularly their base. It means participation in organizations like the broad lefts, linking militants in the NUM with the left wing in the public sector unions like the teachers' union, the NUT, and promoting movements of women and Black people — which are often more advanced in the public sector. It means linking militants in the major public sector and white collar unions with those in the industrial unions. It means having specific tactics towards the *Morning Star* wing of the Communist Party — which will inevitably be in a number of these developments but whose politics must not be allowed to dominate. (3)

This year's TUC was a setback in the class struggle. It subordinated the interests of those who are fighting Thatcher to a (false) calculation of what is in Labour's electoral interests. It accepted a framework of anti-union laws, and put forward no policies which would solve the problems of mass unemployment and other key issues facing the labour movement.

All those prepared to engage in struggle must of course be united. But in practice this requires politically clarifying and organizing the class struggle forces and giving them a correct united front orientation.

It is only by a combination of politically clarifying and organizing themselves, seeking united action, and in particular taking united front initiatives into Kinnock's base, that the class struggle forces can break out of their extreme minority position and pursue the interests of the class struggle. □

2. The Union of Democratic Miners is the scab union based in the Nottinghamshire coalfields that was set up during the course of the 1985-1986 miners' strike. See the interview with Peter Heathfield in 'IV' No. 100, June 2, 1986.

3. The Communist Party of Great Britain is split into two wings. These are commonly referred to in relation to the journals they control: the Eurocommunists produce the theoretical monthly, 'Marxism Today', and the fundamentalists the daily newspaper, the 'Morning Star'. See "Open warfare in the CPGB" by Mick Archer in 'IV' No. 69, February 11, 1985.

AROUND THE WORLD



Britain

Miners still need support

EIGHTEEN months after the end of the miners' strike, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is still fighting for the reinstatement of 468 sacked miners. Six languish in jail. And that means the National Justice for Mine-workers Campaign still has a lot of work on its hands.

In an article in the August 29 issue of *Socialist Action*, Bill Etherington explained the difficulties facing the miners. Bill is the chair of the Justice Campaign, and general secretary of the Durham Mechanics.

"In many cases the Coal Board is refusing to take part in conciliation and totally ignoring decisions of industrial tribunals. We have a classic example of that in Durham. One of our members was alleged to have hit a scab on November 5, 1984. On April 14, 1985, six weeks after he'd returned to work, he was summarily dismissed and remains sacked to this day....

"We have managed to get one Durham Mechanics' member re-engaged, but that means he loses all his previous rights and conditions — in addition, of course, to having been without wages for 18 months. This particular man was involved in a bizarre incident. A security guard came upon three miners stealing coal and set his dog on one of them. In the scuffle that ensued, the man escaped but was caught by the police, whose evidence made plain that he wasn't involved in the assault. The Coal Board kept him sacked for 14 months because he wouldn't give them the name of one of the other men who escaped. That miner lost 18 months wages because of the Board's malice....

"There are hundreds of examples of the Coal Board's attitude. Our sacked members are victims of the Tory government's attempts to decimate the coal industry and smash the National Union of Mineworkers — and we still need the support of the whole labour movement.

"Although the receivership of the NUM's funds has been lifted, we've yet to get our money back. It is important the labour movement understands that money is still needed.

"Over 400 organizations have affiliated to the Justice Campaign. That includes a hell of a lot of Labour

Party branches and many trade unions . . . But the financial situation of our sacked and jailed members is worse now than ever it was. The majority have fallen into the social security poverty trap. The NUM's national solidarity fund needs your money more than ever . . . (this is) an opportunity to show your determination to defend the victims of the Thatcher government's attack on the unions."

For more information on the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign write to: Durham Mechanics Office, 26 The Avenue, Durham DH1 4EH. And don't forget to enclose a donation! □

USA

Anti-apartheid action

NATIONAL anti-apartheid protest actions are being planned in cities and at college campuses throughout the United States for October 10.

Backed by student committees, trade unions, community organizations, churches, political parties, and other groups, these actions will demand that the US government cut its ties with the apartheid regime of South Africa through divestment and the imposition of trade and other sanctions.

October 10 coincides with the International Day in Solidarity with Southern African Political Prisoners. So the protests will likewise promote campaigns for the release of South African and Namibian political prisoners, with participants encouraged to wear black armbands in solidarity with those jailed by the apartheid authorities.

The protests are backed by the American Committee on Africa, the Call to Conscience network (encompassing many local anti-apartheid organizations), the US Student Association, Mobilization for Survival and other groups.

Many of the campus actions will feature the construction of shanties, as well as sit-ins and other forms of protest. Other demonstrations will target the offices of US corporations with investments in South Africa.

The DC Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism is organizing a march in Washington, DC, which will include protests near the embassies of other governments that collaborate with the apartheid regime.

In Los Angeles, an anti-apartheid

march set for October 11 is being organized by the local Free South Africa Movement and a broad list of sponsors. It has also been endorsed by a coalition building a November 1 demonstration to demand "US out of Central America." Activists plan to organize a large Central America contingent in the anti-apartheid action, under the banner "Boycott South Africa, not Nicaragua."

Among other locations, protest demonstrations are also being built in Miami, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Atlanta and Philadelphia.

According to the American Committee on Africa, plans are also under way in Europe for actions to protest US aid to the South African-backed counter-revolutionary bands operating in Angola.

For further information on the local actions, contact: American Committee on Africa, 198 Broadway, Room 402, New York, NY 10038, (212) 962-1210. □

[From the September 19 issue of The Militant.]

Ireland

Season of terror

THE SUMMER period of sectarian loyalist marches is always a tense one for the nationalist community in the North of Ireland. It is a time when loyalist blood runs hot — marching, throwing bottles, and asserting their so-called "British" identity by a reign of terror. But this year, as the reality of the Anglo-Irish Accord becomes even clearer, the period of summer loyalist marches was particularly chilling.

The marching season reached its first peak around July 12. After weeks of inflammatory outbursts by Unionist politicians, the loyalists vented their feelings in attacks on Catholic women, men, children and their homes and property.

Two young married men were shot and killed by loyalist paramilitaries on July 12 itself in Belfast. According to official figures from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which grossly underestimate the real situation, there were 71 attacks over the weekend of the twelfth. Nationalists defended their areas as best they could — in some places such as Dunloy and Ligonield erecting makeshift barricades.

The marches on the twelfth were preceded by a series of attacks earlier in July in Belfast. On Friday July 4, several homes in the Oldpark area of north Belfast were attacked. On July 10 mobs in the predominantly loyalist Woodside Estate in Portadown attacked nationalist homes with stones and petrol bombs.

Every Catholic business in the village of Kinkeel was attacked on July 12. On the 14th, petrol bomb attacks were carried out against Catholic homes in the Lower Falls Road area of Belfast. Other petrol bomb attacks took place in Lisburn, Dervock, Dunloy, Ballyhinch, Aho-gill, Rasharkin, Limvady, Ballymoney, Maghera, Armagh and Derry.

This is the background to the much-publicised loyalist march into the village of Clontibret, south of the border, which was led by Democratic Unionist Party Member of Parliament Peter Robinson.

Just before 2am on August 7, several hundred loyalists armed with cudgels and wearing balaclava masks invaded Clontibret. The loyalists daubed "Ulster has awakened" on the local school, uprooted signposts, trees and gates and attacked the unoccupied police station.

The loyalists were then marched in paramilitary formation to the crossroads at the centre of the village and blocked the roads. Simultaneously, in an incident not widely reported by the media, 500 loyalists in around 150 cars attacked the mainly Catholic village of Swatragh. The armed loyalists set up roadblocks, began searching cars, smashed windows, and fired shots into the air.

On August 12 the British army was directly complicit in a further loyalist show of strength in Derry. The army and RUC saturated the nationalist areas to police the 20,000-strong bigot Apprentice Boys parade. The loyalists, led by Democratic Unionist Party leaders Ian Paisley and Peter Robinson, led the parade.

Five days earlier, on August 7, the loyalist Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) had released a video to the press announcing their intention of stepping up the sectarian murder of Catholics. The UFF were rightly termed by Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams as "gangsters" who were "tolerated by the British government because their murder campaign fits into the classical 'counter-gang strategy' perfected by the British government in Aden, Cyprus and Kenya."

What is taking place in the North of Ireland is clear. It has nothing to do with "Catholic versus Protestant violence" — as it is portrayed by the British media. It is a systematic campaign by loyalist bigots, acting with the protection of the RUC and British army,

to try to break the will of the nationalist community.

There is going to be no end to this type of loyalist violence until Britain

gets out of Ireland. □

[From the August 29 edition of the British newspaper, Socialist Action.]

Notebooks for Study and Research

"THE Place of Marxism in History" is the title of a new educational pamphlet prepared by Ernest Mandel on the basis of a course he teaches at the International Institute of Research and Education (IIRE), a Marxist school in Amsterdam.

Lenin identified "three sources and three constituent parts of Marxism": German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism. Mandel explains the contribution of each of them and adds some others: French sociological historiography, the experience of far-left organizations, and the early trade-union movement. The pamphlet includes some interesting thinking on why Marx and Engels became politically involved as well as an explanation of the unequal dissemination of their works throughout the world.

Many former exponents of Marxism are now claiming that it is unable to explain the new phenomena of this last quarter of the 20th century. In reply, Mandel points out that Marxism has always incorporated the latest advances made in the social sciences and by the progressive movements. He proposes an approach which makes it possible to develop a combination of in-



novative thinking and the verification of already established conclusions.

This pamphlet will undoubtedly be widely used as a reference work in many Marxist educational programmes. But its quality and the relevance of the topic merit a wider distribution among all those who are interested in Marxism and a scientific approach to the class struggle.

This pamphlet is issue number one of the *Notebooks for Study and Research/Cahiers d'Etude et de Recherche* published by the IIRE. These *Notebooks* will provide important educational material, consisting of the transcriptions of courses taught at the Amsterdam school, studies of a particular theme or country and special features and written debates. Published in both English and French, the *Notebooks* draw from the international experiences of the staff and students.

The English-language version of this pamphlet will be available from October 15th.

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Who are the "anti-terrorist" measures aimed at?

THE WAVE of terrorist bombings in Paris has enabled the rightist government to speed up a long-planned repressive offensive. That, fundamentally, is what is involved. Otherwise, the measures taken by Jacques Chirac's government would make no sense.

The most important of these measures was the imposition of a visa requirement for all citizens of non-EEC countries except Switzerland. The vast majority of those affected are American and Scandinavian tourists.

GERRY FOLEY

The results of this measure, at least for several months, will be to overwhelm the French border guards so they will be even less effective in stopping any "terrorist infiltration".

Nonetheless, the Chirac government was prepared to pay a great price to impose the visa system. In 1985, 2.4 million American tourists visited France. That is equal to about 4 per cent of the total French population. Swedish tourism cannot be unimportant either given the visibility of Swedes in Paris this summer. And that is to say nothing of the Japanese, who are a growing presence during the tourist season.

American tourism was already sharply down this year, both because of the terrorism and the fall of the dollar against the franc. If Americans were frightened away by a few incidents on airliners, what sort of reaction can be expected from the French government itself declaring the country a war zone?

The political meaning of the French government's measures is clear from the contrast between the attitude of the US government toward them and that of the Norwegian, Swedish and Austrian authorities.

The US approved measures discriminating against its own citizens, while the other governments affected protested strongly on behalf of theirs.

"In principle, the United States supports all effective acts to counter terrorism," state department spokesperson Bernard Kalb commented.

Why should the US consider that measures mainly affecting its own citizens are "effective acts to counter terrorism?"

The obvious answer is that the

main imperialist power wants to spread a net of political surveillance internationally. The US itself maintains a massive political police operation on its own territory.

How extensive US political surveillance has been was attested to recently in the court judgement on the suit of the US Socialist Workers Party against the government for harassment (see page 22). It involved tracking SWP members in every aspect of their personal lives, as well as a series of break-ins into SWP offices, in at least one case through the services of a criminal.

The US has sought collaboration in this sort of surveillance from European governments, as the harassment experienced by American radicals passing through Thatcher's Britain indicates. Now, obviously, it hopes that this will be extended to the continent.

The proposal for computerized identity cards is being raised both in France and in the US. This has been one of the French right's more prominent "security proposals." It could make a system of political surveillance airtight.

Strict checks at frontiers could be a pillar of a system of general political surveillance, especially with the growth of international travel. There is already talk of tougher border controls in other EEC countries, modelled on the French measures.

Some ominous implications of "collaboration against terrorism" by the European imperialist powers are pointed up by Britain's offer to send SAS teams to France. These elite forces, similar to the US Green Berets, have carried out a policy of assassina-

ting nationalists in the North of Ireland.

Chirac has talked about "retaliating" against terrorists. There is already an example on French soil of what such "retaliation" could mean. It is the operation of killer gangs against Basque nationalist refugees in the south of France.

These death squads are made up of French gangsters recruited by the "democratic" government of Spain, with the toleration of the French government, which itself hands Basque refugees over to the very government that hires killers to assassinate them on its territory.

"Retaliation" means simply state terrorism. The French secret services are already organized for that, as the Rainbow Warrior bombing showed. Moreover, the assassination of alleged terrorists internationally would inevitably mean widening the pattern of para-police executions perfected in Latin America.

It is an index of how much French liberals have lost their heads that *Le Monde's* editorialist wrote in the September 16 issue that the visa system had probably stopped "Middle Eastern Terrorism" in the US. Not only is there no evidence for that, but it ignores the political role of this provision. The use of the US visa system for political discrimination and intimidation has been well-known and deplored by defenders of human rights in France for decades.

After all, the threat that terrorists can pose to the general public is limited. It is the capitalist press and governments that have whipped up a general fear in response to these outrages.

In its September 17 issue *Rouge*, the paper of the French section of the Fourth International, wrote:

"Once again blind terrorist acts are serving as the pretext for unleashing a campaign that is all the more hysterical because it is being fostered by a climate of national union. 'This is war,' Jacques Chirac tells us flatly, while the editorialist of the *Quotidien de Paris* already favors establishing a state of siege. . . .

"These ravings might seem funny. But they should raise the alarm. They show that the rulers will do anything to try to impose what they have had difficulty in getting accepted before — the reduction of individual freedoms, criminalization of solidarity with third world peoples, making anyone with a dark skin a suspect."

The French government's measures are part of an international conspiracy by the imperialist governments to turn frontiers into prison walls. They should be answered by an international campaign of exposure and protest. □