

International VIEWPOINT

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**Nicaragua's
emergency
measures**

**Sinn Fein
congress**

**The present stage
of the struggle in
South Africa**

**The fate of the
Iranian movement**



INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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Grenadan trade-unionist on hunger strike

According to the latest news, on November 11 the imprisoned trade union leader, Chester Humphrey was still on hunger strike (see *International Viewpoint*, No 85, October 28, 1985). Arrested in November, 1983, Humphrey's hunger strike began on September 2 this year. He has been taken to hospital but has refused to receive medical treatment while he is still in handcuffs and the authorities are still refusing to allow him to see his lawyer and family regularly. A decision concerning his extradition to the United States will be taken by a court of appeal on November 25. Till then telegrams of support should be sent to the Prime Minister's offices, St. George's Grenada.

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What the State of Emergency means in practice

MANAGUA -- When President Daniel Ortega renewed and broadened State of Emergency regulations on October 15, imperialism launched a new campaign of slanders against the Sandinista revolution.

"The measure is another step by the Sandinistas towards totalitarianism," said the White House mouthpiece Larry Speakes.

"It looks like we're taking steps towards totalitarianism," chimed in Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, the most prominent opponent of the revolution inside Nicaragua.

The big-business press joined in on the campaign. Managua-based correspondents falsely reported that there was a state of siege, that martial law had been declared, that a curfew had been imposed, and that even the right to political asylum had been abolished.

A constant theme of such reports was that the decree had caught everyone by surprise and showed that the Sandinistas believed their grip on political power was slipping.

The truth is, of course, that Nicaragua has been under a State of Emergency not since October 15, but since March, 1982, when intensifying US aggression forced the government to suspend many constitutional guarantees. A State of Emergency has been in effect continuously since then and Sandinista leaders have always said that it could be lifted if and only if the Reagan administration stopped its war against the Nicaraguan revolution. But just the opposite has happened.

JOSE G. PEREZ

As President Ortega explained in his October announcement, the White House "has continued carrying out its unjust, immoral and illegal aggression against the people of Nicaragua. All the political and diplomatic efforts of the Nicaraguan government, the nations of the Contadora group and other peace-loving countries have been unfruitful in changing this aggressive and criminal policy of the US government."

Despite huge losses, the Nicaraguan people remain firm and the revolution is advancing. In his October 15 speech, Ortega said that the contras "have been hit hard by the people and show symptoms of demoralization and defeat."

In response, the US government is trying to revitalize the contra army. Washington has launched a new offensive against "the efforts of the Contadora group to reach a balanced and just agreement in Central America" and there have been growing tensions

on both the Honduran and Costa Rican borders that could serve as a pretext for a direct US invasion.

Part of this imperialist counter-offensive, Ortega said, has been a step up in the activities "inside the country of the allies, of the agents of imperialism who act from within some political parties, mass media and religious institutions." Their goals are "to sabotage the military defense of the homeland, place obstacles in the way of economic policies, sabotage the national effort to raise production, and provoke confusion and discontent among the masses."

Explaining the need to further tighten emergency regulations, Ortega said that "The government and the heroic people of Sandino cannot permit that these actions ... continue to be carried out with impunity."

"The brutal aggression by the United States and its internal allies has created a truly extraordinary situation.

All the efforts of the government and of the people must be directed at defeating this aggression on the military, economic and political terrains."

Under the regulations in effect until October 15, freedom of the press and normal judicial process for people accused of counterrevolutionary crimes had been suspended.

The suspension of the right to *habeas corpus* and to immediately consult an attorney upon arrest, which have been highlighted in the capitalist press as one of the worst "abuses" of the new emergency regulations, in fact have been in effect for a long time. Normal constitutional guarantees, however, continue in force for all cases not involving counterrevolutionary activity.

Additional rights affected under the October 15 decree include freedom of travel within the country; the right to hold public rallies and demonstrations; the right to strike; and freedom of association.

By and large, these are not *blanket* suspensions. For example, people can still organize public meetings, but must first obtain a permit, and the police is empowered to deny it. Similarly, unions, political parties and other organizations continue to function normally, but the government now has the legal authority to regulate or suspend their activities.

The exception is the right to strike. Sandinista leaders say the country's economic situation is so grave no work interruptions can be permitted. (The overwhelming majority of the unions, which are led by the Sandinista Front, adopted a no-strike pledge more than a year ago, and there have been no significant work stoppages since then.)

Many of these guarantees had also been suspended under earlier State of Emergency decrees until the presidential and National Assembly elections a year ago. At that time, virtually all restrictions except for those on the press and on the judicial rights of suspected counterrevolutionaries were lifted. Moreover, censorship was loosened to a large degree.

This was a concession to the opposition capitalist parties, stripping away pretexts they were using to impugn the legitimacy of the elections and boycott them. It was also a reaction to the US Congress's decision to suspend open funding for the contras.

This was not the only conciliatory gesture made by the Nicaraguan government at the time. Others included an amnesty extended to all contras who laid down their weapons, including top leaders; and Nicaragua's offer to sign the September, 1984, Contadora peace plan although it contained many concessions to Washington.



The people mobilised to defend the revolution. Summer 1985 (DR)

Speaking to reporters in Managua on October 23, Commander of the Revolution Bayardo Arce, a member of the FSLN National Directorate, drew a balance sheet on the US response to these actions.

"What has happened in the last year? Did we moderate Reagan's policies? No. In the past year, they imposed the economic blockade, restored funding to the counterrevolution, and increased all the campaigns of sabotage against us.

"What did we gain with Contadora?" he continued. "Was the September 1984, Act maintained? No. A new Act emerged, making more concessions to the United States."

Arce also addressed one of the main arguments used by liberal commentators, who say that Ortega's declaration was a "mistake" because it damaged Nicaragua's "image" abroad.

The FSLN leadership, Arce said, knew it would be forced to pay a political price for the decision, but that "when external factors might affect domestic ones, we give preference to the domestic ones"

"We appreciate international opinion, we appreciate even more international solidarity," Arce explained, "but we appreciate most of all the willingness and capacity of our people to continue forward with its revolution"

He also took up the parallel claim that the tightening of the State of Emergency shows that the Sandinistas are losing the war. "Anyone who watches boxing knows that the one who is winning and has his opponent cornered doesn't withdraw to his own corner to let the other one catch his breath. Rather, that is the moment when he makes the greatest effort to knock him out. Unless, of course, the match is fixed — and our fight with the United States isn't fixed."

Contrary to the reports in the capitalist press the atmosphere throughout Nicaragua is calm. The sentiments of working people were captured well by Oscar Danilo Munoz, a textile worker who said the day after Ortega's

speech: "The State of Emergency doesn't affect me at all. Only those who are conspiring against the revolution should be afraid."

On October 17, the nation's main unions issued a joint statement backing the decree as necessary to defend "the greatest historic conquest of the working class: having taken political power on July 19, 1979 ...

"We make use of workers' power through the instruments of the revolutionary state," the union leaders said. "The State of Emergency goes in defense of the historic conquest achieved by the workers ... With the State of National Emergency we guarantee and deepen the right to make the revolution."

The capitalist news media, of course, ignored such statements. Instead they tried to paint a lying picture of an entire nation up in arms against the government.

"Some 7,000 Catholics defied recent government restrictions on public meetings and attended a procession for the Virgin of the Rosary headed by Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo in this city," reported the Associated Press from Esteli on October 21.

In fact, no "defiance" was involved at all. Obando has been having such processions throughout the country for several months, and the Esteli march had been approved by authorities, as had a similar one in the town of Tipitapa the day before.

In their dispatches, international news agencies have repeatedly insisted that the emergency measures are aimed against the Catholic religion. This is a bald-faced lie. There are no restrictions on freedom of worship or belief.

But it is true that the measures are partly meant as a warning to some religious figures, and in particular to Managua Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo.

Since being raised to the rank of Cardinal last May, Obando has been waging a sustained political campaign for "reconciliation" with the contras.

The CIA's 15 of September Radio has been making extensive use of the cardinal's sermons, and even transmitted live — courtesy of Managua's Radio Catolica — Obando's first mass as a cardinal on Nicaraguan soil. Obando himself has publicly signalled his agreement with this. On his way back from Rome, last June, he stopped in Miami where he said mass and gave his blessings to a congregation that included top contra leaders.

Most recently, the cardinal and his associates staged a major provocation against the government. They formed a business named COPROSA (Archdiocesan Commission for Social Advancement), obtained a printing press and set about issuing a newspaper called *Iglesia* without bothering with any of the legal formalities and without submitting the paper to the censor.

As a result, the government was forced to impound all 10,000 copies of *Iglesia* and shut down the unlicensed printing establishment.

In an October 17 speech commemorating the sixth anniversary of the Ministry of the Interior, Commander of the Revolution Tomas Borge publicly lambasted Obando's campaign for "reconciliation" with the CIA forces.

Referring to the traitors who aided US intervention against Nicaragua in the early 1900s, Borge declared, "the ghosts of Diaz, Chamorro and Moncada still live. Now they are called Robelo, Cruz, Pastora, Bolanos, and others who today are travelling around the country asking that Cain be forgiven for Abel and begging heaven that Judas Iscariot be granted absolution, at the same time that they curse the whip that drove the merchants from the temple."

To emphasize that the new restrictions came in response to very real threats, Borge revealed that State Security had just broken up a terrorist cell in Managua. Several people were arrested and forty kilos of explosives confiscated. Some of those involved were presented to reporters the day after Borge's speech, and they said they had planned to bomb the airport, two bus storage depots, a shipping center, a supermarket and an electric substation.

The same day, authorities in Region VI — the north-central provinces of Matagalpa and Jinotega — announced that they had dismantled an extensive contra civilian support network.

Both the Region VI network and the Managua terrorist cell were political, not simply military, operations. In both cases, a key goal was undermining the Patriotic Military Service (SMP), Nicaragua's draft.

The reason for this is not hard to understand. The SMP has made a big difference in the war. It has allowed

for the orderly but massive expansion of the regular army into a force now numbering more than 50,000.

In fighting the SMP, the underground contra networks have a de facto division of labor with above ground religious sects, such as the Jehova's Witnesses, as well as the Obando wing of the Catholic Church. In their sermons, pro-imperialist ministers make countless appeals for parents to send draft-age sons abroad, often using unmistakable biblical references, such as Herod's slaughter of the innocents.

But young men who turn to smuggling rings rarely make it to a foreign country. Instead, they are handed to the contra and forced to bear arms against their country.

The Region VI and Managua contra operations show the need for the kinds of restrictions the Nicaraguan government is imposing under the State of Emergency.

In these cases, the investigations lasted for many months. Had the government been forced to tip its hand as soon as the first arrests were made — through *habeas corpus* proceedings, normal trials and so on — others connected to the operations might have gotten away.

It is also an illustration of why the government considers the restrictions on freedom of the press, assembly and association to be necessary. The Sandinistas say they will not allow public campaigns advocating dialogue with the contras or opposing the Patriotic Military Service. These, given the situation Nicaragua is in, would simply become a legal, above-ground complement to the contra war and especially to the CIA's efforts to set up an "internal front" in the major cities.

The FSLN makes no bones about this policy. Asked if it was prohibited in Nicaragua "to call for a dialogue with the counterrevolutionaries," Commander of the Revolution Bayardo Arce answered categorically: "We are not going to permit public propaganda in support of US positions."

At bottom, Nicaraguan leaders say the State of Emergency is not aimed at "punishing" a reactionary minority by depriving everyone of their rights, but at defending and safeguarding the rights of the toiling majority.

As Commander of the Revolution Tomas Borge explained, "This is a State of Emergency to defend the workers, not repress them; to defend the aspirations of the peasants, artisans, women, students and professionals not to deny them ... This is a State of Emergency to defend the homeland, not to sell it out.

"This is a State of Emergency only to tie the hands of the enemies of the people." □

The revolution on permanent alert

ON OCTOBER 15 the Nicaraguan president, Daniel Ortega declared a State of Emergency lasting for one year. Twelve articles contained in the Statute of Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans adopted in 1979, were totally or partially suspended. This included the right to travel freely inside the country, the right of assembly and the right to demonstrate, the right to *habeas corpus* and the right to strike.

VINCENT KERMEL

Daniel Ortega explained these measures were necessary because 'the brutal aggression of the US and its internal allies has created a truly extraordinary situation.' Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge illustrated this situation more precisely; 'Can there be any doubt that we are at war? This is not a war with toy soldiers ... This is a kind of war that is turning our country into a nation riddled with bullets and in a permanent state of alert.'

The State of Emergency represents a series of preventative measures in defence of the revolution and does not appear to be a response to any immediate deterioration in the military situation. Indeed, on October 14 the vice-minister of defense and chief of staff of the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), Joaquin Cuadra Lacayo, said that in 1985, 'the forces of the revolution have encountered a very favourable situation in the confrontation with the mercenary arm of the Reagan administration.' This does not mean the military pressure of the contras was any the less but rather that it had been contained, notably in its goal of occupying certain areas of the country where they might be able to establish a provisional government for which they could call for support from imperialism.

However, the contra army is still a large army of mercenaries equipped and trained by US imperialism. Its activity has already led to the destruction of 321 schools, fifty health centres several cooperatives, whole villages and large quantities of equipment. Social programmes aimed at improving the lot of the working population have been totally disrupted because more than half the national

budget has been unavoidably turned over to military spending.

The war has had disastrous consequences for agricultural production in some areas. The involvement in military tasks of so many cadres and Sandinista militants has undermined their participation in the mass organisations. The human cost of this war is such that if related to the proportion of the population of the US it would represent the equivalent of 723,000 deaths.

To this also has to be added the US trade embargo announced in May 1985 which was aimed at strangling the revolution by blocking Nicaraguan access to credit, closing off traditional outlets for Nicaraguan goods and by paralysing the economic infrastructure of the country through preventing access to spare parts.

On the diplomatic level US imperialism has kept up the pressure on those regimes in Latin America who wish, for their own reasons, to see a negotiated solution to the conflict in Central America.

The economic difficulties and the continuation of the war are beginning to produce a weariness amongst certain sections of the population. The contras are trying to use this for their own advantage, in particular through the ideological offensive being waged publicly and openly by the Catholic Church.

The Reagan administration is seeking to deliver a death sentence on the Sandinista revolution, to role back the social gains and dismantle the Nicaraguan workers state. And in order to achieve this objective it will use any means that its imperialist power can offer (military, diplomatic and economic) in order to weaken the capacity



Sandinista militias marching toward a combat zone (DR)

of the mass movement to resist and to undermine the Nicaraguan masses sufficiently to be able to deal them the final blow in one form or another.

But in order to limit the human and political costs of such an undertaking, US imperialism is seeking to open up and stabilise an internal military and political front aimed at undermining the social base of the regime. In this, the ideological pole of the counter-revolution inside the country plays a key role. The US administration has tried to beef this up by supporting the activity of COSEP (the employers' organisation), of certain bourgeois parties and of personalities like Arturo Cruz during the November 1984 election campaign.

The Catholic hierarchy — a fifth column.

In the past such manoeuvres have always failed in their objective because of the political initiatives of the Sandinista leadership and the accompanying mobilisation by the popular masses.

Today, it is the Catholic hierarchy that is playing a central role in the counter revolutionary political offensive within the country. It is the channel for the mobilisations in support of imperialist propaganda and the contras.

The Church hierarchy now represents a real fifth column. The declaration of the State of Emergency above all is an attempt to head off this ideological campaign. This comes at a time when the political conjuncture is marked by increasing problems for the Nicaraguan revolution and by the absence of any immediate perspective of a solution to those problems.

This development in the situation is shown in the recent increase in US

credits to the contras in accordance with Reagan's expressed wish to see the resources of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN) increased from about 10,000 to 30,000 men between now and the end of the year. So, a qualitative leap in the extent of military aggression against Nicaragua can now be expected.

What is more, US imperialism has also scored a point on the diplomatic level with Ecuador's breaking of diplomatic relations with Nicaragua. This is the result of imperialism's efforts to torpedo the negotiations initiated under the auspices of the Contadora.

The Sandinista regime's room for diplomatic manoeuvre is narrowing correspondingly. Previously it had been possible to use this opening in order to win time and more support in the face of imperialist aggression.

Finally the ideological offensive of the Catholic hierarchy has been stepped up around the campaign for the opening up of a dialogue between the Sandinista government and the contras and around the increasingly systematic agitation against Patriotic Military Service (SMP), which is a central element in the defence of the country.

Unlike the various bourgeois parties and associations, the Catholic Church has at its disposal a whole series of effective organisers, international support and large financial resources, plus wide margins of manoeuvre because of its religious activity, with which it can pursue its campaign of political destabilisation.

It has openly taken up the question of the SMP, thereby stirring up dissatisfaction among some layers of the population in order to wage its disruption against the revolutionary government.

This campaign has been accompanied by a direct provocation to the

Sandinista government in the form of the publication of a journal, *Iglesia*, by those close to Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo. This journal, of which 10,000 copies were produced, was not legally registered, and contained an editorial calling for a boycott of the SMP. That is why it was seized and the spokesperson of the Curia, Bismark Carballo — Cardinal Obando's right-hand man — was searched in the headquarters on the order of the minister of the interior.

Such a challenge to revolutionary legality and to the need for defence against imperialist aggression in fact justifies resorting to exceptional measures. For the moment, these measures are only being used in a preventative way. So, for example, on October 21, 7,000 Catholics were allowed to meet in Esteli on the occasion of a religious procession led by Cardinal Obando. But the Sandinista leadership might be obliged to apply the measures more severely against the ideological and military offensives of the reaction in the future.

The State of Emergency is thus above all a shot across the bows to the Catholic hierarchy. This is how the October 17, 1985 editorial in *Barricada* explains it; 'What is involved is a refusal to allow the religious beliefs of the people to be used to legitimise the denial of revolutionary legality, as certain groups within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church are trying to do by publishing political and counter revolutionary journals and by ignoring the legal steps necessary for using these means of communication.'

Barricada also presented the objective of these measures from another angle, declaring that it was a question of 'putting an end to attempts to create more problems in the economy; to sabotage productive work; and to

undermine social stability on the pretext of defending workers demands and by manipulating certain sections of workers and through denying the gravity of the economic situation which imperialist aggression has created. There will be no further toleration of such activity which, on the one hand, unjustly demands more material benefits than our economy is capable of producing and, on the other hand, refuses to contribute the minimum necessary for defence'.

This relates to a recent event which is rather revealing of the political situation in Nicaragua. It also revealed some of the more fundamental contradictions that this country's process of transition is coming up against.

The very day of the proclamation of the State of Emergency, a long debate took place in the National Assembly on the question of the payment of the thirteenth month (an extra month's wages at the end of the year). The initial proposal of the FSLN was to retain the previous year's procedure which granted the full payment to all those wage earners whose wages were not above 5,000 cordobas, that is a little more than the minimum wage (one dollar is worth about 700 cordobas). The money not paid to wage earners earning above that ceiling would be contributed to a fund to fight unemployment.

In the National Assembly, a bourgeois grouping, the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD), together with one of the two pro-Soviet parties, the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) opposed this proposition, demanding the allocation of the thirteenth month payment to all wage earners. The CST (Sandinista Workers Confederation) and the ATC (Rural Workers Association) then proposed the full payment of the extra month's wages to all workers earning up to 12,700 cordobas (level ten on the wages scale), which applies to 70% of wage earners.

Moreover, this bonus would be calculated on the basis of the previous month's wages which would allow the workers to benefit from any increases accruing over the year. This proposal was adopted by the Assembly.

The PCD, the PSN, the Movement of Popular Action (MAP) and the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) maintained their opposition to this formula, continuing to demand the full payment of the thirteenth month right up until the twentieth point on the wages scale, that is to 21,700 cordobas.

Parallel to these discussions in the National Assembly, Alejandro Solorzano, a leader of the CGT (Workers Confederation) linked to the PSN went on hunger strike in support of this campaign. Imprisoned and subsequently released, he halted his action after three days.

On October 15 a demonstration was organised by the Union of Carpenters, Masons and Allied Trades and led by the PSN, demanding the payment of the thirteenth month for all workers. This initiative attracted 1,500 people.

A report published in *Barricada* on October 16 quoted several demonstrators, showing that the vast majority of the people present were wage earners earning less than 12,700 cordobas and therefore entitled to the payment of the thirteenth month.

This parliamentary debate and the social agitation to which it gave rise reveal much about the current political situation in Nicaragua. Certain sections of the bourgeois opposition and other left currents are systematically attempting to outbid the FSLN proposals, and to capitalise on the discontent which is emerging amongst a section of the population because of the economic difficulties which the country faces and the drop in their standard of living.

Beneath the tactical nature of the discussion on the thirteenth month, there lies a real debate on the fundamentals; that of the problem posed by the need to defend the revolution and the consequent necessity to share out resources between finances destined for the war effort and those needed to avert too great a decline in the standard of living of the popular masses.

At the same time the maintenance of a capitalist sector permits the accumulation of profits and the diversion of some state aid and funding toward speculative activity, which correspondingly undermines the possibilities for economic planning and a more equal division of the necessary burdens and sacrifices.

The social consequences of this situation are of a significant and long-lasting character. They include a rural exodus, a development of the black market and the informal sector (that is the uncontrolled labour market). This contributes towards feelings of weariness and discontent and even toward a demobilisation of certain layers of the population. It is on this terrain that the campaign of the Catholic hierarchy is trying to take root. It is on this terrain that demands can emerge from within the working classes, which will be difficult to meet economically and in which mobilisations that obstruct the revolution's priorities for defence can arise.

This situation indeed has potential for an undermining of the social base of the revolution and the suppression of the right to strike could unfortunately aggravate this. What is needed are political dialogue with the masses, including with the section that could become despairing of the current

situation or that could begin to put forward economic demands difficult to meet in the short-term, as well as calling for the mobilisation of those layers who support the revolution unwaveringly. This cannot be replaced by placing the sword the Damocles, the suspension of the right to strike, over the heads of those sections of the workers and peasants movement who want to take advantage of the situation.

A revolution with its back to the wall

With its back to the wall, the revolution does not have the means today to rapidly resolve all the problems that are contributing to the decline in the standard of living of the masses. Nor can it hope for a total military victory over the imperialist aggressor in the short term, which would rid Nicaragua of the main cause of all its problems.

The continuation of the agrarian reform announced by the Sandinista government is a good way of strengthening the support of the peasantry for the revolution and the defence of the country. Equally, the continuation of the war effort being demanded of the workers could be consolidated by a renewal of the social mobilisation of the popular masses.

This mobilisation has tended to decline in the recent period. The flagging in the organisational capacities of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) is one example. The corollary of this is the threat of a growing resort to administrative means by certain intermediary layers of the state apparatus, many of whom have never been very fervent supporters of the revolution. Another problem lies in the difficulty the government has had in curbing the growth of manifold forms of speculation without a reactivation of control by the popular masses.

Obviously no one measure can resolve the problems that Nicaragua is facing at the present moment. The origin of these problems rests for the most part in the imperialist onslaught. But two conditions could serve to strengthen the social gains of the masses above and beyond the measures necessary for self defence against the counter revolution. One is a renewed mobilisation of the popular masses and the strengthening of the activity of the mass organisations. The other is the stepping up of international solidarity to come to the material aid of Nicaragua. At this crucial time for the Nicaraguan revolution, all our forces must be thrown into the fight to meet this second objective. □

Ground still crumbling under the bureaucracy

ONCE AGAIN Poles abstained en masse in the October 13 parliamentary elections. The government itself acknowledges that 21% of the voters abstained, as against 25% in 1984 and less than 2% in the spring of 1980 (four months before the strike wave that led to the rise of Solidarnosc).

The underground union itself, based on a statistical survey of the polling stations, estimate that the abstention rate was 34%.

CYRIL SMUGA

It was in the big industrial concentrations (Nowa Huta, Lodz, Gdansk) that the boycott was the most massive. It was less so in the countryside, with significant exceptions, and in cities that are more "service centers," such as Warsaw.

Thus, somewhere between five and a half million people (the government figures) and nearly ten million (the estimate of Solidarnosc) boycotted General Jaruzelski's plebiscite. Given the very strong pressure that has been brought to bear on citizens by a thousand and one means, this result is quite significant. Indeed, the general first secretary and prime minister had gone so far as to suggest that there could be an amnesty for the political prisoners if the boycott were not followed.

This result is also considerable after four years of blows against the gains of the working class (the more than 30% drop in real wages is only the best known example), and when it is generally accepted that the level of trade-union organization has declined in the factories over these past two years.

Since the December 1981 coup d'etat the regime has been trying to increase the exploitation of the working class in order to meet the demands of the Western banks and the pressure groups inside the bourgeoisie that are clamoring for new investments by reducing the level of domestic consumption.

The real incomes of workers are in a nose dive, the right to Saturdays off is being largely honored in the breach, piece-work wages are being generalized.

In line with the flexible-hours schemes beloved of the Western bourgeoisies, the Polish cabinet last year issued a decree making the protection for workers contained in the Labor Code a dead letter.

The workers are resisting these attacks, and sometimes they win. For example, during the first half of 1985, wages increased faster than had been predicted by the plan (but more slowly than the cost of living), as a consequence of many strikes.

It has not yet been possible to apply the decree mentioned above in all of industry, and even the official press has taken note of the strong feelings of the workers against it.

A mobilisation of Solidarnosc supporters (DR)



In the General Walter textile mill in Lodz, the workers forced the management to suspend the introduction of night and Saturday work until the decree in question was clarified.

The workers struggles remain scattered today because the underground union movement is proving incapable of advancing unifying perspectives. The call for a general strike on July 1 did not get a great response. Only a few dozen enterprises were affected by the strike, according to the most optimistic estimates.

The failure of the strategy of achieving structural reforms peacefully through the pressure of a powerful mass movement, which has been supported by most of the Solidarnosc leadership, is today evident to all. But no alternative strategy has yet won the support of the movement.

At the same time, the Polish revolution has made a deep impact on the minds of the workers. Opposition to the regime is massive. And illusions about the ability of the bureaucracy to make the slightest improvement in the lives of the people have disappeared. These two factors mark the political situation today.

Moreover, there are indications that even in the absence of unifying perspectives, a spread of the struggles remains possible today. For example, in the spring of 1985, the regime had to face a series of strikes in factories employing mainly women workers.

It had to backtrack, offering substantial wage increases. It is significant that hardly had the first concession at the Rosa Luxemburg factory in Warsaw become known than a strike started for the same demands at the Stella factory in Zyrardow, which was followed in turn by another enterprise in Zyrardow. □

Sinn Fein moving leftward, the stakes for the national liberation movement

THE SINN FEIN *ard-fheis* (congress) this year took place against the backdrop of the so-called Anglo-Irish talks, which were touted by the Dublin government in particular as a means of achieving a settlement of the Northern Irish problem that would isolate the "men of violence." Two weeks after the *ard-fheis*, the two governments signed a formal accord. It created machinery for consultation between the British and Irish governments on Northern Irish affairs and on cooperation against the IRA. Obviously the British government has more interest in Dublin's cooperation in repression than it has in consulting the craven neocolonialist regime about what it does in Northern Ireland. After 15 years of war and suffering for the nationalist people of Northern Ireland, any illusions in the possibility of a "compromise" settlement could only open the way for more effective repressions and create serious political problems for the resistance movement as a whole.

GERRY FOLEY

DUBLIN — The November 1-2 *ard-fheis* (congress) of Sinn Fein was a watershed for the political organization of the revolutionary nationalist movement in Ireland. It confirmed the identification of Sinn Fein with a broad range of socialist positions on domestic and international questions, firmly declaring that the place of the Irish national liberation movement was alongside the other revolutionary national liberation movements of our time, in particular the fronts in Central America, the African National Congress, and the PLO.

This *ard-fheis* also confirmed the project of the new leadership around the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, to give effective organization and a coherent political program. This project has clearly been underway for some time. It was described in fact quite clearly by Sinn Fein spokespeople at the time of the Northern local elections in May, which, along with the Southern local elections in June, were an important initial test.

While regular observers of the Sinn Fein *ard-fheiseanna* in recent years remarked that there were no new political advances this year, this *ard-fheis* seemed to represent a point of no return for the leadership in its attempt to transform the movement into a coherent revolutionary political organization.

The appointment of Danny Morrison, a central figure in the new leadership, as education officer points to an acceleration of this process. Adams indeed seemed to be announcing this by making a special point of Morrison's new assignment in his presidential address.

In evidence at this *ard-fheis* was a new layer of young activists and leaders, in particular from Dublin and other parts of the 26 Counties, who were representative of the radicalized younger generations.

The organization seems to have begun to recruit young radicalized people in a serious way in the formally independent part of the country, where the importance of national oppression is less obvious than in the North, and where radical nationalism has a corresponding much smaller, much more passive, and more scattered historic base.

The appearance of such a layer was also a result of the initial leftward move in the radical nationalist movement led in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the so-called Official wing of Irish republicanism. The latter group, however, lost its appeal for young revolutionists after 1974 when it moved rapidly to the right, ending up as a pro-imperialist ultra-bureaucratic sect, something like what the Russian revolutionists called

"police socialism."

The failure of the first attempt to turn the traditional militant national movement to the left still hung over this Sinn Fein *ard-fheis* like a spectre. It continues to be an obstacle to leftward development in the republican movement, along with the wreckage of previous political strategies that were offered to Irish republicanism.

Traditionalists obviously find it easier to remember the opportunist betrayals of those who talked about the need for politics in the past than they do to try to understand why previous leaderships of the movement felt the need for a political and social strategy and why those who remained faithful to the ideas of the Irish republic failed to come up with one.

Now, another republican leadership forged in the struggle against British imperialism has launched on a great political endeavor, and there can be no doubt that its outcome will have a crucial effect on the prospects for national and social liberation in Ireland.

Whatever the conclusion of this undertaking, it has already proved that in our time the leadership of the struggle against imperialist domination in Ireland will be drawn inexorably toward a revolutionary socialist and internationalist program. The traditional Sinn Fein right has found itself without any positive alternative, having to withdraw to defensive, waiting positions.

The anti-Communist and Catholic social views that were put forward in the initial stages of the rise of the Provisional republican movement, in an attempt to provide an alternative to internationalist or "extreme" socialism then identified with the "Officials" seem to be a fairly dim memory in Sinn Fein today.

Right wing not clearly defined

In fact, the first thing that struck me about this *ard-fheis*, which is the first I have attended since 1981, was the absence of a clearly defined and vocal right-wing bloc. Four years ago, there was still a very visible right wing threatening the new leadership with dreadful consequences if they "went too far."

In this *ard-fheis*, there was little or no opposition to the adoption of a whole range of positions characteristic of the international youth radicalization. There were some incidents that illustrated this in a particularly striking way. One speaker, for instance, dressed in punk style, won general applause when he announced he was a

homosexual and not ashamed of it, and his motion of defense of gay rights was passed with only a few opposing votes.

The *clar* (agenda) included a section on "women's affairs," whose first motion was to ratify a policy of positive discrimination to bring women forward in the movement. It was carried with only small opposition. Another motion that "all sexist terminology be deleted from all Sinn Fein literature, internal, external, or policy" was carried without any opposition whatever.

Hand in hand with the continuing move to the left, the Sinn Fein leadership showed an increased openness to working with other groups. Members of collaborative left organizations, such as People's Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International, were invited to observe the *ard-fheis* without restrictions. The political discussion was carried on almost entirely in the open, in contrast to the 1970s, when, as I remember sometimes only a few sessions were open. A good many independent radicals were also welcomed.

The leadership seemed to be making a new effort to assume their responsibilities as the leaders of the predominant organized opposition movement in the country. For example, they invited representatives of the participants in a long-running strike in the Dunnes' Stores chain against the handling of South African goods to address the conference and called for support for them. The radical leadership of the Union of Students of Ireland were also welcomed.

Anglo-Irish accords — threat to the resistance movement

At one point in the discussion also, Adams said that the aim of the London and Dublin governments in the Anglo-Irish talks was to find a way to defeat the whole resistance movement in Ireland, not just Sinn Fein. I do not recall hearing Provisional republican leaders put forward such a conception in the past.

On the other hand, it has been very common to hear arguments that the republicans are *the* movement and that anyone serious about opposing the system should join up without further delay. If the view expressed by Adams on this occasion is adopted systematically, it would represent an extremely important change for the republican movement and for the "whole resistance movement" also. It would put the republicans in a position to play the role of center of a broad radical movement, the role that they have won



A previous year's ard-fheis (DR)

by their historical credentials and their self-sacrificing struggles and which, at the moment at least, only they have the capacity to play.

In line with such an attitude, one of the first motions on the *clar* was for the republican leadership to call an open national conference within six months "with a view to establish a broad-based campaign in defense of the rights of Irish political prisoners and to bring unity and cohesion to the many worthy campaigns presently being waged."

A decisive turn by Sinn Fein toward building a broad movement on such issues would be a very positive development. After the end of the H-Block movement, unfortunately the movement tended to fall back on a more inward-looking approach.

On the other hand, there were very few concrete motions on the *clar*. In general, most of those on policy put forward very general positions. A lot of them did not go beyond the commonplaces of the new left. There was little or no evidence of a systematic political approach or consistent criteria. One incident may serve to illustrate this.

One of the main motions put forward on "foreign affairs" by the *Ard Chomhairle* (National Executive) said, "... we condemn the regimes of South Africa, Namibia and Ethiopia. That we recognise the legitimate struggles of those attempting to overthrow these repressive regimes."

The position on the first two regimes and the opposition to them is uncontroversial on the left. The case of the third, however, is quite different, since it is a government that came out of an anti-imperialist revolution, claims to be left, and is supported to varying degrees by the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Dealing with the problem of the Ethiopian Dergue and the movement's struggle against it, the most important of which is the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, has been a problem for most left groups. It would be interesting in particular to see how the Irish republicans deal with it, especially because of the way it raises the questions of national and democratic rights in the context of fighting imperialism and that of the need for a critical examination of Soviet and even Cuban policies.

However, the reference to Ethiopia was simply dropped before the motion came up. There was no explanation either of why it was included, or why it was dropped. Moreover, there was no mention of Poland under the foreign affairs item despite the historic ties between Polish and Irish revolutionists and the support of Solidarnosc leaders for the republican hunger strikers.

It is true that the traditional agenda made up of resolutions from every sort of body in Sinn Fein, from the *cumainn*, which correspond to cells, to the National Executive complicates political discussion. In fact, notable progress was evident this time in organizing the discussion, by comparison with the 1970s in particular. The tendency is, as the level of political discussion rises, for the resolutions to be combined into composite motions that more and more resemble the political resolutions of left organizations.

However, Sinn Fein appears still very far from the sort of systematic debate that exists in revolutionary Marxist organizations or in some broader revolutionary organizations with which Sinn Fein now identifies, such as the FSLN or the FMLN.

An organization united around

general sentiments and action faces very difficult hurdles in taking up the basic strategic questions in systematic debate. Obviously, there are all sorts of latent, potential, and implicit contradictions that can become dangerously divisive. These problems emerged very clearly in the debate over electoral strategy.

This discussion also seemed to mark a point of no return for the leadership. Although the National Executive as such, and Adams himself, remained aloof from the debate, it was clear that the leadership was pushing for dropping the principle of not taking seats in what republicans consider "illegitimate" parliaments, that is, the London and Dublin parliaments.

The debate sharpens

Morrison introduced the debate on a motion to change abstaining from these parliaments from a principle to a tactic by warning strongly against emotionalism and appeals to the past. At the same time, he noted that Bobby Sands was opposed to keeping abstention as a principle. Tom Hartley, one of the Belfast leadership team and a member of the *Ard-Chomhairle*, spoke for the motion in his "personnel capacity."

A whole series of leaders and activists representative of the new leadership spoke for it, raising again and again the argument that the main principle of the movement should be "to win." Moreover, the way had been prepared for putting such a question by a previous internal conference, in which a respected republican of the older generation, John Joe McGill, had raised arguments against abstention.

Nonetheless, the right mobilized strong opposition and managed to defeat the motion by 187 votes to 161. Moreover, the abstention-as-a-sacred-principle bloc seemed clearly this time to be a right-wing one. In the past, there has been a convergence of right-wingers and ultraleftists on this issue. This time there was little sign of young ultraleft anti-electoralists. The young speakers against the motion seemed to come essentially from traditionalist families, to be chips that had not flown far from the old blocks.

Thus, the right won a decisive victory against the new leadership on the principal debate at the *ard-fheis*, after a long series of motions putting general left positions had passed with little or no opposition.

Afterwards, you could hear arguments trying to minimize the importance of this vote. It was noted that it

had been possible for the first time to have a real debate on the question, that the gap in the vote was not so great, and that with continued growth of the movement among the radical youth and in the urban areas, it is only a matter of time until the old position falls.

The first problem with this is that if the left knows that it is only a matter of time, so does the right, and there is no reason to think that it will remain passive indefinitely waiting for that to happen.

More importantly still, this vote tied the hands of the leadership going into a vital political test, the 26 County general elections, which will come up in less than two years. In particular, if the British and Irish talks produce any credible plan "for settling the Northern Ireland problem," the elections could become the main opportunity for challenging it. What is more, the progress and even survival of the movement could depend on making an effective answer. At the moment, Sinn Fein has political maneuvering room. But the objective of the British and Irish governments is to get into a position where they can isolate it and smash it.

The final vote at the *ard-fheis* was also an apparent point of no return. Sinn Fein became the first party with mass influence to come out for "women's right to choose." This motion was passed by a vote of 77 to 73, that is, a very narrow majority with less than half the number of delegates voting that voted on the question of abstention.

This was the last debate, and it is possible that by the time the vote came up, a lot of the rural delegates had left. But the support for it reflected some powerful forces operating in the new Sinn Fein. One obvious one is the recruitment of radicalized urban youth. But another seems to be a general rise in consciousness and confidence of the women involved in the struggle in the North.

(Formally the leadership opposed

this position, supporting a vague intermediate one. They did not, however, fight hard against it, and clearly their political base voted for it.)

The Church and the Dublin government immediately opened up a barrage on this issue, with the Dublin minister for justice trumpeting that the Provos had made unborn children a target.

Besides these sharp debates, there were skirmishes around questions such as whether or not Sinn Fein should be a party, the attempts to structure the organization, the role of elected representatives, and there was a muted debate over whether Sinn Fein should or should not agree to take some sort of "nonviolence" oath to keep legality.

The delegates who opposed Sinn Fein being a party touched a key point. If the leadership moves decisively to transform Sinn Fein into a revolutionary party, it is hard to see how they can avoid serious divisions. But if they try to do this through a slow process of education, it is equally hard to see how they can avoid having to pay the price of political paralysis, which in the pressures of the Irish situation, could cause incalculable problems.

On the other hand, since the failure of the Officials, more flexible forms of uniting politically heterogeneous forces in a revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle have proved successful, notably the revolutionary fronts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. It remains to be seen what concrete lessons the Sinn Fein leadership will draw from its new interest in the revolutionary liberation movements in other countries.

In any case, another great political drama has almost certainly begun in Ireland, toward which no genuine revolutionist can be a disinterested spectator. In particular, it is important to give a new impetus to solidarity and to foster an understanding and collaborative attitude in the left and working class movement toward the republican movement. □

With the H-block campaign the republican movement broadened out (DR)



Gerry Adams speaks

WE REPRODUCE below major extracts from the speech by Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein to the recent *ard-fheis*.

It is no accident that the Dublin government finds common ground with Thatcher and Reagan in their attitude to liberation struggles. Dublin's attitude on these issues is but an extension of its attitude to the British presence in this country. The natural and logical place for Ireland is alongside the Palestinians, the Chileans, El Salvadoreans and the Nicaraguans. A government which truly represented the Irish people would be in opposition to Reagan's backing of repressive regimes in Central America, in opposition to Israel's policy of genocide against the Palestinian people, and in opposition to the British partition and occupation of this country ...

I also take this opportunity to congratulate all of you on our electoral successes since the last *ard-fheis*. Contrary to the predictions of our opponents, and despite harassment in both states — plus new British anti-voting legislation in the Six Counties and Section 31 in the 26 Counties — we emerged from the local government elections with a more efficient organisation and with a new middle leadership in the election of 98 local representatives.

In the border counties and in Dublin we made significant breakthroughs relative to the consistency of our work in these areas and in a limited contest our vote held, with significant potential being identified in many districts throughout the 26 Counties.

The performance of our councillors on local government bodies in the Six Counties has totally vindicated our decision to take seats on those councils. Not only have our representatives shown their ability to participate in an intelligent and consistent manner, even within the restricted powers of the councils, but we have exposed the undemocratic nature of unionism and the passivity of the SDLP [the bourgeois nationalist Catholic Party].

Isn't it strange that despite a long involvement by the SDLP in the councils there was never any real hullabaloo until republicans took their seats? Is it any wonder that the nationalist electorate is asking: 'What have the SDLP been doing all those years?' It is also worth recalling John Hume's often repeated assertion that his party

would not talk to us. As is now well-known, the May elections were hardly over before the SDLP and Sinn Fein representatives were engaging in talks.

We applaud our councillors in the front line in the chambers of Belfast, Craigavon and other little unionist citadels. We thank those who voted for us, whether in the Six or 26 Counties. We congratulate our newly-elected councillors, and our returned councillors, whether in Dublin, Derry, Monaghan or Donegal, and we thank all our candidates and party workers on their election campaigns. A special word of thanks must go to the stalwart people of Fermanagh. They have built well on Bobby Sands' election victory and in that county and in Omagh district, Sinn Fein now holds the chair of these councils, an achievement equal to Mac Swiney's and Mac Curtain's lord mayorships of Cork city. (1)

It is this continued consolidation of our base and the obvious potential for further expansion which the British and Irish establishments perceive as confirmation of their fears about the political threat which Irish republicanism represents to their interests.

They are not so much afraid of Sinn Fein as afraid of the inherent soundness of the Irish people. They realise that they have made such a mess of this country and failed miserably to satisfy the aspirations of ordinary people that the people, cynical of the posturing of establishment politicians, represent a threat to establishment interests.

It is that threat, as yet unrealised, it is that fear that the people will become organised and that Irish republicanism — always a potent and radicalising force in Irish politics — will become a catalyst for a re-awakened and militant alternative to the present mess which masquerades as government in both this state and the British colony in the Six Counties. It is this fear that fuels Dublin, unionist and London paranoia about Sinn Fein. And they have a right to be afraid!

No working-class person in this country — whether in the ranks of the unemployed or the public sector, whether small farmer, PAYE [Pay as you earn] employee, housewife or industrial worker — could be satis-

fied with Irish society. No Irish school-leaver today can look with confidence to the future. And little wonder.

On every front the ordinary people are being squeezed. In the Six Counties by the continual British military occupation and all its related social and economic deprivations; in the 26 Counties by identical monetarist policies and similar social and economic deprivations ...

The British occupation of the Six Counties is one of political imperialism which has weakened the Irish working class, North and South, because of the absorbing and divisive nature of partition, and which created powerful vested interests in the unionist and Irish establishments which have a real affinity with Britain.

Successive Dublin governments inherited a tradition of neutrality — in practice, the battered concept of which they have often stretched. Nevertheless, neutrality is a principle which coincides with the instincts and mood of the Irish people who do not want to be drawn into any imperialist nuclear nightmare and who support the concept of an independent foreign policy and improved relations with the developing nations.

It has been mooted — and the SDLP deputy-leader, among others has welcomed the idea — that the principle of neutrality be bartered in return for British concessions on the national question.

Not only would such a move be taking the 26 Counties back into the 'United Kingdom' so called but in joining with the NATO powers Ireland would be joining the club of imperialists and former colonial nations notorious for their oppression of people across the globe.

Irish foreign policy should be based on a policy of neutrality and non-alignment which includes the promotion of nuclear disarmament, the promotion of peace internationally, and independence in political, economical and ideological matters ...

Finally, it is worth recalling that this party was formally established eighty years ago this month at a convention in the Rotunda on November 28, 1905. Since then, this country has undergone many changes and in terms of social composition and policies Sinn Fein is a different party. The nature of British rule is different now also, but two fundamental things remain unchanged: the British government still denies us our freedom and we, like the republicans of that period, remain resolute in that struggle for freedom ... □

1. Mac Swiney and Mac Curtain were both Sinn Fein supporters who died for their country. Mac Curtain was killed by masked raiders presumed to be British and Terence Mac Swiney died in a British gaol following a hunger strike.

Regime launches assault on workers movement

NOT LONG ago, the Tunisian government demonstrated its total subservience to US imperialism by failing to make more than a pathetic protest after the Israeli-American raid on the PLO headquarters near Tunis, and by its subsequent complicity in the US highjacking of the Egyptian plane carrying Abu-Labbas and the members of his group.

Only a few days after this bending of the knee to US imperialism, this same government did not hesitate to launch a vicious onslaught against the UGTT, the country's main union confederation, which is considerably larger than its pro-government rival, the UNTT.

SALAH JABER

In the last week of October, the militia of the Destourian Party, the Tunisian version of the parallel repressive forces typical of fascist or populist dictatorships — forcibly took over the headquarters of several UGTT regional organizations, in particular the one in Sfax, one of the largest and most militant working-class concentrations in the country.

At the same time, the Bourguibist party set up so-called provisional committees of the UGTT, which were supposed to represent the union's "rank and file" against the Achour leadership, which was accused of being unpatriotic and serving the interests of Libya.

Since this grotesque frameup failed, the government threw its official guard dogs into the fray occupying by military force the headquarters of the regional unions in Sfax and Tunis on October 30, and then, on October 31, the national headquarters, in Tunis and almost all the regional headquarters except for those in the southern part of the country, an area with a tradition of opposition to the government and where there are also big working-class concentrations, such as the Gafsa mines.

Simultaneously, the government rounded up dozens of trade-union activists and leaders on various pretexts, going from crude police manipulation, such as the claim that knives and copies of Kadhafi's "Little Green Books" were found in Sfax, to the charge of adultery (!) lodged against Jared, a member of the UGTT Executive Bureau and the right-hand man of the general secretary, Habid Achour. Achour's son was also arrested on an obscure charge of evading customs, just in time to blacken his father's name.

This vast offensive by the government whose methods Achour correctly described as gangsterlike, is aimed at

destroying the UGTT as an independent representative of the Tunisian working class and reducing it to what it was ten years ago, what the yellow splinter group, the UNTT is today, that is a transmission belt between the regime and the workers.

The radicalization of social struggles in Tunisia over the 1970s led progressively to a divorce between the UGTT bureaucracy headed by Achour and the Bourguiba regime, a divorce that was to be consummated by the general strike of January 26, 1978, and the violent repression that then came down on the workers movement and the union bureaucracy.

In the medium term (1981) it was the union that emerged victorious from this test of strength. It maintained its organizational continuity despite the government's repression and established a political autonomy that has grown continuously since then. This process went so far that in the most



recent years the UGTT has evolved into a specific combination of a union and a mass workers party.

Thus, this year, the UGTT chose, in line with the rest of the opposition, to boycott the municipal elections, and decided to transform its weekly publication *Ash-Shaab* into a political daily. At the same time, a discussion started up within the union about the advisability of running independent workers slates in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 1986.

This politicalization of the UGTT, combining with successive waves of radicalization on the social front in struggles given impetus by the economic crisis convinced the Bourguiba regime to act before a political crisis came along to complicate things further. Causes for worry in this regard are the frictions with Libya and the possibility that the fading Bourguiba may finally pass away.

Since the start of this year, repressive pressures have built up against the UGTT. Trade-union meetings in the plants have been banned. There have been arrests and layoffs of strikers (in particular in transport). The daily *Ash-Shaab* was suspended after five days of publication. The police surrounded union headquarters. The state-administered dues check-off of 1% of wages, the union's main source of funds, was abolished. The state stopped paying trade-union full-timers. And so it went.

Then, on October 23, the impresario of the January 26, 1978, repressive operation, Zine-El-Abine Ben Ali, a top cop and notorious pro-American, was promoted to the rank of minister for national security. This came in the context of a ministerial reshuffle aimed generally against the UGTT and coincided with the launching of the latest repressive offensive.

This is not the time for balance sheets, although it is already clear how much the union bureaucracy failed to prepare the workers for this confrontation, thinking that it could avoid a showdown by increasing its concessions and partial retreats. Now is the time for a fightback. The response, however, so far has been unfortunately weak on the scale of the country as a whole, aside from a strike in the banks (one of the most radicalized groups of workers) and student demonstrations.

However, in the southern part of the country, strikes are growing. A general strike was called for November 5. At the same time, workers defense groups have been set up to defend the union headquarters. This is certainly the road to follow throughout the country — the formation of workers defense groups and a general strike until all the arrested unionists are released, police persecution is ended, and the occupation of the union headquarters is called off. □

How far has the new upsurge gone ?

THE POLITICAL situation has been evolving rapidly in South Africa. New relationships of forces have been established over the last years. The violence of the clashes that occurred between June and October 1985 confirmed that the country has entered a new period. The elements of this change have in fact been accumulating for almost twelve years, beginning with the Natal general strike in 1973 and the 1976 youth uprising in Soweto and in the Transvaal.

It is easier today than in the past to form an opinion on the concrete situation in South Africa, inasmuch as the mass movement has given rise to a variety of activist journals. For its part, the English-language liberal big press has improved its content somewhat, and has even taken a rather militant tone to defend the point of view of the bourgeois opposition to the regime of Pieter Botha.

These developments enable us to clarify certain features of the present political situation.

PETER BLUMER

Over the month of October, new elements came to light in the South African situation. The big mobilizations that took place in the winter gave way to more isolated clashes, sometimes of a very specific character. The most striking development was undoubtedly the secondary school boycott in the Cape region.

Since Capetown has been classified as a preferred residential zone for Coloureds, the high-school students' struggle took on the dimensions of a confrontation between the Coloured youth and the Ministry of Education of the House of Representatives for Coloured Affairs. (1) That is, this struggle struck at the heart of apartheid.

The high-school students, like the overwhelming majority of the population, grant no legitimacy to this kind of institution, regarding its agents rightly as mere collaborators with the racist government.

The boycott started on July 29, 1985 and is still continuing. This is the first time that a school strike has lasted such a long time. And the support from parents and teachers has been broader than during the mobilizations of 1980, when the Coloured high-school students had "their Soweto." (2)

This kind of struggle, however,

is not without its contradictions. Refusal in principle to negotiate with a puppet administration leaves no immediate solution for this boycott, unless the regime backs down totally. Since there is no prospect of that at the moment, the students have been led in fact to modify their demands, focusing their movement on a more and more remote objective.

At the outset, they demanded the lifting of the state of emergency applied in a part of the country. Subsequently, about a dozen demands were raised, mainly concerned with the question of repression in the schools. Then, they put in question the whole system of second-rate education offered to non-whites. Finally, with the prompting notably of young sympathizers of the United Democratic Front, a part of the movement has identified with the slogan "No education without liberation." (3)

The high-school students movement has had difficulty in organizing itself and getting a second wind. The lack of concrete proposals for a continuing organization of youth may even lead to a demoralization of the strikers. (4)

The weakness of teacher unionism, along with the hesitations of the parents in this period of examinations and the political differences that exist

are not making it any easier to solve the problem. Some express the fear of a certain ultraleftism that they think they see among the young people linked to the UDF, and which they trace back to the slogan of the African National Congress (ANC) of making the country "ungovernable."

The school boycott has gradually led to clashes with the army. The young people have been making a target out of any vehicle doing the business one way or another of the system and sporadically occupying the roads. They have been savagely repressed. Many have already been killed and a great many wounded. On October 15, the army set up an ambush in Athlone and cold-bloodedly shot down four youths at pointblank range.

The other form of struggle underway is the boycott of white-owned stores. Its success remains uneven, depending on the objective conditions. It has been successful where the white stores are only a few outlets in remote townships, for example in the regions of Pietermaritzburg and East London. But it has been virtually nonexistent in the greater part of Capetown.

In order to be fully successful, this form of action would require in fact a very high level of organization, which has not yet been achieved. The action, however, has been sufficient to get merchants associations to begin to express their fears to the government. (5)

Finally, the pressure of the workers and the trade-union movement in the workplaces remains very strong. Many strikes took place over September and October, in particular in the Volkswagen, Mercedes, and Alfa Romeo plants. According to the chair of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), some trade-unionists continue to get death threats. Passports have also been regularly refused to unionists who want to go abroad to promote solidarity.

The FOSATU chair pointed out; "When Black workers representatives want to speak for themselves, they are denied passports. This also once again raises the sinister links between

1. The election for these rigged institutions was massively boycotted by those entitled to vote for them. On Botha's constitutional reforms, see 'International Viewpoint,' No. 46, February 13, 1984.

2. See 'Inprecor' (IV's French-language sister publication), No. 80, June 26, 1980.

3. 'Cape Herald,' October 12, 1985.

4. In the African townships the situation of disorganization and tension is such that there is often a de facto boycott of the schools but which does not take the form of an organized struggle. Repression has been used against the high-school boycott. Around a hundred anti-apartheid activists have been arrested.

5. 'Sunday Times,' October 13, 1985.



Workers on strike in South Africa (DR)

the government and business. Passports are denied to our representatives to the UN hearing. But representatives of industry can go to the same hearings without difficulty." (6)

The liberal view scores some points

The most significant development in recent weeks, however, has been the change underway in a section of the white population. Unquestionably, the fear created by the troubles in July and August has modified the political opinion of a certain number of whites.

The traumatic effect has been essentially on the petty bourgeoisie and a part of the bourgeoisie, but not on the white wage workers. What is also new is that this evolution is taking place also in certain Afrikaner circles, and not just, as was the case before, only among English speakers. It is important, however, not to exaggerate this phenomenon.

Nonetheless, militant reformism is having a heyday. Often taking a Christian coloration, it reflects fundamentally the fear of confrontation. Many organizations have arisen, such as Women for Peace and Let South Africa Speak, which are campaigning to get South Africans to learn to know each other and talk to each

other. They are all advocating rapid and substantial reforms. Apartheid is being seen as a time bomb that has to be defused as quickly as possible.

Such evolution could not have gotten underway if the liberal opposition and the press favorable to it had not already been waging very energetic campaigns on these themes for some time. Every passing day, the big English language papers hammer away at the Botha government, declaring the need to take a new look at the constitution and public life as a whole.

Among many others, the comments in the October 11 *Financial Mail* were significant in this regard:

"Behind all the jargon and rubbish being put out by the Nationalists these days lies a profound fear. It is that the Afrikaner tribe will lose power. And, following that, there appears to be some kind of apocalyptic vision of the Afrikaners dispersed in their own diaspora, their language scorned, their culture vilified. Anything, it seems is preferable to that: a mickeymouse currency, a controlled economy, disinvestment, debt default, poverty and starvation, mothers and children whipped into sullen submission, military rule, war in far lands." This is how the journalists of high finance are writing these days!

But who are these liberals who are coming out so firmly against apartheid? The main party representing them is

the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), which has long been seen as a formation linked to South African financial circles and to the English-speaking bosses, such as, for example, the Anglo-American Corporation.

Capital is highly concentrated in South Africa. A half dozen groups control the vast and extremely lucrative mining industry, and six companies dominate the financial sector. The Anglo-American Corporation directs the five leading mining companies, and by itself holds a majority or strategic minority share of the stock in the five leading industrial trusts.

In 1976, the Anglo-American Corporation owned 250 companies trading in 22 different countries. Its capital was mingled with that of 73 big foreign banks and industries. (7)

It cannot be claimed, therefore, that the South African liberals represent a marginal current in the capitalist class or that they constitute a "nationalist" faction of the bourgeoisie only weakly linked to imperialism. It is this, perhaps, that gives their political actions, such as entering unilaterally into discussions with the ANC, an even more spectacular effect.

6. *Financial Mail*, October 27, 1985.

7. *'Anglo-American and the Rise of Modern South Africa'*, Duncan Innes, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1984.

On September 13, a delegation of businesspeople went to Zambia to meet the leadership of the ANC. It was made up of representatives of the Anglo-American Corporation, the Association of Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCOM), the Afrikaanse Handelinstituut, the South African Foundation, the Barlow Group, and Barclay's Bank.

Other contacts were made more discreetly. Moreover, it was confirmed in the *Cape Times* of September 9, 1985, that talks had been going on for a year in London between the ANC and the South African Foundation. The first official meeting had at least the objective of showing in a spectacular way that the government of Pieter Botha was no longer respected. So, the bosses and the ANC discussed the democratization of South Africa.

With an ingenuousness far too great to be real, Tony Bloom, the boss of Premier Milling, explained later to the South African public: "I was struck by the absence of traditional Marxist-Leninist jargon and dogma. Even in the discussion on nationalisation of industry, the concepts could quite easily have fitted into a socialist rather than Marxist framework. I found it curious that they used the example of Sweden as an ideal, rather than the USSR or Eastern Bloc states." (8)

The liberals meet the ANC

So, there you have a Tony Bloom, who in the recent past has been far from being among the reformist bosses, and all of a sudden he finds in himself a compassion for those that not long ago he considered terrorists to be shot down.

Nonetheless, for the time being the bosses do not seem to want to go any further in the negotiations. Cautious and maneuverist by nature, they prefer to let the political apparatus act, even if this sometimes takes on the outlines of premature electoral campaigns. In any case, it was Van Zyl Slabbert, leader of the PFP, who led his party's delegation to Lusaka in Zambia on October 12, 1985, to meet the ANC in its turn.

When he came back to South Africa, he announced that in his opinion, despite the differences, "a negotiated way out of our problem is still possible." (9) The joint communique specified that "both groups share the urgent need to dismantle apartheid and establish a non-racial and democratic South Africa."

It is not certain that Slabbert has unanimous support in his party, as indicated by the different shadings

Employers condemn apartheid

ON SEPTEMBER 27, 1985, ninety of the biggest names in the world of business and high finance belonging to the English-speaking bourgeoisie in South Africa signed a document calling for the end of apartheid. Their statement said, notably: "We believe that the reform process should be accelerated by: — Abolishing statutory race discrimination wherever it exists. — Negotiating with acknowledged Black leaders about power sharing. — Granting full South African citizenship to all people ... We believe that there is a better way for South Africa, and we support equal opportunity, respect for individual, freedom of enterprise and freedom of movement."

Their spokesperson, Raymond Ackerman, was to specify that their action was designed to show both inside and outside of the country that the private sector wanted to promote change. He explained that they were equally opposed to poverty and unemployment and to a boycott of South Africa and disinvestment. He added "We are not asking for one man one vote — we are urging the government to negotiate shared power." (*Cape Times*, September 28, 1985.)

The Afrikaner private sector has not signed this document. Bishop Tutu and the chief of Kwa Zulu, Buthelezi, have supported it. Notable among the signatories are the bosses of Nedbank, Toyota, Barclays Bank, Anglo American (including H.F. Oppenheimer), of IBM, Rank Xerox, Caitex, Kodak, BMW, Control Data, Coca Cola, the Argus press group, Colgate, Volkswagen, General Motors, etc.

in the successive declarations of PFP leaders. But the Slabbert operation is important at least because it represents an open division in the ruling class.

The writer of the editorial in the October 17 issue of Johannesburg's *Business Day* explained in this regard that "the old assumption that the nationalists are unbeatable in the white election no longer holds ... Instead, there is a reasonable prospect that the next election will split the whites three ways and that the moment of opportunity long foreseen by Slabbert will become a reality."

Hardly had the PFP delegation returned from Lusaka than the press announced in big headlines that Afrikaner students at the University of Stellenbosch in the northern Cape had also decided to send a delegation to Lusaka to meet the youth organization of the ANC.

That was a bitter blow for the scions of the HerrenVolk, who saw some of their offspring get the urge to discuss with Black representatives of a movement they consider "terrorist" and, what is more, "Communist." At last, the government decided to stop them from leaving the country and confiscated their passports — quite a pointless exercise, given the depth of the political debates running through the ruling class.

On October 23, it was the turn of the Methodist Church of South Africa to launch an attack against military service and to declare its support for discussions with the ANC, proclaiming; "The Gospel teaches us to love our enemies. How can you love your enemy if you don't even want to talk to him?"

The differences that have emerged publicly between the ANC and the liberals flowing from both meetings have borne essentially on what institu-

tional form should be given to a future dismantling of apartheid. The PFP has advocated calling a broad National Convention that, among other forces, would include the government and the ANC.

The ANC has declared its opposition to such an initiative. A joint communique of October 12, 1985, explained that both parties differ on the principle of a National Convention, specifying that "The ANC does not consider that there has come into being a conducive climate to reach a negotiated resolution of the crisis." (10)

The ANC's information secretary a bit later was to specify that despite its rejection of this proposal his organization believed that "everybody, every organization, must participate in the democratic process which will bring apartheid to an end." He was also to stipulate that "the ANC recognises that the PFP represents a very important and significant constituency in society." (11)

The old idea of a National Convention suited the ANC in the 1950s. For a long time, it has been a point of contention in the South African political movement. Can basic democracy be negotiated between the oppressed and the oppressors? How can you negotiate anything besides calling free elections without conditions on the basis of universal suffrage to set up some sort of constituent assembly? Such were the terms of the debate.

The old line of the ANC on this question in the 1950s was in line with its idea of a democratization of the

8. 'Weekend Post,' Port Elizabeth, October 19, 1985.

9. 'Cape Times,' October 14, 1985.

10. *Idem*.

11. 'Cape Times,' October 15, 1985.

apartheid regime from above. In the 1958 "white" elections, for example, the ANC appealed to these voters with the slogan "Get the Nationalists out!" This meant in effect being for a white government of the United Party, the ancestor of the PFP, against the National Party.

The abrupt change in the political situation has thus put back on the agenda the question of what forms the democratization of the system might take. It is easy to understand why the liberals are favorable to a National Convention. It would enable them to put on stage all the political and ethnic forces created by racial segregation. This operation would thus make it possible for them to rely on the collaborationist political parties, the "governments" of the Bantustans, and manifold representatives of all the "races" and "ethnic groups" defined by the regime in order to arrive at a draft constitution that would be more than likely to be very federal and leave in place certain mechanisms of uneven development among the "races."

The PFP leader, Slabbert, has already explained that it is necessary to establish a form of universal suffrage, but not according to the principle of "one person, one vote," in particular because he remains a partisan of a sort of veto for the whites on certain questions. This simple fact shows that the ruling class cannot really contemplate the elimination of all racial classifications in South African society. (12)

The ANC has, thus, come out against a National Convention. It is still difficult to assess the exact reasons for its position. It may very well consider that the relationship of forces is inadequate, and that its own organized forces in the country are too limited to face such a challenge.

In the Bahamas, at the end of the Commonwealth conference that debated the question of South Africa, a representative of the ANC said that his movement was not ready to accept negotiations and call a halt to the armed struggle as long as the ANC remained banned, Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners were not granted amnesty, apartheid was not dismantled, and the state of siege was not lifted. (13) In reality, this long list of demands makes it possible to get a bit better idea of the content of the negotiations between the liberals and the ANC.

It might appear somewhat surprising that South African big capital has engaged in such public negotiations with those whom it has always considered more or less as dangerous revolutionaries. The mass movement, to be sure, has shown its impatience in the recent months, but no one



Protest by migrant workers (DR)

believes that a revolutionary situation has already opened up in South Africa.

The mass movement is very far from being solidly organized, and for this reason it has no immediate perspectives for a real revolutionary offensive. The ruling class has reason enough to be worried about the future, but here and now it has not been driven to negotiate for the sake of survival. These discussions, therefore, have another sort of objective.

Negotiations on what is to follow Botha

The PFP and a part of the bosses want to prepare the way for a post-Botha solution that could take the form of some sort of governmental coalition combining reformist elements of the National Party and members of the PFP, for example. Whatever the governmental option, any such prospective regime would need a valid and responsible interlocutor capable of achieving sufficient credibility to represent and control the mass movement of the oppressed.

This conception is not a recent one in the minds of certain liberal leaders. And, therefore, one should not underestimate the role of the negotiations in progress. There is obviously not going to be any cold dismantling of apartheid. But it is now conceivable that in the event of a governmental crisis or the formation of a new ruling coalition that the ANC may be authorized in one or another form to function legally and that its exiled leadership may be able to return to South Africa.

The immediate effect of such a turn about would be to make it possible for the ANC to increase its strength considerably. It could then

organize its following and become a mass party. Whatever real organized strength the ANC has today, such a development would be seen by the mass movement as a victory.

Moreover, in such conditions, a new South African government might be capable of establishing a cool dialogue with the ANC on constitutional changes without having to fear confusion and the threat of an uncontrolled rise of the mass movement.

It is obviously impossible to foresee whether this tactic of the liberals has a chance of being carried through. In any case, the ANC has no reason not to try to take advantage of the offer. Its meetings with the PFP have made it possible to isolate the Botha government. And the appeal that the ANC is making now for some sort of legalisation echoes the proposals of the white liberal opposition.

According to the *Argus* of October 23, a representative of the ANC informally told the Commonwealth general secretary that his organization was ready to suspend the armed struggle if Botha agreed to negotiate with the Black leaders.

Thus, in the coming period, very important changes in South African public life may be expected. But the reaction of the mass movement cannot be predicted.

The dismantling of apartheid is, thus, today the central theme in all political debates. The very powerful

12. Cf. Van Zyl Slabbert and David Welsh, 'Strategies for Sharing Power,' David Philipp, Cape Town, 1981: "Universal franchise must be distinguished from 'majority rule' ... The logic of this conclusion is that a democratic political system in South Africa must involve a minority veto in the legislation process ... the main purpose of the minority veto is to force negotiation and consensus between parties." (Pp. 152-153)

13. 'Cape Times,' October 22, 1985.

Association of Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCOM), meeting in Capetown, assailed the government's timidity in making reforms and called for the repeal of the law of preferred residence zones (the Group Areas Act), the law restricting freedom of movement (Influx Control), and all discriminatory laws. According to one of the ASSOCOM leaders, "Reform must not be aimed at improving discriminatory laws — it must remove them. No longer can we tinker with apartheid — we must dismantle it now." (14)

A democratic and non racial South Africa.

But what sort of regime could accomplish such a task? Apparently the bosses think that a PFP government could. That is going off a bit half-cocked. What sort of thing, moreover, would a democratic and nonracial South Africa be? It would be a country where no law, no regulation and no economic mechanism was explicitly or implicitly based on racial or ethnic distinctions, a country where the workers could get hired for any job without discrimination and regardless of the color of their skin. Everyone, men and women alike, would have the right to acquire the same skills and, having done that, to get the same wages.

Youth would have to have access to the same sort of education without inequalities in income imposing a form of segregation. Everyone would have to be able to live in or acquire a house in any part of the country. This would mean that the prices for land and urban plots could no longer be wildly unequal and permit de facto discrimination.

Public services and social benefits would have to be equivalent for all. The poor in the countryside and a part of the unemployed in the cities would have to be able to acquire land and live by cultivating it.

The present Bantustans would have to be dismantled and their puppet administrations, as well as their repressive forces, would have to be abolished. There would have to be universal suffrage on the basis of the principle of "one person, one vote." A constituent assembly would have to be called.

There would have to be full freedom of association and expression, as well as a radical reform of education. Along with this, Namibia, which is still occupied by Pretoria, would have to be given its independence, and there would have to be a halt to the aggressive military operations against Angola.

Are these gentlemen of the ASSOCOM, the PFP, and the Anglo-

American Corporation ready to take on all that? Obviously not. The social nature of apartheid prevents them. It is the form that capitalist domination has taken in this country. The changes in South African capitalism over a quarter of a century — among other things its monopolistic concentration — have no doubt profoundly altered its needs.

But the apartheid system does not date from 1948, when the National Party came to power. The entire system is rooted in a century of colonial domination, racial segregation, and the use of semi-enslaved labor. Such a society has very little means for self-reform.

The establishment of a genuinely democratic and nonracial South Africa could come about as the result of the action of another social class and as the product of another kind of state. That is, only the proletariat, in the broad sense of the term, can accomplish this task in all its manifold dimensions by establishing its own state power.

For the same reason, in the last analysis, the liberals will have to make a compromise with the other faction of the ruling class, which remains faithful to the principles of segregation. Whatever may be the content of a political deal between the liberals and representatives of the movement of the oppressed, big capital will have to determine its overall policy on the basis of the general interests of the capitalist system in South Africa.

The crucial compromise will not, therefore, ever be made between the PFP and the ANC but between the PFP and the National Party. This is why the present posturing of the bourgeois opposition in favor of a non-racial South Africa is largely demagoguery. Another indication of this are the parallel negotiations that the opposition is carrying on with Buthelezi, the leader of the Zulu Inkatha.

Slabbert, who is quite active these days, has in fact also organized a sort of min-National Convention, including for example, Gatsha Buthelezi, chief of the Kwa Zulu and of the Inkatha party. This meeting, which was held in September, has been denounced by all components of the anti-apartheid mass movement. The ANC did not fail to note later, in the discussions in Lusaka in October, that it considers Buthelezi as a mere agent of the regime.

According to Slabbert, this convention was to bring together in a second phase the UDF, the churches, representatives of commerce and industry, and the youth movements, in addition to the PFP and Inkatha. (15)

It is interesting to note in this regard the contradictions among the

bosses. The Kwa Zulu bantustan is made up of several separate enclaves in the heart of Natal, some of them extending to the outskirts of Durban. Neither the Zulu profiteers of Inkatha nor the Natal bosses are ready to give up the perspective of real regional integration, and they oppose the encumbrances of the segregated economic system.

In 1983, the Buthelezi commission, which included a number of white liberals, even presented a program for integration. In part, the same persons turned up to the National Convention organized by Slabbert, to which Bishop Desmond Tutu sent a message of sympathy. (16)

Thanks to the support of the central government, Buthelezi has gained a considerable power over a large part of the Zulu population. His party, Inkatha, need not envy the other single parties of Black Africa. The schools under its jurisdiction carry on a continual indoctrination of the youth. Groups of Inkatha activists regularly intimidate the population.

The people know beforehand that in order to get an administrative job they have to join the Inkatha. No UDF activists or unionists can be sure of their safety today in Natal, and Buthelezi turns his anger on any progressive movement.

Racial clashes with the Indian community in August were in fact engineered by Buthelezi as a diversion. His militia, the Impis, are known to have links with the Pretoria regime's political police.

This instance shows quite clearly the context of the great national accord that the white opposition is seeking. It, of course, has no great desire to maintain a sort of pseudo banana republic at its side, but it has to play this card also to try to carry through the bold maneuver that it is undertaking on all fronts.

A very deep economic crisis

The existence of Inkatha is now a grave problem for the mass movement. According to a recent poll, Buthelezi has the approval of 34% of the Zulu population, as against 19% for the ANC, 8% for Bishop Tutu, and 10% for the UDF. This support is even stronger in the rural areas of Kwa Zulu. (17)

Buthelezi has just made a trip in Europe, visiting in particular Switzerland, in order to meet his

14. 'Business Day,' October 18, 1985.

15. 'Cape Times,' August 26, 1985.

16. 'Financial Mail,' September 27, 1985.

17. 'Weekly Mail,' October 11, 1985.

bankers; and a short while ago he said "I have myself come to the conclusion that despite its faults the free enterprise capitalist system is the best economic system which man has ever devised." (18) In reality, Buthelezi, Slabbert, and the others are now very worried about the crisis of the capitalist system.

South Africa has entered a very grave recession. Even before the effects of the political crisis escalated, the downturn had already had a profound impact on the country. Gold is the barometer of the South African economy and the country's leading export. After undergoing a boom in 1979-80, the price of gold has now plummeted. Because of the overvaluation of the US dollar, gold has, moreover, ceased to be a refuge for capital, and it has lost something of its role to speculation.

In 1982, South Africa appealed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A net upturn occurred in 1983, but then the South African economy went into a nose dive. The national currency, the Rand, which was worth 1.09 US dollars in 1982 is now worth less than 0.4 US dollars.

According to the *Financial Mail* in October 80% of South African imports were considered essential, and they were largely billed in dollars. Despite a largely positive trade balance, the balance of payments is in deep trouble, and the country has found itself obliged to stop payment on its debt until December.

The inflationary effects of the fall of the Rand are considerable. The prices of imported goods, mainly machines, technology, and semi-manufactures, have also doubled. In May of this year, factories were operating at 84% of capacity in a country where some industries used to work around the clock. Unemployment has risen to 35% of the Black population (55% in East London), and it is beginning to hit some layers of white wage workers. The effects of apartheid in restricting the internal market are therefore becoming accentuated.

The *Financial Mail* of September 27 did not hesitate to call the automotive industry in a headline "an industry in agony." Over the last 18 months, this industry has lost 33,000 jobs. Ford has closed two of its factories in Uitenhagen. While the market for whites is 450 vehicles for every thousand inhabitants, for Blacks it is forty vehicles for every thousand people.

The decline in buying power is, thus, going to deepen still more this contradiction arising from the narrowness of the internal market, which is the result of apartheid. The government's new economic policy, which is designed to achieve a small up-



The army on the streets (DR)

turn in order to attract capital again, is going to keep inflation at its present rate of 16% a year, or even increase it.

It is very interesting to consider the possible links between the present state of the economy and the attitude of the liberal opposition. In 1983, on the eve of the referendum on the constitutional changes, the relations between Pieter Botha and the bosses were at their warmest. The economy was then going through a good period, buoyed up by major wage increases in the public services and by an alleviation of tax burdens.

In this period, the opposition was less vehement about apartheid, and the PFP called for voting "yes" in Botha's referendum. For their part, the multinationals retained their optimism. In 1982, a good number of them increased their operations in South Africa.

The West German firms Hoechst (chemicals) and Siemens (electronics), for example, poured in enough capital to double West German direct investments by comparison with 1981. In the same period, joint ventures between foreign and South African firms multiplied. (19)

Things have changed considerably since then, and the political situation has aggravated the capitalist retrenchment that started at the end of 1984. According to *Business Week* of June 30, 1985, over the first six months of this year, private sector investment has declined by 4.8 billion Rands. The country's foreign debt is estimated at over 22 billion dollars, while the short term debt is 14 billion dollars. (20)

The time, thus, has come for the opposition and the bosses to link the democratization of the country to problems of expanding the market, establishing industrial and commercial zones without racial or geographic discrimination.

For example, the Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce has adopted a motion in which it calls for reforms, negotiations with the Black leaders, and for an opportunity for the private sector to play the role of mediator. After praising the virtues of a market without racial constraints, the Chamber of Commerce leader, Denis Creighton, explained: "We in business have had a favourable experience of working together equally and accordingly have developed certain skills in dealing with people fairly." (21)

A section of the imperialists share this conception of how to solve simultaneously the economic and the political crisis. A representative of the US State Department, referring to the recent creation of the US Corporate Council on South Africa, said recently; "The free market approach, after all, is the natural adversary of apartheid or any system that restricts the free movement of labour and political life. The business community realises this." (22)

The Council brings together the principal US companies, including those operating in South Africa and working for reforms in that country. In it you find notably General Motors, IBM, Colgate, Mobil, Caltex, and the like.

In such conditions, the Botha government is in fact not in a very favorable position at the present time.

According to Botha, the situation was going to improve thanks to the constitutional changes made in 1984 and the setting up of the presidential council including Coloureds and Indians. This was a non-starter. In

18. 'Weekly Mail,' October 11, 1985.

19. 'South African Review,' Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 162.

20. 'Financial Mail,' September 27, 1985; and *Argus*, October 23, 1985.

21. 'Weekend Post,' October 19, 1985.

22. 'The Argus,' October 22, 1985.



The Black ghettos of the apartheid system (DR)

fact, the mass boycott of the elections to the Coloured and Indian chambers was the start of the present mass remobilization.

The tricameral system has been a total failure, and the houses did not even function. On August 15, Botha made a great to-do over a scheme of reforms. His speech, entitled "The Crossing of the Rubicon," was empty. The mountain brought forth a mouse.

At the congress of the Cape branch of the National Party, Botha tried to take a supplementary step, announcing that he was committed to "the principle of a united South Africa, one citizenship and a universal franchise, but within the structures chosen by South Africans." The opposition rejected this, saying that this project still did not break with "separate development."

For its part, the *Financial Mail* of October 4, 1985, considered that "there can be little doubt now that Botha does not have new constitutional structures in mind."

If the government apparatus is divided on this question, it is no less at odds as regards foreign policy in the region. The Mozambican army has recently gotten hold of documents of the Mozambican National Resistance (RNM) that show that the South African army, taking advantage of the hesitations and differences in their country's government, are still conducting their own policy of supporting the guerrilla movement that aims to destabilize the Samora Machel regime.

The opposition has had a field day explaining that it has every right to discuss with the ANC, which is denounced as terrorist, when the government is openly supporting Joras Savimbi's UNITA and the RNM. South Africa has been virtually at war for ten years on the Angolan, Mozambican,

and Namibian fronts. The two-year military service obliges youth to take risks. Several thousand of them are trying to get out of the draft.

Botha has made some gestures, such as repealing the laws forbidding marriage and sexual relations among different races. Henceforth whites, Indians, and Coloureds can intermarry, but the system is so absurd that he then had to repeal the rules governing retail shops and the sale of beverages (the Liquor Act), because, as the *Financial Mail* of October 11, 1985, noted, if that were not done, it would have led to "prohibiting legally married couples from even having a drink together, let alone staying in the same room without special permission in any hotel."

Racist dogmatism makes the situation rather bizarre. In fact, Botha has just noted that there is no question of repealing the law that assigns residential areas to different races (the Group Areas Act). So, everyone is wondering now where the new "mixed" couples can live. The government has no answer. But for a long time now, very fortunately, the racist bureaucracy has had a hard time keeping track of everything.

Botha, on the other hand, has said that he does not want to give up the provision that regulates movements of labor in accordance with racial or ethnic criteria (Influx Control) and that the schools should continue to be segregated.

In view of such resistance from the Afrikaner regime, the editorial writer of the *Weekend Post* ventured a prediction, "In the months ahead (the time scale does not permit us to talk in years) a crisis coalition government might well be the one viable vehicle to manage the country in its painful transition to full democracy." (23)

All of this has not kept Botha, however, from telling the *Wall Street Journal* "I think that at a certain stage some months ago some international interests thought this was going to be another Iran ... That's not going to happen."

Other elements may come into play, moreover, in an assessment of the situation, in particular US-Soviet relations. The South African press has played up the fact that Ronald Reagan proposed to the UN a resolution of the conflicts underway in southern Africa, Asia, and Central America. The *Argus* of October 25, 1985, noted, for example: "Outlining a three-point plan for each region, he [Reagan] mentioned, he called for negotiations between the US and the Soviet Union."

On the same theme, the *Cape Times* of October 25, 1985, evoked Margaret Thatcher's policy in the following terms: "In short, the Frontline states under the leadership of President Kenneth Kaunda have agreed to deliver the minority white government to the negotiating table. Quite clearly Mrs Thatcher would not have done this without consulting President Botha ..."

The state of the mass movement

We are still far from such an eventuality. But Botha, nonetheless, sometimes talks a new and not undaring language, as for example when he said: "I want to say emphatically, that if the ANC wants to talk to us, it must lay down its weapons and end its terrorism, stop loading cards with bombs ..." So, talking with the ANC is now something that the regime might consider in the future.

23. *Weekend Post*, October 19, 1985.

Leaving aside the unions, which are advancing toward the formation of a single confederation, the rest of the mass movement has not reached the point where it can work in a systematically united way. It remains very dispersed, very little organized, and its uneven and fragmented development at times follows the lines of separation dictated by apartheid.

In the absence of a real weight of the organized working class, every layer and every sector that may enter into struggle seeks to assert itself on its own. At the moment, the best example of this is the high-school students in the Cape, and such a course does not fail to involve risks of leading to desperation.

The UDF unquestionably has an enormous following in the African townships. Its influence is a good deal weaker in the Coloured and Indian areas. But it has attracted to its ranks some white democrats, in particular students. If you follow the movements around partial demands and the community associations, it appears that the UDF has not gotten very far in organizing its activist base.

While the religious leaders have been particularly discreet lately, the ANC has taken the UDF firmly in hand. For the time being, it seems that the liberals and the American lobby no longer see in a personality like Bishop Desmond Tutu a leader who can really gain the ear of the masses.

In June, the ANC announced that it was stepping up its armed struggle, but for the moment it has ceased all its operations. A section of the progressive movement, on the other hand, accuses it of bringing ultraleftist pressures to bear in the UDF, pressures that are unrealistic in the present relationship of forces.

The National Forum (NF) is rather dormant, reflecting the present crisis of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), its main component. The latter, which has rejected any united front and which failed to support the Transvaal general strike in November 1984 out of sectarianism, is also paying the price for the fact that it is neither a party nor a broad movement, and does not have the means to operate. The crisis that AZAPO is going through now is the latest expression of the crisis of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Finally, mainly in the Cape, there are other sorts of groupings, such as the Cape Action League or the New Unity Movement. (24) But very many associations operate without links to any broader grouping. Thousands of people are ready to work. They are waiting for a real organizational framework and the offer of a concrete political perspective. A large part

of this group vanguard is unorganized.

Edward Kennedy's trip to South Africa, which was denounced and boycotted by the National Forum and some other organizations, slightly shook the UDF's base in some places, where it was also tempted to denounce this operation. In certain townships around Port Elizabeth, East London, and Durban, there is still tension between the UDF, on the one hand, and AZAPO or FOSATU on the other. (25) Several people have already been killed in clashes.

However, the most important event in the weeks ahead will certainly be the founding of a united national confederation of unions in Durban on November 30. This will be an event of the greatest importance in the history of the workers and oppressed of South Africa. The new organization will start out with about 500,000 members. Its weight will give impetus to trade-union organization in new sectors and to trade-union unity in others.

When independent trade-unionism is beginning among the teachers in the Cape and Port Elizabeth, the automobile workers union NAWU, which is linked to the FOSATU, is undertaking fusion discussions with two organizations that have left the collaborationist confederation, the TUSCA. (26)

If the positive effects of unity continue to operate, the confederation could have a million members a year from now. For the first time, the South African Black workers will have a means of expressing themselves as a class and be able to act in a centralized way. The operation underway, however, remains very fragile.

The two main founding organizations will be FOSATU and the miners union (NUM). A lot of things will depend on the future relations between the leaders of these two organizations. The unions have now to solve the problem of how to intervene in the townships. They have had very little presence in these areas, except for some places in the Transvaal and the eastern Cape, where in the absence of the UDF or other forces the FOSATU has been able to play the predominant role.

The unions are also going to have to clarify their relationship to the ANC. It is in fact difficult for the unions to let the bosses discuss with the ANC and pay no attention to this question. The trade-union unification underway has confirmed the numerical and organizational weakness of unions such as the SAAWU and the GAWU, which are members of the UDF and close to the ANC.

However, the new confederation will, in a way, involve a coalition of very different political positions, re-

gardless of how representative some of them may be. At the outset, this broad confederation will not be able to avoid some general debates over strategic questions facing the workers movement.

The unions, like the rest of the mass movement, are particularly concerned about the weakness of international workers solidarity. The big strike at SARMCOL (BTR) in Pietermaritzburg, an enterprise in which British capital is involved got only timid and inadequate support in Great Britain, even though no strike in South Africa has ever been so important.

The metalworkers union affiliated to the FOSATU, the MAWU, launched the struggle in response to the lay-off of 1,000 workers. It led to a general strike throughout the region on July 18 in support of the SARMCOL strikers, which was a total success.

This was the first time that such a strike was held in solidarity with the struggle in a single factory. Even the traders and craft workers closed their small shops. A union had shown that it could unite the entire population around a workers struggle. So, it is regrettable that this fight got so little real support in Britain.

The South African press is well aware of the need to keep quiet about such confrontations. It obviously has other concerns, and in these times it is not at all happy about having to point up the contradictions that arise from the struggles of the Black working class against employers who are proclaiming in every direction their support for "democracy."

A metalworker trade-unionist remarked in this connection "the media in South Africa seemed to be scared to report this. Despite the extensive coverage of the hearings [at the UN in a report on working conditions at SARMCOL, Bata, Tidwell, and Transvaal Alloys] and press statements from MAWU, there was very little reporting of the union delegates' presence or evidence. Nor was there reporting of remarkable commitments of employers' representatives. It seems that is not only the SABC [state TV] which is 'protecting' the public." (27)

Beyond the present situation, the struggle of the oppressed in South Africa needs great determination and great diversity in action from the solidarity movements. □

24. 'People's Express,' September and October 1985. The New Unity Movement was formed at a conference held in the Cape in April 1985. (Cf. 'Azania Frontline,' bulletin of the Committee for the Liberation of Azania, London, No. 11, September 1985.)

25. 'Evening Post,' May 2-25, 1985.

26. 'Cape Times,' September 27, 1985.

27. 'Financial Mail,' October 11, 1985.

International workers movement steps up solidarity

IN BRITAIN ... the National Union of Seamen (NUS) hosted an important international conference on October 30-31 organised by Maritime Unions against Apartheid which involves British, Danish and Australian trade unions. Over thirty countries were represented at the conference which was addressed by, among others, Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party. He expressed support for workers action to implement sanctions. The aim of the conference was to organise to stop all oil imports. A resolution was passed to commit participants to 'direct action against the vessels of any companies involved in supplying oil to South Africa'. The United Nations is for an oil embargo but, unlike the arms embargo, it is voluntary. Although all oil producing states officially observe the ban, oil companies continue to supply crude oil to South Africa.

Meanwhile British maritime workers have already begun to take action at the base against South African goods. In August of this year, dockworkers in Southampton refused to handle a load containing a computer-controlled Berox 800 KV milling machine aboard the ship *Sedburg*, bound for Durban. In doing this the dockworkers were enforcing what even the British government was pledged to do, since the machines were probably destined for resparring of Mirage fighter planes and thus should have been stopped under the terms of the military embargo. This action was the result of concerted work by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the NUS and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) to trace the cargo.

Whilst the conference was going on in London, in Swansea, South Wales dockers were refusing to unload a cargo of South African coal from the West German owned vessel *Angelica Schulte*. The Welsh dockers agreed to stop handling the coal after appeals from the TGWU and the South Wales NUM. Liverpool dockers were also planning similar action.

French police protect the South African embassy in a protest in Paris (DR)



For information on the highly successful November 2 national demonstration against apartheid, see *International Viewpoint* No 86, November 11, 1985.

IN SCANDINAVIA ... workers are showing the way in terms of action against apartheid. Finnish and Norwegian transport workers began a boycott of trade with South Africa in mid-October and this soon spread to Sweden. In Sweden the action will stop 245 million dollars-worth of trade per year. Danish workers are due to join the blockade soon.

IN IRELAND ... the fight of the Dunnes' Stores workers against the handling of South African goods is still continuing due to the refusal of the management to reach an agreement (see *International Viewpoint* No 83, September 10, 1985). The Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union (IDATU) is still appealing for support and donations can be sent to IDATU, O'Lehane House, 9, Cavendish Road, Dublin, 1.

The Dunnes' workers are not the only ones to have taken action under the union's policy and there have been some successes elsewhere. Clery and Company withdrew South African shoes from its store following representations from IDATU and Best Ltd has returned all South African clothing to suppliers. Roches' stores has withdrawn some South African produce from supermarkets and members at Quinnsnowth now have the right not to handle apartheid goods.

[Much of the above information was obtained from *International Labour Reports*, November-December, 1985 and *Labour Research* September 1985].

IN USA ... trade union action and support is also spreading in particular in the autoworkers and mineworkers unions. The president of the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) was recently arrested whilst picketing outside the South African embassy in Washington DC. The anti-apartheid movement is pledged to maintain picketing of the embassy until apartheid is ended. It is illegal to go within 500 feet of the embassy and many prominent personalities have been arrested including singer, Stevie Wonder.

The UMWA have also set up a fund, South African Miners' Aid Fund, which will send money to the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Two companies the UMWA is helping to expose are Royal Dutch Shell and Fluor Corporation. Both have extensive holdings in South Africa. They are co-owners of A.T. Massey Corporation which forced 2,000 UMWA members out on strike recently.

Responding to the United Nations designation of October 11 as a day of solidarity with South African political prisoners, campus protests, marches and rallies against apartheid were held in many cities across Canada and the USA.

IN THE SPANISH STATE ... The Commission for Solidarity with South Africa in Barcelona recently organised a tour with Solly Smith, a representative of the ANC in Europe, who visited several towns in the region during a week of action from 7 to 12 October. The week culminated in a demonstration attracting 5,000 people. Similar actions were also organised in Madrid. □

How Khomeini defeated the workers movement

THE FOLLOWING is the first of three articles on the defeat and beginning recovery of the workers movement in Khomeini's Iran.

SABER NIKBEEN

The wave of terror unleashed by the Islamic regime in June and July of 1981 led rapidly to a general defeat of the revolutionary mass movement and a complete take-over by the bourgeois-clerical faction of the post-revolutionary institutions. The main forces of the left, which claimed to defend the working class and enjoyed a considerable base inside it, were not prepared for this counterrevolutionary onslaught.

The collaborators — led by the pro-Moscow Tudeh Party and their Fedayan fellow travellers (the majority or *Ekseriyat*, faction) — continued to support the regime of "militant Moslems", claiming that it was at least "anti-imperialist." They denounced the opposition to the terror as the result of "imperialist plots."

Under the circumstances then prevailing, such an attitude meant active cooperation with the repressive forces of the bourgeois state—the Pasdaran Army, the Islamic anjomans, the baseej corps, the hezbollahi thugs, (1) the Imam's komitehs, etc.

The oppositionists — the largest being the Fedayan Minority Faction (the Aghaliyat) and Peykar (a Maoist group) made the fundamental mistake of tail-ending the Mojahedeen Organization. At that time, the Mojahedeen were aiming for a rapid take-over of power from above, hoping to win control of the government through the armed actions of their own militia and promised support from a faction of the army and the Shiite clergy itself.

The consequences of this are now history. The workers movement underwent a rapid disintegration. The larger left opposition forces went down with the Mojahedeen without having enough time to realise what was happening. The forces of counter-revolution were greatly strengthened. Having tested the relationship of

forces, the reactionaries pushed for a final, decisive blow against all the remaining manifestations of the revolutionary movement. The collaborators themselves now came under the gun because they were no longer needed.

The salient result of this period was the almost total destruction of all the independent organizations of the masses, including the potentially independent workers councils (*shoras*). Arrests en masse and summary executions of thousands of known militants followed suit. The situation deteriorated so rapidly that before the third anniversary of the February 1979 insurrection, none of the major gains of the revolution remained intact.

In the face of this defeat, opportunists of all colours — who had in fact constantly underestimated the counterrevolutionary potential of the Islamic bourgeois regime and its petty-bourgeois shock troops and who were responsible for the unpreparedness of the revolutionary movement — claimed that their error was to overestimate the capacities of the Islamic working class.

The events of the last four years have, however, shown that the opportunists were just as mistaken about the working class as they were about the "Islamic" leaders. The working class remains, despite the ever increasing repression, the only major social force of opposition to the counter-revolution.

The workers movement has outlasted the capitalist offensive, gradually reconstructing its defences, and it is even beginning to prepare for a general confrontation. It has already forced the Islamic regime to retreat on some important issues.

The recovery of the workers movement has to be looked at in its various phases, and the changes that have come about have to be understood. This is necessary in order to

be able to see the possibilities that exist in the present situation for a future revival of the mass movement.

Just as the workers movement in September to February 1979 helped to radicalise the mass movement against the shah, today it can give impetus to the popular discontent with Khomeini. This time, the rise in workers struggles may have to provide the catalyst for the mass movement, and not vice versa, as was the case before.

The new role of the workers movement has been indicated already in relation to the anti-war movement and the protests of the urban poor. Following the latest waves of workers actions (strikes, go-slows, protests), there has been a definite increase in all other forms of resistance by the oppressed and toiling sections against the reactionary policies of the Khomeini regime.

It should not be forgotten that the rise that led to the Iranian revolution began in fact in the summer of 1976, with a sharp rise in activity amongst the urban poor of major cities, such as Tehran, Esfahan, Tabriz, and Ahwaz. At that time, for example, Tehran had something over half a million unemployed or underemployed poor. Today, this figure has gone well over the 2 million mark, and is still growing. Any major victory for the working class could immediately create an explosive social situation.

In such conditions, it is no accident that the regime of the mullahs is staking everything on keeping the repressive forces constantly mobilized and suppressing any movement before it can spread. The terror of the summer of 1981 marked the beginning of this period.

The capitalist offensive was launched after a considerable period of decline in the workers movement caused by the Iran-Iraq war. Under the cover of this war, the Islamic anjomans were successfully utilized by the regime to oppose and disrupt the activities of the independent shoras.

In almost every major factory, there were, before the offensive was launched, powerful pro-regime anjomans, themselves armed and also linked to Pasdaran (2) units outside. The military drills they conducted (daily in most places) were supposed to be to train volunteers for the front.

1. "Anjoman" means "society." The anjomans were built by Islamic fundamentalists to replace the shoras, or councils. "Baseej" means "mobilization." It was used for corps of volunteers organized by the regime. "Hezbollah" means the "party of God," it was used by rightists who attacked demonstrations considered to be organized by un-Godly parties. —IV.

2. "Pasdars" means "guard." The pasdars were the militias organized by the clergy. The Persian plural is "pasdaran." —IV.



Iranian army troops march past the presidential review stand — June 1984 (DR)

In fact, they were designed to create an atmosphere of fear and apprehension inside the factories.

The capitalist regime had also succeeded in most places in forcing through a drastic cut in wages (by either simply not allowing any increases and letting monetary inflation do the job, or by imposing direct cuts in incomes) and longer hours, except in the most powerful sectors of the working class. The forty hour week gave way to 44 and then to the 48-hour week. Furthermore, to help the war efforts of the regime, productivity deals were imposed in many factories.

Terror-June-December 1981

All of these measures were not, however, sufficient to prompt capital investments and a return of the capitalists who had fled the revolution. The summer 1981 offensive was designed to remedy this failing.

The fact that this onslaught was indeed a *capitalist* offensive is clearly indicated by its immediate aims of crushing the workers' resistance. In almost every workplace, militant workers were arrested en masse and extensive lay-offs were carried out.

At every factory gate, the armed guards of the Islamic anjomans and/or pasdars would do body searches to prevent any political propaganda reaching the workers. Distribution of any kind of literature not approved by the anjomans was prohibited. In many factories, political discussions could be punished with expulsions.

A tactic more or less universally used by the anjomans in the first days of the terror was to create some disturbance in the factory directed against well-known militant leaders, then bring in the pasdars to arrest

those "responsible" for the conflict and "restore order."

In addition, the anjomans would provide a list of militant workers and demand that the management sack them or else face the consequences. The management would then lay these workers off or even hand them over to the pasdars. In most places, the lists published by the anjomans were actually invitations to the repressive forces to arrest the named workers.

A few examples will illustrate what took place after June 21, 1981:

In the railways in Tehran, a leaflet signed by the "Hezbollahi Revenge Squad" was distributed naming 23 active leaders, including all of the militant members of the workplace shora, threatening them with execution if they did not resign from their jobs. By the end of the week, they were all either arrested (one was later executed) or were forced to go into hiding. The day after the explosion in the Islamic Republican Party headquarters, another fifty workers were arrested.

A few weeks later, about 1,500 temporary (contract) workers were given the choice of signing a new contract or getting the sack. The agreement put before them included a clause giving the management the right to terminate the contract whenever it wished to. There were, of course, protests, but under the circumstances, they got nowhere. (3)

In the industrial city of Alborz, near Ghazvin, on the night of June 21 (the day when the armed thugs of hezbollah machine-gunned a demonstration of over 300,000 persons in Tehran), pasdars raided the homes of many militant workers. They arrested over 200 persons (of whom 17 were executed). In the days that followed, many factories were occupied by the repressive forces.

In the Parchin factory (part of the arms industry) on June 22, 57 workers were arrested, and the independent shora was replaced by a reactionary one appointed from above.

In the General Motors factory in Tehran, on June 29, all the leading activists were arrested. On July 5, pasdars were at the factory gate with a list of names provided by the anjoman. Over a hundred workers were arrested that day, and another hundred a week later.

In the Benz-e-Khavar auto factory, on the night of June 28, pasdars raided the homes of the leaders of the shora and arrested three of them. The next day, one of them was whipped in front of the workforce. He was later executed. The anjoman also gave the names of 54 militants to the management. All of the named workers were either arrested or sacked. In this way, the independent anjoman was destroyed.

In the Iran Yasa tire factory, on June 28, all members of the shora were taken to the Labour Ministry and forced to resign without being allowed to explain their reasons. Obviously, they were threatened with imprisonment or execution. The militant mood of the workers in this factory, however, kept the regime from resorting to violence immediately. The repression there began later, in the autumn of 1981, with a total ban on the shora.

In the Tehran Bus Company, which had been involved in a labour dispute for almost a month, the situation was "normalized" by the arrest of all the militant members of the shora on July 4. Baseeji were brought in to keep an eye on every department.

These attacks on the working class were raised to a special intensity whenever any member of the regime was killed. The day after the explosion in the IRP headquarters, for example, in Tehran alone a convoy of forty buses went to the gates of most of the factories on the Tehran-Karaj Road arresting militant workers fingered by the anjomans. Many of those arrested at that time have yet to be released. A lot of them were executed. Those who were eventually released lost their jobs.

In the Iran National factory over 700 workers (out of a workforce of 8,000) were laid off. Some of them were allowed back after passing an "ideological test" administered by the anjoman.

3. All the incidents cited in this article have been based either on reports from the Iranian Fourth Internationalists or reports that have appeared in the journals of other left groups. In all cases, a comparison has been made between the various reports of the same incidents. Author's note.

The powerful oil workers had kept their shora. A section of them in the Shiraz refinery had been involved in a dispute with the Oil Ministry that started long before the wave of terror. They had planned the eleventh meeting of the National Shora to deal with this dispute and to organize solidarity actions with the Shiraz workers.

This meeting fell on June 23-24, that is, just a few days after the terror began. Delegates were reluctant to call for an all-out strike. They limited themselves to a resolution calling for some mild solidarity measures.

Five days later at the Tehran refinery, as soon as workers got out of the buses, they were confronted by a joint force of anjoman guards and pasdars. Many were beaten up on the spot, and many more were arrested, including all the militant shora members.

In the Pars Elektrik factory, the Islamic Anjoman organized a sit-in demanding the sacking of 15 workers. The management, of course, immediately acceded to this demand. When workers protested on the following day, a further 150 were sacked. By the end of July the number of those arrested and laid off had reached 300. On August 25, six leaders were executed. To put down any possible protests, pasdars occupied the factory.

It was by means of such vicious attacks that the workers' resistance was eventually broken. Gradually, all over the country, all the remaining shoras were crushed. Once that was accomplished, new offensives were launched.

No "pagan" ideas allowed

The workers' share of the annual profits (set at 20% under the shah) was already cancelled in 1980. This aroused many protests, which had forced the regime to retreat. The authorities had promised that for the coming year, a new plan would be introduced. After the workers' resistance was crushed, in August, the "new" plan was made public. It had nothing to do with profit sharing, which was labeled a "Taghooti," that is, a "pagan" idea.

Rather, workers were promised a one percent increase in wages for every one percent increase in output, calculated on the basis of a "standard level" fixed by the Ministry of Labour. Those workers in factories producing below 65% of this level would receive nothing, and those in factories producing between 65% and 100% of the norm only 0.2% for every one percent increase in output. Under the circumstances, the authorities could expect



An Iranian soldier assists his companion at the Iran-Iraq front (DR)

that there would be no serious protests.

On August 30, the new minister of oil, Gharazi, who was considered a "maktabi" (literally, a scholastic, that is, an Islamic fundamentalist, a *maktab* being a religious school), announced another plan. Thursday closings were to be ended. (Since the Islamic sabbath is Friday, Thursday corresponds in Islamic countries to the Western Saturday.)

A 44-hour week was to be applied throughout the oil industry. There were protests, but none succeeded in changing the mind of the minister. All those workers who defied the new hours and stayed away on Thursdays were immediately sacked.

In Tehran, Esfahan, and Shiraz, many oil workers were arrested. To further weaken the oil workers, many South Korean and Pakistani skilled workers and technicians were brought in to replace discontented workers.

In most factories, a "code of discipline" was imposed, laying down a whole list of offenses for which a worker could be sacked. Among them were "any form of insult against the Islamic Republic" and "all kinds of disturbing the minds of the workers as regards the Islamic Republic." (From the code of discipline of the group of factories belonging to the National Shoe Co.)

Despite everything, there were a number of strikes in this period (we know of 14). Most of them, however, were bloodily suppressed, sometimes after an initial retreat by the authorities.

At the Starlite factory (with a mostly female workforce of over

1,200), there was a mass assembly on September 15 in protest against arbitrary sackings of women workers whom the *maktabi* manager accused of not respecting Islamic *hejab* (that is, the obligation of women to cover their distinctively female features, which when interpreted strictly can mean shrouding themselves completely in a sort of black tent).

At first, the management did not make any moves. But by the end of the week, one of the women workers had been executed and 58 arrested. In early October, the management sacked the elected representative of the workers in the consumer cooperative. At the end of October, the management announced plans for increasing productivity without any wage increases (to aid the "war effort").

The workers responded with a go-slow. Two workers were arrested. On November 3, the workers went on strike. The next day, six more workers were sacked. The struggle then ended in a defeat.

In Iran National, a strike began on December 4. The workers were protesting against the proposals to cancel their right to buy a car every few years at the factory price. The Islamic anjoman warned against any "Monafaghin" conspiracy. (This term means literally 'hypocrite' and is generally applied by fundamentalists to left and liberal Moslems.)

The Minister of Labour and a group of pasdars came to the factory the next day to try to persuade the workers to end the strike. The workers gave notice that if by December 13, a new proposal was not made. They would resume industrial action.

On the same day, the labour minister, Tavakoli, appeared on national TV denouncing the workers as "profiteers" and "responsible for the black market." The strength of the pasdar units inside the factory was tripled. On December 13, arrests began. Almost 400 workers lost their jobs. The repressive forces opened fire on the workers, wounding many and killing at least one.

The only successful strike in this entire period took place in the Skuip factory on August 25. It was a protest against a management that was blatantly cheating the workers in its calculations of their over-time pay.

In this period, the regime of the mullahs was preparing the ground for its plan to normalize the economy and to bring back the capitalists. This was to be capped by new labour laws, around which a fight had been going on since the February 1979 insurrection. (4)

4. See "Clergy serves Mammon, but badly," in "International Viewpoint," No 85, October 28, 1985.

Statement of the Colombian section of the Fourth International

ON NOVEMBER 8 a massive military operation was launched by the Colombian army against the occupation of the Palace of Justice in the capital Bogota, by the April 19 Movement (M-19) guerillas. The operation cost 95 lives and was personally authorised by President Belisario Betancur and his Congress who ruled out all possibility of negotiation despite demands by hostages held in the Palace of Justice that this be done. The army operation in fact sparked off protests by 30,000 court workers demanding to know why the government had refused to negotiate.

We publish below the statement of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) — Colombian section of the Fourth International, on these events.

With respect to the occupation of the Palace of Justice by a commando group of April 19 Movement, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (the Colombian section of the Fourth International) makes the following statement to public opinion, the workers and peas-

ants movement, and democratic forces:

1. We condemn the military operation launched by the Colombian army against the Palace of Justice and the April 19 movement. This assault represents a crime against the lives of the judges and civilian person-

nel who were taken as hostages. The fact that the government ordered this action demonstrated that it wanted a military solution of the problem.

2. The resolutions voted by the Senate and the House of Representatives were totally hypocritical. A parliament that has done its utmost to prevent the most minimal reform, which is against the process of political liberalization, a parliament led by the nose by the two traditional parties, has no moral or political authority to condemn the action of the April 19 Movement.

We have stressed that the violence in this country in the past and today has an *official origin*, that is, those responsible for it are the government, the army, the Liberal and Conservative parties, and the parliament that follows their orders.

3. We do not support the military action of the April 19 Movement. This was an isolated action carried out in disregard for the present state of the mass movement, and which therefore obscures for the masses the role that they can and must play as an *organized force* in the struggle against the capitalist system and the government of Belisario Betancur.

Such actions by the April 19 movement have served as a pretext for rightist forces, the army, and the government to step up their repression against the Colombian people and to increase the budgetary appropriation for the military. That is why these sectors are calling for a militarist solution in the long run.

4. The government of Belisario Betancur bears the sole responsibility for the deaths of the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Alfonso Reyes Echandia; of the Supreme Court judge Maria Ines Ramos; of the civilian personnel; and of the members of the April 19 Movement.

Thus, the major blow to the so-called "democratic" opening has come from the bipartisan government itself;

We call on the workers and peasants movement, on its parties, and on all democratic forces to demonstrate their condemnation of the bloody solution that the Betancur government and the army gave to the occupation of the Palace of Justice. We call on the exploited people to block the advance of militarism. It is necessary to continue the struggle for a genuine democratic opening, for the implementation of the accords signed with the guerrillas, for the dismantling of the paramilitary groups, and for the lifting of the state of siege.

Signed: National Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, Bogota, November 7, 1985.

Socialist leader murdered

THE COLOMBIAN socialist leader Cesar Florez Gonzalez was shot down on October 30 in the city of Riochacha. It seems that two mercenaries perpetrated the crime. Cesar Florez was well known throughout the Northern Coast region of Colombia for his work on behalf of the disadvantaged. A lawyer, he dedicated himself to helping the people living in the shantytowns around the city of Cartagena. In fact, one of these settlements was named after him by the local people who wanted in this way to express their gratitude to the socialist leader.

As a member of the national leadership of the Partido Socialista Revolucionario (PSR), the Colombian section of the Fourth International, Cesar Florez had been threatened with death several times by anonymous representatives of the landlords. The police in Cartagena also spared no efforts to harass him. He was illegally arrested on two occasions. The protest organized by his comrades and the solidarity of the oppressed in Cartagena won his release.

A large number of people from the shantytowns attended the funeral of Cesar Florez, who at the time of his death was part of the leadership of the Partido Socialista, a recent splitoff from the PSR.

The murder of Florez comes in the context of a desperate offensive launched by the government, the army, and the most reactionary forces in Colombia, which are trying to suppress by violent means the protests of the workers and poor masses against the declining standard of living and the failure of the process intended to bring peace to the country.

Indeed, only a week after the murder of Cesar Florez, the government of Belisario Betancur ordered the army to send its tanks against the Palace of Justice where a guerrilla unit of the April 19 Movement had taken hostages. The government's overkill operation cost the lives of 95 persons, twelve of whom were judges of the Supreme Court and forty of whom were civilians.

Rodrigo O' Farrell

AROUND THE WORLD



West Germany

Demonstration against austerity

THE FALL actions of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) against the government's policies were a great success. A campaign of more than a thousand local demonstrations and tens of thousands of factory meetings culminated in rallies of more than 600,000 workers on October 19.

The government proved unable to use the budget debate that took place in the middle of the week of action to sell its so-called achievements in reducing unemployment. Kohl's propaganda about the "week of agitation" and the DGB's so-called "scorched earth" policy was no more effective in keeping the workers away from the demonstrations.

In the factories and on the streets the potential opposition to this government became clear, and the responsibility that falls on the trade-union movement.

Those who came out for these actions are not going to be satisfied any more if Breit proposes negotiations with the government. OK, but only when there is not going to be much on offer. So, how often should we go through this business?

The active workers want a different policy. But unlike Breit [leader of the DGB] they know that means another government. And this in fact aroused the Social Democrat candidate for chancellor, Johannes Rau, for a day or two, and he gave an interview to the Cologne *Express* outlining the policy he would follow in government:

The 23 laws passed by the present government introducing social cut-backs and cuts in trade-union rights would be reversed. Political black-listing would no longer be practised, and the government would opt out of the NATO double-track decision and any participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars).

But that was too much for other party figures, and Rau himself complained of being misunderstood by the *Express*.

This points up the dilemma of the Social Democrats. Rau, Apel, Vogel, and the rest want only enough "alternative policy" to gain a profile of opposition to the Turn parties [the "Turn" is used by the Christian Democrats to mean that the period

of "welfare" capitalism is over].

This is why Rau and Schroeder reject an alliance with the Greens. That would force them to change their policy. The bosses might bring economic pressure to bear and threaten to stop investments, as they are doing today in Hesse [where there has been an alliance between the Social Democrats and the Greens].

The unions have to widen the opening that has begun. This means:

— Contract struggles to maintain the living standard by higher wages and to win a shorter workweek in opposition to flexible hours and unemployment.

— Mobilizations against the Turn government and for a Social Democratic government working with the Greens, because that is the only alternative today to the Turn.

— Mobilizations to press their demands, especially for an employment program in the social and environmental areas, in order to assure that another government will pursue a policy in the interests of the workers.

— Readiness to support such a government actively against the open and surreptitious resistance of the bosses.

(From the October 24 issue of *Was Tun*.)

Latin America

Fourth Internationalists meet

THE THIRD meeting of the political bureaux of the Latin American sections of the Fourth International took place last September and was attended by representatives of the sections in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and the West Indies, as well as a delegation from the United Secretariat.

There were issues on the agenda concerning the region as a whole as well as discussions on the political development and construction of the sections in particular countries.

The first report presented was on the deepening economic crisis of the past year, its social effects and the responses and initiatives in relation to the foreign debt following the conferences that were held in Havana last June and July. The Latin American sections of the Fourth International drew up a joint statement on this subject and pledged to be actively involved in the regional wide day of trade union action on

October 23 (see *International Viewpoint* No 85, October 28, 1985).

The meeting also discussed two further reports, one presented by comrade Margarito Montes from Mexico on the question of the development of the peasant movement in the region and its relations with the workers movement; and the other on the changes in the social position of women and the forms of struggle in the economic crisis. The latter report was presented jointly by comrades from Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia.

Finally the meeting discussed the situation in Central America.

Concerning the construction of the sections and their perspectives for growth, the discussion centred on the cases of Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia and above all Mexico, following the results of the elections in July 1985 and the successes of the PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores). In relation to this, the meeting noted a document announcing a split with the Colombian section of the Fourth International issued last June by former leaders of the PSR (Partido Socialista Revolucionario), Socorro Ramirez and Ricardo Sanchez. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International adopted a statement on this issue at its September meeting in which it 'condemned the split initiative as a break with the programme of the International and as in practice going further and further from the construction of a vanguard party based on a Leninist heritage.' In the position it took the United Secretariat confirmed 'its total support and solidarity with the PSR, the Colombian section of the Fourth International'. □

ERRATUM

For technical reasons an error occurred in *IV* No 86, November 11, 1985 on page 23.

In the article entitled 'The SWP(USA) rejects the organisational demands of the Twelfth World Congress', the end of the second section of point 'c' of the world congress resolutions should read, 'when they should all be members of the fraternal section of the Fourth International in the United States, the SWP ...', not, 'when they should all be members of the Fourth International in the United States, the SWP ...'

We apologise to readers for this error.

Fall mobilizations show continuing impetus of peace movement

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS in the Netherlands on October 26 and November 1 against deployment of the missiles and throughout the Spanish state on November 10 against NATO showed both the continuing strength of the peace movement and a growing need for more conscious organization and longer-term perspectives.

GERRY FOLEY

In the Netherlands, the demonstration by the militant wing of the peace movement, timed to coincide with the presentation to the premier of the petitions against the deployment of the missiles, was an impressive success, despite the opposition of the moderate leadership of the national coordinating committee, the KKN (the Komitee Kruisraketten Nee — Committee Against the Cruise Missiles).

The KKN leaders not only directly called on people not to participate in the militant demonstration, they even changed the time of the rally at the Houtrusthalle in the Hague to keep people from participating in both events. As it turned out, the latter maneuver backfired. Birger Soerensen, correspondent for *Klassekampen*, the paper of the Danish section of the Fourth International, wrote from Amsterdam:

"Some 15,000 people chose to demonstrate their determination to continue the struggle. It was not the left wing of the peace movement that was left with a small following, but Mient-Jan Faber and company — with about 5,000 people, which seemed a small number in the gigantic Houtrusthalle."

Among the main organizers of the demonstration were the SAP (Socialist Arbeiders-Partij — Dutch section of the Fourth International) and the militant peace group BONK.

At the conclusion of the petition campaign, 3.7 million people signed against the deployment of the missiles in a country with a total population of about 14 million.

On November 1, an estimated 150,000 high-school students struck against deployment of the missiles.

The SAP paper, *Klassenstrijd*, commented: "The call for the strike

was issued by the national peace organization Jongeren Tegen Kernwapens (Young People Against Nuclear Weapons), which includes the young people of the left youth organizations, as well as a lot of unorganized youth. Although this organization is part of the Committee Against the Cruise Missiles, this strike was organized entirely on its own initiative. It was all done by volunteers, without a penny in subsidies, with a contact network of 150 local groups and many individuals."

In the Spanish state, *Combate*, the paper of the Spanish-state section of the Fourth International, reported that in general the November 9-10 demonstrations were larger than those of December 2, 1984, but smaller

'NATO — no. Bases out ...'



than those against Reagan in May, and that the results differed notably from city to city and among the various nationalities.

One factor that kept the numbers down in the Atlantic coast regions in particular was heavy rain, although spirited participants in the demonstration of 5,000 in Bilbao shouted, "La lluvia de Felipe no nos derrite y la de Fraga no nos apaga! (The rain of Felipe [Gonzalez] will not melt us, and the rain of Fraga [Ibarne, the rightist leader] will not extinguish us."

In the Basque country, the actions suffered from disunity. The revolutionary nationalist organization, Herri Batasuna, did not participate. Furthermore the Communist Party; Euzkadiko Ezkerra (a moderate group of nationalist origin); and the CP-dominated union, the Workers Commissions, held small diversionary demonstrations. But in Pamplona, the turnout for the united demonstration was 5,000, considerably larger than the 3,000 in May.

In Madrid, 20,000 people took part in marches on November 9 and about 300,000 in the big demonstrations on November 10. That was more than twice the December 2, 1984, figure, but less than the half million that demonstrated against Reagan. *Combate* wrote that, nonetheless, "it was the largest demonstration against the policies of the government yet, since an important factor last May was the physical presence of the emperor of the galaxy [Reagan]."

In Barcelona, about 30,000 people formed up to spell out "Nato, no: Bases out; neutrality; referendum" in the Catalan language. About 70,000 participated in the subsequent demonstration. That was a bit more than last December but far less than the half million that demonstrated against Reagan. "A big factor was inadequacies in building the action, with little propaganda in the last days," *Combate* wrote. It concluded more generally:

"We have to continue to stress that despite the opposition of the majority of people to NATO, there is no automatic guarantee that masses of people will come out to protest. Daily work has to be continued in the neighborhoods, towns, factories, and schools ... It is necessary to continue strengthening links with other social movements (unions, feminist groups, international solidarity movements) and with the parties and other groups opposed to Spanish membership in NATO. In this way we will assure that the next demonstrations coming up in February are much more massive than those on November 10." □