

International VIEWPOINT

Issue 199

February 4, 1991

£1; \$2.25; C\$3; 14FF

Welcome to the New World Order!



**Inside: Gulf War – analysis, antiwar actions, FI statement
plus: Morocco ● Algeria ● China ● Soviet Union ● etc**

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International Viewpoint

A fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

All editorial and subscription correspondence should be mailed to: International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Fax: 43 79 21 06.

Published by Presse-Edition-Communication (PEC). Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 0294-2925. Imprimé par Rotographie.

International Viewpoint is catalogued by the US Alternative Press Index.

● News closing date:
January 25, 1991
Fax no: 43 79 21 06

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Stop the imperialist aggression against Iraq!

ALL the debates and conjectures that preceded the outbreak of the war can now be resolved. First of these was the debate on its real objectives. Whatever attitude one may have on the question of Kuwait, there can no longer be the slightest doubt that the real aim of the impressive concentration of American forces in the Gulf region goes beyond the "liberation" of the Emirate. This objective could have been achieved through a sustained blockade, without bloodshed, as some of the American establishment — fearing the negative effects of military action on imperialist interests in the Arab and Muslim countries — wished.

But this was not the objective of Bush and his acolytes. This self-appointed world cop unilaterally despatched forces to the region that went well beyond what was needed to defend this other Texas that is the Saudi Arabian kingdom, or the needs of the embargo decreed by the Great Powers united in the United Nations Security Council. Since the start, Washington's real aim, as we have explained many times, has been the destruction of Iraqi military potential.

Bush plainly stated this, in an official letter addressed to Saddam Hussein during the Baker-Aziz meeting on January 9 in Geneva. This letter does not say: "leave Kuwait or we will dislodge you by force", but in substance "get out unconditionally, otherwise your military establishment will be destroyed." Given the point that things had reached, the Iraqi dictator had, furthermore, every reason to believe that, even if he withdrew, the French promises that this would carry no risk would turn out to be at best only the fond wishes of Paris.

American officials and experts were repeatedly stating that, even if Iraq decided to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait, Saddam's Iraq would be subjected to sanctions, a continuing embargo and other forms of harassment aimed at making him pay the price for the invasion of Kuwait and strangling his military potential.

The definition of the objectives of the first phase of operation *Desert Storm* is eloquent. It is not the Iraqi

ON THE night of January 16/17 George Bush unleashed his strike force — of unprecedented power — in an attack on Iraq.

The most formidable, violent and sophisticated air attack in history is under way, and, at the moment of writing, appears to be achieving its objectives without great difficulty. This will come as a surprise only to those who have either believed the campaign whipped up in the imperialist media around the theme of the "new Hitler" with "the fourth most powerful army in the world", or those among the Arab masses who have been taken in by Saddam's rhetoric.

BUREAU OF THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

troops stationed in Kuwait who have been attacked, nor is the assault restricted to missiles and other Iraqi military means that could be used to directly support the troops.

The Cruise missiles and the formidable air fleet used in this phase have targeted Iraqi objectives which have a military potential in the broad sense of the term. That is to say, not just existing forces, but everything that might permit Iraq to rebuild its military power in the future, such as the nuclear, chemical and armaments industries.

That phase of military action that generally takes place when it has become clear that the enemy will fight to the end, was here the very first one, that is, a lightning, massive night time strike by the American forces. That is to say a deliberate aggression against Iraq as

such, going far beyond the question of Kuwait or the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The destruction of Iraqi potential by the United States and allied forces aims at eliminating a regional power capable of standing up to American plans in the area, threatening Washington's Arab financial backers and protégés, influencing the oil market and breaking the strategic superiority of the Zionist over the Arab forces, which has existed for more than four decades.

These have been the real aims of American imperialism in the Gulf crisis since the start. Those like the social democrats, who have pretended to believe in the "international legality" of the American action, and have defended this idea against the pacifist inclinations of public opinion, have ultimately played the game of the American big brother. The French imperialist government is not winning over anybody in the Arab world by "limiting" its participation to an attack on Kuwait. The Soviet bureaucracy, for its part, has hit the lowest level of cynicism during this crisis. After being well paid for its collusion with Washington in the UN, it has taken the opportunity to try to brutally subdue Lithuania.

What is taking place in the Gulf is the first big battle of the "new world order" so dear to the heart of George Bush. It will not be the last. The present Arab generation will have to draw the same lessons from this as did the generation of 1967, which saw at one and the same time the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese and the humiliating defeat of the Arab regimes by Israel.

Rotten bourgeois dictatorships are incapable of a victorious resistance to imperialism. The latter's technological superiority can only be overcome by a prolonged popular revolutionary mobilization supported by the world anti-imperialist and anti-militarist movements.

Such support is more than ever needed for the masses of the region. For them to be able to get rid of all the tyrannies that oppress them it is first of all, and above all, necessary to win the immediate withdrawal of all the forces involved in this criminal imperialist aggression. ★



Apocalypse Now — part II

NEVER in history has a war, and its plans, been “so-much foretold”, so far in advance. The offensive unleashed by the United States army and its allies in the night of January 16/17, 1991 corresponds in detail to the scenario developed by the Pentagon’s strategists since the start of what it was convenient to describe as the “Gulf crisis”.

At the time of writing — January 18, 1991, — less than 48 hours after its start, the offensive has only begun. Nonetheless, phase 1 will certainly run according to plan, since it depends on air forces and missiles, in which the aggressors have crushing and comprehensive superiority. The Pentagon has, of course, prepared several variants for the subsequent phases corresponding to the range of possible results of phase 1.

SALAH JABER

TWO conclusions need to be drawn at this stage. They allow us to resolve the debates which have been taking place inside the anti-imperialist and anti-war movements around two closely connected questions: that of the real objectives of the imperialist intervention and that of the real relation of forces, beyond all the fantasies stemming from contradictory motivations and leading to contradictory conclusions.

The fact that the scenario developed by Washington and “so much foretold” can be implemented with such ease, proves firstly that it was necessary to take this scenario seriously, as we have always done². Secondly it shows that this scenario was perfectly plausible — contrary to the belief of those who took for good coin George Bush’s rantings comparing the stakes in this war to those in the Second World War, or in Saddam Hussein’s blusterings about certain victory.

Errors of well-intentioned doves

Until the last minute, two huge errors of interpretation of the US administration’s designs were current among well-intentioned “doves”. The first was to believe that the main function of the massive forces deployed against Iraq was deterrence, aimed at defending Saudi Arabia and persuading the Iraqis to withdraw from Kuwait. The second was to imagine that, if force was used, due to Baghdad’s obstinacy, this would take place in line with the objectives set by the United Nations Security Council, that

is the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

From the start we have insisted that Washington’s real objectives went far beyond the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait. “International law” was the least of George Bush and co’s concerns. For them the issues were:

1. To defend their hegemony in a region of the world which not only contains the world’s largest reserves of oil, but also puppet states which “recycle” enormous oil revenues to the direct or indirect profit of the imperialist governments and economies;

2. To affirm the absolute political and military supremacy of the United States in the “new world order” after the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the growing paralysis — and collusion — of the bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union;

3. To justify, in this context, the maintenance and even reinforcement of the American armed forces, with financial contributions extracted from the rich beneficiaries — whether other imperialist countries or the oil monarchies — of the American military umbrella;

4. To compensate for the decline in the US’ economic position in the face of German and Japanese competition by underlining the importance of US military power, which had tended to be minimized in the euphoria of world detente with all the fine words about economic competition replacing war, and using its military role as a lever for gaining commercial and financial advantages.

For all these reasons, and because of the considerable stakes involved, Wash-

ington, as we have constantly emphasized, had set itself the objective not of “liberating” Kuwait, but of destroying Iraq’s military/industrial potential.

This was the minimum, non-negotiable programme for the Bush administration: not only to remove the Iraqis from Kuwait, but to remove Iraqi pretensions to regional hegemony in defiance of the US, and in this way to set an example to the rest of the world. This objective had to be reached at whatever cost — whether by military or “peaceful” means.

Thus the only choice left to Saddam Hussein was whether to capitulate without a fight or be crushed by force — to grovel or be forced to grovel³. This analysis completely ruled out all the chimerical “Arab solutions” and other compromise formulas. As we have stressed, the intransigence in this conflict has not come from Saddam Hussein, but the American president. The Iraqi dictator was certainly ready for a variety of possible compromise formulas.

Even ruling out any Iraqi territorial gain, in line with Bush’s “principle” of “no reward for aggression”, a compromise would have been possible on the basis of the proposal made by Saddam Hussein himself on August 12, 1990, ten days after the invasion of Kuwait. (This “principle” is not, of course, applied to Israel — plans floated by the US government for Israeli withdrawal from any part of the territories occupied in 1967 always involve big concessions by the neighbouring Arab states).

Falling into Washington’s trap

The despot of Baghdad had then realized the hole he had dug himself into. He had marched blindly into the trap set for him by Washington⁴. After vainly threatening the Emir of Kuwait to extract from him the funds needed to refloat the Iraqi state, he then invaded Kuwait, promising to withdraw three days later with the hope of getting a satisfactory deal.

Then, faced with the refusal of the Kuwaiti ruler to negotiate, he proclaimed the latter “overthrown” and later announced the annexation of Kuwaiti territory, pursuing his flight forward faced with American and world reaction. On August 12, Saddam Hussein proposed a global discussion on the presence of his army in Kuwait and those of the Israeli forces on the West Bank and Gaza and of Syrian forces in Lebanon.

The aim of this manoeuvre was not to justify the continuation of the occupation

1. “Une guerre tant annoncée” the title of an editorial in *Le Monde*, January 18, 1990.

2. See *International Viewpoint*, nos 190, 191, 194 and 197.

3. *IV* 191.

4. It has been well documented that the US government allowed Saddam Hussein to believe that it would not intervene in his conflict with Kuwait.

of Kuwait, but to allow him to withdraw without losing face. This became more and more clear as time went on. The behaviour of the Iraqi troops in Kuwait, which they pillaged, carrying off everything to Iraq, was evidence that their presence there was not considered irreversible.

The Iraqi leader wanted to be able to boast that he had won not a "reward" for himself — he had probably understood that there was no hope of this — but a "victory for the Arab cause." He would probably have been satisfied with a decision to hold an international conference on the Middle East, in exchange for the withdrawal of his men.

The American administration torpedoed this prospect whenever it presented itself — right up until the rejection of the French proposal at the UN Security Council. Bush categorically and explicitly ruled out not only any compromise or "reward for aggression" but any way out that would allow Saddam Hussein to save face.

Bush's insults and provocations

The fact that an American president surrounded by a multitude of advisers, including psychiatric experts, chose to violently and systematically insult the megalomaniac of Baghdad — calling him "worse than Hitler" and stating that in case of war he was going to "get his ass kicked" was not a matter of impulse. These words were calculated to provoke Saddam into hardening his position and thus justify the military smashing of Iraq.

The feeble diplomatic efforts of the White House, such as the Baker-Aziz meeting in Geneva on January 9 this year were exclusively designed to soothe American public opinion and win support from the US Congress. The idea was to make the Iraqis appear intransigent, when they refused the only choice on offer, total and unconditional surrender.

The letter from Bush to Saddam Hussein that the Iraqi foreign minister Tarek Aziz refused to receive owing to its insulting nature intimated worse than surrender. The letter spelt out the Americans' threat: not only the "liberation" of Kuwait by force, but the "destruction" of "the Iraqi military establishment", adding in this terrible sentence: "What is at stake here is not the future of Kuwait — it will be free, and its government restored — but rather the future of Iraq."

Washington's real objective could be



read from the very deployment of the forces in the Gulf. The "logic of war" was deliberately chosen by the US administration from the beginning. The forces deployed bore no relation to the stated objective, that of forcing the Iraqi army out of Kuwait, even basing oneself on the doctrine of overwhelming superiority enunciated by Powell-Cheney⁵. The figures are well known.

We will only add this commentary from Newsweek⁶ on the 2000 airplanes of the imperialist air armada. "Essentially the same force that NATO arrayed against the Soviet bloc in Central Europe, it represents a 40-year effort to negate the Warsaw Pact's numerical advantage through advanced technology. But the Iraqis have only about 650 operational jets, of which only between 65 and 75 are top-of-the-line Soviet models. The allied air forces face good defenses by Third World standards, but nothing comparable to the forest of surface-to-air missiles in the Warsaw Pact".

This shows the degree to which the forces were without relation to the means chosen by the UN Security Council to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait: an embargo, and de facto a blockade. The White House's arguments against those, including members of the US Congress, who supported the option of a long-term blockade as a "peaceful means" of obtaining Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait were in this respect of unequalled absurdity and hypocrisy.

The Bush administration explained that the size of the forces deployed ruled out a blockade lasting perhaps one or two years, if only for financial reasons, not to mention the morale of the troops and the immobilization in one place of the bulk of the US intervention capacity. If this was the case, however, why could not Bush deploy forces suitable to the aim of a long-term blockade?

Bush himself added: the liberation of Kuwait is an urgent task, since the Iraqis are pillaging that country — as if destroy-

ing the country were a means of saving it from pillage.

All the evidence thus points to the fact that the war was desired by Washington, and that its objective was from the start the destruction of Iraqi military/industrial capacity. All those who have contributed to conferring "international legitimacy" on the American action and have maintained the fiction that the objective of the troop build up in the Gulf was the restoration of the "sovereignty" of the Kuwaiti state over its territory — that is, the restitution to the Emir and his family of their property —

have been accomplices of the American aggression.

This is the case of the Congress "doves" taken in by Bush's claims that the threat of war was the only way to get Saddam Hussein to withdraw without a fight, who voted through war powers. And, of course, it is also the case of that false innocent, the European social democracy, since, from the start, following the example of the French "socialist" government, it has supported all the American resolutions at the UN, including the one authorizing the use of force after January 15, 1991 — which amounted to an abandonment of the blockade strategy.

Worse still, it has actively participated in the US war preparations. French forces are now involved in the aggression, under American operational command, with the feeble and hypocritical caveat that they will only do their killing on Kuwaiti territory.

Alliance with Saudi obscurantism

The social democratic leaders along with other "democrats" of imperialist Europe have used and abused the false arguments of the democratic battle against a terrible dictatorship, echoing Bush's hypocrisy. The value of this pretext can be seen from the fact that it is here being used to justify an alliance with the world's least democratic and most obscurantist state, Saudi Arabia, which even the intervention troops have found hard to put up with.

It should also be pointed out that this so-called battle for democracy has involved the deliberate over-riding of the majorities of public opinion opposed to the involvement of their country in this war. The grandiloquent speeches accusing the pacifists of wanting a "new Munich", referring to the complacency of the imperialist democracies toward the

5. *IV* 197.

6. *Newsweek*, January 21, 1991.

Third Reich in 1938, are as wild as the line peddled by Bush and his agents on the theme of the "new Hitler". Comparisons between Nazi Germany, with its formidable industrial power and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a technologically backward country, which exports only oil and dates and depends on imports in all other fields, including arms, are ridiculous and fantastic.

On the other hand, support for the destruction of a country by the United States, the world's premier military power, for reasons which have everything to do with the latter's hegemony, at a time when it is in an economic recession, amounts to a contribution in reality to the formation of a Fourth Reich — at the moment formally democratic — whose New Order is this time called the "New World Order".

Gorbachev sells Soviet support

The complicity of the Kremlin bureaucracy under Gorbachev — who only yesterday was passing himself off as the champion of peace — is vile. Moscow has literally sold itself to world imperialism, and first of all to American imperialism, its main opponent on the world stage for the past four decades. From the ignominious transaction undertaken at the Helsinki summit on September 9, 1990⁷ until the vote on November 29, 1990 at the UN Security Council authorizing the use of force against Iraq — preceded by the promise of \$6bn in credits from the oil monarchies of the Gulf⁸, of which \$1bn from Kuwait — Gorbachev will at least have succeeded in dispersing any remaining illusions in the heads of the anti-imperialist militants of the Third World as to support from the USSR for their cause.

The brutal and bloody repression of the Lithuanian national movement by Kremlin troops, profiting from the concentration of the world's attention on the Gulf, the reaction of Bush — solely inter-

ested in Gorbachev's support for his Gulf policy — to this, German Chancellor Kohl's declaration reproaching the Lithuanians for being "too much in a hurry", the green light given by Washington to Syria in Lebanon, and the reception of the Chinese foreign minister by the White House, smack of the distribution of racketeering zones of control by mafia bosses. Only complete idiots can see in this a new world era founded on respect for law.

The choir of hypocrites knew what to expect in the Gulf. They were perfectly conscious of the real objectives of Washington, as we were ourselves and as was anybody not taken in by the lies in the imperialist media.

We warned against the Apocalypse Now — Part 2 which the Pentagon was preparing in Iraq⁹. We stated that, when Bush assured the world that: "this will not be another Vietnam, it will not be a prolonged war", he was speaking the truth, since his generals were preparing instead another Hiroshima¹⁰. We were proved not only right — except that reality has gone further.

In the course of the first day of bombardments, more than 20,000 tonnes of bombs were released on Iraq, with a power estimated at one and a half times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Compare this figure with the 3,000 tons dropped daily "in the heaviest of the raids that, in the last year of the Second World War, razed the German cities"¹¹ or with the 40,000 tonnes dropped in two weeks in December 1972 on Hanoi and Haiphong.

In much less than 24 hours on January 17, the American and allied planes made over 1,300 sorties over Iraq and Kuwait, that is, as many as in all of those terrible two weeks at Christmas 1972 in Vietnam.¹² This is indeed the biggest air-raid in history.

The United States intends to continue this onslaught on Iraq at this rhythm for several days, and a month if necessary, according to *Newsweek*¹³. Their action

combines almost playful elements, evoking Coppola's film and a weapons' test on real targets, as with the crime in Japan.

Leaving aside the unprecedented medicalization of the conflict and its "video game" aspect on the technological level, there is also a bet between different parts of the American army on the possibility of winning this war using only air power — which would be the best thing for Washington, since it would lead to few dead and wounded soldiers.

This game is not just for fun. There are real gains to be won. The same *Newsweek* explains candidly that the role of the different branches of the armed forces in this combat will determine the number of billions of dollars that they will be allocated in future Pentagon budgets. Iraq has thus become a vast field for experimentation with the American army's latest gadgets and the object of competition between its different corps.

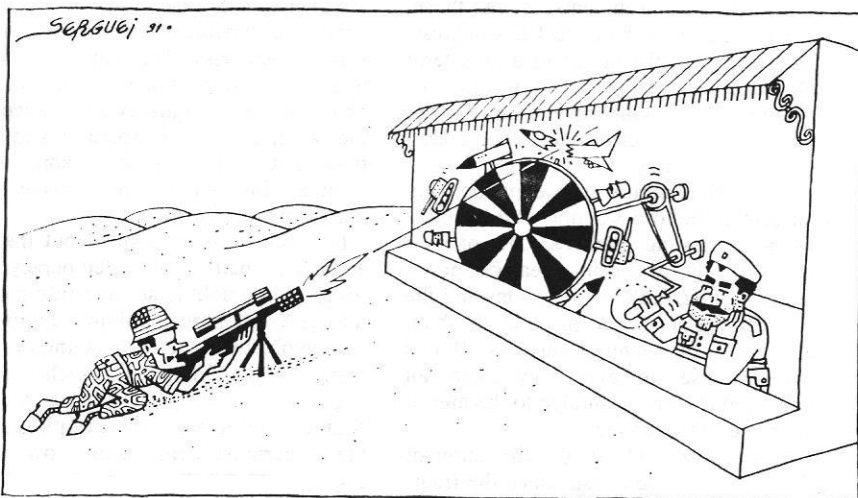
This macabre game has, evidently, nothing to do with the "liberation" of Kuwait. This is also shown by the choice of targets: not only military targets, but also nuclear sites, chemical and biological factories, communications' centres, power stations and so on.

Who can tell how many Bhopals or Chernobyls the destructive fury of the US air force is risking. Who knows how many victims of the bombing and its consequences there will be. We don't know, and, most terribly of all, nor do the Pentagon or White House. The stakes in their eyes are worth putting in danger entire populations, not only that of Iraq but also the neighbouring countries, to which Saddam Hussein has promised to take the conflict.

Destroying Iraq in order to save it

This carnage and destruction — aimed not at destroying a despot but his people and his country — must be stopped. Iraq, the new Carthage, is in the course of being destroyed by today's Romans, capable of vastly greater murders and violence than those of antiquity. It is necessary to maximize the cost of this imperialist aggression, as we have been preparing to do since the start of the build up.

The strong antiwar movement which preceded the unleashing of the aggression and which continues to grow, in particular in the countries taking part in the anti-Iraq crusade and in the Arab countries, can significantly hinder the US actions,



7. *IV* 190 and 191.
 8. *International Herald Tribune*, November 30, 1990.
 9. *IV* 190.
 10. *IV* 197.
 11. According to a military expert quoted in *Le Figaro*, January 18, 1991.
 12. *IHT*, January 14, 1991.
 13. *Newsweek*, op. cit.

and, at the least, win the cessation of the bombing. It must continue without relenting and be stepped up until the withdrawal of all imperialist forces from the Gulf region.

For the same reasons that motivate the imperialist aggression we wish for the defeat of the imperialists with all our heart. But it is no use having illusions. The only real possibility for creating the conditions for a political defeat of imperialism — and even in Vietnam its defeat was political rather than military — today resides in the development and radicalization of the mass movements opposed to the aggression. Even this requires that Iraq resists for a long time, which is no means certain.

The American air force's control of the sky gives it an immense advantage in these open desert regions and allow it to carry out of the work of destruction without great difficulty. No technologically inferior army could resist. There remain the urban zones where a very determined army could hold out for a long time, even against an enemy disposing of far more powerful firepower. This was demonstrated by the defenders of Beirut in the face of the Zionist army in 1982.

But how determined will the Iraqi soldiers be in Kuwait, which is where the Pentagon wants to dislodge them from? The bulk of Saddam Hussein's troops concentrated together there in an ill-thought out way that exposes them to huge losses, are made up of the "people's army", a kind of militia created by the Ba'athist regime, badly fed and poorly trained. These men, among whom are many Egyptian workers drafted by force were motivated to go to Kuwait by the prospect of unrestricted looting and rape — when they could have easily been disciplined by Ba'athist terror.

It is even probable that Saddam Hussein has chosen to send this mass of militia men to Kuwait because they are the least reliable of his fighters and might turn their weapons against him. The fact that the access from Kuwait to Iraq is held by Saddam Hussein's elite forces, the famous Republican Guard, can thus be understood not only as a defence of proper Iraqi territory but as a force to dissuade the troops massed in Kuwait against any desertion and retreat. These troops would then find themselves between the imperialist hammer and the Ba'athist anvil.

The murderous folly of George Bush is only equalled by that of Saddam Hussein. He has dragged his country into a new ill-thought out adventure, which is now costing Iraq whatever and whoever escaped the destruction and massacres of the crazy war against Iran.

Even if you believe that there was something progressive in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, it is clear that the relation of forces made it a senseless and thus criminal undertaking, the last madness of a dictatorship at bay. Even the Bolsheviks

gave away a part of their territory at Brest-Litovsk owing to the balance of forces.

Here is the difference between revolutionary realism and the blindness of a psychopath playing double or quits, in this way hoping to win a refulgent place in the pantheon at the expense of his murdered country.

The other side of this tragedy are the immense illusions in Saddam Hussein amongst a significant part of the Arab masses, and above all the Palestinian masses.

These illusions are certainly the product of years of frustration and bitterness in the face of imperialist and Zionist arrogance. But they are illusions all the same, and dangerous ones, since the awakening may be brutal and disillusion turn to despair.

Twenty three years ago, in 1967, a generation of Arabs placed immense hopes in Nasser's Egypt. They believed in the invincibility of his army and his "rockets". The shock when these same masses realized that their hero had capitulated in six days was terrible. Nasser was an incomparably more progressive and popular figure than Saddam Hussein. The balance of forces between his army and the Israelis was far more favourable than that between the Iraqi army and the coalition it faces. Even so he was defeated.

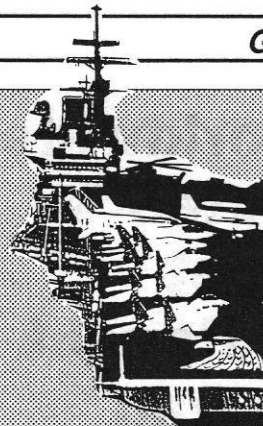
He was technologically inferior to the Israelis and could not conceive of a strategy based on the revolutionary mobilization of the peoples of the whole Arab region, the break-up of the Zionist consensus by a fraternal appeal to Jewish workers and support from the worldwide anti-imperialist movement.

This lesson must, once more, alas, be learnt by the Arab masses. Two decades of defeats and the extreme weakness of the revolutionary movement have allowed the lessons of 1967 to fade away. The people of the *Intifada* itself have forgotten that, at its height in 1988, it gained more by its own popular, self-organized activity than from all the champions of bourgeois nationalism.

The example of the *Intifada*

It is the *Intifada* that has shown the way, and not Saddam Hussein. The *Intifada* must be extended to the other Arab countries, including Iraq. If it had triumphed there before the present war, it would have been able to take possession of a considerable potential to put at the service of the Palestinian cause and the revolution, potential which the madness of the Baghdad despot has given imperialism the opportunity to destroy. Imperialism will win a round, but not the whole battle. It will conquer Saddam Hussein, but not the Iraqi workers that he has oppressed.

The task of the moment is, more than ever: *two, three, many Intifadas!* ★



Massive turnout for January 26 antiwar marches in United States

"SUPPORT our troops — bring them home" was the most popular theme of the immense peace marches in Washington and San Francisco on Saturday January 26. Police estimated the numbers taking part in the Washington march at 75,000, and the organizers at 250,000. The figures for San Francisco were similar.

According to our correspondent, there was a high turnout by young people on the Washington march, with students especially in evidence. There were officially-backed contingents from a number of trade unions, among them the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, the United Electrical Workers, the Service Employees Union, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Other big contingents were of army veterans, Central America and Palestine solidarity activists, Lesbians and Gays and the environmental protection organization Greenpeace. Among other widely supported slogans were "Give peace a chance", and "No blood for oil."

The previous Saturday marches in Washington and San Francisco — of perhaps 50,000 people apiece — had been notable for a high turnout from the black community. ★

Worldwide protests greet onslaught on Iraq

SPANISH STATE

OVER the weekend of January 19/20, 1991, tens of thousands of people participated in demonstrations throughout the Spanish State — more than 80,000 in Madrid, 50,000 in Barcelona, and over 10,000 in cities such as Seville and La Coruña. These were united demonstrations, with a presence from the major union federations, the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and UGT, and the United Left (dominated by the Communist Party). A general strike of school and univer-

sity students is planned for January 24. In many neighbourhoods and small towns, all kinds of initiatives are taking place.

Four young soldiers summoned to join the Spanish fleet in the Gulf have refused to embark. Two of them gave a press conference in which they defended their desertion.

At the call of the CCOO, many workers stopped work for two hours on January 18. This organization has supported the idea of a general strike against the war. For the time being, the UGT has not responded to this proposal, although its leaders have been taking part in all the antiwar mobilizations.

Marches on American bases in the country are planned for January 27. ★

ITALY

BEFORE the outbreak of the war, on January 12, more than 100,000 people gathered in Rome in opposition to NATO and for the withdrawal of Italian troops from the Gulf. The contingent from the Communist Refoundation current — the left wing of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) — was big, as was that of Demo-

crazia Proletaria.

The Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL — the biggest union central, close to the PCI) refused to take part in this mobilization, considering that there was not a sufficiently clear condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein. Nonetheless, unions at a local level were present.

On the night of January 15/16, numerous concerts, sit-ins, marches and antiwar actions took place throughout Italy.

The three main union confederations — the CGIL, the Italian Confederation of Free Unions (CISL) and the Italian Union of Workers (UIL) called for a 15 minute work stoppage in all enterprises at midday on January 15. Since the outbreak of the war, the unions have been calling for local work stoppages, for example on Monday January 17 in Milan and Florence.

On January 17, demonstrations took place in many cities, the most important bringing together 100,000 in Milan. Antiwar initiatives continue throughout the country and many schools and universities are on strike. The following Saturday there were further demonstrations including one of 50,000 in Rome.

Antiwar committees exist in many schools and also in factories, and Christian organizations are playing an important role. Left currents inside the trade unions are putting forward the proposal for a general strike against war on January 30. ★

FRANCE

A CROWD of 100,000 assembled in Paris on January 12, 1991, responding to the "Appeal of the 75", which brings together the Communist Party, the far left and personalities. Other large turnouts were registered in Marseilles (20,000), Lyon, Lille and Bordeaux. Despite a police decree forbidding peace demonstrations in Paris, the National Assembly debate on the war on January 15 was the occasion for a 10,000 strong demonstration, while 15,000 people defied the ban on the evening after the outbreak of the war.

Further protests took place on January 22, with a march of 15,000 in Paris. ★

BRITAIN

AS in many other countries, the Saturday before the start of the war saw an outpouring of pro-peace feeling. Some 80,000 marched in London, 8,000 in Manchester and 5,000 in Glasgow, and for the first time since the crisis began union and Labour Party banners were in evidence.

Women have been mounting a permanent peace vigil outside the Foreign Ministry. On January 15, several thousand demonstrated outside Parliament calling on the MPs to vote against war.

Demonstrations took place throughout the country on January 26, and a national march, for which the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is mobilizing, is planned in London for February 4. ★

War shocks German society

THE first direct German involvement in war since 1945 — besides its financial contributions to the US-led war effort, the West German army has sent parachutists and fighters to a NATO base in Turkey — has aroused strong emotions among the population. There is a debate on the altering of the German constitution to allow the German army to intervene beyond the country's frontiers.

Around 250,000 people — 100,000 in Berlin — took part in antiwar protests in the capitals of the main Länder on January 12, 1991. The mobilizations were headed by the left. In some regions the social democrats (SPD) and the trade unions took the initiative, in others the far left. On the day after war broke out, perhaps 150,000 people demonstrated in Berlin, some 15,000 in Stuttgart and 10,000 in Frankfurt. An estimated 300,000 people were involved in antiwar marches on that day.

Since then there have been endless demonstrations, rallies, blockades of stations and town centres and so on throughout the country, including in small towns. School students are much in evidence, and in many schools peace assemblies have replaced the normal activities. The slogans most often heard are "withdrawal of German troops from the Middle East" followed by "General strike against the war".

Numerous direct actions have been carried out. For example, on Friday January 18, some 800 people blockaded the entrance to the airfield at Hamburg, which is used for logistical support to the imperialist war machine, while 300 people occupied the stock exchange in Frankfurt. An attempt was made to prevent the departure of the German warship, *Mölderf*, from Kiel for the Gulf. A union representing 65,000 military auxiliary personnel called on its members not to take part in the war effort.

On a number of days, the unions have called on their members to stop work for token periods. In some factories, including major enterprises such as Volkswagen Opel, work stoppages have taken place. The National Confederation of Labour (DGB) has called for a central demonstration in Bonn on January 26, a call supported by the SPD, and many Church organizations. A blockade of Bremerhaven harbour was also planned for that day.

According to initial reports the January 26 march in Bonn was attended by some quarter of a million people, with a demonstration of 100,000 taking place on the same day in Berlin.

★

AUSTRALIA

ON January 18/19, more than 100,000 people demonstrated against the participation of Australian warships in the attack on Iraq, and hopes are high that the pro-war stance of the ruling Australian Labor Party leadership and the Australian Council of Trade Unions will face a major revolt. There were marches of 40,000 people in Sydney and Melbourne.

The major Sydney mobilization was organized by a left-dominated coalition. The chant "Hawke, Bush, go to hell, we don't want to die for Shell!" won out against the "Give peace a chance" choruses. When the march rallied outside the Israeli Consulate, calls for a general strike and a split in the federal Cabinet were applauded.

From the second week of January, protest and peace vigils have been constant, at least in the major cities. The coalition has committed itself to repeat the show of strength on January 26. ★

TURKEY

THE leadership of the Türk-Is trade

unions included the issue of war in their statement concerning the successful January 3 general strike. Among other things the union called for Turkey to stay out of the war unless first attacked by outside forces. The fact that "allied" planes are attacking from Turkish bases is being kept out of the Turkish media.

On Sunday January 13, over 50,000 people took part in an illegal antiwar demonstration in Istanbul. There are also reports of antiwar strikes. Big workers' demonstrations on Friday and Saturday 25/26 January are reported to have voiced opposition to Turkey's pro-imperialist stand in the Gulf. ★

PAKISTAN

THE involvement of Pakistan in the US-led crusade has been met with massive outrage, including general strikes and violent demonstrations.

According to newspaper reports popular feeling for Saddam Hisein is sweeping the country. ★

UNITED STATES - See page 7

Pro-Iraqi mood sweeps North Africa

NORTH Africa has witnessed some of the biggest and most militant demonstrations against the imperialist attack on Iraq. As the January 15 deadline approached, tension rose in Tunis where the first, harshly repressed, demonstrations broke out on January 11. But it was the assassination, in Carthage, of PLO leaders Abu Iyad, Abu el Houl and Ahmed Oumari, that brought demonstrators onto the streets in their thousands in fifty different towns (15,000 at Tunis and 20,000 at Sfax), for the most part very young, with many women participating.

Marchers burned the American flag, and carried portraits of Saddam Hussein, or Palestinian or Iraqi banners, to cries of; "Abu Iyad is not dead and the revolution is not finished!"; "No concession, no capitulation, Saddam forward!"; "A single people, a single nation!"; "The generation of anger arises".

The regime did not intervene despite the omnipresence of the army and the brigades of public order. Students on the Tunis campus organized general assemblies (that of the fundamentalist trade union drawing 7,000 people), marches and strike appeals. All schools and universities have been closed until further notice.

In Algeria, numerous mobilizations of support for Saddam Hussein have taken place, for the most part spontaneous. At Constantine, following a public meeting, the French Consulate was sacked by demonstrators; several meetings of support for Iraq have also taken place in the interior of the country.

Several of the "democratic parties" called for a demonstration for the morning of January 18 in Algiers. The fundamentalist FIS called another march in the afternoon which drew some tens of thousands of people, including many youth.

Big fundamentalist marches took place in the other large towns, demanding military training for the youth.

In Morocco, demonstrations are in effect banned following the general strike and riots of last December. King Hassan II sent 1,700 troops to "defend" Saudi Arabia last August. Hassan's principled stance against the occupation of Kuwait can be explained by the billions of dollars of aid he has received from the Saudis to fund his own bloody occupation of the western Sahara. Under the impact of public opinion, he has had to change his tone — he has referred to Saddam Hussein as his "brother", and has warned against an escalation of the war. Hassan's threat to introduce a state of emergency at the least sign of trouble has, for the moment, held back popular mobilizations and a possible explosion of youth. Meanwhile, troops have been moved for the first time from the western Sahara to positions in the northern Rif mountains, where the regime is particularly unpopular.

The Gulf conflict is likely to have a severe effect on already fragile economies. Morocco and Tunisia are being hard hit by the loss of tourist income (the latter country derives one fifth of its foreign earnings from tourism), while Algeria will suffer if the price of oil should decline any further. ★

ISRAEL

ON January 12 a march "against racism and for Jewish-Arab friendship" brought together several thousand Arabs and Jews in the north of Israel, answering a call from the Israeli Peace Now movement, the Supreme Council of Arab Organizations in Israel and the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East.

On January 14, on the initiative of the Women and Peace movement, several hundred people assembled outside the United States embassy in Tel Aviv, the US consulate in West Jerusalem and the headquarters of the 6th fleet in Haifa. Their slogans included "Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait, Israel from the Occupied Territories"; "Immediate withdrawal of American troops from the Gulf"; "No Israeli intervention in the Gulf War".

Many reservists have been called up by radio. According to some sources, many are considering disobeying. The Soldiers' Movement is calling on soldiers to refuse to carry out any illegal act, such as the indiscriminate repression of Palestinians.

During the night of January 14/15, a peace meeting organized by university teachers and some members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) took place in Tel Aviv.

On Friday January 24 several dozen peace activists gathered outside the US embassy in Tel Aviv holding placards saying among other things: "No to Saddam, No to Bush, No to War"; "Immediate ceasefire"; and "The Patriot can save our skins — but only peace can give us a future."

The organizers of this action sent a message of support to the organizers of the January 26 antiwar march in Washington.

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are only allowed out of their houses for two hours a day. Otherwise they are being strictly confined to their houses, not even being permitted to go up onto their roofs. The Unified Leadership of the *intifada* has appealed to Palestinians in the territories not to respond to provocations, since Israeli soldiers have been ordered to fire on anybody defying the curfew. ★

The discreet war of the Italian bourgeoisie

LAST autumn, Italian political life was dominated by revelations on the so-called "Gladio affair", one of the most murky episodes in recent Italian history. An official inquiry has been opened.

ENZO TRAVERSO

AN official document sent to parliament by the head of the government, Giulio Andreotti, on October 19, 1990, revealed the existence of a clandestine structure (secret, but not illegal) whose name, Gladio [sword], recalls one of the symbols of the Salò Republic — the regime led by Mussolini in the Nazi-occupied north of Italy between 1943-45.

Gladio was a "secret resistance network" created during the Cold War period, which was intended to confront any attack by Warsaw Pact troops. In pursuit of this goal it was prepared to gather information, develop anti-Communist propaganda and organize sabotage and guerilla activities. Set up in 1951, it came under the control of the secret services in 1956 and was reorganized in 1980. It had considerable military equipment at its disposal.

Partial revelations

In fact, the document which Andreotti presented to parliament contained nothing new and only confirmed what was already known and strongly suspected by quite a large body of public opinion. Gladio is only a fragment, "cleaned up" and made presentable, of a much bigger structure linked in many ways to the state, which has played an active and important role in Italian political life during the past 35 to 40 years.

The novelty rests in the fact that for the first time a government figure has admitted something that has been denied for



years. In fact this was the second occasion; in August 1990 Andreotti referred in parliament to this same structure, claiming that it had been dissolved in 1972, although, according to all the information now available, it in fact survived until November 1990 — being currently "on ice" waiting for the storm to blow over. On Monday January 7, the Italian press published a detailed list of 577 people who belonged to this organization.

State involvement in massacres

During the 1970s it was widely believed, especially in the big cities of the North, that there was a connection between a series of massacres — in 1969 at the agricultural bank in Milan, at an anti-fascist meeting in Brescia in 1974 and several times on trains — and the fascists and the state. Later on, the rise of leftist armed groups such as the Red Brigades was used to turn the notion of terrorism into a nebulous, ahistorical entity.

Since then memories of that period of Italian history, when it was quite reasonable to have the greatest suspicions about the activities of the Italian state, have faded.

The significance of Andreotti's statements is not only that they show up the unconstitutional character of an apparently innocent organization. They amount to an official and public confirmation of such suspicions.

The idea that Gladio was a defense against the eventuality of an enemy invasion does not hold water. Can anyone really believe that, despite its information, NATO feared a Soviet invasion — whether in 1951, 1956, 1972 or 1980 — of a territory which the Yalta accords had firmly fixed in the Western sphere? The real reason for Gladio was to prevent the

entry into government of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which was supported by the most important Italian trade union and drew its strength from a whole phase of massive and radical struggles, perhaps the most important in a postwar Western country. This was pointed out by the director of the main Italian daily, Eugenio Scalfari: "It has now been shown with dramatic clarity what we have been repeating for a long time — that the various projects such as Solo, Gladio and Sigma were all part of a single structure, outside the public security institutions, designed to prevent, and if necessary repress, the coming to power of the PCI." (*La Repubblica*, November 16, 1990)

For years all parliamentary inquiries into the massacres, the attempted coups d'état and the plots of the P2 Masonic lodge (an anti-communist body closely tied to the state) have been baffled by the intervention of a secret organization, which is not always exactly the same, but which is always dependent on the same force, situated somewhere between NATO and the secret services. Here are hidden the illegal military and paramilitary structures of which Scalfari speaks.

Investigations blocked

Already in 1974, during an inquiry into the activities of a far-right organization, the Rosa dei Venti, the Padua judge, Giovanni Tamburino discovered a connection between this outfit and a secret security structure.

One of its officers, the murderer Gianfranco Bertoli, who carried out the massacre in the rue Fatebenefratelli in Milan, appears on the list of Gladio's members. The investigation was taken out of the hands of Bertoli and transferred to Rome, where it was allowed to die. There have been several examples of this sort.

Some on the left, and notably the *II Manifesto* daily, have interpreted the Gladio affair as a proof of the "limited sovereignty" of the Italian state vis-à-vis the United States. This is a total misreading of the case. It is true that Andreotti's document talks about a "military organism formed within the NATO framework" and it is well-known that this latter drew up several plans for interventions against the "communist threat". It is known furthermore that some far right terrorist groups responsible for the so-called "strategy of tension" in the 1970s were recruited by the secret services and trained in the Capo Marrangiu NATO base. But all this is of secondary importance.

If you look at the period and the forms of activity used by the secret services, at the interests which they protected, and at the political decisions that directed them, it becomes absolutely clear that Gladio is above all an Italian affair.

While the US may have collaborated through NATO and given protection to the operation, all the operational decisions concerning Gladio were taken at the national level.

Dictatorships in Southern Europe

How to explain the existence of this clandestine structure? In the postwar decades, economic development, the changing relation of forces between social classes, the growth of trade unions and leftist movements in the advanced capitalist countries, all produced a process of democratization in which the interwar dictatorships were replaced. Even so, fascism survived in Spain and Portugal until the 1970s, while in Greece there was the dictatorship of the Colonels — and in Italy there was Gladio, with its massacres and its failed coups.

In this country, the key sections of the ruling classes chose to use the "strategy of tension" as a means of provocation and threat, without however overturning the democratic institutions. The repressive apparatus of the state was used with a certain restraint.

On the whole it was more sensible for them to look to the PCI and the unions to control the anti-capitalist sentiments of the working class and other social movements. On the other hand, if the reformist leaderships could not exercise such control, there were other possibilities. A coup d'état and full-scale use of repression could not be ruled out.

The lesson of Gladio is clear and represents a challenge to the entire policy followed by the mainstream Italian left since the war. If the aim is to build a society where profit no longer rules, and there is no longer a separation between exploiters and exploited, then at some stage a confrontation with the repressive state apparatus is unavoidable. ★

Strike wave signals end of dark decade

THE present round of negotiations for collective wage agreements in Turkey involves nearly half a million workers in public enterprises. Some 100,000 metalworkers are already on strike and are soon to be joined by 100,000 textile workers. But it is the miners of Zonguldak that have been at the forefront of working class combativity.

FUAT ORÇUN

SEVERAL factors have been fuelling militancy. Firstly the system established after the 1980 coup d'état is slowly but steadily crumbling. President Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP) won the 1983 legislative elections with 45% of the votes. In 1987 it got two thirds of the seats, but only 36% of the votes, while in the municipal elections of March 1989 its score was down to 21% (see *IV* 166, June 26, 1989).

But, rather than making the slightest concession to the appeals for legislative elections, the then Prime Minister Özal had himself elected president by his parliamentary majority. Özal has concentrated so much power into his own hands that institutional reform is blocked.

The workers, meanwhile, in the absence of independent forms of political expression, are totally outside the political system, at a time when both the debates on the Kurdish question and the strikes of spring 1989 showed the growth of social discontent, sharpened by the catastrophic results of ten years of economic liberalism.

Wages have fallen by a half and the rate of unionization has stayed at around 11% — in 1980 there were about 5.7 million trade unionists, but only 1.7 million in 1985, rising to 1.9 million in 1990. It would be too much to say that the past decade has seen the creation of a new working class, such as that which carried through the Brazilian "economic miracle". Even so, given their economic situation and awareness of the declining credibility of the regime, Turkish workers are determined not to accept further wage cuts.

Furthermore the actions of May 1989

saw a change in attitudes and in union personnel. A number of union leaderships passed into the hands of more militant elements, near to social democratic ideas. This has been the case with Genel Maden-Is, the General Mining Union, affiliated to the right-wing Türk-Is confederation.

The Gulf crisis has aggravated the situation. Pushed along by Özal, Turkey has been dragged into playing an active military role in the crisis. However, the president is about the only person in the country who wants this war, which is supported neither by the workers, the bourgeoisie, nor the army high command itself. The crisis has given a further upward twist to inflation, while the oil producing countries, and notably Iraq, are among Turkey's main trading partners. And all this puts the workers in an even more insecure position.

Zonguldak is a city of 1.1 million people, isolated on the shores of the Black Sea. Its whole social and cultural life are centred on the mines. This is a peculiarly favourable situation for militant trade unionism. The new leadership of Genel Maden-Is, and its president, Semsi Denizler — nicknamed the "Turkish Walesa" — have taken full advantage of this to oust the old union leadership which was isolated from its base.

Fall in mining profits

Zonguldak was the fifth largest city of Turkey in 1975, but is now somewhere below the 20th largest. The reason for its decline is the fall in the profitability of the mines. And this is also the main reason used by the government to reject the workers' wage demands. They have threatened to close the mines, arguing that it is cheaper to import coal. And, in fact, imported coal — mainly from South Africa — costs \$50-60 a tonne while that of Zonguldak sells at \$80, its cost price being \$130 a tonne. The mines thus operate at a loss, since state subsidies have been abolished (Germany and France, for example, subsidize their coal by \$72 and \$69 a tonne respectively).

Thus the conflict in the mines is more than just a wage struggle. The miners want more than just a rise; they want a decent wage, giving them back the standard of living they enjoyed ten years ago before the military coup.

It is the government, however, accustomed to meeting no serious opposition, which has been responsible for the symbolic significance which the miners' struggle has assumed. Özal thought that,

by threatening, on television, to shut the mines, and using the war hysteria, he could settle for a pittance, while buying off the union leaders in the usual way. But the miners were determined and their leaders were not for sale.

A three-day warning strike involving 44,000 miners was the first step. The union demanded the resumption of negotiations, and the government replied with threats. Notification of the strike was given for November 30, when 48,000 miners went on strike, supported by 24,000 other workers deprived of the right to strike. Zonguldak was abuzz. For a whole month dozens of meetings and demonstrations were taking place with miners, their families, shopkeepers, officials and even pawnbrokers.

The demonstrations were organized by ad hoc committees set up by the unions, while the strike itself was organized through strike committees. Özal's threats only served to further radicalize the struggle, although the national television maintained a news blackout on the strike.

The struggle became one between the miners and Özal, and the former decided to organize a march on the presidential palace in Ankara. Faced with this radicalization, the Türk-İs union confederation was obliged to support the miners. It called on December 20, 1990 for a day of "general unemployment" on January 3 or two weeks after (the formula of "voluntary non-paid unemployment" was a way round the constitution and laws which forbid general strikes and sympathy strikes).

Union leader joins military government

The Türk-İs trade union was founded just after the Second World War on the US model and with the support of US unions. It has always been connected with the regime, and was the main rival of the progressive DISK confederation in the 1970s. After the 1980 coup, the Türk-İs' secretary general, Sadik Side became labour minister in the first military government. Sevket Yılmaz, its president at that time, and still in place, is known to be close to the ex-prime minister Demirel and his Party of the Just Way (DYP — the right wing opposition).

It is thus somewhat ironic that Türk-İs, under pressure from below, found itself calling actions to force the government into negotiations. At the same time this was a manoeuvre since it involved postponing the march on Ankara.

Türk-İs was above all frightened by the prospect of a massive and uncontrolled extension of the struggle since, just after the miners' collective agreement, those of other groups organized by Türk-İs were up for negotiation. The rises demanded by the miners were nearly three times those being put forward by the right wing unions in Türk-İs.

In any case, the miners postponed their march to January 4, and the day of action went ahead on January 3, despite threats from the government and bosses. Depending on the source, participation was between 60 and 90% — a success, particularly given that nothing like this has been attempted for 10 years.

Dozens of buses carrying miners from Zonguldak to Ankara were stopped by the army and police. The miners then decided — in the middle of winter — to walk the 280 kms to Ankara.

The Türk-İs president, Sevket Yılmaz, called on the miners' leader to abandon the march. The latter replied: "When we say that Özal bears the main responsibility for the past ten years, we must add that Sevket Yılmaz also fully shares that responsibility. He has nothing to offer the working class. He is even one of its chief obstacles... His mentality is that of the government."

From 80,000 to 120,000 workers then took the road, although the government had declared their action illegal. The cortege contained women and men, people from Zonguldak and the surrounding area. It was the biggest march in the history of the Turkish workers' movement.

Need to overcome the legacy of dictatorship

As Semsî Denizer put it: "We must above all put an end to the fear that has been instilled in us by the repressive region of September 12, 1980. People must be made to raise their heads, and see the realities of Turkey today.... We have tried to practice up-to-date democracy with all its institutions and practices."¹

Their first stop was a small town of 15,000 inhabitants. Here the whole population came out to greet and provide for the miners. Food coming from the surrounding area and the capital was fairly distributed. On the second and third days, the march was surrounded by the police and army. Then, finally, on the government's instructions, barricades were erected and the demonstrators' way blocked. Some 200 miners were arrested for trying to get across the barriers.

The march could go no further, but the miners refused to go back and negotiations began. Things came close to a clash with the soldiers when convoys carrying bread and blankets from Ankara were blocked.

Women from the mining community played a very important role. They were everywhere present, galvanizing the troops, lifting morale, organizing solidarity and marching in the front ranks. When Denizer suggested that they should go back to Zonguldak and await the outcome of negotiations, they refused indignantly: "Our place is with our friends. Nobody will be able to say that they died of cold!" They also launched the shout: "Soldier, are you going to shoot us down? We are

not in Israel!"

On the fifth day, with negotiations promised, the miners, overcome by the cold, isolated and in the absence of any massive solidarity actions, were obliged to return to Zonguldak, but have not given up the fight: "we were not looking for a fight. We hoped that they would remove the barricades. But they seem to regard us as enemies.... If I had asked for it, we could have got through the barricades. We were 120,000, a crowd 6 kms in length. There were 45,000 miners in the front rank.... Faced with this danger I gave the order to retreat.... They would have shot us down.... It was too cold to stay and conduct a war of nerves.... It was hard, but we decided to go back home. Conditions in Turkey are not ripe for such an advance.... That would need united action by all the democratic forces; without that it is impossible to get over the barricades mounted against democracy."²

The government has tried to profit from the Gulf crisis to drag out the negotiations. The miners fear that the government will order a state of war to suspend the strike.

Pressure for renewal in unions

Besides the wage negotiations, the strike in Zonguldak represents an important step to overcoming the legacy of the lost decade. In the unions, the renewal that started in spring 1989 is continuing. Nineteen out of the 32 Türk-İs unions are still in the hands of collaborators, but they are under pressure. The fact that Özal has stepped forward as the mouthpiece of the enterprise management has had an impact on the workers. In the last legislative elections the two social democratic parties got 43% of the vote in Zonguldak, and social democratic deputies and even the rightist DYP took part in the march, while town halls controlled by the former have given practical support.

A number of legal obstacles have been brushed aside in action. Even the bosses confederation has spoken out against legal attacks on the workers and demanded an overall solution to the wage problem.

The coming months will show if the march on Ankara was a harbinger of a fundamental change. As the miner's leader Semsî Denizer said, "The working class must above all be united, for its interests are the same. Our rights will not be decreed by the leaders. We cannot expect that anywhere in the world. We have to win them by our own efforts. Obviously that involves risks; we must be ready to take them. The resistance in Zonguldak will be the best of examples."³ ★

1. Interview with Semsî Denizer in the daily *Cumhuriyet*, January 13, 1991.

2. Semsî Denizer, *Milliyet*, January 13, 1991.

3. Declaration at the end of the march on January 9, 1991.

Building an alternative to fundamentalism

LONG awaited by the partisans of Aït Ahmed, leader of the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), the demonstration of December 27, 1990, in Algiers, attracted some tens of thousands of people.

The day before, the Algerian parliament had adopted a law on Arabization, making the use of any language other than Arabic punishable by a fine. In its majority Kabylia [Berber], the FFS was able to profit from this show of strength and to channel popular discontent as much against the rise of religious fundamentalism as against the regime.

For the latter, the law is above all about outbidding the fundamentalists. It appears more as an error on the part of the regime than a deliberate manoeuvre. Indeed, it seems rather misjudged in the light of its tactic, followed until now, of seeking to draw all bourgeois opposition to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) into a common front at the second round of the next legislative elections.

CHAWKI SALHI

GOING by the foreign reaction, this is a serious business. French imperialism is worried about the future of its Francophone zone. For the Algerian regime, the mobilizations of the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) in Kabylia are much more worrying. The demand for recognition of the Berber language, Tamazight, with equivalent status to Arabic is at the heart of these mobilizations.

This polarization on the question of Arabization has diverted attention from the vote on the 1991 law of finances, and the measures which have been passed opening up the economy to imperialism. These latter questions seem to us more serious for the Algerian people.

The Gulf crisis has had some unexpected effects for Algeria. The Algerian regime was economically on its last legs — its entire policy rested on borrowings and a phenomenal debt. The electoral breakthrough of the FIS greatly worried its imperialist backers.

With the Gulf crisis and the increase in the price of petrol, it is estimated that the Algerian regime has benefited from a windfall of \$2.5 billion. The price of a barrel of oil could stabilize itself at a higher level. This has allowed the regime to breathe again, when it had been in a difficult situation.

To satisfy its western backers, the Algerian regime has had to accelerate the economic opening up of the country and give some concrete pledges, authorizing the installation of branches for the multinationals.

This concession is of exceptional gravity, meaning that a non-competitive economy will be put in a situation of competition with the imperialist giants. Certainly, the regime has some safeguards — the measures do not concern all sectors, nor all products — but it is a heavy blow for the Algerian economy.

The regime has also had to make concessions on support to the state enterprises, which are unprofitable. These enterprises have been accorded autonomy — which means in the more or less short term their liquidation.

But for the legislative elections, promised soon by the regime, numerous bankruptcies would already have been announced, notably of almost all local enterprises.

The manna coming from the Gulf crisis has to some extent allowed the regime to postpone this reckoning.

Regime equivocates on Gulf

The regime has remained relatively discreet on the political questions raised

by the Gulf crisis. Whereas it has given the impression of condemning the foreign presence, President Chadli, in the course of a television broadcast, pronounced himself very energetically against the invasion of Kuwait.

In fact, the government is in a contradictory situation — it must condemn the foreign presence in the Gulf, so as not to go against the general sentiment of the country, and, at the same time, placate its western "partners".

The attitude of the regime, like that of the FIS or the other parties, is largely determined by the domestic situation and the next legislative elections, for which the date has still not been set by the National Assembly.

The FIS was the first to take the initiative on the Gulf question, but in very particular conditions. Very quickly, it called for demonstrations. Although they did not attract very many people, they allowed the fundamentalists to take the initiative. What was remarkable was the contradiction between the FIS' denunciation of both Iraq and the foreign presence — not as a military intervention, but as an intervention of infidels and unbelievers — whereas the people who demonstrated were in their totality hostile to the US presence.

The FIS had great difficulty in handling this situation — whereas its newspaper took a very anti-imperialist position, during public initiatives, they adopted a position of conciliation between the belligerents, for the unity of all Muslims.

General sympathy for Saddam

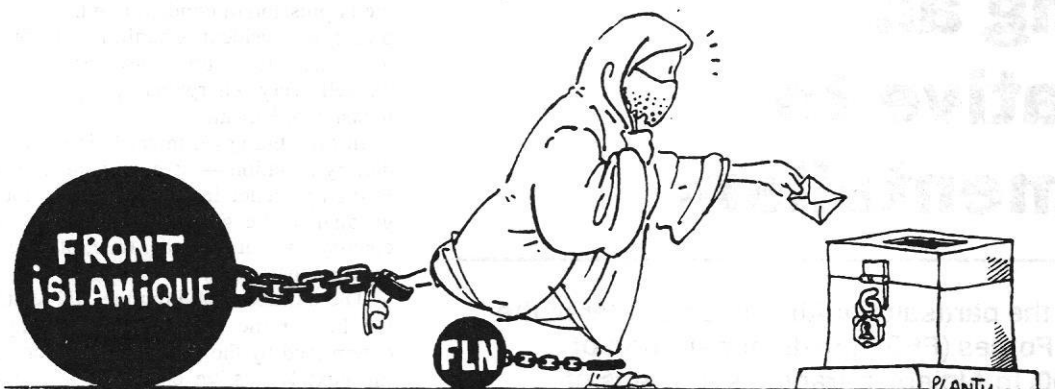
This party was then fairly quiet on this question, an attitude without doubt linked a little to lack of massive popular reaction. Starting from the moment when the Americans took up position against Saddam Hussein, a general sympathy for the latter emerged among the population.

But one could not at first speak of mass mobilizations, nor of particular enthusiasm — the demonstrations did not draw many people. One, supported by 17 parties, attracted only a little more than a thousand people. This undoubtedly indicated a certain reserve on the part of the population. So far, it is more an anti-imperialist reminiscence than a new radicalization.

In fact, the situation in Algeria has been totally transformed from September 1990. Prices have skyrocketed, and although the country does not have reliable official statistics, inflation reached 40% during the autumn.

This has completely changed the atmosphere of the state of grace around the liberal reforms and the promises of economic opening. Very many Algerians have returned to socialist or populist positions.

This situation has led the workers to



polarize on the social problems, the democratic and political questions tending to recede in importance.

The General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA, a trade union linked to the regime) mobilized to demand a minimum wage of 4000 dinars (it is currently hardly more than 1000 dinars) and wage increases. With the aim of renewing the credibility of the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), the regime has conceded under pressure an increase of 500 dinars, which might appear derisory, given the current inflation rate, but which has allowed the UGTA to appear as a credible partner. This has not put an end to popular unrest.

In the face of this social protest, certain political parties, like the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), for example, have taken positions which are to say the least contradictory — the FFS, which only a few months ago considered dropping the word “socialist” from its name, has decided to keep it.

Other parties, like that of Ben Bella, have made declarations in favour of the poor and deprived.

All this does not correspond to a concrete political channeling of the social unrest. The strikes and social struggles are going on regardless of the declarations and speeches of the political bigwigs.

Popular revolts and numerous strikes

There have been popular revolts amongst the victims of the earthquake of 1988, relodged in precarious conditions since then — certain villages have neither water, nor semolina, nor elementary products, nor transport. There have also been numerous strikes in several sectors, in the absence, unhappily, of a real popular organization capable of calling a general strike.

Unhappily, because we believe that only a general strike can resolve the problem.

All these social struggles are tolerated by the regime with total cynicism; the strikes in the enterprises on the road to liquidation serve to diminish wage costs

and the regime regards them with insouciance; the social combativity could exhaust itself. We support these mobilizations energetically, while maintaining that a general strike remains the only solution.

The Algerian economy is bankrupt, but does not prevent the postponing of its final liquidation. At the time of the municipal elections of June 1990 (see IV 189), the regime’s margin of manoeuvre remained very limited.

The Gulf crisis and the unexpected supplementary resources it provided allowed it to give some crumbs to the workers. The regime is constrained to plunge into the logic of integration in the world market and thus immediate and generalized pauperization.

For a long time its avowed objective to reassure the bankers was of assuring the convertibility of the dinar against the dollar and the opening up to foreign capital. This corresponds to the positions of the whole of the opposition, from the FFS to the FIS, with the exception of some, like our Socialist Workers Party (PST).

Attack on workers necessary

For this policy to be realized, a collapse of the purchasing power of the workers is necessary — the essential criteria for foreign capital, here as elsewhere, is profitability.

The Algerian labour market cannot compete on the level of technical aptitude, but only on labour costs, as well as on political stability and labour discipline; in other words, Algerian workers must be cheaper than the Moroccans, Senegalese or Koreans.

At all times, the regime has kept a grip on the social struggles. In the most grave moments of crisis, faced with the FIS for example, the regime has continued to fix as its principal enemy a general strike by the UGTA, and as its essential objective the economic reforms.

After the electoral defeat of June 1990, the FLN declared that “the economic reforms must continue as before”.

The head of the government demanded of the deputies an emergency vote on the

laws on the economic reforms. The only future for the regime lay in satisfying its imperialist backers, through privatization and the opening of the economic frontiers.

For the Algerian working class, the barriers have very quickly been fixed. The right to strike has been terribly compro-

mised by the recent restrictive legislation. All strikes are in practice illegal and the regime is in the process of drawing up lists of trade unionists who will be dismissed when the struggles decline.

The building of a trade union alternative is difficult. The UGTA is rejected by very many workers, but they have no other choice. Most strikes happen at the workplace, on the initiative of the rank and file, in a totally unorganized fashion. These struggles do not lead to the emergence of a conscious workers’ vanguard.

Certainly, some seek to respond to the situation. A group of militants originating from the Party of the Socialist Vanguard (PAGS — the Communist Party) has built a small red trade union with some former trade union cadre from the UGTA apparatus. This alternative is obviously illusory, and has little credibility.

Islamic trade union created

An Islamic trade union now exists. It puts left trade union militants in the painful situation of remaining without a voice in the confrontation between the FLN and the fundamentalists, who enjoy a very significant support among the working class. Even if its platform appears completely ridiculous, the new law on trade unions permits it, with the support of a mere 20% of the workforce, to have as many delegates as other more important trade unions — this gives it a very important presence as a partner in negotiations.

There is a great temptation to call for the creation of another trade union. For the moment, this question is being debated.

But abandoning the UGTA can only be justified if something efficient and useful for the workers can be built in its place — which supposes a greater accumulation of forces than what exists today.

At the moment, we are calling for the creation of support committees for the strikes, which will constitute committees of action and of permanent struggle to regroup the more advanced militants and to make progress on the trade union question. But that cannot be envisaged as an overall alternative.

In fact, all the parties of opposition have

the same social and economic programme as the FLN. There are obviously nuances, between the Islamic fundamentalist FIS and the secular and Berber movement (FFS, RCD — Assembly for Culture and Democracy).

But the FIS remains the principal organization of opposition, with support from the workers, the oppressed, and all the popular layers.

The FLN wants the next elections to legitimate its power, without having to share with other parties. The regime is currently in the process of renewing the FLN, that is changing all the fulltimers to replace them with others.

The regime had initially envisaged the emergence of a myriad of indistinguishable parties, so as at once to render credible its new democratic course, and to abandon populism, through the emergence of another form of popular representation.

Fundamentalists given favourable treatment

It is because the populism of the FLN has been seen as an obstacle to the liberal opening that the fundamentalists benefited from a favourable treatment from the regime for a whole year. It did not envisage what was to follow.

The electoral law envisaged that the seats would be attributed to a relative majority — in fact, the

regime counted on an opposition divided into 36 pieces, the largest part going to it.

The FIS succeeded in accumulating enough forces, notably in the suburbs of Algiers and Constantine, to lead the regime to review its strategy and to envisage a form of election which would permit an FLN presence, even where the FIS won.

The Islamic tidal wave was not expected by the regime — its objective from then on was to demolish any exterior alternative to the regime. For example, it gave publicity to the RCD, to stop the FFS from appearing in a credible role; it favoured several little Islamic groups to break up the bloc which had formed around the FIS.

The strategy of the FLN is to present itself as the only alternative to the FIS at the second round of the legislative elections, to avoid a fundamentalist dictatorship. It is a stupid game, even from its point of view. It is not the FIS which has invented traditionalism, or the oppression of women. It is only through struggle that these will be changed.

After the electoral defeat in the municipalities, the regime no longer had legitimacy — a national electoral timetable was

needed in the short term to make the status quo acceptable to everybody. In fact, both the FIS and the regime needed to postpone this schedule by some months to prepare.

The new electoral law is still not ready, and there is much debate on the form of voting. There is first the question of the system permitting men to vote for women. Given the difficulties of the regime, there are some chances that the system of proxy votes will be suppressed. A very broad front has been created around the movement of women to demand the suppression of this measure.

We think that proportional representation is the only democratic way. All the other methods are destined to give the majority to the biggest minority — in Algeria, this will be the FIS.

Proportional representation is the sole means of avoiding a fundamentalist dictatorship in the short term and also the sole means of avoiding a continuation in power of the FLN, in case its policy of presenting itself as the sole alternative to the FIS should succeed.

What might happen in the elections?



There is a certain disenchantment with the FIS, which had promised the moon and crystallized the whole of the protest vote against 25 years of FLN rule.

It had pulled together a vote of hope of rapid change in social conditions, employment, housing, without explaining that a victory in the municipal elections would not be sufficient to realize all this. When the FIS won victories in some municipalities, it has obviously not changed the world. It had moreover absolutely no means of changing things.

All parties lack credibility

At the electoral level, this disillusionment can only concretize itself if an alternative emerges. Indeed, the other parties, the FFS as much as the diverse so-called democratic parties, and also the radical groups like the PST or the OST (Socialist Workers Organization — affiliated to the international Lambertist/Trotskyist current) are all in the same situation of a loss of credibility and do not appear capable of changing things immediately.

It is probable that despite the attempts to build a bloc around Mahmoud Nahnah (an Islamic moderate), the fundamental-

ism of the FIS will remain an electoral pole of the first order.

If we have a ballot of two rounds, it is very possible that we will be confronted by a horrible choice between the FLN and the FIS — fundamentalism, first version, against fundamentalism, second version. What alternative is there to the FIS and the FLN? The PST calls for a workers and popular front, of the left, of the PST, the OST (called the Workers' Party since its last congress), of the PAGS, of trade union currents, of popular committees, and so on.

This appeal is for the moment an appeal for debate — it does not translate itself into precise relations, common platforms, but by a line of unitary action of our organization. The appeal of the PST to unity of the workers and popular left has met an echo among the militants of the PAGS.

The PAGS is a populist party, whose structures are anti-democratic. It has never had a congress in its history, not even a founding congress. The emergence from clandestinity has produced a terrible shock for its militants, discovering at the same time their diversity, and their weakness as a real force in society.

The zigzags of their party in relation to the regime over the last years have made its members seasick. The members of the PAGS were the only militants tortured in October 1989 — but the party has continued to support the regime, justifying its image as a vassal party of the Algerian government.

How has the party not split in this situation? It has authorized a freedom of manoeuvre to its militants in terms of intervention. Apart from the diffusion of central propaganda by the leadership, members do as they please, which is obviously untenable and explosive.

Logic of sacred union

Initially, the PAGS was relatively hopeful of an eventual opening of the regime. Then, when multipartyism was introduced, the PAGS accepted it, even though it had never been one of its demands. Then, it followed the logic of a sacred union of all the parties, from the FLN to the FIS.

Taking account of the incessant attacks of the FIS against its militants, the PAGS has transformed this sort of national democratic front into an anti-fascist front. But the leadership has applied this position inconsistently.

It took the defeat at the elections and the terrible pressures which they suffered at the polling stations from the fundamen-

talists for the leadership to decide to adopt a combative anti-fascist attitude, proposing a front to the regime and to all the parties against the FIS.

For PAGS militants, who considered themselves as the party of the working class, in the image of the big mass parties of Western Europe, the disillusionment has been significant.

In reality, it was a party of one or two thousand militants. The leadership had put off a congress for a long time — after the electoral defeat, it could no longer do so.

The leadership has published an “enormous” text explaining that the error had been to believe that the fundamental contradiction was between capitalism and socialism, whereas in reality it was between modern capitalism and archaic capitalism.

It would be necessary henceforth to unite with the modern capitalism of the regime, against the archaic capitalism of the FIS.

The least that one could say is that the text did not convince all of the militants, and numerous contributions have subsequently been written. The rank and file have successfully demanded that the date of the congress is fixed and that the texts of discussion are published.

Opposition argues for leading role of proletariat

Amongst this protest, there has been an important document, called the Text of the Ten, which has said that the proletariat must be the leading force of the national democratic revolution. Revolt is general inside the party.

After the municipal elections and the disorientation of a majority of its membership, the debate has pushed the PAGS towards a radical left position where its militants consider themselves as revolutionaries, estimating that the proletariat must play a leading role. The debate on the next congress will certainly counterpose the constitution of a national democratic front against the FIS, to the building of a workers and popular front on a class basis.

Since the disquieting victory of the FIS in the municipal elections, the rebellion of women has never been so great.

They have reacted superbly in a massive and spontaneous manner, even if the organized womens' movement is a little exhausted. They have put on the agenda the question of the proxy vote of men on behalf of women.

Today, and it is no coincidence, they participate in all the social and democratic struggles taking place in Algeria. Very often, they are even at their head.

The womens' coordination plans to organize a conference of the womens' movement, with the perspective of the constitution of a unified womens' movement. ★

Kingdom of Repression

ON DECEMBER 14, 1990, the Democratic Labour Confederation and the General Union of Moroccan Workers issued an appeal for a general strike, which was widely followed, in pursuit of wage demands. In Fez, the eve of the general strike saw violent riots, with youth in the front line. They were repressed with at least 200 deaths and more than 1,000 arrests.

Last autumn, at the same time as the French authorities were involved in plans to celebrate the Year of Morocco, the appearance of a book about Morocco by Gilles Perrault, entitled “Notre ami, le roi” (“Our friend the king”), which exposed the terrible regime of repression existing in that country, and the complicity of the French ruling class in that state of affairs, upset the steady course of Franco-Moroccan relations.

However Morocco's royal dictator, Hassan II, has used the Gulf crisis to introduce a state of emergency without any trouble. There is a danger that the situation of Morocco's political prisoners and the general crisis in the country will once again slip from public view.

Cecilia Garmendia and Sophie Massouri spoke to Soukaina Salem, a member of the families of Moroccan political prisoners, and Gilles Perrault about the changes in Morocco

“Victory is certain”; interview with Gilles Perrault

YOU TALK in your book about the worsening economic situation and the government's austerity measures. Would you say that the recent riots in Fez were the result of this?

The population is at the end of its tether. Of course, the regime does not bear the sole responsibility for the misery. As with all Third World countries, Morocco is caught in the vice of economic imperialism. Measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund led, in 1984, to

bread riots and more than a thousand people were killed.

Nonetheless, the situation is made worse by the fantastic corruption surrounding the royal palace and the big commercial bourgeoisie. Inequalities are continually increasing. The most insulting wealth exists side by side with extreme poverty. The minimum wage is less than 700FF a month. Tens of thousands of qualified students have no job. The young are completely desperate, having no prospect of finding work. This is why they are ready to confront machine guns with their bare hands.

■ **The sentences handed down for those arrested during the demonstrations are very severe.**

It is true — to us the sentences seem altogether excessive. But Moroccans themselves claim that they are significantly less severe than after the riots in 1981 and 1984. The regime remains brutal, but is no longer able to act as ruthlessly as usual. And further retreats will follow. How long this takes depends on how powerful international solidarity is. We must destroy the international support enjoyed by Hassan II's regime. In fact, it is not quite accurate to speak of international support. There is total complicity between

national and foreign exploiters.

■ **In their appeals for a general strike, the CDT and UGTM trade unions did not say that their action was aimed against the king. What is the place of the king in the Moroccan system?**

Article 23 of the Moroccan Constitution says that: "The person of the king is inviolable and sacred." Even the mildest criticism of the king can be punished by 15 years in prison. On the other hand, criticizing the government, its ministers and officials is allowed, and the opposition press takes advantage of this. However, in Morocco it is the king and the palace that decide, thus it does not make a lot of difference to be able to criticize a government without power.

In Morocco, the king is the regime. In my opinion, the development of democracy in Morocco will not come about through a frontal attack on royal authority, which is absolute. Many Moroccans want a constitutional monarchy of the Spanish type. In recent months, parallels between Hassan and Spain's General Franco have been drawn very often in Morocco. However Hassan II is only 61 years old.

■ **Nonetheless this royal dictatorship has kept certain appearances of constitutional and democratic functioning, including opposition parties, parliament, and even Communist Party deputies. Which opposition forces are tolerated and what are the limits?**

Hassan has put up a democratic shop front to deceive those foreigners who want to be deceived. Every Moroccan is well aware that for the past 30 years every election has been systematically rigged, and that the opposition knows that there is an invisible line which they cannot cross without being repressed. To an extent, the opposition provides the king with a democratic cover. Indeed, one can say that the Moroccan Communist Party is a pillar of the throne.

Nonetheless there are genuine democrats in the USFP (Socialist Union of Popular Forces). They know the role in which they have been cast and would very much like to get out of it. Real international solidarity would help them to do that. We can also ask what Moroccan socialists must think when they see their French "co-thinkers" give unwavering support to the regime.

Ilal-Amam, a banned Marxist organization, is a case apart. This organization has never made the slightest compromise with the regime. It is clandestine, but has real influence, notably among the youth. When the regime finally has to bail out, it is clear that democratic forces will appear who are presently invisible.

■ **The question of Western Sahara allows the monarchy to play the**

"national unity" card. What has been the attitude of the opposition to this?

The struggle for Western Sahara is a tragedy for the Saharans and a millstone for the Moroccan people. Even if the limits of freedom of expression in Morocco make it impossible to judge the real state of public opinion, it is clear that most Moroccans consider the Sahara an integral part of their country.

Hassan II has cleverly played with this sentiment for the past 15 years to rally the people around his regime. However, this near unanimity is starting to unravel. Moroccans are tired of the conflict and the sacrifices it entails. People know that 40% of the state budget goes on the war and the maintenance of order. This is unbearable. The king will not for very long be able to stifle demands of every kind by brandishing the Sahara issue. The sentiment is growing in the country that Saharans and Moroccans have a single enemy, the regime.

■ **Your book has made considerable waves and thrown a chill on Franco-Moroccan relations. But President Mitterrand has refused to condemn the repression that has followed the December 1990 riots. Thus, the French Socialist regime has maintained France's tradition of complicity with Hassan II. What is behind this complicity?**

Here as elsewhere, but perhaps, above all here, the Socialists have revealed their double nature — they talk all the time about human rights, but in practise are as cynical as the right. More than 1,200 French enterprises are established in Morocco. They get big profits from the underpaid local labour force. The French bosses do not plan on giving up this manna from heaven, and they will support Hassan to the bitter end, since his pitiless repression keeps the whole system going.

The French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, has gone down on his knees to appease the Moroccan monarch's irritation with my book. François Mitterrand has refused to condemn the repression and has sent his new year greetings to Hassan. Everything is being done to make it clear to Hassan II that he has a free hand. A different attitude would help the freeing of political prisoners and save lives.

I am absolutely convinced that the French Socialists will pay a very high price for this betrayal. They have not noticed that times change and that French public opinion, for its part, does not treat human rights as merely a matter for fine words.

■ **Morocco's Abraham Serfaty is Africa's longest serving political prisoner. Despite the international campaigns, the appalling situation of the political prisoners, the disap-**

pearances and torture continue.

No, things are changing. They are on the move, because Moroccans themselves are on the move. Thus, until six months ago, it was impossible even to talk about the Tazmamart penal colony where, for 17 years, people, most of whom have completed their sentences, have been kept in dark cells. But at the end of December 1990, some families of detainees found the courage to petition the Moroccan Justice Ministry. In France, other families are hiring a French lawyer to bring a court case against the Moroccan state.

In Morocco itself, more and more voices are being heard demanding a total amnesty for all political prisoners. As for Abraham Serfaty and his comrades, an international campaign is being set up. It will be of the same breadth as that for Nelson Mandela.

Here in France we are going to be holding mass actions demanding that the French government change its relations with Hassan II. This is a time of hope. The fight will be bitter, but if we put all our strength into it, victory is certain. ★

"The taboos are falling"; interview with Soukaina Salem

DO the general strike of December 14, 1990, and the riots in Fez signal a change in the situation in Morocco?

What has been the attitude of the opposition parties?

Apart from the immediate circle around the king, everybody wants a change, including the traders and the national bourgeoisie who can no longer accept the Makhzen system¹ nor the royal appetites. The monarch has granted himself the right to the lion's share, and this annoys the business people.

Thus, for example, the Omnium Nord

1. Makhzen — the army, the royal palace, the king and the tax officials.

African (ONA), formerly a branch of the French Paribas bank, is now Moroccan. This means that it is 60% owned by the royal family and takes control of whatever is privatized.

The dominant force in the legal opposition is the national bourgeoisie.

It is represented above all by the Istiqlal, the party associated with Morocco's independence, which remains very influential — like the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), it now calls for a transition to a constitutional monarchy.

These parties are demanding a change in the constitution in the direction of a modification in the position of the monarch.

Another important sign is that leaders and parties that seemed to have faded away are waking up.

For example, Abdalah Ibrahim and the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP), which derives ultimately from Istiqlal's first split in 1959.

The UNFP is tied to the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT), the third union confederation, which did not join in the appeal for the general strike, but demands a change in the government.

The reappearance of its leader suggests that the UMT is going to decide to get in on the action with the two other unions, the Democratic Labour Confederation (CDT) and the General Union of Moroccan Workers (UGTM).

The Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS — the Communist Party) cannot be considered an opposition party.

It is more royalist than the king, and its attitude has been shown once more during the Gulf crisis — apart from Hassan himself it is the only force to have taken the side of the West.

The Organization for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP) is a small party, deriving from a clandestine Marxist-Leninist organization, that has decided to become legal and recognize the five statutory points — the monarchy; the inviolability and sacredness of the monarch's person; Islam as the state religion; Arabic as the national language; and the Sahara as an integral part of Morocco.

All these opposition parties support, in different ways, a move towards constitutional monarchy.

The problem is how to get the palace to pay attention to something that it does not want to hear.

This legal opposition, which has been more or less dormant, has recently come to life.

Thus in three or four months, the press run of the two big opposition journals, those of the Istiqlal and the USFP, has increased from 20,000 to 200,000.

■ But these parties which are calling for a reform of the regime are in difficulties when a popular uprising, such as in Fez, takes place. They

have accepted the job of giving a democratic cover to Morocco. How can they link up with the popular movement without blowing that cover or finding themselves outside the law?

In fact, the strike was the work of unions tied to these very opposition parties.

There are two currents in the USFP, a social democratic current, composed of intellectuals, and a populist current tied to the CDT union, whose secretary general Noubir Amaoui has become something of a popular hero after the strike. The UGTM for its part is closely tied to the Istiqlal.

These opposition parties did not openly support the Fez riots — which were a primordial outbreak of popular anger, not



directly connected to the general strike. But they immediately demanded commissions of inquiry and organized such investigations themselves to throw light on these events.

They have denounced the trials that followed the riots as illegal, since people have been sentenced before the commissions of inquiry have completed their work. They have also been protesting through human rights organizations.

The repression has been more restrained than in 1981 and 1984. The regime knows that with the passing of time people are more aware of what is happening here than before. But the sentences are heavy, going as high as 15 years in prison.

■ Do you think that the appearance of Gilles Perrault's book has had an effect?

Without doubt the book had a shock effect in every sense of the term in Morocco

and has allowed the unions to play their hand boldly. It is not the revelations as such which have been important here but the fact that the king has been exposed, as if a key has been turned in the regime's most important lock — the person of Hassan II as a taboo subject.

The unions asked for a 50% rise in the minimum wage over a year. The bosses offered 25%, over two years. The king then made a speech and proposed 15%. In Morocco, you do not answer back to the king.

After three days, the unions came together and got round this ban. They addressed themselves to the government, saying that they could not accept a rise of 15%.

They decided to continue the struggle and move towards another general strike. This is the first time since independence that, even indirectly, the king has received such a reply.

By ignoring the king, they pushed him into the place of one who "reigns, but does not govern" — which is what the legal opposition wants.

Among the Moroccan people it is said: "we cannot speak, but someone has spoken for us." For the revolutionary militants the book was an occasion for joy. For the first time they saw another side of France: not only the ex-colonial power, but a France that supports the Moroccan people.

The taboos are falling; Tazmamart [the prison where officers accused of a previous coup attempt against the king are kept in barbaric conditions], and the person of the king.

But nothing has been solved. There is the risk that the Gulf war will push the situation of the Moroccan people into the background.

I have myself heard leaders of opposition parties say that the worst can be expected when there is no campaign abroad.

■ Are the doors going to be opened in Morocco tomorrow?

I think that the king is not going to open up anything at all until the last possible moment. I don't know when that moment will come, nor what will provoke it.

What is clear, is that without French money, the Moroccan regime would have already fallen. This point needs to be more widely known. The Moroccan army is a school for some of the Black African regimes, but only some — Sudan, Zaire and Gabon, to name the three most important.

You can see their officers in uniform, here to learn how to keep a people under control, how to make a dictatorship work. But who are their teachers? These, also in Moroccan uniform, are French officers.

It is they who train the officers of the Black African dictatorships. There are some 170 to 200 of these French military functionaries in Morocco. ★

Hoxha's heirs try controlled opening

TOWARDS the end of 1990 the winds of change blowing through Eastern Europe finally reached Stalinism's last secure bastion — Albania. Cecilia Garmendia and Janette Habel talked to Edith Lhomel, who has written many articles on Albania, notably for *Le Monde diplomatique*, about the limits and prospects for the current changes.



authorizing a private market.

The massive emigration of Albanians in July 1990 (a figure of 4,787 refugees is estimated) has allowed

us to discover, through the accounts of witnesses, if not the poverty, in any case the very low level of the standard of living of the population.

■ What about the opposition, particularly the Forum of Students and Intellectuals? Is it structured?

In Albania, we have not seen the resurgence of old parties; there were in any case very few — the only one which might have reappeared is that of the monarchists (King Lezka, who is in exile in South Africa, has said that he is satisfied with the changes, but he retains reservations — he has also announced that he will demand a referendum on the question of the reestablishment of the monarchy).

There exists today a spontaneous student movement, which, apparently, is beyond the control of any party. The Forum of Intellectuals and Students fights principally for human rights. The youth can remain at the head of the movement of opposition, on condition that they do not allow their movement to be immediately brought under the control of the political parties.

Then there is the Democratic Party, which could present itself as a sort of social democratic force; it has been capable of attracting the support of some thousands of people, and it believes itself capable of obtaining about 50 of the 250 deputies to be elected in the legislative elections on May 31, 1991.

Very many people who had belonged to the Party of Labour are today involved in the Democratic Party, it consists of intellectuals or even former party notables like the doctor Sali Berisha or the economist Gramos Pasho.

An ecological Party is also spoken of,

despite the fact that Albania had been presented as one of the countries which had best preserved its environment. Finally, there is talk of a Christian Democratic Party, founded around one of the martyrs of the Catholic community. There is also a Republican Party.

Our general ignorance of this country explains in part the difficulty in analyzing the different political currents on the ground and the layers which support them. As in the case of other countries in the region, the political parties are still barely structured and created for the most part "ex nihilo".

Albanian society is historically divided into two clans, the Ghegs and the Tosks (based, respectively, in the communities in the north and the south).

The Catholics are mainly Ghegs and have in this respect suffered from the unjustified supremacy of the Tosks in the Albanian language. Certain formations could perhaps be created out of this dichotomy — the birth of a Christian Democratic Party, based essentially on the Catholic community, is significant.

Given this, the new political parties do not employ a very virulent language against the PLA and there is obviously an attempt to regain control of the democratization on the part of the party in power, which undoubtedly exerts a partial control over these new political organizations, if only because of the domination of the whole of society which the PLA has exercised over more than 40 years. Indeed, in order to obtain a postponement of the election from the regime, the opposition has been prepared to support the suspension of strikes and a wage freeze.

The people could, then, have the sentiment of being completely cheated by this birth of multipartyism.

The case of Rumania is, in this regard, enlightening; the society identifies very little with some of the political parties represented in Parliament (apart from the Hungarian minority with the Magyar Democratic Union); hence the street movements and the student and workers' opposition, relayed through the increasingly important trade union organizations. The institutional game of the parties is not representative of Rumanian society, for these formations do not represent social interests, contrary to what has happened in Poland.

In Albania, we do not know to what extent some of the new parties (which are still not locally structured) will identify themselves with the desire to go to the west that has overcome that to stay in the country.

Although it has been possible to obtain a passport since May 1990, the people have quickly realized the extent of the bureaucratic obstacles, and that they

1. Albania is the world's second largest chrome exporter, after South Africa.

2. Albania has the highest birth-rate — 20.1 per thousand — in Europe. The average age is 26.

WHAT lies behind the discontent of the Albanian people, indicated by the massive wave of people trying to leave the country in July 1990 (see IV 189), and, in December, by the rioting which took place in the principal towns and industrial centres, Skoder, Elbasan, and then Tirana?

Have the economic reforms introduced by Ramiz Alia been responsible for a decline in the standard of living of the population?

The essential reason for the economic deterioration resides in the total erosion of the apparatus of production. The quality of chrome, for example¹, can no longer be improved because of the absence of certain products; the production of petrol has slackened off because of lack of equipment; all this is the result of the technological strains which undermine Albania. Then there is the problem of unemployment, provoked by the enormous influx of youth onto the labour market², something which Ramiz Alia himself referred to in his speech as a cause for alarm.

In my opinion, it is premature to speak of a recent degradation because of the economic reforms; on the contrary, the greater autonomy accorded to private landholdings, and the possibility of selling products freely on the small markets, have rather immediate beneficial effects on supplies.

Free markets of this kind have been *de facto* allowed, without being explicitly restored, since the last plenum of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA — the ruling Communist Party), in the context of the reforms; if a peasant produces enough to feed himself and he has a surplus, he can sell it — this amounts to implicitly

could not travel without unobtainable currency, meaning that few can exercise this right — this is one of the reasons that provoked the riot and the rush to the embassies of July 1990.

■ What is the role of the Catholic church in the opposition?

The Catholics represent only around 20% of the population, the Muslims are 70% and 10% of Albanians are of other confessions — among them the Jewish minority, recently authorized to emigrate to Israel. The Catholic church should not then have a determining weight in the elections.

However it has maintained some bastions (among them Skoder); this was an underground church, which has its martyrs.

■ Which social sector has mobilized to the greatest extent?

Above all the towns, the principal industrial areas — nothing has been heard about the peasantry demonstrating. Also the most violent demonstrations have taken place in the towns. But there has been no news of organizations in the factories — in my opinion, the workers are going to identify themselves with the new parties, everything remains to be done in the trade union movement and in terms of the demands of the working class.

■ The departure into exile of the writer Ismael Kadare³ was very surprising....

It remains puzzling. Kadare's explanation, according to which he had lost hope of change inside the country does not seem to me very pertinent to the time when he went into exile — the reforms were already underway, and someone like him, a favourite of the PLA apparatus, knew that they were to a great extent irreversible, and rather important. Otherwise, he would have left in July 1990, when the army fired on the demonstrators. It would not be surprising if he returns to the country in a few months.

Moreover, in some demonstrations, there have been calls for him to lead the country. Close as he is to the regime, as a former member of the nomenklatura, he is not so badly regarded — through his literary work, he is seen as somebody with an intimate understanding of the Albanian soul, the Albanian people, and so on.

■ And the PLA?

The PLA has decided not to abandon the ideology and the dogma of "Marxism-Leninism", it adheres to them still and it has declared that it will not deny its past history (unlike other parties of Eastern Europe, which have been quick to slough it off) — it is not going to change its name either. That corresponds to the legitimacy that the PLA considers itself

to have on the plane of defence and of national independence.

On this subject, it is interesting to read the PLA's electoral platform — it presents itself above all as the party which has defended the sovereignty and national independence of Albania, and not as the party which has led the country towards socialism, despite — it recognizes — grave errors. It is convinced that this heritage will meet an echo among the population.

■ And what economic propositions does it make?

The discussions today on the economic future of Albania are not debates about the "third road", or the "social market economy", "gradualism", or "shock treatment", and so on. The economic programme of the PLA contents itself with making a distinction between a state sector, which will remain omnipresent, and a sector of what is called free initiative — for the moment no text has been adopted permitting the formation of private enterprises.

New legislation concerning companies set up in partnership with foreign capital was adopted in November 1990. It gives foreign companies beneficial conditions concerning repatriation of profits, exemption from taxes during the first five years, and so on — stipulate that these firms must sign contracts with the state enterprises. For the moment there is neither a private sector, nor private companies, and it is still not envisaged.

Moreover, the law no longer lays down conditions as regards wages, dismissal and working conditions in these companies which are to be set up. A state bank for international commercial relations has been established.

This legislation still poses problems for the eventual investors of the Albanian diaspora who have a mind to return to do business in the country. Some Albanian immigrants in the United States were ready to invest in tourism, for example, but they want to be proprietors of the hotels! In the absence of this possibility, they will not invest, at least for the moment.

There are, moreover, some measures undertaken by a US company for oil exploration, which marks a beginning of the normalization of US-Albanian relations. Commercial links with Germany, which had begun in 1987, continue. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China are normalized, as with other countries (with the exception, until now, of South Africa and Israel — even if the departure of the Jews from Albania has been authorized).

The electoral platform of the PLA, finally, challenges the dogma of heavy industrializa-

tion, and envisages a greater place for light production (textiles, tourism, food and agriculture products). The government hopes to obtain very quickly some currency through tourism (some agreements with Italian and German companies are under consideration), emphasizing the Adriatic coast, which would allow the development of a service sector and furnish some rapid openings to agriculture — that will lead to the emergence of a small private sector, considered as the embryo of a market economy.

■ What is the state of development of this mixed sector?

The United States and Germany are interested in mounting joint ventures in the area of oil exploration — there have also been some initiatives in the area of tourism (hotels), mainly with Italian and Austrian companies. But no contract has yet been definitively signed.

With regard to a mixed sector of the economy, Albania is not starting totally from nothing. It is now known that there were some western enterprises which worked in subcontracting, above all in textiles, wood and furniture, and food production — all this was carefully hidden. Nothing is known of the conditions of work in this sector, of the workers and of the conditions under which they might be dismissed.

■ In November 1990, before the big demonstrations, Ramiz Alia had announced a series of political reforms, putting an end, *de facto*, to the leading role of the party. How did this go down in the PLA?

Since July 1990, Ramiz Alia has argued at the political bureau of the PLA that the only alternative was to surf on the wave of opposition and to go more quickly — apparently he was able to obtain a consensus on this theme. He had understood that it was impossible to keep things as they were. The amendment of the constitution, challenging the leading role of the party, is now being discussed. It is envisaged that Albania will become a state of laws, reintroduce religious liberty, authorized, *de facto*, the right to strike, and so on.

Alia has then gone along with, and anticipated, the change. He had an argu-



ment in his favour, to the extent that Albania had decided to rejoin Europe and that it was necessary for him to give credibility to his policy of joining the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE — where it is already an observer). The reforms were then also, at this level, the only solution — it was the price demanded by Europe.

The exit from political life of Enver Hoxha's wife, Nexhmije Hoxha, who was still director of the Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies and of the Democratic Front, might indicate that she could not follow this type of movement, but she has all the same taken care to say that she supports Alia's reforms.

The "Hoxhaite" legacy is not yet overcome — all PLA meetings are still held under a picture of Enver Hoxha, whereas the hatred of the demonstrators for the latter is evident — Hoxha is very much more despised than Alia.

The government has also decided on the liberation of 393 political prisoners — as the Democratic Party had demanded — and admitted the existence of other detainees (certain estimates speak of more than 30,000 people, which represents nearly 1% of the population). They are prisoners of conscience, the product of purges in the party (for example, the partisans and the family both close and distant of Mehmet Shehu, ousted and officially said to have "committed suicide" in 1981).

Moreover, an independent daily is legally published, *Recindja Demokratia*. There are then concrete measures of liberalization, even if it is necessary to put things in proportion. Albanian society remains straitjacketed and the party retains all power and all the financial means — the autonomy of the opposition is very relative.

■ Has the question of the Albanians in Yugoslavia's Kosovo region — which has a hard-pressed Albanian majority — appeared as a demand of the opposition movement?

There is a kind of self limitation on the part of the leaders of the opposition on Kosovo — it is a matter for some astonishment that a party for the independence of Kosovo, or for the adherence of this region to Albania, has not emerged (as was the case in Rumania, for example, with Moldavia).

The electoral platform of the PLA mentions Kosovo, saying that, as before, the party will continue to demand respect for the national and democratic rights of the Albanian minority — but it is not playing the nationalist card.



This is explained by the fear of disturbing the Balkan region, which could still explode, and which is strategically important for Albania's projects (Alia perpetuates thus the tacit consensus which existed between Tito and Hoxha which, beyond their disagreements, gave priority to stability in the Balkans).

The PLA is perhaps also trying to play down the latent conflict with the Greek minority, 80,000 to 100,000 strong on some estimates, which has appeared in broad daylight with the large scale departure of the Albanians of Greek origin, in July 1990. The Balkan conference, which was held in Tirana, has shown that Albania wishes to be one of the most active agents of cooperation in the region.

■ There appear to be certain common characteristics in the transitions underway in the Balkan countries, where neo-Stalinist regimes survive, contrary to the rest of the former Eastern bloc.

The essential reason for this persistence, whether in Rumania, Yugoslavia (essentially in Serbia) or Albania resides in the absence of oppositions of long standing, as is the case in Poland or Hungary, and the absence of democratic traditions.

The cultural heritage of the Balkans is also different from that of Central Europe, the political traditions were different — the Ottoman centuries have left their mark on the region. All this leaves the field free to the Communists to refund their legitimacy on the basis of an ideological, political and even economic virginity (on this last terrain, they had no choice).

These parties have also shown a considerable ability to turn to their own ends all the so-called instruments of democracy. The PLA, for example, can dare to organize elections soon for a country

which has not known multipartism for 45 years, as the National Salvation Front had done, four months after the fall of Ceaucescu.

Beyond this, in Yugoslavia and in Albania, there is a specific feature; the origin of these regimes, which were not imposed by the Soviet Union, like those of Rumania or Bulgaria, where the CPs had no historic legitimacy.

The ideological output of these parties, which based itself on the defence of national independence, has engendered some currents in society which have become very contemptuous of western Europe (this is the case in Rumania) — in Albania, we could see the same kind of reactions.

The people of the Balkans have endured these regimes which have imposed themselves by repression, for the most part, and have identified with them only through nationalist slogans.

■ To return to Albania, what kind of regime is the PLA likely to concede in the end?

There is first the question of the forthcoming elections and of the role of the new assembly. The deputies will sit in the Parliament which already exists, and nobody knows if the elected assembly will elaborate a new constitution (as was done in most of the other countries of Eastern Europe) or if it will function according to the amendments adopted by Alia in November 1990. The elections do not constitute a guarantee in themselves.

Then it will be necessary to see, in the context of a planned economy in transition to a market economy, if there is a transfer of political power to the economic plane. It will be possible then to see whether the nomenklatura preserves its privileges and blocks the economic liberalization, or, on the contrary, goes ahead and occupies the economic posts (as in Hungary or in Poland).

In Rumania, for example, there is today a total asphyxia of the circuits of official distribution, a kind of sabotage — the enterprises no longer make their deliveries to the state.

At the same time, we are witnessing a kind of stranglehold by the local powers on all the circuits of parallel distribution (which they controlled already in the past). This leads to enormous economic disorganization and total confusion.

In Albania, it is difficult to predict how this process will unfold, although continued mass emigration to Greece shows the profound discontent of the population. ★

3. Ismael Kadaré is Albania's best known writer, for many years a pillar of the regime. He sought political asylum in France in October 1990.

Between democracy and capitalism

Interview with Josef Pinior and Petr Uhl

OVER the weekend of January 12/13, 1991, the Council of the Czech Civic Forum movement, which played an organizing role in the downfall of the neo-Stalinist regime in November 1989, and is now the largest party in the Federal Assembly, formally transformed itself from a coalition movement into a party with individual membership.

The new party, under Vaclav Klaus, has pledged itself to "reject socialism in any form" and build a capitalist society. According to Klaus this decision resolves the "conflict between the revolutionary period, which is ending, and the beginning of the normally functioning state and society".

As in Poland, therefore, Czechoslovakia is now seeing attempts to transform organizations born out of the mass struggle for democracy into instruments for the consolidation of the power of new elites. On December 20, 1990 — before the Civic Forum decision — Cyril Smuga spoke to Czechoslovakia's Petr Uhl and Poland's Josef Pinior, both long-time anti-bureaucratic activists and revolutionary Marxists, about the crisis of the democratic revolution and its prospects.

OVER the past year we have seen profound changes both in Czechoslovakia and Poland, started by social struggles. Today, however, social mobilization has died down. Why?

Petr Uhl: There was a different level of struggle in our two countries. I worked for a long time in Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity and there were many more people involved in struggle in Poland than in Czechoslovakia. We should remember that in Poland, the struggle for the emancipation of the workers and the people and against the bureaucratic dictatorship was undertaken by a mass movement over ten years.

In Czechoslovakia, the struggle was the preserve of a handful of "dissidents", not more than a thousand strong before the revolution. They were interested above all in human rights, peace, culture, religion and ecology, much less so in intervening in the political or trade union field. Timothy Garton Ash has said: "The revolution in Poland lasted ten

years, in Hungary ten months, in East Germany ten weeks and in Czechoslovakia ten days". He was wrong. In fact in Czechoslovakia it lasted only seven days. In Czechoslovakia there was no formed vanguard, unlike in Poland. The Civic Forum (OF) was formed on November 9, 1989, two days after the big demonstrations in Prague.

It comprised two main currents: that of the dissidents (activists in independent groups, above all Charter 77, human and civil rights) and political clubs which began to emerge after 1987, but which had very little weight. Then there were the intellectuals and artists who had created independent groupings in the official structures in which they worked. Thus the OF was largely made up of intellectuals, the workers playing a marginal and secondary role.

After being formed the OF addressed itself to the population at large and specifically to the workers, and, thanks to the prevailing public feeling that it was necessary to put an end to the system, it was able to gain important working class

support. Representatives of strike committees — intended to form the kernels of a new union movement — took their place in the OF. But the weight of the working class as such in OF was very weak, and in the course of time it has more or less disappeared.

There is now a renewed version of Czechoslovak-Polish Solidarity. [An initiative in which Petr Uhl and Josef Pinior were active, which used to organize meetings between Czechoslovak and Polish activists before November 1989.] New people are active in the frontier regions. However, traditional anti-Polish sentiment has got worse in Czechoslovakia, due to the economic inequalities. In Poland, prices have been completely freed, so that everything costs twice as much in Poland as in Czechoslovakia, leading to much black market activity, and people react to this in a nationalist way.

Jozef Pinior: Don't you agree that East European emancipation, this traditional movement for political anti-bureaucratic revolution, has met with new and unexpected problems?

In Poland, it has come up against new mechanisms of exploitation and domination. There are no ready-made recipes for solving these new problems. And this may be one of the reasons for the frustration and disorientation and for the fact that this programme of emancipation no longer has the support that it had in Poland ten years ago, or a year ago in Czechoslovakia.

PU: We are faced with the fact that we have not achieved the goals we set ourselves. The anti-bureaucratic revolution has not been carried through. Certainly we have liquidated the old mafias, but new ones have emerged. The anti-bureaucratic struggle is gradually becoming an anti-capitalist struggle, and we are not used to this change.

JP: In both Poland and Czechoslovakia I can see a division within the anti-bureaucratic movement. A part of the leadership is in the process of modifying the original programme. This was not a capitalist programme, but an attempt to link up human rights, the ecological and anti-militarist alternative, social justice and liberty. This was, without doubt, not a search for a "third way" — such a formula would be too strong.

PU: I don't think it's too strong.

JP: But now things have moved on. The people who are coming to the fore in OF are a lot like those we know in Poland, Balcerowicz, the IMF programme and all that.

PU: Since the start, OF did not refer to a single ideology and did not use words such as "socialism", "capitalism" or the "third way". The programme on which the OF deputies were elected to the assemblies was clearly pluralist, both politically and economically. It was in favour of a plurality of forms of owner-

ship of the means of production. There has been no new document by OF on this subject. However this is going to be debated in the conference at Olomouc in December 1990 and then at the OF congress in January 1991.

For the first time there is a possibility that OF will cease to be a pluralist movement and become a political party with a liberal or liberal-conservative line. When Klaus was asked if he was a liberal or a conservative, he replied that he was a conservative. What is involved also is the rejection of any social or social/ecological dimension to our reforms. In such a situation, many of those who are still in Civic Forum — and many have already left in disillusionment — and are not in favour of such changes, will propose that those who support such changes form their own party. But this would mean the end and the disintegration of the OF. In any case, unlike Walesa, Klaus is no populist.

■ **Klaus' project is clear — everyone knows what he wants. But I have the impression that his opponents have no clear project. They want to keep OF while the rise of Klaus is in itself proof of the limitations of this framework.**

Can the OF be kept in its original form or will growing awareness of divergent interests imply its breakup? The OF was united by the struggle against the bureaucracy — and this is no longer the main battle.

PU: When it was formed, the OF defended the possibility of organizing political life not on the basis of parties on the Western model, but via a civic movement where different groupings could form on this or that problem with a plurality of views. This would enable citizens to take part in political debates and decision making. In this way, a parliamentary system would be progressively enriched by elements of direct democracy.

OF has a reason for existing insofar as it is supported by the mass of the population. If it loses that support — as is happening today — Klaus' solution is a fake. We could of course develop another conception, for example, form a Bolshevik Party of the Soviets, but this would be artificial.

JP: I think that there is a more general and deeper problem here. I think that today in Poland — though not yet in Czechoslovakia — we are facing new forms of exploitation and domination based on the market and not on the political power of the bureaucracy. In fact this bureaucracy itself, which had previously ruled through political means and force, is now trying to maintain its positions through the market. This is new. Perhaps the efforts of all those who see themselves as an alternative to the right in the form of civic movements are not ade-

quate today. Might it not be that the ideological force of these new market methods is so strong that traditional answers are too weak and doomed to failure?

PU: If this alternative is too weak in Poland, then things will be ten or a hundred times worse in Czechoslovakia. With us many times fewer people have been involved in the civic movements than in Poland. We see only one solution. The mobilization of those who are against Klaus and who have never participated in the anti-bureaucratic struggles — 99% of the working class.

The workers have not had the experience of anti-bureaucratic struggles in independent unions, it has had tolerable material conditions, while suffering violations of human rights such as the right to travel, and religious and cultural freedom. At the same time the country is ecologically ravaged by 40 years of bureaucratic mismanagement and there is a looming economic crisis.

Will this be enough to stimulate a movement that is both anti-bureaucratic, and does not demand a return to Stalinism, and anti-capitalist, that is, in favour of social justice. The question of the proper role of the unions and above all their role in management of the enterprises has not been resolved. There are traditions here that are positive — there has been a strong workers movement here for over a century and there are bourgeois democratic traditions as well.

In Poland on the other hand you can always count on the ten million workers who were in Solidarity and the tens of thousands of militants who were involved in day to day activity for years. They were 20 or 30 when they began, and now they are ten years older. We can discuss with old people about the anti-capitalist struggles before the war and about the anti-Nazi struggle. This is a big difference.

■ **Before the November 1989 events, Petr, you had pointed out the type of self-limitation in the model of democracy proposed by many of the intellectuals who went on to form the OF. You also underlined the problems with the definition of property. Has this debate continued in the OF?**

PU: The debate on democracy has taken place between different political clubs — between Obroda, ex-members of the Communist Party, Christian Democrats, Left Alternative and others. It continues now in a different form in parliament. On the property question for example, the OF recognizes a plurality of forms of ownership of the means of production. However for the last few months, the majority of the leadership has oriented towards private property only, forgetting the support that it had previously expressed for cooperatives, ownership by



communes of towns and workers' ownership of their enterprise. Self-management was abandoned at the start of 1990.

■ **Has the anti-bureaucratic desire shown in Czechoslovakia during the "velvet revolution" given way to a perspective of capitalist restoration?**

PU: Czechoslovak society is undergoing a process of very gradual differentiation. Some people, notably Vaclav Klaus, are for the restoration of capitalism — although they do not use the word. The left has not taken this as a reason for a break, but continues to defend pluralism.

Unorganized people are often supporters of capitalist methods because they are worried by the fact that the structures of the old regime are not totally destroyed and that the bureaucrats are trying to set up new limited companies, while political democracy — and thus political life — have not really developed. The laws that would give the people "at the bottom" economic guarantees are not there. This creates a pressure in favour of a more rapid progress towards a Western system which seems efficient to such people. At the same time people are anxious about the future, fearing unemployment, inflation, a decline in living standards and poverty.

■ **Do legal limits exist in Czechoslovakia that would prevent foreign capital from buying up particular sectors?**

PU: The "small privatization" envisages the sale by auction of hotels, garages and so on. However it does not involve transport, agriculture, industry or the health service. It only includes some service sectors.

Furthermore it only applies to enterprises belonging to the state and not those that have been confiscated from a commune or a private owner. In this last case, the goods are to be given back in money form and will not be privatized. Foreign capital will not have the right to take part in the first round of auctions, but only in any subsequent round. In my opinion there is no great danger in a foreigner buying a restaurant or a delicatessen.

Furthermore, in many resorts, hotels belong to the unions and nobody can touch them. The "big privatization" law (the "law on the transformation of state property", towards which privatization is

only one of the roads, which could include share-holding by workers to create a limited company) has not yet been adopted, and we do not know what limits will be set to foreign capital.

Klaus is defending his "coupons" scheme — a proposal under discussion, according to which between 20 and 80% of the property of the big factories will be distributed among the population in the form of cheap coupons — the equivalent of half the average monthly salary. We will see what people make of this.

These coupons can be used to buy shares, but they will only go to Czechoslovak citizens, who, according to the law, will only be able to sell them to other citizens. The share itself on the other hand can be sold to a foreigner.

■ Both of you are known as representatives of the leftwing tradition. Both of you have, at one time or another, been leaders in the opposition, Jozef in Solidarnosc and Petr in Charter 77 and VONS (the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted). Jozef found himself at a given moment outside Solidarnosc, and you, Petr are the subject of attacks.

PU: It is Vaclav Klaus who is most opposed to the presence of the left in OF. He is not a long-term activist, and only appeared 14 days before the end of the old regime. He is no ex-colleague of mine. He is supported by people I have never known. I recently went to the OF's Council meeting to defend my own position and that of the Left Alternative group to which I belong. Two thirds of the people there were totally unknown to me, and it is they who voted to exclude me. The people that knew me voted against this.

Poland is a year ahead of us in the liberalization of prices and economic reform. In the Polish situation, I could without doubt become a deputy in the parliament, but I could not be in the political structure of a force like Solidarity or Civic Forum if it had the explicit programme of the former. At the moment it has not spelt out such a programme. It is for this reason that Josef has already been excluded from these structures whereas I am still involved.

JP: There are big differences between our two countries. What is the situation of the Czechoslovak workers' movement today? For we agree that it is the workers movement that will decide the future.

In Poland I put my hopes in the development of new movements from below, which will arise inside Solidarnosc and in the enterprises. These movements will seek an alternative to the economic plan of Balcerowicz, while organizing the workers for a struggle against such phenomena as chauvinism, anti-semitism and racism. Such structures already exist and I hope that they will develop. But what is

the situation in Czechoslovakia? Is the union movement still controlled by the old Stalinist apparatus?

PU: There has been a complete change in the unions. I do not know if the old unions still have even a formal legal existence, or if they are still conducting their last battles in front of the tribunals on union property.

The people who hold the responsible positions in the new unions came to the fore in November 1989. They are the people who organized the threat of a general strike and the strike committees to prepare for a new union movement. In the old "Revolutionary Union Movement" there were some 16 to 18 sectoral organizations, today there are around 80, independent from each other, although coordinated by a relatively strong centre.

Most of these unions are, furthermore, federalized — one in the Czech Lands and another in Slovakia — with a level of coordination between them. Some are organized on an all-Czechoslovak level. There is no union pluralism — the workers don't want it. This means, for example, that there is one union for journalists in the mass media (radio, television, and the national press agency — CTK).

The printing workers at CTK are in the printworkers union. But there are no unions which are more to the left or to the right. Of course there are some old bureaucrats in the apparatuses but they do not have decisive influence.

The unions have already protested against some laws. They express their ideas in the daily *Prace*, which used to belong to the old unions, and which is not the property of the new ones. They have been undertaking campaigns, as for example the one recently concerning the draft law on the right to strike, one paragraph of which forbade political strikes. At that time the unions appealed to the prime minister, Marian Calfa, asking: "how a government which was born out of a political strike can ban political strikes." The law was not adopted.

It is being discussed. This debate is structured through the political groups. Of course the Czechoslovak Communist Party is now 100% for union rights, but the five other forces — the Civic Forum, the Public Against Violence (the Slovak partner of Civic Forum), the Christian Democratic Movement, the Moravian regionalists and the Slovak nationalists — in the Federal Assembly are divided. Their votes go both ways. Inside OF some say: "these are Bolshevik arguments and it is necessary to put an end to the situation of the past 40 years, where the unions have had a negative influence on production." This is not true of course. There were no real unions under the old regime. It was a comedy.

JP: What did you mean by your remark that the anti-bureaucratic revolution had not been carried through to the end?

PU: The Czechoslovak process has not

gone as far as in Poland, where the political leaders of the old regime are reorganizing themselves in a market framework. With us there are analogous tendencies, but they are not general. At the intermediary level, on the other hand, the old officials, factory directors, assistants, heads of sectors and so on, are still in position. This poses a real problem of responsibility, education and cadres.

People are fed up with this, and it is beginning to change. All the structures at a lower level in the communes and towns are going to be changed by elections. The management system imposed by the state will be replaced by a system of territorial self-management and certain officials will lose their power. In the towns with between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants the mafias are still at work. They comprise the public prosecutor, secret police agents, the president of the local court, directors of factories and local cooperatives, the mayor and so on.

Often these people are old — we are ruled by a gerontocracy. Sometimes they have kept their positions, or they have been demoted a rung, but with all the old contacts still working. They are a parallel authority.

People are well aware of this and say: "One year after the revolution, all this still exists." The most radical, the far right Republicans come close to calling for "Stringing up the Communists." But these are marginal people. All this will become clearer when social conflicts develop, when there is inflation and unemployment, above all inflation, because people are not so sensitive to unemployment.

■ There are local elections in Czechoslovakia. In Poland these elections have already taken place. The new local self-management structures are very restricted by the new state structure.

JP: In my opinion, the anti-bureaucratic revolution cannot be made in the framework of the moves towards new market mechanisms of domination and exploitation. It is clear that in the context of the opening to the world market, there cannot be an anti-bureaucratic revolution, since the ex-Stalinist bureaucracy is best placed to benefit from the new mechanisms.

To the extent that the bureaucratic structure remains untouched, the people who join the local councils work on its terms. The people adapt to the structure, not the other way round. Thus, the new councils work in the old way. They are inefficient, lazy, and are in no way under the democratic control of the electors.

■ One of the principle values of Solidarnosc was that the workers and citizens should be social subjects.

PU: But this is an old Marxist idea. Why hide that? ★

Left reacts to Klaus' takeover of Civic Forum

THE LEFT has for some time been irrelevant inside the Czech Civic Forum (CF) and its Slovak equivalent "Public Against Violence". In the past year the majority of the left has left CF to set up more clearly defined organizations.

The left inside CF now consists of Left Alternative, a social democratic club around Charter 77 dissident Rudolf Battek, and Obroda, a group of Communist Party members expelled from the party in 1968.

ADAM NOVAK

ETR Uhl (see preceding interview) will not seek membership of the new party, but will remain in the CF parliamentary group until the next elections. "There, I will continue to fight for the original programme of Civic Forum as I interpret it....That was my electoral promise in the June elections".

Vrat'a Votava, editor of Left Alternative's journal *Polarita*, said; "Perhaps we can finally stop wallowing in the mud of confusion in Civic Forum, and concentrate on building a left movement in this country".

The Campaign for the Rights of Youth (KPM) has argued for a reorientation of the left around a set of concrete demands - their charter of youth rights. They organized a small demonstration against the economic policies of the CF government, but do not believe the changes in CF fundamentally change the situation for the left.

The Club of Social Democrats inside Civic Forum has been formed by five federal deputies. They reject "the search for a third way in economics" as "unrealistic and utopian". "We fundamentally reject any kind of social demagoguery, which the non-parliamentary opposition and the communists are now practicing. This is a break on radical economic transformation". The model of a market economy not characterized as "social and ecologically oriented" is, for the club, "an anachronism in Europe" (*Rudé Právo*, January 16, 1991).

A coalition of anarchist groups, in an open letter to congress delegates, said "Whatever the differences between you, agree on at least one thing....Give up the name Civic Forum! It hasn't belonged

to you for a long time. The only civic movement with a right to bear that name ceased to exist a long time ago....Unfortunately, we didn't give that form of social organization enough chances...We ourselves were the first to demonstrate, last spring, against Civic Forum's undemocratic practices.

"Admit, gentlemen, that you all carry partial responsibility for the death of 'non-political politics', with your taste for the great political game, your longing for power, your intriguing and your reinforcement of your personal positions. Stop trying to persuade us that, whether you say conservative, liberal or whatever, that there exists only one way, yours, the right way.

"Don't you feel that we've already experienced that here? We shit on your path to paradise. We don't believe that the hunt for profit...will truly solve any problems....will prove to make anyone truly happy....In history the path backwards doesn't lead anywhere".

The Union of Unemployed commented; "With the change of Civic

Forum from a movement into a party the mandates of all CF deputies in the Federal Assembly and Czech National Council expire, along with those of all the members of the Czech and federal governments representing CF. We watch with concern the continued breaking of their promise to the original civic forums" (CTK January 13, 1991).

Finally, Vladimir Kolmistr, the deputy president of Obroda, said; "CF has changed from a movement into a party with very strict, in our opinion sectarian, restrictions on membership. By these restrictions Obroda ceases to be a part of CF.

"This process of change was dominated by essentially anti-democratic and intolerant tendencies. The process has been carried out by undemocratic negotiations, going as far as shouting down and labelling opponents.

"It's interesting that, while seven weeks ago you could hear....that Obroda was a brake on reform, by the time of the CF congress you could hear the same thing about members of the Liberal Club. This means that these undemocratic methods are threatening a larger and larger group of people.

"We, as a club, cannot be members of a party with membership, as the congress characterized the new CF. Given our orientation, and knowing the people who are members of our club, probably no-one will want to be in the new party".

Kolmistr added that elected Obroda deputies would stay in the CF deputies clubs, but that in his view they should form their own club with other left-oriented deputies (*Rudé Právo*, January 16, 1991). ★

From perestroika to perestrelka?

IN THE FOLLOWING article, Dick Forslund, trade-unionist and leader of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, recounts a discussion he had with Soviet workers trying to start an independent trade union. It has been translated from the January 4 issue of *Internationalen*, the paper of the Socialist Party.

DICK FORSLUND

ALL VOLGOGRAD exploded in rage in February 1990 when it was revealed how the top bureaucrats had broken the law and commandeered nice apartments for themselves. All of them were forced to resign. You could say that the government apparatus was somewhat shaken up. But in December it was clear that nothing had changed.

Sergei Bobgenko is an engineering worker in Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad, a legendary turning point of the second world war. Volgograd lies along a southern stretch of the Volga between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

I met Sergei at a seminar in Leningrad organized by the Socialist Party in the USSR at the beginning of December. The party had invited Western friends to the discussions. A varied group of Soviet opposition groups were represented. There were also new workers' leaders who are trying to form independent unions and seeking various forms of workers' management in the plants.

Until quite recently, Sergei Bobgenko was a member of the Communist Party, and he was a delegate to the Twenty-Eighth Party Congress in August 1990.

"I had been in the opposition in the party for several years. 'Despite everything, it's a workers' party,' I thought. At the congress, I realized that I had made a mistake.

"It was the government bureaucracy's party. I looked for a new party, and I have just made contact with the Socialist Party (USSR) in Volgograd.

"Volgograd has a million inhabitants. Of them, 200,000 are industrial workers, and most of them are organized in the official unions. Sixty percent of industry is heavy industry. With the current evolution, it is expected that after the start of the new year, there will be 100,000 unemployed.

"The popular rage that forced the old apparatus to resign was the high point of the democratic movement in Volgograd," Sergei said.

"But it soon became clear that that was not sufficient. We had a democratic election with competing candidates. We got new people in the old posts. Now it is evident that nothing, absolutely nothing, has changed. And the people are very tired now."

It was in this situation that Sergei Bobgenko and others started up the Democratic Workers' Movement of Volgograd, a union that is to be independent of the state and party.

"We have existed for two weeks," Sergei said. "We have about a hundred members. Most are workers who have left the Communist Party to come to us.

"We are growing slowly, but that is not a bad result for such a short time. There is a considerable interest in our statements, and people often sign them. Local trade-union activists are interested.

"On the basis of the experiences that people have gone through over the last year, it is not easy to go around and try to win members for a new organization.

'You are only one more that wants to have power and sit on our backs,' is a common comment.

"A lot of people are starting to get desperate. At a factory I got the following answer from the workers: 'An organization!? We don't need any new organizations. Give us machine guns instead!'

"Another problem in building independent unions is that health insurance is paid today half by the state and half by the unions. So, everybody joins the official unions. If they leave, they lose half their sick pay.

"Our demand is that the unions be separated from the state, and that the state take responsibility for social security. When the union uses state resources, it becomes a state institution. The state should not give grants to the unions but to people who have special needs, such as students, the handicapped, the elderly.

"Other points in our program," Sergei continued, "are that the union functionar-

ies should get the average wage. No privileges.

"Moreover, we want to build the union on the basis of profession rather than industry. Today, everyone in the factory, including the bosses, is in the union. We want a union for every profession. After that, a coordinating committee should be organized in every factory."

■ I realize that the bosses should not be in the union, but the others, why?

"The unions also have to be able to express narrower interests on the labor market. Today, we have a shortage of engineering workers. But we engineering workers have the lowest wages. If we had a union of our own, we could take advantage of a positive conjuncture on the labor market to push up our wages.

"We also think that wages should be adjusted in line with the cost of living. We are demanding that the threshold for price rises be revised upward.

"The decisive thing now is not whether the owner is the state or private persons; the important thing is for the workers to be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor," Sergei had said in the debate at the seminar a few hours earlier. I asked him to

then they have to ask their bosses, and so on.

There is no responsiveness to the demands of the market. The bureaucrats would rather lay people off than try to meet the demands of the market. Small enterprises of that type are a threat to the bureaucracy."

■ But isn't there a threat that a section of the workers will only become capitalists?

"No, no. We want a moral economy. The income people get must be based on work, not ownership. The workers should have control over what happens, over what they produce. The aim of the economy is to achieve prosperity. The workers must be able to keep a part of the surplus in their pockets."

■ That seems reasonable. But can that work for production of paper, steel and other raw materials? How can it work for the big plants that are the bases for the small ones? And how can it work for health care and transport?

All these can't be run as worker-managed small enterprises.

"No, that has to be decided centrally."

■ But in that case, who decides centrally? Is it the bureaucratic plan again?

Our interpreter, and the whole Volgograd group joined in the discussion. How can the government be elected?

Every citizen has to be able to participate in the decision about, for example, how big military production should be. That is already clear in the Soviet Union. There have to be various parties that offer various lines. There has to be a right to vote.

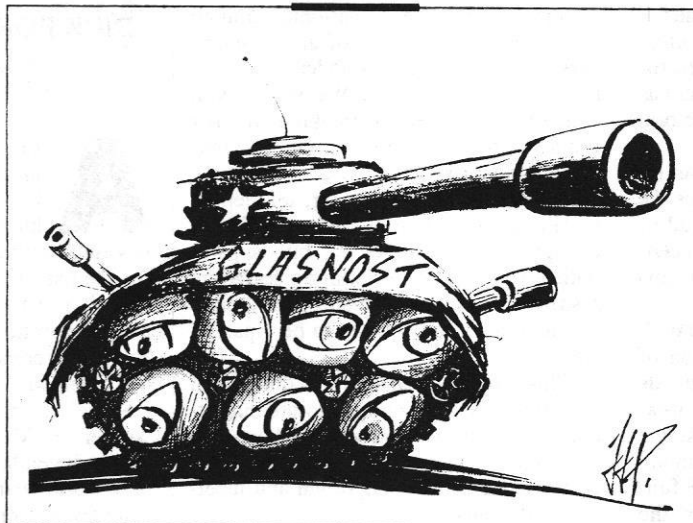
"But also local self-management can be distorted.

Maybe after discussing needs locally, you will have the means for economic management through workers' cooperatives so that you don't get scarcities of some necessities and surpluses of others," someone interjected.

The discussion continued into the evening, and went over into anecdotes and stories. "Gorbachev got the peace prize. People despise him. The whole country is breaking up and a civil war is starting! The peace prize!"

I learned the latest joke... "First *perestroika*, and then *perestrelka* (a shoot-out)."

We parted with promises to stay in touch and develop ideas about international solidarity and trade-union experiences. ★



clarify what he meant.

"Our new organization aims at getting the workers more and more to take control over distribution of what they produce and over profits. A union has to devote itself to economic problems.

"We are against the layoffs that the bureaucrats are decreeing now. Those who are threatened by unemployment have to have the right to start up their own business, a small business that can be a part of the big factories where the workers are now employed. The mass layoffs have to be stopped.

"We often see there is a shortage on the market, and that we should be able to produce the goods.

"But to start up new production today, we have to ask the bosses closest to us,

New onslaught on democracy activists

ON January 5, 1991, nine Chinese students were sentenced in a Beijing court for their role in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989. Seven received jail terms of between two and four years, whilst two were pardoned for having confessed and repented. Other pro-democracy activists, to be tried over the next few weeks, are likely to receive much heavier sentences.

The following statement on the trials is taken from *October Review*, a magazine published in Hong Kong by sympathizers of the Fourth International. The statement was distributed as a leaflet during a rally in Hong Kong on December 9, 1990. The article has been modified somewhat for stylistic and space reasons.

DOCUMENT

ONE and a half years after repressing the 1989 Democracy Movement, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has started the prosecution and "trial" of a number of key democracy movement fighters. According to the Chinese constitution and the law, long-term detention and depriving the arrested of communication with their families are illegal. The so-called "public trials" and the appointment of defence lawyers are also obviously just a show.

The repression of the 1989 Democracy Movement by the CCP was itself criminal, against the people, against democracy. It was a counter-revolutionary action. Any defence of such action cannot, in the eyes of the people, be justified or legitimized. Therefore it is not necessary to quote in detail articles of the law to argue whether the current trials are legal or not.

However, this does not mean that we should not take this series of trials seriously. On the contrary we should reveal the aims of the CCP regime and make a forceful response.

The democracy movement activists are accused of "making counter-revolutionary propaganda", "inciting rebellion" and even "conspiring to overthrow the government." The CCP uses such accusations to insist on its characterization of the 1989 Democracy Movement. The aims of criminalizing a "handful of people" are to deny that the 1989 Democracy Movement was a revolutionary movement, in which the people rose spontaneously, mobilized widely and began to organize themselves; that the movement was triggered by deep contradictions of the CCP regime; that the repression of the Movement revealed the totally corrupt and rotten nature of the

CCP regime and its political suicide in front of the people. By concentrating its attack on a small group of people, its aim is to root out the most active fighters in the Democracy Movement and to issue, at the same time, a warning to the people as a whole.

Three groups of victims

On current information it seems that there are three main groups who have been singled out for severe punishment:

- People who have been actively promoting the democracy movement since 1979, including Ren Wandong, Wang Juntao, Chen Ziming and Liu Jiamin.

- Workers leaders, including Hang Dongfang, Li Jinjin, Liu Qiang and He Lili, who organized independent unions and are potentially capable of liberating the massive dynamic of the workers behind this Democracy Movement.

- Leaders of the student movement, including Wang Dan, Zheng Xuguang and Zhang Ming.

At the same time intellectuals who have been particularly active, such as Liu Xiaobo, Liu Suli and Chen Xiaoping, and supporters of the CCP faction that has lost power, have also been targets of attack.

Some of the Democracy Movement activists — who face charges that carry a possible death penalty — were participants in the 1979-81 samizdat journals movement. At the end of 1978, the CCP faction led by Deng Xiaoping carried out economic reforms that did not touch the political power of the bureaucracy. At the same time, spontaneous samizdat publishing movements, championing political democratization and other reforms, arose in the society.

From January 1979 to April 1981, Ren Wandong, Wei Jingsheng, Liu Qing, Wang Xizhe, He Qiu, Xu Wenli and many others were arrested and sentenced to up to 15 years. The semi-underground samizdat movement was thus forcibly repressed. Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming were penalized but not jailed; and they unceasingly used the limited unofficial channels to continue to champion political democratization and reform, and to carry out research work on Chinese society and theory for the Democracy Movement. They set up the first civilian "Beijing Social and Political Research Institute" and carried out massive works of theoretical research. The accumulation of many years of work provided the theoretical basis for the 1989 Democracy Movement.

It is Democracy Movement activists such as these that the CCP regime is now singling out for attack, with the aim of physically torturing them to the point of annihilation.

Overseas solidarity develops

The Chinese people, including overseas compatriots, must try by all means to defend and rescue them. Overseas solidarity campaigns are developing on a large scale.

Marches, demonstrations, signature campaigns, and other acts of protest, are stating clearly to the CCP regime: you will not succeed in your attempts to cover up with legal procedures your repression of democracy movement activists; your attempt to foster a facade of legality and stability will fail completely; we shall remove the cloth covering the butcher's knife, and reveal the ferocious face of the murderers in front of the broad masses.

The overseas democracy movement has a lot of practical and urgent things to do. On the question of the "trials", it must initiate the widest possible contacts and acts of solidarity, on the one hand to stay the hand of the regime and on the other to aid the families of the persecuted.

As for the communication of information, it must strive to break the official news blockade, send information into mainland China, and link up with and encourage the struggles of the people inside the country.

By striking at the legality of the regime and isolating it, it must try to win over those people with lofty ideals to the side of the people and not to collude with the enemy.

The Chinese Democracy Movement began its rise in 1976 and, with the traditions of the 1979 Democracy Movement and the 1989 Democracy Movement, there will be countless fighters of the people taking up the torch and continuing the theoretical research work on Chinese society and the democracy Movement, in this way promoting the democratic revolutionary movement of the broad masses. ★

"For their freedom and ours!"

The outcome of this confrontation is by no means predetermined. The Baltic movements have powerful allies, allies that are potentially a match for Gorbachev and the Stalinist Black Hundreds that have flocked to his crusade to "save the Union".

They are not the Western governments that have made hypocritical protests.

The Soviet press has had no trouble finding statements by Western leaders showing that they don't really mind.

The allies of the Baltic national democratic forces are, in the first instance, the mass democratic movements in the other republics and in the Russian federation itself.

This support was reflected in the demonstration of more than 100,000 people in Moscow on January 20.

The movement of solidarity with the Baltic peoples that began to develop in earnest in the Russian centers in response to the blockade of Lithuania has grown into a vast mobilization.

It is of crucial importance for the future of the democratic revolution in the Soviet Union.

Ivan Drach, chair of the Ukrainian national movement, Rukh, responded to Moscow's campaign of violence in a message to the Lithuanians by raising the old slogan of the 1848 revolutions.

"The dark forces of evil cannot break the aspirations of the peoples for independence! Together we are invincible. For your freedom and ours!"

Radicalization of national movements

The Soviet crackdown came in fact in the context of a radicalization of the national movements both in the political and in the social sense, as reflected, for example, by the rejection of Lithuanian premier Prunskiene's price rises and the denunciation of the bureaucracy's privatization by Drach at the recent congress of Rukh. (See *International Viewpoint* No. 196, December 10, 1990.)

The attacks of the Soviet armed forces have had essentially two targets — first of all, newspaper printing plants and paper warehouses, and secondly centers of independent armed forces, including the legal police and the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia, which has by no means been a nest of nationalists.

Obviously, what worries the Stalinist bureaucracy is first and foremost the freedom of speech that has existed for some years now in the Baltic, which has made it the cockpit and political laboratory of the

A DECISIVE battle is now being waged in the Soviet Union. It is not simply between the Baltic peoples, or even the national movements in general, and Moscow. It is between all those who support democratic rights to one degree or another and the leadership of the Stalinist bureaucracy, desperate to roll back the democratic gains that the masses have made in the Soviet Union as a whole.

GERRY FOLEY

mass movements.

In fact, it has not only been the press in the local languages that has become an open forum, but also the Russian-language papers published in the Baltic countries.

A prime example has been the former all-Union Komsomol daily, *Sovetskaya Molodezh*, published in Riga.

The editors of the latter paper that I talked with in June did not show a great enthusiasm for Latvian national aspirations, but they had a friendly relationship with the People's Front on the basis of a common interest in democracy.

It is notable also that the crackdown on the Baltic governments was accompanied by blows at the more independent Russian and all-Union media.

The Kremlin's main political line of attack on these movements in the last period has become the charge that they threaten to impose a new "totalitarianism" because of their alleged anti-Communism and chauvinistic intolerance, among other things.

There have been emotional reactions against the experience of Stalinism that have led to anti-Communist expressions.

Mistake to ban pro-Moscow party

The Lithuanian government also made a mistake in trying to ban the pro-Moscow Communist party as "foreign based". It failed to make the necessary distinction between defending political ideas, even if the mother organization is foreign, and acting as the material agent of a foreign

enemy.

But the recent events have shown quite clearly that the pro-Moscow CPs in the Baltic republics serve only as pawns of, and political cover for, the Soviet armed forces.

They are collaborators of an oppressor power, and have to expect to be treated as such.

The statement of the Lithuanian "National Salvation Committee," published prominently in *Pravda* of January 17, was decked with "left" Stalinist rhetoric: "Lithuania was transformed by the Western special services into a carefully defended base for a peaceful attack on the USSR in order to restore capitalism."

It went on to say, "Now in Lithuania dual power has arisen, the power of the bourgeois nationalist Supreme Soviet and the power of the National Salvation Committee of Lithuania.

"Dual power cannot last long. At any moment, it can be resolved by a civil bloodbath".

Supposedly, to prevent bloodshed, the Committee called on the workers and "engineer-technicians" to "take power in the factories".

With breathtaking hypocrisy, it called for "driving out of the collectives the thieves who are robbing the people under the banner of privatization."

Bureaucracy favours restoration

The fact is that it is the Stalinist bureaucrats above all who are doing that, and who are openly for restoring capitalist relations, with themselves as the beneficiaries.

There is no reason to think that the national-democrats are in any way more restorationist than the "internationalist" bureaucracy.

Moreover, unlike the advocates of economic reform in Moscow, who stress the need for "a firm hand" to impose painful changes, the Baltic movements have generally placed their economic programs in the context of a thoroughgoing democratization of all decision-making in the society.

So far, it seems that few if any workers in the USSR have been taken in by the left rhetoric of the neo-Stalinists.

Workers and socialists in the West should not be either.

It is essential that socialists and democrats now defend the embattled Baltic movements without hesitations or reservations.

"For their freedom and ours!" ★