

international

**VIEWPOINT**

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Germany :

**Neo-nazis up the ante**

Brazil :

**An historic conference**

Dossier :

**United States**



# CONTENTS

## 3 BRAZIL

An historic conference — *José Correa*

## 5 EUROPE

An important initiative — *Claude Gabriel*

## 6 GERMANY

Neo-nazis up the ante

— *David Müller & Björn Mertens*

## 9 SPANISH STATE

A white line across the Pyrenees?

— *Miguel Romero*

## DOSSIER: USA

### 12 CLINTON

No Franklin D Roosevelt

**Dianne Feeley**

### 16 LOS ANGELES

One year on

**Evelyn Sell**

### 19 LABOUR

Signs of resurgence

**Frank Lovell**

Stopping the decline

**David Simcha**

## 24 BELGIUM

New Belgium solves nothing

— *Alain Tondeur*

## 27 GUATEMALA

Auto-coup — Auto-exit — *Roland Wood*

## 29 URUGUAY

Beyond the domesticated left — *Interview*

## 32 IRELAND

"As British as Bexley" — *John North*

## 33 CAUCUSES

A Stalinist legacy — *Vicken Cheterian*

Memories live on — *Vicken Cheterian*

## 36 AROUND THE WORLD

● East Timor ● Mexico ● Bosnia ● Britain

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## Summer break

WE at *IV* are off for the month of July. The next issue of your favourite magazine will come out in early September. Please keep the renewals and correspondence flooding in. All the best for a safe and happy summer! — The Editors ★

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# An historic conference

THE general orientation of the resolution approved by the eighth national conference of the Workers Party (PT) — the text “A leftwing option” — aims to deepen and radicalise the strategy for a popular and democratic alternative, developed by the party at its fifth national conference and put forward as a social project in the programme of the Lula presidential candidacy in 1989.

**JOSÉ CORREA —**  
São Paulo, June 18, 1993

**T**HIS text asserts that “to carry out deep-going reforms in Brazilian society implies breaking or severely limiting the power of dominant groups. This process occupies a central role in our society’s democratic revolution — which will make a clean break from the current structures of power and opens the way to the building of a radically different society.”

It emphasises the anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist and anti-big landlord character of the reforms proposed by the PT, as well as the need for alliances on the basis of the democratic and popular programme. The resolution is introduced by a self-critical text on the previous orientation of the party, and calls for a change in the party’s line and a renewal of the leadership.

The eight proposed political texts presented for discussion at the conference were reduced to four — that of “Radical Democracy”, supported by the members of the “Project for Brazil” current<sup>1</sup>; that of the “Articulation-Unity in Struggle” current<sup>2</sup>, which included most of the signatories of the “Policy for a new hegemony” text presented by the Minas Gerais PT<sup>3</sup>; that of the “PT in Struggle” current<sup>4</sup>; and, finally, the “Leftwing option”, itself a fruit of the fusion of four texts (see box).

The political theses agreed on the Friday afternoon incorporated a large number of the amendments proposed by “Unity in

## *A clear shift to the left*

THE eighth national conference of the Workers Party (PT), which took place from June 11 to 13, confirmed the growing strength in the party of positions with a clearly leftwing orientation as well as the heightened unity of party members — two important factors, given the fact that the Brazilian and international press forecast a very different outcome.

The conference ratified an explicitly class struggle, democratic and popular orientation for the party, as well as an agreement on struggles for anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist reforms and against big landowners. This was a product of the experience amassed since the first congress of the party in December 1991 and the programmatic arsenal that has been assembled — not without conflicts and tensions — during 14 years of existence.

Since the 1991 congress, Brazil has seen the fall of former President Collor, the municipal and federal elections in at the end of 1992, the deepening of the political and economic crisis under the Itamar government — as well as the departure from the PT of people such as Luiza Erundina, ex-mayor of São Paulo, who decided to join the new federal administration, with the idea of playing a leading role in the formation of “centre-left” alliances proposed by the most conservative elements of the party.

Against this backdrop and the upcoming elections in 1994, the objective of the gathering — like the preparatory discussions which preceded it — was to draw up a balance sheet of the party’s line, to find alternatives to overcome the current impasse of the leadership, and to advance in the direction of a strategy which could bring the PT to power.

The line chosen by the majority of the 518 delegates — called “A leftwing option”, the fruit of a fusion of four initial lines: that of the “Articulation-Hour of truth” current, the “Socialist Democracy” current, the current around the head of the parliamentary group, Vladimir Pereira, and the “Socialist Orientation” current — synthesises the aspirations of the PT rank-and-file to consolidate a project which would see the party gain political and social hegemony within the population.

This project means being very specific about the policy of alliances, the kind of social mobilisations to organise from now on, the role of the party, and above all the type of government the PT proposes to lead. On this matter, it should be recalled that the first congress of the PT had already adopted a political line favouring the left of the party, but that at the time the forces behind this orientation were not strong enough to have a consequent impact outside the party.

Today, not only has the practice of the last year and a half served to confirm the validity of these positions, but changes in the national leadership of the party — which now reflects the actual relationship of forces between the different currents in the party — mean that many tensions and contradictions built up in the past will be overcome. — Alfonso Moro ★

Struggle” and by “PT in Struggle”. Among these amendments, the following should be highlighted:

- an amendment from “Unity in Struggle” on the union movement, further amended by the authors of the “Leftwing option” theses, which blames the deepening of the crisis in the United Workers Confederation (CUT) on the absence of clear

1. “A Project for Brazil” is a former part of the PT leftwing, which has since made a social democratic turn. It can be considered the most reformist wing of the party.

2. “Articulation” is the former majority current of the PT, and received 46% of votes at the first congress of the PT in November 1991. The two currents which are its successors got 47.3% of the delegates — 29.3% for “Unity in Struggle” and 18% for “Hour of Truth”.

3. Minas Gerais is a big state in the southcentral part of Brazil. This proposed political text, “Policy for a new hegemony”, was written by the “Unity in Struggle” current, by “Socialist Democracy” and independent sectors of the PT.

union orientation by the PT, and proposes that a national gathering of PT union activists be held in the second half of this year.

- an amendment from "PT in Struggle" on the fight against the current parliament's proposed constitutional reforms.

- an amendment from "Unity in Struggle" elaborating the PT's international political positions.

An editorial committee composed of representatives of the different currents adopted by consensus a text on proposals for the PT's economic policy — fusing the texts of the "Unity in Struggle" and "PT in Struggle" currents.

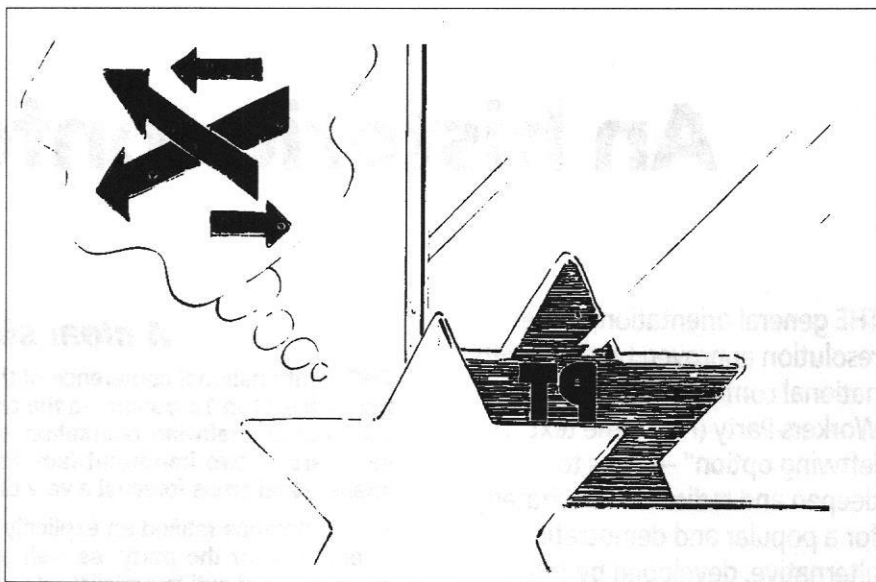
This text attenuates what, in the political theses, was seen to be an exaggeration of the role of the state in the economy and corrects the erroneous view developed by "Unity in Struggle" on the links of the Brazilian economy with the world market — translated in the formula "competitive insertion of Brazil in the world economy". Six amendments proposed by "Radical Democracy" and three proposals from "PT in Struggle", among others, were not integrated into the political theses.

The press focused above all on the debate around alliances, even though this subject has become less acutely posed among PT members since the entry of Fernando Henrique into the Ministry of Finance.<sup>5</sup> The political resolution asserts that, "The PT must propose to those forces interested in a popular and democratic government a policy of alliances around a government programme, to oppose the elite political forces, divided between the candidacy of Maluf and that of the 'third way'."

The resolution goes on to describe the political scene and examine in detail the Democratic Labour Party (PDT) and the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB).<sup>6</sup> Concerning this latter party, it says, "While it is not part of the popular and democratic camp, the PSDB has progressive sectors.

Today, the search for a third way holds sway in the PSDB, but tomorrow it may lean towards us. For this reason, the PT must win the support of its activists and its electorate, beginning in those cities where we already share leadership with them — by accentuating the polarisation in the party between partisans of an alliance around a democratic and popular programme and the others."

This proposal, defended by Vladimir Pereira, won against two others — one which came from an amendment by Augusto de Franco that proposed to suppress the characterisation of the PSDB and replace it with a more general text including the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B), the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), the PDT, PSDB, the Socialist People's Party (PPS), the Uni-



fied Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) and the Green Party (PV).<sup>7</sup>

The other, defended by Rogério Correia, while supporting the argument that there are progressive sectors in the PSDB, said, "Today, the search for a third way holds sway in the PSDB. The PT must win the support of its activists and its electorate — by accentuating the polarisation in the party with proposals for an alliance around a democratic and popular programme."

The amendments presented by "Radical Democracy" were for the most part related to questions of the institutions and "governability". A supplementary amendment describing the centrality of social struggles for structural reforms under a popular and democratic government was passed. It stated, "This mobilisation will let us create a spectrum of alliances that will facilitate the work in parliament, by exerting pressure through the indispensable broadening of the parliamentary base of the government."

Two other amendments were rejected — one which proposed to suppress the section in the political theses which argued that the PT should try to force possible allies to withdraw from the current Itamar Franco government; the other on the PT's conception of "governability".

This latter amendment proposed to replace the paragraph which states, "The pace of the application of the popular democratic programme will be defined by the relationship of forces existing in society, in particular by the level of mass mobilisation and self-organisation." Their defeated amendment read, "we are going to implement a policy of selective losses — keeping mind that that we can't confront all our adversaries at the same time."

"PT in Struggle" proposed an amendment, which was defeated, to the political theses, criticising the PT's intervention in the *camaras setoriais* — price and cost-set-

ting bodies with representatives from the employers, the unions and the government — a theme absent from the initial text.

An amendment proposing that the PT invest itself in a campaign calling for the early holding of upcoming presidential elections was also rejected — as was an amendment that proposed a change in the current practice of systematically linking regional and national alliances and one that denounced all PT relations with social democracy.

In general, it can be said that there was political homogeneity in the majority of political texts proposed to the conference. In the end, pressure in the direction of a change in the party's orientation — clearly voiced in the majority of gatherings in the different states — was expressed not only through a recomposition of political forces inside the PT and of the texts presented at the outset, but also by the existence of a broad spectrum of political formulations in the final resolution, passed following the incorporation of a number of amendments. ★

4. "PT in Struggle" is the product of the convergence of several currents, the main one being that of peasant base of "Articulation". This current had 19.1% of delegates. "Socialist Democracy" is the PT tendency organised by members of the Fourth International.

5. On the entry of Luiza Erundina, former PT mayor of São Paulo, and Fernando Henrique, an economist considered to be close to the PT, into the government, see "The temptations of office", João Machado, IV 243, March 1993.

6. The PDT is the political heir of the Brazilian populist tradition, but which has become increasingly social democratic. Its roots are primarily in the south of the country and its main electoral support comes from Rio de Janeiro. The PSDB is a party which is not traditionally linked to the popular and democratic movement and is halfway between social democracy and traditional liberalism.

7. The Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B) is the formerly pro-Albania Stalinist party; the PSB is another party which can be considered social democrat; the PPS is the new name of the majority from the former Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), previously pro-Moscow and very pro-Gorbachev in its final days; the PSTU is the party created by the former "Socialist Convergence" current, which split last year from the PT and is connected to the Argentina-based Moreno current. The PV is a small left-wing ecologist organisation.

# An important initiative

THE June 12 Paris Assembly has created a significant space for reflection and debate. The question of pan-European solidarity has been posed now for several years by the evolution of policies of the different governments and by the reorganisation of capital. The Single Act of 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty have been at the heart of these problems for nearly three years.

**CLAUDE GABRIEL —**  
Paris, June 25, 1993

**T**HESE first attempts to gather those forces to the left of the "Maastricht" social democrats in debate and exchange are thus rather belated.

The list of participants at the Paris Assembly shows that most organisations present are the products of the crisis of the traditional reformist parties. Either they are splits or they are radically oppositional currents. There are also — either present in Paris or signatories of the appeal — a few Communist Parties whose evolution means that from now on we can look forward to unity in action with other currents in the workers movement.

It is the crisis of the workers movement — and particularly of social democracy and Stalinism — that enabled us to pose in a new way the question of solidarity and unity faced with the attacks of the employers and European governments. The delay has been costly in terms of the social relationship of forces and rank-and-file resources. Therefore, the Paris Assembly took place in a political and social context which, for the moment, limits opportunities to experiment.

The June 12 meeting therefore reflects a contradictory state of affairs. All the organisations and currents present are engaged in efforts to oppose the disasters of the capitalist crisis, to oppose the policies of austerity and plans for European unification. But there is an enormous disparity in the area of political perspectives, the means of struggle and the perception of capitalism itself. So, on the

## ***A healthy foundation***

THE first Assembly of the European Left can be considered a success — one that should be built upon by our current.

For the first time in our history, we were able to bring together — around a clear platform that we had a central role in drawing up — one of the most significant currents of left social democracy (Tony Benn), the most significant elements of those forces which have emerged from the Communist Parties, as well as a few progressive ecologists.

The militant tone of the initiative (a rally and not only a simple academic gathering) encouraged the beginnings of a unitary dynamic between the different European currents present. It also helped get new signatories of the appeal from other forces.

On the day after the gathering, a meeting brought together representatives from the PDS (ex-East German CP), the United Left (Spain), the Workers Socialist Party (Belgian section of the FI), the Danish Red-Green Alliance, and, from France, the Red and Green Alternative, the Movement of Citizens, the Alternative-Socialism-Democracy, the Refounders and the LCR (French section of the FI).

The Belgian CP, the Portuguese Manifesto group, the AKOA (former Greek CP which has clearly moved leftward) and the German VSP participated as observers at this meeting.

The Labour Party left was absent, but Tony Benn said he was prepared to associate himself with any initiative taken around the Paris Appeal. A message from Marcelino Camacho of the Spanish Workers Commissions conveyed the same commitment.

The meeting decided to request other political and union currents to sign the Paris Appeal, and to form a working group that would organise another assembly in the autumn of 1994 in another European capital.

The agreement remains very fragile. The considerable weight of forces that emerged from the Communist Parties might make it difficult in the future to attract forces from ecologist and social democratic currents. A number of the parties involved are currently having essential strategic debates (for example, a not insignificant part of the Spanish United Left wants to come to an agreement with the PSOE government).

Moreover, while some of the participating organisations want to move toward greater cooperation, specifically in the run up to the European elections (for example, the Italian Party for the Communist Refoundation), others don't want to go any further than the creation of an informal framework for debates (forces such as the United Left and the French Communist Refounders, who do not want to commit themselves to any cooperation which would place them in opposition to the leadership of the French CP).

In such conditions, the holding of the Assembly and the meeting represent a political victory from three points of view: the ability to take the initiative, the creation of a framework, and the establishment or strengthening of links.

There were of course bad points: the Assembly was not very convivial, and the workshops were not very productive even though the speakers were usually very representative. These are areas for future improvement. ★

one hand there is a strong desire to debate and react, but on the other there is tremendous political heterogeneity.

The important thing is that it was possible to take this international and public initiative alongside ecologist currents, left reformists and revolutionary Marxists. This could be an important step for the future, and could be translated into concrete activity in the various social movements like, for example, anti-racism or union struggles.

A purely "political" approach — or purely electoral, given the upcoming European elections in June 1994 — would not have had the same effect as the Paris Assembly. The effective use of pluralism and unity that prevailed in the Paris debates should prove a precious tool in coming social struggles. Some of the currents represented have a real weight in their countries and play a recognised role in the social movements.

Indeed, this is the point: to exert creative

# Neo-nazis up the ante

pressure on activist initiatives and make concrete proposals which favour pan-European united action. The real challenge is to make this link between debates — from Copenhagen to Paris — and an activist and pluralist investment in the mass movements.

It is through the successful combination of these two approaches that future progress in the definition of an alternative Europe will be made. There is a long list of movements for which commitments made in Paris could have important consequences in the future: in European anti-racist campaigns, against unemployment and for the reduction of the work week, in the feminist movement (notably in defence of abortion rights), and in the building of a anti-militarist and anti-imperialist movement.

Many of those present have real forces to invest in such struggles; and while the ideological and strategic debate should be had in full, the ability to join together around immediate demands will be decisive. It is precisely in this that the interest and utility of the Paris Assembly lies.

And this is why the Fourth International and its sections were a driving force. To be sure, there is a need for further proof after this first initiative, before we can make a final judgement. But other organisations who claim allegiance to socialism and a revolutionary project are wrong to keep aloof from such initiatives.

We are neither dreaming nor racing ahead of ourselves. The Paris Assembly clearly demonstrates what is currently possible and necessary. ★

## A growing list

THE following is a list of new signatories of the Paris Appeal, which appeared in the May 1993 issue of *International Viewpoint*:

**Joseph Zisyadis**, deputy and president of the Party of Labour, Switzerland; **Charis Golemis**, secretariat member of the AKOA, Greece; **Per Gahrton**, spokesperson for the Green Party, Sweden; **Gudrun Schyman**, deputy and president of the Left Party, Sweden; **Johan Lonroth**, deputy and vice president of the Left Party, Sweden; **Eva Nikell** and **Kjell Petterson**, spokespeople of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International; **François Houtart**, CETRI, Belgium; **Pierre Galand**, President of OXFAM, Belgium; **Ken Livingstone**, Labour Party MP, Britain; **Jeremy Corbyn**, Labour Party MP, Britain; **Gilles Perrault**, writer, France. ★

**TWO days after the passing of a very tough new law on asylum rights, a house was set ablaze in Schengen in the vicinity of Cologne, killing five Turkish women and girls. The target of racial attacks in Germany has changed — from refugees and recent immigrants to the long-established Turkish community. In response, Turkish youth have started to defend themselves.**

**DAVID MÜLLER & BJÖRN MERTENS — Hannover, June 16, 1993**

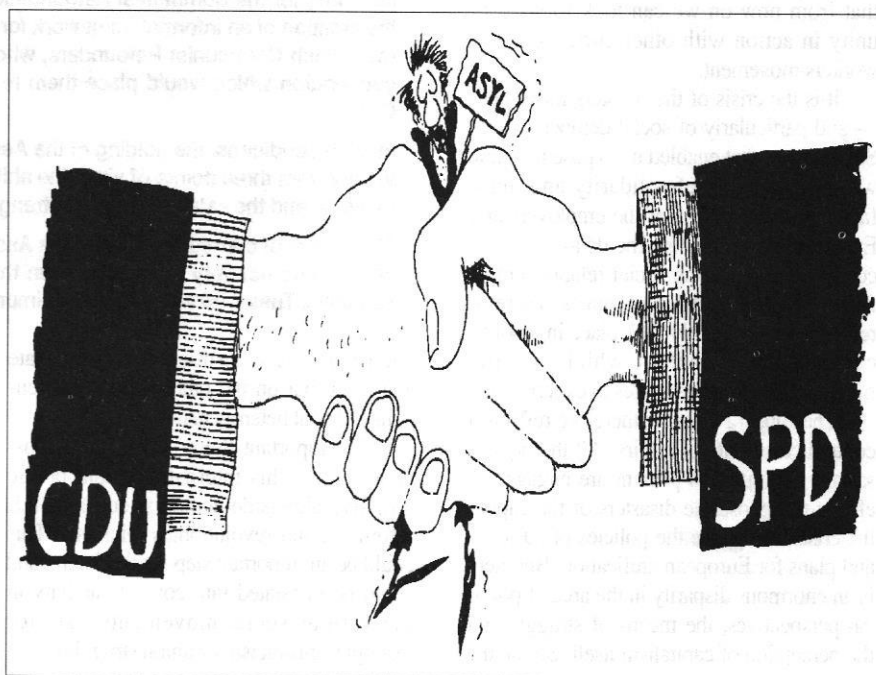
**T**HE constitutional changes and new asylum law passed by the German parliament on May 26, 1993, virtually abolish the right to asylum in Germany. The new rules mean, for example, that a refugee arriving in Germany who has passed through a third country deemed to be "safe" can be expelled back to that country. Countries falling into this category include India, which Amnesty International considers to have one of the world's worst records of torture. Refugees without valid papers will also be thrown out. Despite all the politicians' protestations to the contrary, this will clearly work to exclude political refugees.

The German establishment has been insisting that the asylum restrictions would bring the fascist groups' onslaught to an end. In fact, the new law represents a concession to these forces and a retrospective vindication of the fascist mobilisation.

Now the fascists and the youth under their influence have the wind in their sails, as was gruesomely shown by the murders in Solingen. Since then, every day has seen new arson attacks mainly directed against Turks, but also against refugee centres. This new wave of terror has arisen because of — and not in spite of — the new asylum laws.

Since the start of 1991, the mainstream rightwing government parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)/Christian Social Union (CSU) have been in the forefront of whipping up hysteria against refugees. The aim was to create a climate in which immigration can be halted. The government would no longer give money to political refugees. At the same time, it was convenient to blame non-Germans for the crisis produced by German re-unification.

The government campaign rolled out a red carpet for the fascists. The number of racist attacks soared, reaching a high point in the pogroms in Hoyerswerda in August



1991 and Rostock in September 1992. And on the very night that the refugee hostel in Rostock was set ablaze, the leadership of the opposition Social Democrat Party (SPD) caved in and declared its readiness to support a change in the constitution.

This turnaround would not have come so fast without the fascist terror. The Nazis have gone from being scavengers in the wake of the official policy to being its trail-blazers, at least in terms of the mood of the German people. We now have the first shoots of a new fascist street movement.

The Nazis were able to wage a campaign of open terror in Hoyerswerda and Rostock. In Rostock, the police effectively arranged to leave the field to the Nazis for two hours. In Dresden fascist groups were able to take over the whole city and even cooperated with the police — in this case against public gambling and prostitutes. So far, fascist actions on this scale have only been seen in East Germany where the left is weaker and the militant wing of German neo-fascism — small but highly organised groups such as the formally banned Nationalist Front or the Freedom Workers Party — have been able to win far more influence than in the west.

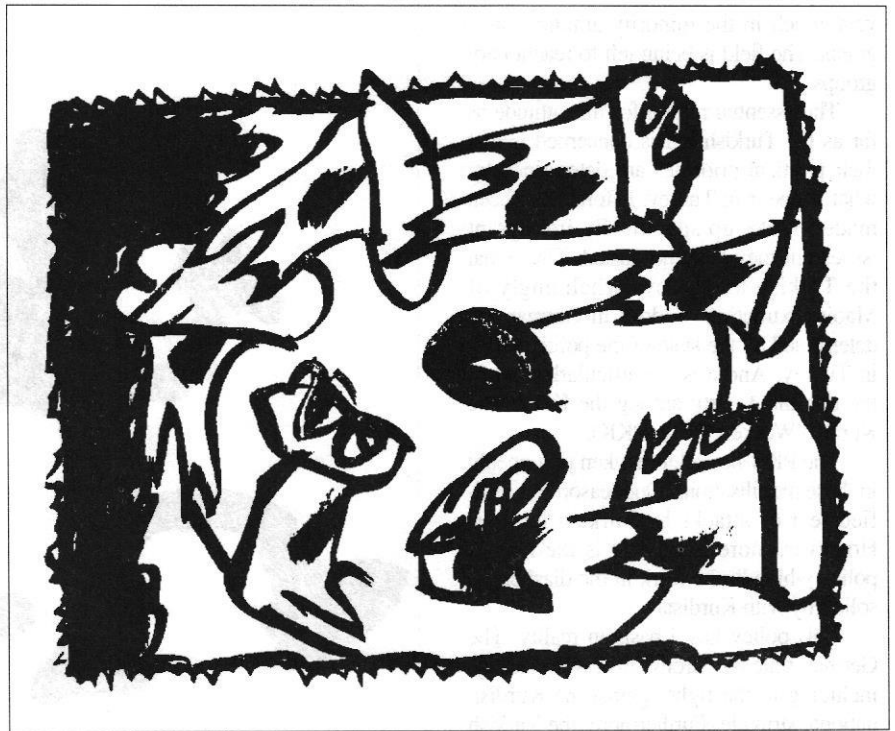
The tactic of night-time raids by hooded commandos on immigrants and refugees throughout Germany, however, has allowed the Nazis to sow fear and confusion while remaining largely secure from retribution by the left and immigrants.

The government and the SPD have fanned the flames, giving the impression that the Nazis are pursuing a righteous aim but with the wrong methods. The terror became uncomfortable, however, when it met serious resistance that could not be controlled; when immigrants were murdered in Mölln, the fascists struck at a group that could defend itself. However, the establishment was most concerned about reaction abroad.

At the same time, they saw that resistance was growing. The official demonstration in Berlin on November 8, 1992 turned into a rally in defence of asylum rights and on November 14, 150,000 people turned out in Bonn to oppose the SPD leadership on the occasion of the special congress of the SPD (which nonetheless voted by a majority of 90% to accept constitutional change); in both cases, the demonstrators escaped the control of the traditional apparatuses of the left.

A further factor was the growing independent strength of the militant Nazis — desirable as auxiliaries but to be kept in their proper place.

All these factors gave rise to the turn of 1992-93 to the "Chains of Light" movement which brought out 500,000 people in



Munich, 100,000 in Hannover and 2-300,000 in Berlin. This was an expression of a change in the popular mood which was no longer ready to accept open terror. The chosen form of action united the broadest participation.

Against the background of the deeply-rooted racism of the German population, the Chains of Light undoubtedly marked a step forward. At the same time, they performed functions which were anything but progressive.

The specifically racist nature of the violence got lost under the general condemnation of "hate and violence" by these demonstrations. And, most disastrously, no concrete demands were raised. Racism as a disembodied spirit was to be exorcised, but there was to be no struggle against concrete racist attacks and laws. The murders in Solingen and the subsequent protests exposed all the weaknesses of the existing anti-racist movements in Germany.

Solingen delivered a shock above all to Turkish immigrants. For the first time we saw anti-racist demonstrations made up in the majority of immigrants — 5-7,000 strong in Solingen on the day after the murders, two demonstrations of 1,500 each in Hannover, 6-7,000 in Munich. The small size of these marches compared to the Chains of Light was a result of "fear of violent disorder".

Even on the evening of the first demonstration in Solingen disputes arose mainly between young Turks and the police. These incidents were sensationalised by the media into civil war-like street battles, although in fact they were at first the outcome simply of spontaneous anger, and the

human cost was strictly limited.

These minor incidents were used by the establishment to raise a hue and cry against "rampaging Turks". The German government threatened those taking part with expulsion. Stopping any such expulsions is thus now a major task for anti-racists. That it is equally important to develop perspectives that can prevent frustration and anger blowing themselves out in incidents that only bring further danger to immigrant youth.

Nonetheless, it remains the case that the current mobilisation by immigrants is a positive development. Immigrants (the biggest group being 1.8 million from Turkey, including some 200,000 Kurds) are both in the frontline against racism and are an important component of the German working class. Many work in big industry — for example Volkswagen — while a third of Opel's workforce is from Turkey — and are unionised. However, much of the German and Turkish left have not recognised or even reacted negatively to the new developments.

Much of the radical left, for example, rules out common actions with nationalist or Islamic groups. By this they mean not only Turkish fascist groups, like the Grey Wolves — which attack the Turkish, and especially the Kurdish, left — but also Turkish youth who wave Turkish flags at demonstrations and people mobilised through the mosques. In Hamburg, for example, the far-left stayed away from the demonstration on June 5 and in Hannover there were two demonstrations.

This is all the more disastrous in that the far-left, both German and Turkish, is

very much in the minority among immigrants. The field is being left to reactionary groups.

The essential reason for this attitude as far as the Turkish left is concerned is that their political priorities are determined by what happens in Turkey. Efforts have been made to take up specifically immigrant issues but they have not lasted. Thus what the Turkish left — overwhelmingly of Maoist extraction — does in Germany is determined by the state of the political play in Turkey. And this is particularly true of the dominant party among the Kurds, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

The PKK has seldom taken part openly in these mobilisations. One reason is a justified fear of attacks by Turkish fascists. However, more important is the PKK's policy which limits work in the diaspora to solidarity with Kurdistan.

This policy has a basis in reality. The German state has strong links with Turkey, including in the fight against the Kurdish national struggle. Furthermore, the Turkish government exercises direct influence over emigrants through a host of organisations. In Germany, Turkish nationalism has the support of a really-existing state.

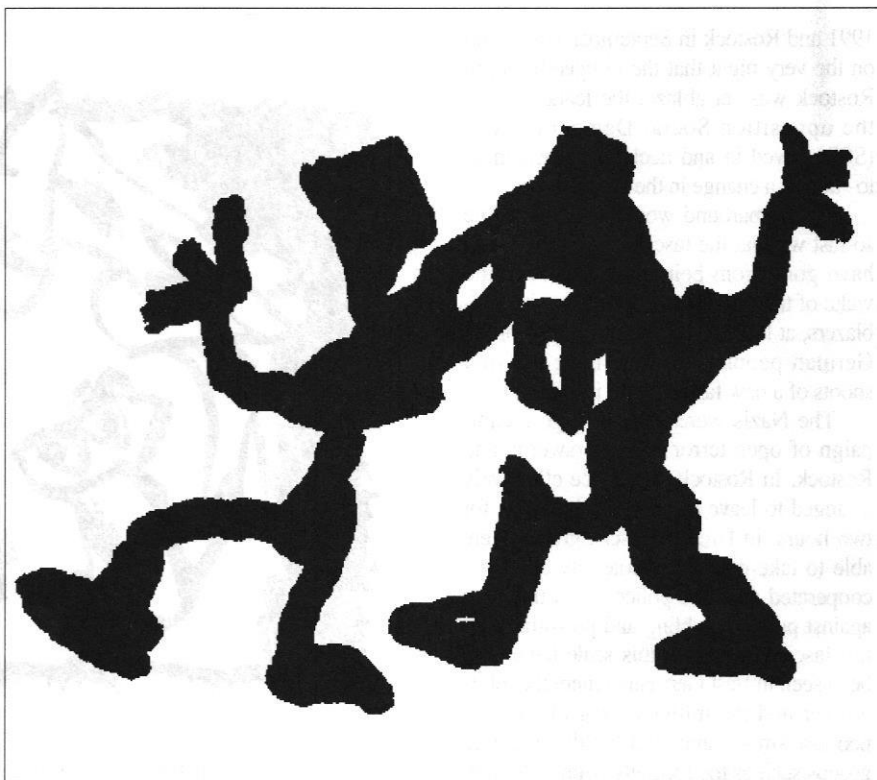
Nonetheless, the straightforward repudiation of Turkish nationalism in Germany by the German left is a big mistake. It fails to see that the nationalism of the Turkish immigrant youth who wave Turkish flags is that of an oppressed group and has no necessary connection with Great Turkish chauvinism. It is an initial defensive response to German racism. However, since most of the German left has long ceased to draw any distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and that of the oppressor, it is unable to grasp what is going on.

There is also a fear about leaving the left ghetto and relating to people pursuing a struggle for their own interests. And there is an underswell of unacknowledged prejudices about immigrants even among left radicals. The overall result of all this is a clear field for the Islamic fundamentalists. The perfidious tactics of the Turkish government, which is trying to make use of immigrants' fear of Nazis in favour of its own racist policies towards the Kurds may bear fruit.

Thus, after the arson attack, it was cynically claimed that criticism of Turkish policies in Kurdistan "contributed to the 'anti-Turkish' atmosphere", thus favouring the attack. The big middle ground of moderate Islamic and nationalist-inclined Turks are left to the tender mercies of openly reactionary forces.

Socialists in the anti-racist movement face three central questions:

- How can the fascist terror campaign



be counter-acted?

- How can the defensive struggle be turned into a campaign for equal rights for immigrants?

- How can the divisions amongst immigrants and between immigrants and refugees be overcome?

Definitive answers require more experience, but outlines of a strategy can nonetheless be suggested.

The Nazi terror must be countered both at the level of the atmosphere in society and through direct self-defence actions. On the one hand, we need broad mobilisations in which people can take part and which must, obviously, avoid confrontation. On the other, self-defence structures can be created, drawn from all the nationalities in a neighbourhood. This would not stop all attacks but such activities as street patrols would raise the stakes for the fascists. In the town of Achim near Bremen, attackers have been driven out. Demonstrations and protests against Nazi meeting places are also important.

The demand for equal rights has been vigorously raised by immigrants themselves. Such rights should concretely include: the possibility of dual nationality at the request of the person concerned; the right to vote at all levels; and the withdrawal of the new labour law, which discriminates against immigrants and refugees. Germany is a multi-ethnic country in which all nationalities must have equal rights, including that of cultural autonomy. Educational campaigns and mobilisations can be organised around these questions.

An important means of struggle untested in Germany is the strike. It would put the unions in the forefront of the anti-racist struggle. At the start of this year independent union groups succeeded in organising a short strike. And now the chair of the European Christian Democratic Workers Association has called for a general strike of all immigrants in Germany. We can learn from the Swedish general strike against racism and initiate common actions between German and immigrant workers. An anti-racist strike would also give an opportunity for educational campaigns and the organisation of demonstrations.

The common struggle for equal rights can also be a means of overcoming divisions. On this point also, socialists must undertake educational work and outspokenly oppose discrimination against particular groups of immigrants and above all against refugees. That means following through the demand for open borders in practice, mobilising against expulsions — even of single individuals — and trying to prevent them. This struggle must also oppose the planned assembly camps.

The longest and hardest struggle will be to bring together the different potential opposition forces (workers, women, immigrants, refugees, and so forth). We have to do more than just talk about common struggle. Practical solidarity must be organised — in particular, solidarity with immigrants and refugees, from movements in which the majority of activists are German.★



# A white line across the Pyrenees?

**HAS Felipe González's recent election victory bucked the trend of European politics? Since 1989 — or more specifically, since the beginning of the current recession — we have seen the decline of social democracy and the accelerated rise of the right.**

**The deputy leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), Alfonso Guerra, said that the election had drawn a "white line" across the Pyrenees. The message to the European right: "You can go no further."**

**MIGUEL ROMERO\***— Madrid, June 21, 1993

If the election result was an exception it had more to do with the form than the substance of the matter. The enthusiastic messages of congratulations that González received from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French rightwing leader Giscard D'Estaing (who also made a kind of "self-criticism" for having participated in a campaign meeting of the People's Party (PP) candidate, José Maria Aznar), and British Prime Minister John Major were more than simple gestures of diplomatic courtesy.

González is one of their kind. Fundamentally, he shares their political programme, their vision of the world, their value system and their material interests. Since 1982, he has transcended political traditions and currents, and has managed four times in a row to be the candidate receiving the most support from the Spanish and European establishments. He has not betrayed this confidence.

Many reasonable forecasts predicted that election day would be the end of the political cycle begun in 1982 — euphemistically described as "the socialist decade". All the pre-election enquiries came to the same three conclusions: the loss of the PSOE's absolute parliamentary majority; the possibility of a "technical draw" with the PP or even that of a marginal rightwing victory; and a significant increase in support for the United Left (IU) who would get at least as many seats as the best score of the Communist Party of Spain (23 deputies in 1979) and perhaps get as many as 30 deputies and 15% of the popular vote. These predictions foresaw a particularly difficult situation after

the elections. Nevertheless, there would be possibilities for organising a social resistance which would push politics to the left.

In fact, of the three conclusions drawn by forecasters only one was actually correct, and then only partially at that: the PSOE indeed lost its absolute majority (formerly, 176 deputies; in reality, a few less due to the non-participation of the deputies of the radical Basque nationalist organization, Herri Batasuna (HB)), but it got nearly 160 deputies (which corresponds to the most optimistic expectations of the party at the beginning of the campaign) and put a comfortable distance between itself and the PP.

The PSOE will have considerable room for manoeuvre in parliament, allowing it to make a wide assortment of coalitions and agreements on its left and right. It could even try to go it alone as a minority government.

For its part, the PP made significant gains in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In particular, it now appears as a credible governmental alternative — something which no rightwing force has been able to do since the beginning of the post-Franco transition. But for the moment it has to be happy with being in opposition. In the new parliament it cannot assemble a coalition to defeat González. Its strategy will probably be to force the holding of early elections.

The results of the IU fell well below its expectations and this has produced a feeling of collapse in the coalition. This is rather excessive given the actual number of votes obtained.

In the coming period, the PSOE will continue to run Spanish politics. While in a weaker position than in the past, González is not obliged for parliamentary reasons to sub-

stantially alter his objectives.

As such, the current situation bears little resemblance to that which was predicted. And, most importantly, in the socio-political atmosphere which has been created, the left does not have the wind in its sails. For now at least, a PSOE-IU agreement does not seem very credible. And if one were to come about in the current climate, it is clear that this would imply more of a rightward drift of the IU than a leftward drift of the PSOE.

At the same time, there are intense pressures for the signing of a social pact — pressures from Gonzales himself, from the big media (especially from the powerful group headed up by the daily *El País*) and from the major corporations. This has not failed to have an impact on significant layers of the major unions, where the "culture of the pact" has made headway, in spite of the devastation it caused in the workers movement into the mid-1980s.

It might seem paradoxical that a victory of the "left" should provoke a "right" dynamic. The paradox only exists if one takes the PSOE's name seriously. If, however, the party is judged according to what it is and what it does, there is no paradox whatsoever.

In the euphoria of election night, a PSOE leader declared, "If they haven't defeated us now, they will never defeat us." To be sure, Felipe Gonzales called the elections at a critical time: the highest unemployment rate in the European Community (more than 22% of the active population and three million unemployed); a serious recession which has led to the application of a severe economic policy of "adjustment" which will last at least until the end of 1994; a series of corruption scandals that have openly implicated the central apparatus of the PSOE in illegal operations of party-financing and have created multi-millionaires overnight out of a number of former party leaders, friends, leaders and collaborators; public factional struggles between the so-called "renovator" current of the party — those loyal to President González — and the "official" current led by Alfonso Guerra who threatened González with a revolt of the parliamentary group against the government; and, finally, a significant change in the leadership of the Spanish right, which is

\* The author is a member of the Spanish revolutionary organisation Izquierda Alternativa (Alternative Left).

now in the hands of young and ambitious politicians who don't have a Francoist background and present themselves as centrists.

How then can the PSOE's victory be explained? In the first place, it is important to underline the exact meaning of this victory. In terms of votes, there was a difference of less than one million votes, or 4% of votes cast. A small swing to the right would have handed victory to the PP.

Taken together, the PP and the PSOE received 74% of votes, a significant proportion in a country with a relatively proportional electoral system, and where there are nationalist forces in government in Euskadi (Basque country) and in Catalonia. But there is no clear sociological difference between their two electorates. The PP is stronger among workers with jobs, those looking for their first job and students.

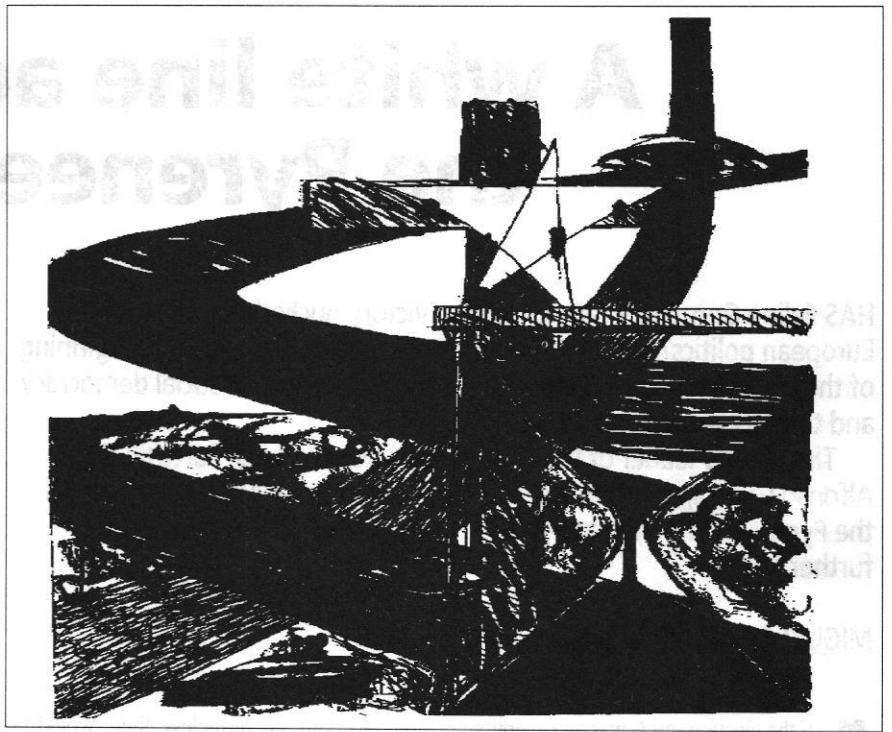
The PSOE is dominant among the unemployed, the retired and housewives. One feature that stands out is the strength of the right among youth voting for the first time: the PP got more than 34% of this group's votes, while the PSOE got less than 30%, and the IU 13%. These figures should, perhaps, be taken with a pinch of salt given the notorious incompetence of Spanish firms engaged in the dubious field of electoral "science".

Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between the urban PP majority vote and the rural PSOE majority. The PP won 39 out of 50 provincial capitals, but in the most populous ones the victories were only slight and in some (Barcelona, Sevilla, Bilbao) the PSOE won by a significant margin.

There has been a widely-defended argument attributing the PSOE victory to a "subsidised vote". The very notion of a "subsidised vote" — or, worse still, "captive vote" — is particularly offensive, especially as it is dressed up in sociological pretence. Spain is a country with more than eight million people living under the poverty line, more than three million unemployed, thousands of agricultural workers condemned to seasonal work, thousands of industrial workers threatened by restructuring, and a pension system which sets the minimum wage as an upper limit for payments to retired workers. To treat people who need "subsidies" to live so contemptuously, is worse than reactionary.

Probably a majority of abandoned workers considered the PSOE to be a better choice, or at least a lesser evil, than the right. But it would be a gross simplification to say that this is the main electoral base of the PSOE.

To understand González's victory, it is necessary to go beyond traditional political and social explanations. This victory reflects neither any fundamental class feeling nor any particular identification with the left. It



is better explained as a product of the "social climate" — in particular, of the various fears now present.

In the first place, there is the fear of the right. In a rather frivolous fashion, many on the radical left treated the PSOE and the PP as equivalents. For the great majority of people, in a country where the adult population recalls forty years of dictatorship, this is not the case — and with good reason.

If the PP had won, a José María Aznar government would not have implemented an excessively different policy to that of González. But the right is not only in the government; there is a right and a far-right in public administration, in the judiciary, the army, the media and the police. They would have seen a PP victory as their own, and the results would have been unmistakable.

Moreover, there is a right and a far-right in the towns and neighbourhoods, who on the eve of the election went around "flexing their muscles". There were shadows of revenge and many people were frightened. González used these fears with great finesse in his television debates with Aznar, by revealing with great ease the PP's candidates' lack of concrete proposals.

He asked Aznar again and again, "What is your real programme, Señor Aznar? What would you really do if you won the elections?" The question must have sent shivers down many people's spines. It is difficult to quantify the effects of this fear, given (as we noted above) the unreliable nature of figures produced by Spanish polling firms. Nevertheless, it is significant that an estimated 2.7 million of those who abstained in 1989 voted this time around: 60% of them voted for the PSOE, 37% for the PP and only

1.9% for IU.

This is to say that of the 900,000 votes that the PSOE got over the PP, we can say that 600,000 come from former abstentionists. This fear of the right had a particularly pronounced effect among potential IU voters. As of now, there are no clear estimates, but people in IU are talking about a last minute flight of 500,000 IU voters to the PSOE, but this figure does not come from the most neutral of sources. Nonetheless, many on the left know people who confess to having changed their vote from IU to PSOE, practically on their way to the polling stations.

Fear of instability also played an important part. And many people equated instability with the defeat of the González government. González himself played this card to full effect, declaring that if the PP came out ahead he would not be the presidential candidate for any kind of coalition government. This indirect request for a plebiscite on his personal leadership once again produced good results.

The personal standing of González is one of the central features of the Spanish political situation. In and of itself, this is proof of the state of disarray and weakness of collective aspirations and the lack of autonomy from public institutions. González is conscious of this situation and he takes risks to squeeze the maximum benefit from it; and the greatest risk he takes is the distance he places between himself and the apparatus of his party.

In this sense, his most spectacular gesture during the campaign was to make the judge Baltasar Garzón — a man with an incorruptible image who has frequently cla-

shed with the PSOE apparatus and the government in the area of corruption and civil rights — his deputy in Madrid. In general, it is clear that the PSOE vote is first and foremost a presidential vote for González.

Most people did not want a change; but this observation needs to be examined in more detail.

There are two counterposed interpretations of the electoral results which can both be dismissed. The first says that the decline of the PSOE was much less than was thought and that, in fact, there is a high level of satisfaction with its policies. This is now the official creed of the PSOE apparatus and it is backed up with some touched up statistics.

To be sure, a majority of Spanish society now have a standard of living considered acceptable and worth defending; the hope for radical change is very much reduced. But, particularly as a consequence of unemployment — the fact that it increasingly affects heads of families, that it is growing amongst skilled and administrative workers and that it is more and more difficult to get a first job — there has been a perceptible spread of social malaise.

There is a pronounced lack of confidence in González's ability to confront these problems, but the majority of people do not see any better alternative. For the fifty year-old worker who has seen the places where they have worked and lived — and suffered a thousand defeats — converted into a desert, getting a "soft reconversion" might appear a lesser evil. But this does not mean that they have forgotten who is responsible for the destruction of their job.

As for corruption, it would be unfair to say that the level of cynicism in society is such that the question is seen as unimportant, since "everyone is a thief". The problem is that people do not have any vehicle to intervene autonomously in these conflicts; in such conditions, they choose to elect the least dishonest "leader" possible.

Another interpretation is that the results are a popular mandate to undertake a "change in the change", in the fleeting words of González, or a "turn to the left", as called for by the major unions and, especially, the IU. It is obvious that González is not planning to undertake major changes in his orientation, even though there will certainly be a change in methods and image, whose degree will depend on whether a coalition is forged with the nationalist parties.

It is much more interesting to examine the IU position. Julio Anguita, the undisputed leader of the coalition, has said that the electoral results of the IU were almost "heroic" given the pressure from the two main parties. This is not a convincing explanation. In this country — except in the event

of a highly unlikely left turn of the PSOE, leading to an electoral accord — a formation such as the IU can only make significant electoral growth by transcending the two-party pressure.

Indeed, Anguita himself expressed this imperative during the electoral campaign, saying that, "the PSOE has to lose the elections to the left and not to the right." The most social-democratic sectors of his organisation (whose strength is not minimal; Anguita only received 63% of votes from the IU leadership for his nomination to the "presidential candidate" of the coalition) now accuse him of "ultra-leftism" for having used such formulas during the campaign.

Nevertheless, it was correct to take such a stance, both politically and electorally speaking. A more unitary approach towards the PSOE would have been politically absurd and very unproductive in terms of gathering additional votes.

In the end, the IU result was not bad, though somewhat uneven. It got a excellent result in Madrid (more than 450,000 votes, or 15%); it significantly increased its score in the Basque Country (while not getting any deputies elected); it basically maintained its percentage of votes in Catalonia, and its score moderately declined in Andalucía (where it got 400,000 votes).

If there is any talk of collapse, this is more in relation to expectations than to past results. But the expectations fuelled thoughts of a significant change in the socio-political approach of the IU. These varied from thoughts of securing "influence in the government", repeatedly declared by Anguita, or playing a more dynamic role in the recomposition of the left. For the moment, none of these effects have been produced by the election results. What happens in the future depends on social and political experiences, and not on the parliamentary group of the IU.

Anguita is a very particular kind of political personality. One of his most famous characteristics is his insistence on the importance of programme ("programme, programme, programme" is one of his well-known declarations), while in truth it can be said that he is the programme of the IU. In other words, the actual programme of the IU does not provoke great interest, not even within the coalition. Anguita's speeches and positions provide the "true" image and reality of the programme.

The contradictions are many. He has an essentially syndicalist approach, with hardly any place left for the demands of the social movements (including ecological demands, which could interest IU for electoral reasons — Anguita can not be called an electoralist). At the same time, in a meeting with the busi-

ness community he can be seen repeating the standard refrain about the "most dynamic sectors" who can "get the country out of the situation it is going through".

He proposes rather serious measures to share work and for the reduction of the working day — which, however, include a reduction in salaries. It can be said that he defends goals which are anti-capitalist, but he is a real devotee of the Spanish Constitution (which, among other things, seriously limit his proposals around the rights of the different nationalities).

He can call for strict democratic norms within the left, while at the same time treating minority rights with considerable disdain.

He can make extravagant speeches. For example, in Asturias — one of the most hard hit regions by the crisis, where until very recently the IU participated in the autonomous government run by the PSOE — he declared, "Miners, steelworkers, and peasants, when have we failed you? Give us strength!"

But he can also make clear arguments, a rarity with leaders in his tradition, such as, "I do not want an increased number of parliamentary deputies that does not lead to an increase in social consciousness". The problem is not only that Anguita "does not want"; it is most probable that a significant increase in IU's parliamentary strength in heavily bi-polar elections, with a line that is clearly to the left of the PSOE, could only come as a product of a change in the relationship of forces in society.

There has been no such change, and the results of June 6 have nothing to do with a "popular mandate" to form a PSOE-IU coalition nor to make a left turn. There is perhaps a considerable amount of popular sympathy with the idea of a PSOE-IU agreement, in part because this would imply a certain amount of pressure on the PSOE and in part because of the lack of confidence in a coalition government between González and the Catalan and Basque nationalists.

For the moment, González feels strong. He is seriously trying to make a programmatic agreement with those willing to submit to his hegemony. In the medium-term, things could change. Hope for a PSOE-IU coalition, which would have an absolute parliamentary majority, might garner increased influence in the future. But experience has taught us that it would be a negative development for this possibility to appear as the mythical solution to all the problems of working people.

The elections are over and they have not left a particularly favourable environment for those to the left of the PSOE. To borrow a phrase from Anguita: the need of the hour is to "increase the social consciousness". ★

# Clinton: No Franklin D Roosevelt

**INTRODUCTION** — In this month's Dossier we turn our spotlight on the USA. The articles we publish here are of course only pieces of a much larger jigsaw but we believe they examine three of the central features of the political situation in America today:

- The rapid disintegration of the new Clinton administration and the "jobless recovery" over which they attempt to preside.
- The protracted urban crisis that has gripped so many of America's cities.
- The signs, despite illusions in the Democrats, of a resurgent union movement.

"I think the American people know one thing — that I'm on their side...", President Clinton said at a press conference in May. Dianne Feeley illustrates how, as Clinton's promises and plans turn to dust, this is clearly not enough. He has, without resistance, become a hostage of the rightwing.

The overwhelming problem facing Clinton — just as it faced Bush — is the US economy. Feeley describes the "recovery" as "jobless" and goes on to note that the recession is, in reality, still lingering. It is against this backdrop that Feeley warns that illusions in the new administration being a friend of the social movements are "pathetic". She concludes that, "...the sooner activists at the base of (...) struggles recognise this, the better."

It is now one year since, courtesy of an extraordinarily well-placed video enthusiast, the world watched a group of Los Angeles policemen brutally assault Rodney King. The police, at least initially, got off scott-free. King was convicted for a traffic offence. The city erupted in dissent. Evelyn Sell, a school teacher in Los Angeles, takes us back to the city to find out what has happened in the last 12 months.

Los Angeles was being hailed as a positive preview of the future America. In her detailed article, Sell reveals that this description may at least be half true. Los Angeles could well be a preview of the future America — but a very **negative** picture develops. Sell concludes by noting how a number of diverse and militant struggles have proved that combativity and consciousness certainly still exist — but that these struggles need to be united.

Can a resurgent and radical union movement play a central role in uniting these, often locally based struggles?

In the February, 1993 issue of *Labor Notes*, Kim Moody wrote that: "The Clinton era will be different from labor's lost decade of the 1980s. It brings some openings, particularly in new organizing. But it also brings new problems." If at least some sectors of the union movement are able to take advantage of the openings; confront and overcome some of the problems, *Labor Notes* will have played a major part in bringing this about. Since its inception, *Labor Notes* has sought to link up individual activists and, where they have existed, the various democratic reform movements from across the country. This year's conference was the largest yet.

Frank Lovell, in his report of the conference, detects that there is indeed a new mood amongst militants, that the signs of a resurgent movement are real. We have chosen to highlight two reform movements which we feel illustrate this: Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and the New Directions current in the United Auto Workers. We would also add that the TDU, having won important positions in the national leadership of the IBT, faces enormous challenges.

A resurgent union movement may not, however, mean an immediate resurgence in strikes, although we could see the Mineworkers re-establishing a trend in this direction. Re-building confidence in the ability to actually engage in a struggle against the employers will in most cases be the first priority. In a shorter article we examine the way in which members of the Allied Industrial Workers have chosen to adopt "in-plant" tactics to carry forward a struggle against a subsidiary of the British sugar conglomerate Tate & Lyle.

Alone amongst every major industrialised country America does not have, nor has it ever had a mass workers party (social democratic or communist). The call, made several times by speakers at the *Labor Notes* conference, for a US labor party based on the unions may appear ritualistic. If, however, the resurgence generally and the advance of many of the democratic reform movements can be sustained and built upon the American working class may be a lot nearer to having its own independent party than it has been for a long time. —

**Roland Wood ★**

With amazing speed, the euphoria of Bill Clinton's January inauguration turned to slush. Many observers had expected Clinton's initial economic package to be enacted without much Congressional resistance, given the stuttering start to the recovery. But Clinton, who is seen as weak, has been unable to get Democrats to accept his leadership and operate in a disciplined manner. Unable to defend his own, woefully inadequate stimulus package from the frenzied worshippers of the golden calf of deficit reduction, Clinton has seen his plans unravel.

**DIANNE FEELEY\***  
Detroit, June 1993

**T**HE early political successes of the Clinton administration were signing a family leave bill that Bush had vetoed two times, reversing Executive Orders that had restricted women's access to abortion and announcing that the United States will sign the international bio-diversity treaty to protect endangered species.

But in comparison to the domestic agenda that Clinton had promised, these are minor victories. What is amazing is how quickly the euphoria of the January inauguration has turned to slush. A recent CNN/USA Today Gallup poll showed his approval rating down ten points, to 45% — a new low for a recently elected President. In an attempt to recover some political momentum, Clinton went on a three-city speaking tour in mid-May.

At a May 14 press conference, he fiercely asserted: "I'm doing things that are hard, that are controversial... Whenever you try to change things, there are always

\* The author is a member of the revolutionary socialist organisation Solidarity and a supporter of the Fourth International.

people there (...) to point out the pain of change without the promise of it...

I think the American people know one thing — that I'm on their side, that I'm fighting to change things, and they're finding out it's not so easy...<sup>1</sup>

Clearly President Clinton is already on the defensive. His most stinging defeat came on April 21, when Republicans in the US Senate crushed his weak stimulus package through a filibuster. Clinton could not — or did not — organise his Democratic forces in Congress for a decisive confrontation; he merely compromised. The \$16 billion plan became a \$4 billion bill, extending benefits to the long-term unemployed.

Within the month Clinton suffered another defeat. His plan to give businesses a tax break to encourage new investment — a plan that was not supported by business — was killed in Congressional committee.

In order to reduce the deficit, Clinton proposed an energy tax, which, if implemented, would represent one of the largest tax increases in US history. Just to get over the first Congressional hurdle, Clinton has already made a number of compromises. Although the tax is expected to pass the House, it may not make it through the Senate.

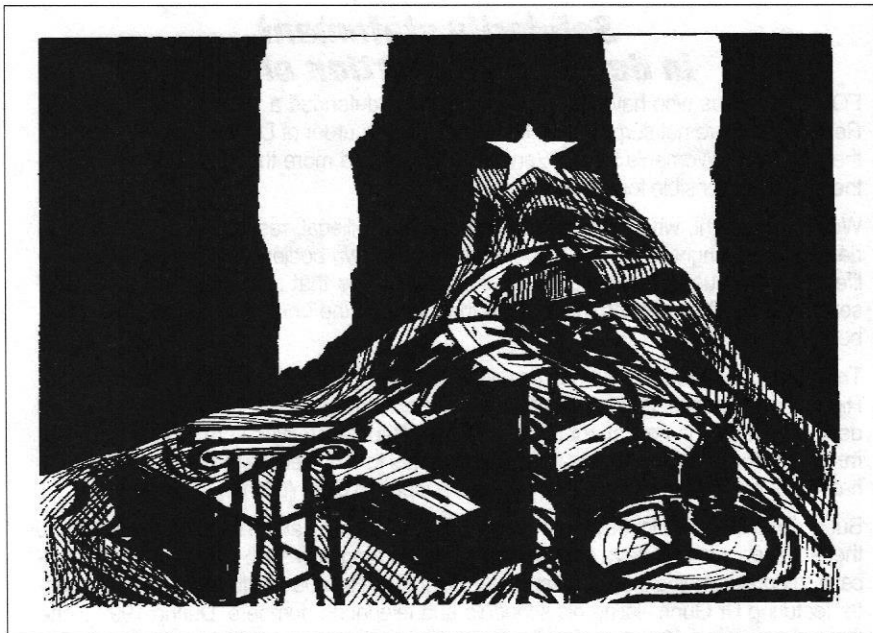
Perceived as weak, Clinton has been unable to get Democrats to accept his leadership and operate in a disciplined manner. Unable to defend his woefully inadequate stimulus package, he has seen his plans unravel.

The recent fiasco over the nomination of Lani Guinier to lead the Justice Department's civil rights division has left more egg on his face. It proved him to be hostage to rightwing veto power, incapable of making a political fight on anything, even when the African-American political establishment, civil rights advocates and liberals were prepared to mobilise in his support.

### **Hostage to rightwing**

Guinier's crime, as judged by the political correctness standards of the rightwing, is her theories on how existing voting rights legislation might be employed to make minority political representation more substantive than purely formal. The speed with which Clinton wimped out of any open debate, which hearings on her nomination would have provided, on the failures of the electoral system as presently constituted, handed the rightwingers their victory without even forcing them to fight for it. As a result, the Congressional Black Caucus threatened to revolt — with what effect remains to be seen.

Clinton now appears on the defensive on every front. At the beginning of June,



administration officials announced, Clinton has decided to delay increasing the minimum wage (now at \$4.25) until next year, and will propose something less than the \$1 an hour raise he contemplated when he took office in January. Why? His advisers acknowledge the proposal antagonises business executives and conservatives in Congress.

### **Homophobia**

Although he rescinded the Executive Order that hounded lesbians and gays out of the military, Clinton allowed Congress and the military to orchestrate hearings that overwhelmingly want to maintain the ban. By mid-May Congressman Barney Frank, one of the few openly gay representatives, urgently called for a compromise on this issue — before Congress legislates homophobia!

The only decisive action the administration has taken was the use of psychological terrorism and overwhelming fire-power resulting in the massacre of a religious cult in Waco, Texas. (Unlike certain other religious fanatics, the Branch Davidians to our knowledge were not firebombing medical facilities that provide abortions or assaulting those who work at them.)

In all matters Clinton is guided by the light of 'realism'. He now carries out Bush's policy of surrounding Haiti so that refugees cannot flee the country's repressive military; he has backed away from the demand that those who use public lands pay above-cost fees; he has delayed the proposal for revamping health care until July.

The overwhelming problem facing the Clinton administration — just as it faced the Bush administration — is the US economy. We are in the middle of a "jobless

recovery". In all other recoveries, as the economy grows, factories and offices start rehiring. We are nearly two years into the recovery and it continues to be flat. Layoffs at big corporations are continuing. So we still have 7.3% unemployment. During the late 1980s the big companies were laying off workers but the small companies were hiring at the rate of 175,000 a month. In February of this year the economy added 365,000 workers — but this figure also included those who are part-time, or temporary workers.

Currently small companies would need to increase their hiring by about 400% in order to bring the unemployment rate down to 6%. But when Clinton raised the idea of cutting capital gains taxes for small businesses that used their capital for investment, business wasn't interested.

### **Minimum wage falls**

Today the United States has a weak, divided and poorly paid work force. Unionisation in the private sector stood at 12% in 1991 (from 31% in 1970). One out of five full-time workers earns poverty level wages. The earning power of the minimum wage has dropped 23% over the last decade. 43% of young workers (between the ages of 18-23) are locked into minimum wage jobs. And the majority of the 37 million people who don't have any form of health insurance are working people. Part-time work is growing rapidly. Today it is 25% of the total workforce, but by the end of the decade the figure will balloon to a full 40%.

Early on in his administration Clinton talked about the need to rebuild the US

<sup>1</sup>. Detroit Free Press, March 5, 1993.

## **Solidarity statement in defence of abortion clinics**

FOR those of us who have been clinic escorts or defended a clinic against Operation Rescue, we were not surprised by Michael Griffin's murder of Dr David Gunn in front of the Pensacola Women's Health Services. But we hold more than the man who pulled the trigger responsible for Dr Gunn's death.

We hold the right, who attempted to make abortion illegal, responsible. They seek to deny women's right to make decisions about their own bodies — decisions that have life-long repercussions. By so doing, the right denies that a woman is a moral and sexual being. They elevate the fetus to the status of the born and relegate women to being incubators.

The rightwing's rhetoric inflames passions as they speak about abortion as "murder". Rightwing columnist, Joseph Sobran, can write in the *New York Times* of Dr Gunn's death, "the score is now about 30 million to 1." Representatives from groups like Operation Rescue, Rescue America and Missionaries to the Preborn mixed pallid condemnations of the murder with calls for financial support to Griffin's family.

But beyond the rhetoric; beyond the attempts to chip away at the legal right to abortion, these anti-abortionists have engaged in a war, blocking access to clinics, stalking medical and administrative staff. Last summer Operation Rescue distributed a 'wanted' poster featuring Dr Gunn, listing his schedule and telephone numbers. During 1992 alone there were over 1,100 acts of serious violence against community-based clinics. This pattern of intimidation and outright terror has existed since the first clinics were established in the 1970s — but the terrorism has gone unchecked.

We hold the local, state and federal governments responsible for the death of Dr Gunn. Hiding behind the rightwing's argumentation, they have passed legislation that restricted women's access to abortion. This has taken the form of cutting off federal funding for abortion (but not sterilisation or birth) which was then followed by a cutoff of state funding in all but a dozen states and Washington DC. Today, so-called parental consent legislation is on the books in 35 out of 50 states, a 24-hour waiting period now in effect in Pennsylvania and Mississippi has been upheld by the US Supreme Court.

Perhaps it was the US Supreme Court that gave the green light to Michael Griffin when they ruled last January that courts cannot use civil rights laws to prevent the blocking of clinics where abortions are performed. This decision affirmed the terrorist tactics of those who physically intimidate women and the clinic personnel assisting them.

We must defend the community-based clinics and their staff against all forms of intimidation and violence. We demand passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act of 1993 (House of Representatives 796). We call for the enforcement of laws which prohibit stalking clinic personnel. In cities where Operation Rescue plans to unveil its new tactics of intimidation and sleuthing this summer, we urge that broad and democratic coalitions be built to defend the clinics and those who work in them.

We demand that the local, state and federal government end its attempts to restrict women's access to abortion by passage of restricting legislation. Repeal this legislation and restore federal funding that allows women to implement their reproductive decisions. We call for a total revamping of the health care system along the lines of a single-payer, Canadian style system that guarantees universal access. In such a system we call for full attention to the medical needs of women, including sex education, access to abortion, pre-natal care and a preventative model of health. To accomplish this, movement forces need to seek allies in all who place human needs before a profit system that favours the few. ★

infrastructure. He talked about money for mass transit, highways, job training, fiber-optic networks. During the Reagan/Bush era the cities were starved, aid was cut by 81%. The infrastructure of all our metropolitan areas is literally falling apart. But Clinton has already given up the fight for \$16 billion — yet if we were to compare the amount of money other industrialised countries put into their infrastructure, we'd realise what a drop in the bucket Clinton's already abandoned goal was. To spend at

the British level, we would need \$100 billion a year, to compare with Germany we would need \$200 billion, with Japan, \$300 billion.

For twelve years the rightwing had a good friend in the White House. That stamped the Reagan/Bush era as one in which the rich became much wealthier and those in charge of enforcing civil rights used their power to subvert those rights. But this relationship is not intrinsically necessary for today's neo-liberal economic order. Neo-

liberalism can be implemented under either hard-right Republican meanness or smiling Democratic 'shared sacrifice'. Bill Clinton campaigned successfully by splitting the difference; his problem in office is that holding together a governing coalition on that basis is a little harder.

So the worst anti-union, anti-abortion and anti-gay policies are in the process of being modified under the new Clinton administration. Some of these policies, from capital's point of view, were counter-productive. After all, it isn't cost effective to spend millions of dollars a year to drum lesbians and gays out of the military or to limit abortion services so that women are forced to bear unwanted babies. It's wasteful to continue to bar the air traffic controllers who struck a decade ago from work-ing in a stressful industry or to force productive workers to quit their jobs in order to take care of their family obligations.

### **No return to Carter**

It is important to note that this doesn't mean the Clinton administration is willing to return to the situation that existed in the early days of the Carter administration. Reversing the Executive Orders on abortion doesn't get us back to where we were in 1976. We still have "parental" consent legislation that prevents teenage females from exercising their democratic right to control their own bodies. Poor women still lack the option to have an abortion. So approximately 20% of all pregnant women who want to have an abortion are unable to do so.

Fifteen years ago when a person was laid off, it was more than likely that they would be covered by unemployment insurance (for six months). Today only one third of the workforce has that coverage. Such a shift came about during the Reagan era — it was deliberate public policy and not just an accident of nature.

The world has changed dramatically since the beginning of the last Democratic administration. This crisis of profitability won't go away. Therefore central to this period of growing crisis are neo-liberal economic policies that seek to continually restructure the process of production. In unleashing the forces of competition, the neo-liberal hope is that the devaluation of the weak will restore the profitability of the strong.

One area where the continuity between the Republican and Democratic administrations seems strong is in their opposition to welfare. Welfare takes up 1% of the Federal budget and only 2-3% of the state budget, covering about 4.5 million families who receive Aid for Dependent Children. Yet

Clinton has called for ending "welfare as we know it". The reality is that over the last two decades there has been a 27% drop in real welfare benefits.

Clinton has proposed that welfare be limited to a two year period, that job training for welfare recipients be increased four times, that \$2 be granted to the working in tax credits. The problem is a lack of jobs and low wages — Clinton's proposals don't even try to address that problem. Instead Clinton, like Reagan and Bush before him, project the image the image of a "lazy welfare mom" instead of focusing on job creation.

### Millionaires

When we look at the Clinton cabinet, the question is not the one the media asked: "Do they look like us?", but do they have solutions for the working people who make up this country? While some journalists pointed out that the varied appointments of liberals and millionaires was a kind of "managed schizophrenia", the fact of the matter is that it is a centre-right cabinet where a few African-Americans, Chicanos and women do not minimise the central fact: more than three quarters of the cabinet members are millionaires, a higher percentage than in the Bush and Reagan cabinets (71% and 62%, respectively).

While Clinton and his cabinet talk about how the United States is going to

regain its pre-eminence through a well trained and productive workforce, that's not at all necessary in today's labour market. Mexico has already shown it can produce a well trained productive workforce at a fraction of the cost.

Co-operation schemes with management will pit workers from one plant against workers from another (usually in the same union), and it will be clear that it is only the corporation that benefits.

At the same time, in this world market of 'lean' production, policymaking will increasingly move from the nation state — even one as powerful as the US — to the multilateral institutions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the North American Free Trade Agreement's dispute settlement panels, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. People will have less control over their lives.

The Canadian/US free trade agreement shows us the future. In Canada the law stipulates that two years after a new drug comes on the market, companies can put out a generic drug. This has meant that the drug companies cannot continue to maintain an exclusive hold over the population, saving Canadians an estimated \$500 million a year. However, the new free trade agreement has developed the idea of intellectual copyright that supersedes the Canadian law.

Despite Canadian protests, the govern-

ment is unable to circumvent the agreement. So today the Canadian single payer health care system is threatened by just such attacks.

### Populist message?

In the current political situation, Clinton had two choices. The first was to water down his programme to essentially nothing, to get something passed through Congress purely for appearance's sake. The second was to force a fight by taking a populist message to the people. Since the last thing Clinton wants is for people to begin fighting for themselves, he logically and inevitably chose capitulation and face saving.

Caught in the traps of its own making — particularly the loony logic of deficit cutting in a time of lingering recession — the Clinton administration may already have entered its phase of disintegration. It's still too early to say if this will be irreversible. What is already clear is that this administration is no friend of the movements; that any hopes that it might carry through any bold programme of economic reconstruction are pathetic illusions; and that the sooner activists at the base of labor, people of colour and feminist struggles recognise this, the better. ★



# Los Angeles: one year on

Los Angeles had been hailed as a positive preview of the future United States. It had become the most ethnically diverse city in the country — replacing New York's Ellis Island as the new port of entry for immigrants. But the fires of 1992 dramatically exposed the decaying foundations of urban life.

**EVELYN SELL\*** — Los Angeles, June 1993

**A**CCORDING to the 1990 census, the city was 40% Latino, 37% Anglo, 13% African American, and 10% Asian — with the largest concentration of Mexicans outside of that country, more Salvadorans than any city except San Salvador, and the largest Chinese, Korean, Philippine and Taiwanese populations in the US. In the city's schools almost 100 different languages are spoken. With the influx of new money and new people during the late 1980s, Los Angeles was projected as the "capital of the Pacific Rim."

The *Los Angeles Times*, which had boasted of the "globalization of Los Angeles", unhappily reported "the first multi-ethnic riots" in US history after the eruption of outrage following the April 29, 1992 acquittal of police officers charged with beating Rodney King. The only unusual feature of this cop assault on an African American was that it was videotaped by an onlooker, and then broadcast across the world.

If developments in Los Angeles serve as a window on tomorrow, what has happened over the past year shows a bleak picture, indeed, of the nation's future.

Nothing substantial has been done to improve the conditions which prompted the actions last year.

● Police brutality against African Americans, Latina/os, Asians, and peoples of colour continues to take place on an everyday basis. The greatest number of complaints against the police are filed by Latinos. The police have stepped up aggressive shows of mass force, carried out intensive and highly-publicised riot control training exercises, and bought \$1 million worth of riot gear, including tear-gas bombs. One

newly acquired item, rubber bullets called "knee knockers", were used by police against African Americans in South-Central Los Angeles on December 14, 1992. Cops claimed they were breaking up an unruly crowd — but, in fact, they attacked Blacks distributing leaf-lets for a defence committee, storeowners, and residents in front of their homes.

After striking drywall construction workers were beaten by police in July, 1992, the executive director of the California Immigrant Workers Association explained, "Every time Latino workers organise, every time Latino students demonstrate, every time that it's us, we feel the discrimination and violence and excessive arrest by the police." On May 11, 1993 city cops brutalised and arrested students demonstrating for a Chicano Studies Department at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

● Poverty rates and unemployment figures continue to be greater than those in other states — an especially important fact because one out of every ten Americans lives in California, and the state accounts for 14% of the Gross National Product. The most recent report showed that California's jobless rate rose to 8.7% in May 1993 — significantly greater than the national figure of 6.9%, and the highest jobless rate amongst the 11 large states noted in the government's report. The 9.1% unemployment rate in Los Angeles County was even worse than for the state as a whole.

## Friction

The scarcity of jobs has contributed to rising tensions between racial and ethnic groups. An example was the friction caused by the disputes over which firms would receive contracts and which workers would be hired to demolish fire damaged buildings. Demonstrations at work sites by

African American organisations won more contracts for Black owned companies and some jobs for African Americans. But newspaper articles and television coverage reported comments by Latino and Korean American workers who complained that they had lost their jobs although they, too, were poor inner city residents and badly in need of work.

● California's most severe budget crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s is resulting in cuts to vital government services, including: health and welfare programmes, public school systems, colleges and universities, mental health clinics, public recreation areas, and a range of services for the elderly, disabled and blind. The Community Health Clinic of East Los Angeles, which provides services for the poorest people in the county, was forced to reduce the hours it was open after the state eliminated \$10 million in funding for recent immigrants' health care. Martin Luther King Jnr/Drew Medical Center, built after the 1965 Watts uprising and the sole positive legacy of that Black revolt, has suffered a stream of cutbacks and is now threatened with complete closure by county administrators.

● Neighbourhoods with the highest rates of poverty and the largest concentrations of people of colour and non-Anglo ethnic groups have the worst housing, overcrowded schools, damaged streets, fewer recreational areas, and the greatest deterioration of public services. Environmental hazards abound. Discriminatory practices result in higher insurance rates for car owners and small shopkeepers.

## Hunger

A study of hunger in inner cities, conducted by UCLA and reported in the June 11, 1993 *Los Angeles Times*, spotlighted higher food costs and less access to markets in one South-Central Los Angeles community covering two square miles. Among the findings about this predominantly Latino neighbourhood: families have a median household income which is less than half the county level; in comparison with suburban areas studied, these poorer families actually pay \$300 more per year to buy minimum food requirements recommended by the federal government; one third of the households have no car, and many residents must take two buses to

\* Evelyn Sell is a member of the revolutionary socialist organisation Solidarity and a supporter of the Fourth International.



get to a supermarket. This limited shopping access forces residents to rely on smaller stores with poorer quality produce, resulting in disproportionate rates of diet-related diseases. The year long study found that 27% of residents did not have enough money to cover food costs, and that their families go hungry an average of five days every month.

These mounting crises — compounded by unrelenting injustices within the legal system, in the workplace, and in all aspects of daily life — were widely known well before last summer's explosion of frustration and protest. Newsweek magazine reported in its May 11, 1992 issue: "After years of neglecting the pent up misery of the inner cities, the country shuddered at the bloody wake up call... The elements of race and class mingled and combusted with tremendous heat..."

Politicians immediately promised aid but little has actually been delivered.

### State of emergency

President Bush (campaigning for his failed re-election bid) declared Los Angeles a disaster site after visiting the city a week after the fires were put out and the end of the state of emergency (a type of martial law). This was the first time a civil disturbance was given the designation previously reserved for floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural calamities. While the city officially qualified for aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Los Angeles residents and officials discovered that FEMA's actions hampered recovery efforts more than they helped. For example, federal officials immediately insisted on restricting relief programmes to fire damage only. They balked at reimbursing the state for more than \$1 million spent in staffing 10 disaster application centres and fencing in demolition sites. They lacked bilingual staff, and failed to involve the local community.

Government regulations prevented many from access to needed programmes already in place; for example, food stamp rules disqualified numerous elderly and disabled residents. Community activists pointed out that many working class and poor people were not receiving assistance because the initial informational campaigns were mostly aimed at business owners.

Disaster relief workers explained that many people did not seek help for fear of being reported to immigration authorities. This was a realistic concern. During the

April 29-May 2 events, the Los Angeles Police Department collaborated with the Immigration and Naturalization Service in invading homes (mostly in the Central American community), and setting up detention centres in local police headquarters. By November, 1992 over 1,100 people had been deported.

The US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development visited Los Angeles in June 1992 and declared that the city would receive \$137 million in federal funds. When city officials studied the figures

closely, they discovered that this money had already been allocated for housing projects — it was not new or additional aid. This kind of trickery was employed over and over again. Federal grants and loans amounting to \$195.2 million turned out to be funds previously committed or were directed at meeting limited emergency needs. None of the amounts promised were designed to alleviate the basic long-term economic revitalisation desperately needed to create jobs, improve housing and schools, provide public transportation and child care, or repair the area's infrastructure.

### Reconstruction

City, state, and county government bodies also failed to provide adequate aid. On May 2, 1992, Rebuild LA (RLA) was launched as a non-profit corporation with a sweeping mandate to lead the reconstruction of the city. To head up this ambitious campaign, the mayor chose Peter Ueberroth, a well connected business man. The Board of Directors was supposed to reflect the city's diverse racial and ethnic population as well as its various communities. But the board membership ended up heavily weighted with state and local government

officeholders and prominent business executives. There are some African Americans, Latina/os and Asian Americans; labor representation is almost non-existent.

RLA's mission statement was: "To bring together the positive power and resources of the communities, government and private sector to achieve change by creating new jobs, economic opportunities and pride in the long neglected areas of our greater Los Angeles basin."

### Large sums

Initial operational funding came from a major utility company and a large bank. IBM donated computers and office furniture. The US Commerce Department provided \$3 million for start-up costs. Enough was secured to keep RLA operating for five years but recovery projects

were not as fortunate. Large sums were announced but there is no clear record of promises being translated into real assistance programmes. The first pledges totaled \$400,000 from foreign owned businesses; in October, 1992, Ueberroth announced promised investments of more than \$1 billion from over 500 US, European and Japanese companies. These included industrial giants such as American Honda Motor Co., Ford Motor Co., Dow Chemical, Coca-Cola and British Airways.

A Los Angeles Times investigation in November, 1992 found that many companies named by the RLA as contributors had no such investment plans.



Even if the pledges were substantiated, they were not sufficient. Estimates given to RLA's first board meeting in July 1992

noted that what was needed to revitalise the economy of the city's neglected and damaged areas: about \$6 billion in investments, and the creation of 75,000 to 94,000 jobs. Ueberroth's stated goal of creating 57,000 new jobs was obviously inadequate.

An internal report on RLA, presented at an April 1993 board meeting, concluded that the agency's role in the rebuilding process had been confused and ineffectual, and that city officials utilised RLA as a "covenant way to rationalize inaction" by telling questioners, "We thought RLA was doing that."

Charges and counter-charges were exchanged at a May 11, 1993 City Council meeting. Elected officials criticised RLA for not co-operating with local politicians trying to attract businesses to the inner city, ignoring the council's Ad Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization, and taking unwarranted credit for business openings. The RLA board members responded by asserting that they had secured \$500 million for inner city investments — a claim which was never itemised nor sufficiently substantiated. About a week later, Peter Ueberroth resigned as head of RLA (although he remained as a board member). At a May 21, 1993 news conference, he explained that he had become a lightning rod for criticism which took attention away from RLA and its activities.

### Small business

What has the RLA actually accomplished? In April of this year, the agency announced the creation of two projects: an independent RLA Community Lending Corporation to provide financing for small businesses in areas damaged during the 1992 events, and a RLA telephone hot line to link thousands of volunteers with community service groups. RLA has also established 14 worker training programmes, and recently received the credit when a large supermarket chain said it would build four new stores and create 500 new jobs in poor areas of Los Angeles and surrounding communities.

Immediate assistance — such as emergency food collection and distribution — was organised by community groups, charities, students and churches. Although limited by the absence of a central co-ordinating body, these efforts demonstrated a healthy response to urgent problems and established multi-racial and multi-ethnic grassroots working relationships. Longer term projects were initiated by individuals by individuals and newly formed organisations. An African American couple, operating out of their South Central home, formed the Youth Jobs Awareness Project

which secured employment for over 500 teenagers and young adults. A Korean pastor of the United Methodist Church opened the Korean American Food & Shelter Services which is used by all those in need regardless of race or nationality. Hands Across Watts, a coalition of some gangs (mostly from public housing projects) provided recreational activities for youths. The Asian Pacific Americans for a New LA was founded. Community Build has begun to implement the most ambitious plans for economic and human development, including: building affordable housing, securing summer jobs for youths, establishing a film and television facility, and programmes to revive depressed South Los Angeles communities.

### Credit unions

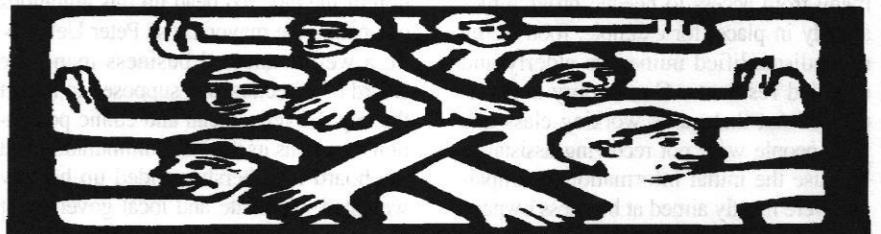
Over the last year, \$26 million was either pledged or raised by religious organisations. The June 9 1993 *Los Angeles Times* reported: "Ground has been broken for low income housing and youth shelters. Church backed credit unions and entrepreneurial assistance programmes are opening to make consumer credit and business expertise more available to hard pressed inner-city residents. There are food giveaways and prayer vigils, crisis counselling and pulpit exchanges. Co-operation among Christians, Jews and Muslims have been unparalleled, clergy members say."

Religious leaders also say — along with many others — that the underlying causes of rebellion continue to exist. A multi-racial coalition of community activists released a report on April 27, 1993 calling for a major expansion of government funding for social welfare, environmentally safe job development, education and housing programmes and other steps for "Reconstructing Los Angeles from the Bottom Up." When asked how such programmes would be funded, activists replied: by tax increases for corporations and wealthy individuals who received numerous tax breaks in the 1980s. A coalition spokesperson explained that many people issued "a collective sigh of relief" when calm prevailed during and after the April, 1993 federal trial of police officers charged with violating Rodney King's civil rights (two of the four were found guilty) but, "Little progress has been made on the

problems of polarisation of the races or the economic struggle."

Los Angeles civic leaders welcomed President Clinton's election expecting that the new national administration would rebuild the crumbling urban core in the US. But President Clinton's policies and actions have already shown his intention to bolster business interests at the expense of working people and the poor. On June 10, 1993, two days after his election as the new mayor of the Los Angeles, Richard Riordan led a delegation to the state capitol. Governor Wilson and state legislators were urged to spare Los Angeles from proposed funding cuts. The delegation heard words of sympathy but received no help from California officeholders arguing over how to cope with a \$9 billion deficit. On June 11, Los Angeles County Supervisors (who reign over a geographical area, population and financial resources greater than many countries in the world) called for \$1.6 billion worth of cuts in hospitals, mental health care facilities, fire protection, children's services, libraries, parks, law enforcement and other services. As Southern California's largest employer, the county's proposed job cuts will push many more thousands into the ranks of the unemployed.

At the present time, there is no organised forces in the Los Angeles area with the authority, capacity and determination to mobilise the necessary struggle. Militant battles have been undertaken by: immigrant workers who have won union recognition and improved contracts; African Americans resisting police brutality; college students fighting against increases in fees and cutbacks in education; Latina/os and community activists who established a Chicana/o studies centre at UCLA; and public employees protesting cutbacks in community services and striking to protect working conditions. These efforts have proven that combativity and consciousness exists within sections of the working class, people of colour and oppressed groupings. What is lacking is a more unified struggle which brings together the kind of power needed to achieve the inter-related range of goals projected by the groupings engaged in various fightback campaigns. ★



# Signs of resurgence

The *Labor Notes* conference met following the first Democratic Presidential victory for over ten years. Some union leaders hope for a return to days of old; a cosy relationship between the bureaucracy and the Democratic administration. The professional union haters may have gone but the bureaucracy will not have the influence they once might have enjoyed. Much of the union rank and file will be harbouring illusions in the Democrats as well. Our correspondent reports on how the conference helped activists tackle the new situation.

**FRANK LOVELL\*** — New York, May 19, 1993

**T**HE 1993 Labor Notes Conference was advertised as "a very special one." And that turned out to be no ad-writer's idle boast. The conference this year was in all respects different and better than previous ones, all of which were gratifying gatherings of progressive unionists seeking to exchange experiences and understand the disheartening decline of the union movements during the past two decades.

This year's conference was the largest ever, attended by more than 1,100 people. The focus: Solidarity and Democracy, but this time it became more specifically defined: "Labor needs its own political agenda." And in the final session the speakers, Elaine Bernard, director of Harvard University's trade union program, and Bob Wages, international president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) union, spelled it out: US workers need their own labor party based on a resurgent union movement.

Bernie Sanders, the independent congressman from Vermont, gave an opening address on the need for "A Bill of Rights for American Workers." He stands for tax reform, a single payer (Canadian style) health care<sup>1</sup>, military cuts, public works projects and a shorter working week. His talk was followed by panel of speakers on "Solidarity beyond Borders." Baldemar Valazquez, director of the Farm Labor Organising Committee (FLOC), described the collective efforts of farm workers on both sides of the Mexican border to win higher wages and better working conditions. He explained that his experiences as an organiser, in the US and Mexico taught him that the present crop of politicians and government agencies in both countries serve the interests of the big growers and that they are always out to thwart independent unionism. This was confirmed by several more speakers from

the ranks of largely unorganised workers in Canada and Mexico. They addressed the complex problem of organising the unorganised in the present age of multinational corporations.

One of the central forums entitled "Solidarity Out of Diversity" featured representative labor activists from working mothers, Black Workers For Justice (BWFJ), and a lesbian and gay union caucus. It was a women's event, chaired by Mary Hollens of the Labor Notes staff. The message was "Our diversity can be our strength if our movement recognises and respects differences of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual preference."

## Assault on working conditions

Nearly all of the 56 workshops were well attended; led by experienced and knowledgeable activists. A rail worker remarked that the meeting of workers in his industry reflected a new interests in unionism resulting from the viscous assault by the companies and government, including the US congress, on jobs and working conditions in this industry. He thought the political consciousness of rail workers, especially those who consider themselves solid union supporters, is changing. Workers generally harbor illusions and hopes in the Democratic Party and what the new Clinton administration can do for them, he said, but job cuts and more railroad accidents provoke resentment and arouse determination to strike back. This has already brought some changes in elected union officials (at least some old fixtures have been voted out and there are a few new faces in the leadership), and conditions maybe ripe for new union resurgence, he said.

Twenty-three union and industry meetings were held for workers in the car

industry, airlines, building trades, health care, public transportation, postal service and so on, as well as for labor educators, union organisers, lawyers, union caucuses, industrial conversion/community-labor organisations, Haitian solidarity, and other social and political protest groups.

A "People of Color Caucus" was held. The speakers were Ron Daniels, of Campaign for a New Tomorrow, and Matt McCarten, leader, of the NewLabour Party in New Zealand. In previous years such a meeting would not have attracted much attention among a crowd of pre-dominantly progressive unionists, preoccupied with sectoral problems. But the meeting this year was well attended and widely discussed during the remainder of the conference. Some said it reflected a growing political awareness and under-standing by secondary union officials, including many who were not present at this conference.

## US imperialism

Juan Gonzalez, a leader of the Newspaper Guild in New York City and of the strike at the Daily News in that city two years ago spoke at the events' banquet on reinventing organised labor. He stressed the changing composition of the US labor force, which is being reinforced by third world immigrants, many from Mexico and Central and South America. He observed that US imperialism for most of this century has drained the Latin American continent of its natural resources and now at the close of the century the impoverished peoples from the southern hemisphere are invading the North America in the hope of reclaiming some of the stolen wealth.

After detailing the anti-labor policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations and their consequences in the US and elsewhere, Gonzalez hinted that it is dubious whether the present administration can make a difference as far as ending the exploitation and oppression of the working class. The clear implication was that workers in the US can assure a better life for themselves only by relying on their own organised economic and political power. This was not lost on the audience. The applause came immediately and was

\* The author is member of Solidarity and a longstanding supporter of the Fourth International. We are publishing an edited version of his article, which first appeared in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, June 1993.

1. The Canadian 'single-payer' system is based on the British National Health Service.

## Teamsters for a Democratic Union

"TEAMSTERS for a Democratic Union (TDU), the rank and file reform caucus within the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), is at a turning point in its history."

This was the view of Nick Davidson, a TDU activist, writing in the March/April 1993 issue of *Against the Current*.<sup>\*</sup> The "turning point" is as a result of the victory of the Ron Carey slate in 1991, when several TDU members moved into high-ranking positions within the union as elected officials.

In many respects the TDU encapsulates the positive developments within the American union movement that we outlined. But the TDU is not a new formation.

The TDU was founded in 1976. In its constitution it states that: "We aim to bring the Teamsters union back to the membership. We do not advocate secession (...), or 'dual unionism'..." Many of its founding members bore scars of physical battles against the gangster driven IBT bureaucracy. The Teamsters was notorious for the corruption of its top officials, its use of intimidation to silence criticism in the ranks, close collaboration between employers and local union business agents... The charges could go on and on.

Importantly, many of these founding members were also acquainted with earlier struggles that had transformed the Teamsters union in the 1930s, especially the Minneapolis Teamsters movement.

In his history of the TDU, *Rank and file rebellion*, Dan La Botz (himself a former truck driver and early TDU leader) devotes a chapter to the 1934 Minneapolis strikes and the successful strategy of the Trotskyist leadership. These strikes initiated the transformation of the union from a craft bound collection of small city based branches into an industrial union of over-the-road truck drivers and warehouse workers.

Despite many disappointments, TDU grew steadily. Over 17 years of struggle it has emerged as a viable leftwing with a membership of more than 10,000. It holds annual delegate conferences and elects a Steering Committee responsible for work between conferences. Its monthly paper, *Convoy Dispatch*, reaches an estimated 100,000.

The most important discussion underway now is about the struggle between the democratically elected national leadership and the remnants of the corrupt Old Guard entrenched in the regional and district structures. Discussion articles are being published regularly in *Convoy Dispatch*. A recent contribution has argued for a special IBT Convention (the first ever) of democratically elected delegates to dislodge aging bureaucrats.

Wrapping up this unfinished business is just one of the many challenges that TDU faces. ★

<sup>\*</sup> *Against the Current* is the bi-monthly journal sponsored by Solidarity

Carey for IBT president. In retrospect it is generally accepted that Carey could not have won without TDU support. But the other side of this proposition is a question: where would TDU be today if it had failed to support Carey? As matters now stand the Carey/TDU alliance holds the national leadership and the Old Guard remains entrenched in many IBT locals (branches) and in the wealthy and powerful area councils. These Old Guard officials have declared war on Carey and the union. The task now is to mobilise the ranks to complete the clean-up of the union.

Later, one longtime union activist remarked that everything that was said and done at the conference was good, but what had not been said there was also important. He went on to elaborate. Despite the excellent successes of the reform movement in the Teamsters, he said, there was a danger that the reformers had waited too long in moving against the Old Guard middle layer of the union. When a year had gone by and the middle-level bureaucrats, in cahoots with the companies, were still running local unions the old way, tying up grievances etc., some activist members had begun to feel that, despite the Carey victory, nothing much had changed. There was a danger of demoralisation, demobilisation, and disorientation.

Obviously a lot of work went into winning the election, and the credit for that goes to TDU, but there was some stagnation after the election victory. The illusion that winning the votes was enough had to be combatted, and the TDU now needed to provide leadership in remobilising all the forces that helped win the first stage in the battle to transform the union and go on to cleaning out the entrenched fossils in the middle levels of the union who engage in corrupt practices, line their own pockets, work with the bosses, and fail to stand up for the needs and interests of the union membership.

### Need for vision

Even more broadly, he said, there was an absolute need for a leadership group with a vision of how society as a whole must be changed. The problem can't be solved just within the Teamsters, the Electrical workers or any one union. It's a problem of the social system. The struggle to transform the labor movement must be led by people who have a radical vision, a vision of the future, or a better way of organising society. If those are to be called communists, so be it. You can't be Red-shy, he said, and hope to make any fundamental changes.

Other workshops took up the topical

sustained. It seemed as if this was what many were waiting to hear.

Speakers at a forum on "Inside the New Teamsters" (International Brotherhood of Teamsters — IBT) described some of what goes into a successful challenge and overthrow of an entrenched bureaucracy in a conglomerate union like the Teamsters — with 1.5 million members, thousands of them employed in industries and workplaces unrelated to trucking. They gave a picture of what is going on inside the Teamsters since the election a year ago of Ron Carey, and the

full slate of 15 reform candidates, to the leadership of the union.

The central idea these speakers sought to convey was that success depends on organising leading, educating, and mobilising the ranks. This requires patience. One panelist stressed the importance of democratic decision-making and the need of a small group (such as TDU was when it began, and still is compared to the IBT as a whole) to constantly learn from its experiences and re-educate itself. He said one of the most important decisions TDU made was when it voted to endorse Ron

## UAW — New Directions

issue of health care reform. The questions asked: "Will congress pass a form of managed competition that allows insurance companies to amke enormous profits? Or can the people's prevailing desire for a simple, single payer plan be turned into reality?" In order to win broad support and political influence the unions must champion issues like universal free health care and take the lead in the strategy to win these goals.

The final conference session began with a talk by Elaine Bernard whose presence was responsible for the unusually large turnout at this event. She is popular with that layer of the presently existing radical movement which comes from the anti-Vietnam War protests and subsequently found jobs as union organisers or became minor union officials. In 1960's jargon, "Elaine tells it like it is." She is wise to union bureaucrats and explains in colourful contemporary language that the present gang of top union officials really are modern "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

She says they adamantly oppose the idea of a labor party in the US and cravenly support Democrats even while the Democratic party endorses and helps enact the anti-union economic policy of big business, because this union bureaucracy has adopted the political agenda of the employers.

She says the employer's political agenda is "a conservative corporate agenda" designed to boost profits and drive down working class living standards to the poverty level. Part of the plan, she says, is to pretend that US capitalism rests on a classless society in which everyone is middle class except the very rich, who remain unmentioned, and the very poor, who don't count. She argues for a candid recognition, at least on the part of those who pretend to represent workers as well as those who aspire to lead them, of this political reality.

### No choice

Under the present two-party system working class voters have no choice in electoral politics and are repeatedly informed of this fact by their unions, their employers, and by all government agencies and public officials. So emphatically is this dogma delivered that most voters believe it. They have discovered that the Republican Party serves only the rich, and they don't trust the Democrats because in Congress, Democrats and Republicans always join forces to enact legislation that satisfies the employers.

But when election time comes the

WE support "social unionism and oppose business unionism. We believe that the failure of the major unions and the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisations) to challenge the policies of Big Business, particularly of the past 15 years, has caused enormous damage..."

This was Tom Laney, a leader of the New Directions current in the United Auto Workers (UAW), writing in response to comments from a unelected UAW official.

Like so many of the reform currents in the American union movement, New Directions, founded in 1989, faces an uphill struggle. The UAW is cited as the best example of the worst of the new business unions. It lacks fundamental democratic mechanisms. Members do not have the right to vote for national officers. The New Directions recent candidate for UAW President, Jerry Tucker, was denied even the right to address the national conference last June.

The union has developed a system of patronage created by the negotiation of "job security" contracts — contracts which trade jobs for the relative security of remaining workers. Furthermore, the system gives the UAW the right to appoint thousands of local union reps to fulltime positions over the heads of the rank and file.

There have been opposition movements in the UAW before but they rarely went beyond a single issue or election. New Directions has begun to develop a rounded alternative platform.

After a five month period of discussion the current platform was agreed in November 1991. It covers five themes central to the re-generation of the "social unionism" for which the UAW used to be well known for in the past.

- Internal democratisation and reform.
- Collective bargaining.
- Organising.
- Political action — alliances with other unions and the community.
- Internationalism.

In his article Tom Laney summarises aspects of this platform: "We want a union that is community — not corporate — based." We should be linking up with the "under-employed and the poor".

"We believe in unions that fight for full employment because the provision of a decent (...) job is the only way to social justice. The way to full employment is through the reduction of the working week. The only way to fair, real quality of (...) employment is through unions that organise solidarity." ★

voter who refuses to vote for the Republican candidate and doesn't like the Democrat is reminded again. "If you don't want to waste your vote, you have no choice. So take the lesser evil and vote for the Democrat." Bernard urged her audience to get behind the labor party movement and help give US workers the only meaningful choice they will ever have in the polling booth. The logic of her argument was so clear and her delivery so persuasive that her listeners seemed completely won over and responded with a standing ovation.

The next speaker was Robert Wages, an international president of an important AFL-CIO union, the OCAW. He led off with a candid announcement that he was in fact a union bureaucrat, which surprised no one. He then gave assurances that he is different from all other AFL-CIO bureaucrats

because his union is the only one officially in favour of a labor party. He pointed to objective opinion polls taken for the OCAW that showed that their membership, by a large majority, favours a labor party and would support labor party candidates if they were given the choice. Where polls have been conducted elsewhere they have shown that members in other unions, in all parts of the country respond overwhelmingly in favour of a labor party.

Wages said he became firmly convinced that a labor party is essential to the future of unions when he looked at the 1992 Democratic Platform and saw that nowhere in it was there even a mention of trade unions. He continued to explain, by way of contrast, what a labor party will mean for the well-being and protection of unions, and for the needs of the working

class.

He believes that a resurgent labor movement today could be similar to what the CIO movement was in its formative years in the 1930's; a social movement which seeks to improve the conditions of life for the benefit of everyone. Before he finished he had won the enthusiastic support of the audience. One veteran unionist wrote a note that Wages had become her candidate for president in the 1996 election.

At the fundraising event, over \$20,000 was raised. This speaks well for Labor Notes and for the growing progressive union movement upon which it depends. Only a movement that can sustain itself and its publications on the resources of the working class will grow and finally become strong enough to transform society.

Everyone there had learned something here, and no one left without a sense of having witnessed signs of a new beginning for the US labor movement. The pity is that there weren't eleven thousand present instead of eleven hundred.

### Spot the difference

As Labor Notes staff and volunteers packed up and left the hotel another small segment of organised labor moved in for the UAW bargaining Convention. They came in chartered buses, some from the airport and others from union halls in Detroit and Solidarity House, home of the UAW bureaucracy. The contrast between those leaving and those coming was easy to see.

There was clearly a generational difference. And there was also a visible difference in mood. Those about to leave were standing in groups, still talking seriously about the meaning of their conference and what had been accomplished. The others were coming in routinely, something most of them had done several times and become accustomed to.

Beneath the surface difference there was a material difference. Those who came to the Labor Notes conference paid the registration fee out of their own pockets; most of them paid their own transportation, many travelling long distances; they paid for their rooms at the hotel, and for their meals. They came to learn, and because they hoped to make a difference in the work of the conference. The UAW delegates, by contrast, knew that everything that would be done at the convention they would soon attend had been decided in advance. They were there as part of the show, and because they were paid to come. Every delegate was on *per diem* wages, plus all expenses paid. That

amounts to a big difference at the end of the day.

However we may assess the degrees of danger and difficulty, the challenges facing the left wing of the labor movement today are many. While this conference helped lay the basis for meeting those challenges, success in the struggle for a better life for the US working class will finally be assur-

ed only by big changes in mass consciousness. When millions of workers realise that is they, and they alone, who can change the conditions of their lives, then we will see a real social transformation. This year's Labor Notes conference has brought the day of that transformation a little closer. ★

## Stopping the decline

**An international solidarity boycott of the Tate & Lyle sugar conglomerate is one factor that gives particular interest to a labor struggle in Decatur, Illinois. Equally significant is the emergence of innovative tactics. Workers have found a new way to use their power at the point of production: Rather than engage in strike action, under circumstances where defeat would be almost certain, workers at the Decatur Staley plant have embarked on 'in plant' action, combining work to rule tactics with a campaign in the local community. If successful, such a strategy suggests a potentially powerful alternative to set-piece isolated strikes, which are often fought against impossible odds.**

**DAVID SIMCHA \***

**A**llied Industrial Workers (AIW) Local 837 of Decatur, Illinois has declared war on the decline of the labor movement. The determination to fight came after their employer, the AE Staley Manufacturing Co., attacked the union. Staley, a subsidiary of British sugar

conglomerate Tate & Lyle, demands concessions, of course, but they also took on new employees.

They first retained Seyrath, Shaw Fairweather & Geraldson, a union busting law firm out of Chicago. They then brought in a new labor relations director best known for permanently replacing 1,200 striking paperworkers in Jay, Maine. Finally, Harmony Construction Company replaced previously used union contractors. Their claim to fame is supplying replacement workers in case of a strike.

But AIW 837 isn't on strike. The 763 branch members know that militancy on its own would not be enough. The local United Auto Workers (UAW), at Caterpillar, were taking traditional strike action but with defeat an increasing possibility. People across the country were describing the dispute as the "Patco of the '90s", in reference to the air traffic controllers strike Reagan used in the early 1980s to break their union.

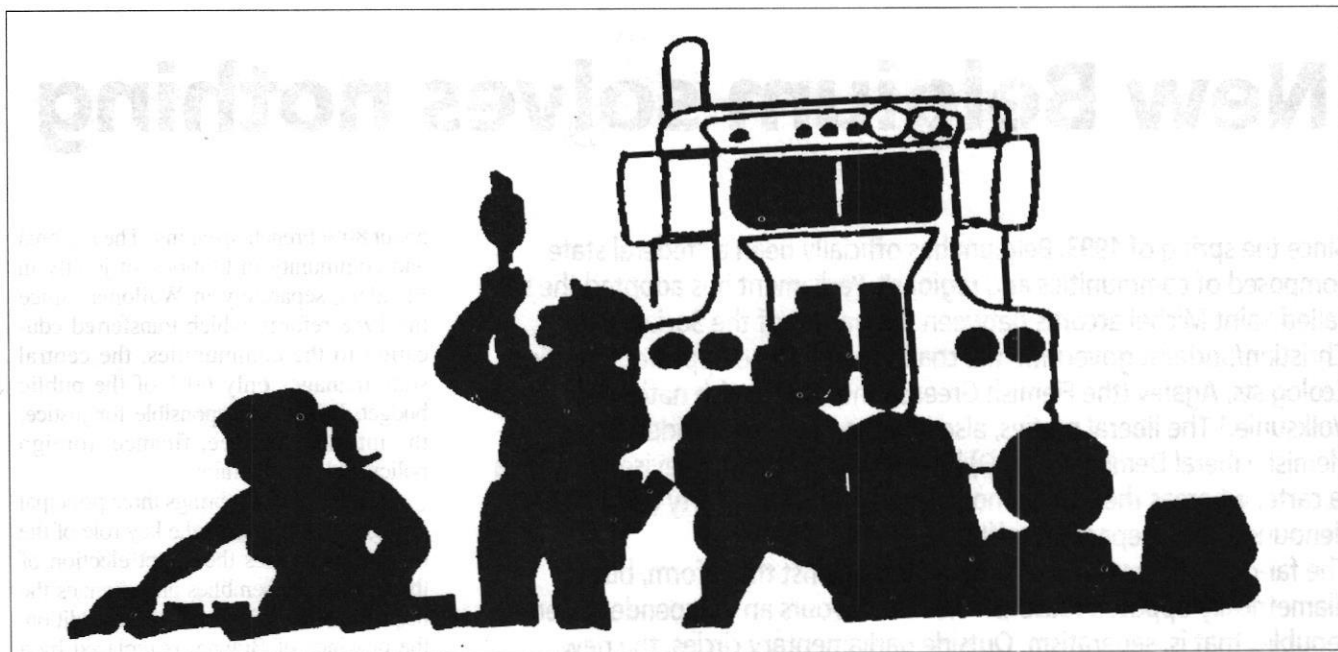
### Mavericks

Instead the Staley workers brought in allies, two mavericks in the labor movement, and then labor and community forces spanning the globe. The mavericks were Ray Rogers of Corporate Campaign, Inc., and Jerry Tucker, a former director of UAW Region 5 and a leader of that union's New Directions reform caucus.

Rogers is best known for his role advising United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 strikers at Hormel in Austin, Minnesota, to co-ordinate a rank and file assault on the company's public image and isolate the company from the corporate community that supports it.

Tucker is a master of in-plant strategies and shop floor tactics such as work to rule, where workers stop helping management achieve production by using their

\* David Simcha is the pen name of an organiser and activist. The article has been published in *Against the Current*.



knowledge and skills, and instead follow the company's rule book and managers' orders to the letter.

Though friends, this is the first time that these two innovative strategists have worked together on a single campaign.

Production has plummeted 32.4%, according to Staley Vice President Patrick Mohan, since the company unilaterally implemented its last contract offer.

### Boycott

Mohan recently decided not to stand for reappointment to the Magna Bank of Central Illinois board. He claims that this has nothing to do with a union inspired boycott of Magna Banks, and he will not step down before his term ends on June 30. The boycott continues.

Robert Powers, chair of Staley, used to sit on the board of First of America-Decatur, until the union ran a successful boycott campaign of the regional bank in Michigan, Illinois and Indiana. Both banks and Staley management remain firm in their declarations that the banks are merely innocent bystanders in a labor dispute over which they have no control.

The union's job has been to argue differently. The members walk door to door throughout Decatur dropping off leaflets describing Staley's greed as well as its practices which threaten the environment, the local economy, and the physical safety of its employees (James Beals, 44, died at work in 1990 after inhaling toxic propylene oxide fumes).

Leaflets are also distributed outside local bank branches. They send the leaflets to union and community organisations regionally, calling for a boycott of the

financial institutions which have close ties to Staley: "Don't bank on community bashing!" Organisations are asked to withdraw funds from these banks and urge their members and allies to do the same while sending letters of explanation to the Bank's Chief Executive Officer.

The union tries to convince the bank's board that it's just not worth the financial liability of maintaining such high profile relations with Staley. At a protest they staged outside the Magna shareholders' meeting in St Louis on May 5, they urged the board to sever ties because to refuse to do so would conflict with their responsibility to their shareholders.

Earlier, on January 27, protests were staged at parent company Tate & Lyle's Annual General meeting in London where workers cautioned stockholders that the spillover from Staley's labor dispute could have a negative impact on the value of their stock and the company's profits which totalled over \$400 million last year.

### International solidarity

Support for the Staley workers has come from more than 35 trade unions in Australia, Britain, Belgium and Canada. On March 28-29, the AIW hosted a meeting in St. Louis for representatives from every union at a Tate & Lyle plant in North America, and Dave Watts, the local's president, expected to see representatives from England, where Tate & Lyle is attempting to impose similar changes in working conditions against the wishes of the workers and the General & Municipal Boilermakers union (GMB), and Australia, too.

Tate & Lyle chief Stephen Brown re-

signed on March 1. A boycott of Tate & Lyle products — Domino, Redpath, and GW sugars — continues.

The Caterpillar workers were brought into the First of America boycott campaign early on, after Rogers identified James Wogsland, vice chairman of Caterpillar, as a director on the board of that bank. However, even though the boycott hasn't been officially called off, the UAW doesn't seem to be continuing promotion of the boycott beyond the local level since Powers of Staley resigned.

Similarly, the campaign at Caterpillar reportedly draws only 15 out of 2,400 workers to solidarity meetings, as opposed to 680 out of 760 at Staley. Some Caterpillar workers have been wondering why their campaign isn't working like Staley's, and why they had to find out from Rogers and the AIW, instead of their own UAW, about the connections between First of America and their employer.

There are no magic pills for the US labor movement, and the fight at Staley is still undecided. But the courage to be creative while thinking strategically, acknowledging and organising solidarity in the workers' communities, as well as national and international rank and file labor solidarity to compete to confront the power of multinational corporations, are necessary beginnings.

Staley demonstrates, in contrast to Caterpillar, that these cannot come from a labor bureaucracy afraid of its members' power, but only from the determination of rank and file workers, including those still to be organised, to mobilise in their own interests. ★

# New Belgium solves nothing

Since the spring of 1993, Belgium has officially been a "federal state composed of communities and regions". Parliament has adopted the so-called Saint Michel accords between the parties of the Social Christian/Socialist governmental coalition and three opposition parties: Ecologists, Agalev (the Flemish Greens) and the Flemish nationalist party Volksunie.<sup>1</sup> The liberal parties, also in opposition, are divided. The Flemish Liberal Democrats (VLD) have voted for various revised articles a la carte, whereas the Francophone Liberal Reformist Party (PRL) has denounced the "separatist drift".

The far-right Vlaams Blok has also voted against the reform, but for diametrically opposed reasons. The Blok favours an independent Flemish republic, that is, separatism. Outside parliamentary circles, the new revision of the fundamental law has been actively supported by the trade unions and the employers. Both see it as a guarantee of stability for the "Belgian model".

ALAIN TONDEUR\* — Brussels, June 6, 1993

**T**HROUGHOUT the last few months, the partisans of the reform have argued that it was indispensable to prevent a collapse of the state, indeed a "Yugoslav-style" crisis. Now the reform has been voted through, it remains the case that nothing has been definitively settled. A little before the vote, the president-minister of the Flemish executive, the Social Christian Luc Van den Brande, was still playing with the idea of a divorce of the Czechoslovak type. On the other hand, a "committee against separatism" — emerging from nowhere, but supported discreetly by the business world — assembled to general surprise 50,000 demonstrators, mainly Francophone.

The prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene of the Social Christian Party (CVP), father of the new reform (the fourth in 20 years!), has said that the constitutional framework should be rediscussed. It is doubtful that this can be done quietly. It is more likely that the inter-communal polemics will break out again in unexpected ways propelled by the sharp political and social frustrations brought about by Maastricht and austerity. The Belgian state will undoubtedly survive, but in what form? And at what price for social gains and democratic rights?

In the course of history, the national question, the social question and capitalist

development have combined in a completely specific fashion in Belgium. It is this combination which confers on Belgian society (or rather the Walloon and Flemish societies) its (their) specific contradictions.<sup>2</sup> Since the Second World War, the ruling class has assured its domination through two mechanisms: a close collaboration with the leaderships of the workers' movement, to maintain social peace, and a decentralization of the institutions combined with a reinforcement of the regime at every level, to conserve the state. The new phase of the constitutional reform continues this orientation, as much by its content as the circumstances of its birth.

## *Distinct responsibilities*

Three constitutional reforms (1970, 1980 and 1988) shaped today's Belgian state; three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and the capital, Brussels) and three communities (Dutch, German and French speaking). Regions and communities have distinct responsibilities; economic policy, land and housing are the responsibility of the regions; education and cultural policy in general that of the communities. Both regions and communities have an assembly and an executive. The Walloon region governs the Francophones of Brussels, a city situated in Flanders but

about 80% French-speaking. The regional and community institutions sit jointly in Flanders, separately in Wallonia. Since the 1988 reform, which transferred education to the communities, the central state manages only 60% of the public budget. It is only responsible for justice, the interior, defence, finance, foreign policy and social affairs.

The new reform brings three principal changes; it accentuates the key role of the regions, organises the direct election of the federated assemblies and changes the responsibilities of the senate. In addition, the province of Brabant is replaced by a Flemish Brabant and a Walloon Brabant.

## *"New elites"*

The region becomes the most important level of power between the commune (municipality) and the central state. It inherits some residual responsibilities<sup>3</sup> and could, in certain circumstances, ratify international agreements. The regional assembly, at last directly elected, becomes the framework of affirmation of the regional "new elites". The reform also puts an end to a profoundly anti-democratic situation: between 1980 and the time, not yet fixed, of their first direct election (when the current chambers will be dissolved), the regional assemblies have been composed of Walloon or Flemish deputies, seated alternatively in the region or in the national parliament. The community assemblies will continue to be designated indirectly.<sup>4</sup>

In Francophone Belgium, the reform thus accentuates the decline of the community in relation to the Walloon region. The Senate, for its part, has been profoundly changed. Its membership falls from 184 to 71 (29 Francophone, 41 Flemish and a German). It will be competent only to settle conflicts of interest at the level of the assemblies. Its composition will be determined by a complex mechanism of direct and indirect election, and co-option, so that not only each region

\* The author is a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (POS/SAP — Belgian section of the Fourth International) and editor of their journal *La Gauche*.

1. There are no longer unitary parties among the parties represented in parliament.

2. See A. Tondeur, "L'intégration européenne fragilise l'Etat belge", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1992.

3. The functions which are not explicitly attributed.

4. With the exception of the German-speaking council, which is elected.



and community but also the Flemish and Brussels French-speakers are represented — also so that the nomenclatura of the traditional parties is not too badly hurt by a more radical reform.

The growing weight of the regions and the reform of the senate are the two big arguments of those who claim that Belgium has entered for good into an era of “union federalism” and “community peace”. But a closer examination cautions against this optimism.

The new senate is not a genuine federal chamber. It retains its right of initiative on all matters — except those which will be the exclusive domain of the chamber.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, its composition is strictly proportional to the population of the country — whereas genuine federal states opt for parity, even over-representation of minorities. In these conditions, it might be feared that the most acute conflicts will be settled by the judges of the court of arbitration, which is not elected. This is far from a democratic federalism.

### **Impose**

Moreover, the whole of the institutional schema is not reflected by any advance towards more democratic rights. The regional and community assemblies will be elected for a fixed term of five years. The right and a section of the social democracy wanted to constitutionally impose a legislative parliament at the national level also. They have had to content themselves with a clause of “constructive mistrust” (the parliamentary majority which removes a prime minister at the same time proposes the name of a successor), which is moreover not much use when the chamber maintains in parallel the possibility of bringing down the government without having the ability to replace it. On the contrary, those politicians concerned with their strongman image will ensure that the reform imposes at most 15 national ministers, and that these latter abandon their parliamentary mandate to enter the government.

The proposed mechanism for the Brussels institutions is of bewildering complexity. The regional council in Brussels will have 75 members — as many as Wallonia, which is more populous. The reason: without this the traditional Flemish parties, eroded by the crisis of the political class and elected by less than 20% of the Brussels population, will not be sure of being all represented among the 11 Flemish elected deputies. The 75 deputies will be divided among three bodies responsible for community matters, respectively dealing with Franco-

phone, Flemish and “bi-community” matters. These bodies are asymmetrically linked to the French and Flemish communities, and their financing is partially interdependent.

This reproduces, in miniature, the mechanism of “compensations” which has for some years clogged the wheels of the central state. It would be astonishing if it does not have the same effect at the level of Brussels. Whatever happens, this complicated picture will not lead to the self-government of Brussels by its people. It is true that the capital of Europe itself embodies a denial of democracy; its inhabitants of immigrant origin (200,000 out of a million people) have strictly no chance to vote on the choices which concern them.<sup>6</sup>

### **Debt**

Above all, the regions will not be responsible for tax policy, which will remain the domain of the central state. The federal entities have only the possibility of raising taxes or deducting a few additional centimes. It amounts to a decisive point, for the Belgian public finances are burdened with a debt of 8,000bn francs, leading to the payment of astronomical interest; more than 700bn francs for 1993. Without this charge, the state budget would be in surplus. From the economic point of view, Belgian “federalism” comes down to devolving to the decentralised institutions the constraints of austerity decided at the national and international level. How does this link to the national question? Simple: the egoistic reflexes, the withdrawal into a search for identity and the quest for scapegoats, that the crisis engenders throughout Europe, have tended here to deepen the gap between the Flemish and Walloon peoples, to the extent that the central state seems increasingly suspended in air. And it is thus that a national question can re-emerge even when, in the opinion of most people, there is no longer any kind of oppression of national democratic rights.

The management of the debt has for 15 years led to a stifling austerity. The balance sheet between 1982 and 1992 can be summed up in four figures: GNP up by 24%; income for wage earners down by 13%; income of enterprises up by 75%; incomes of the rich up by 37%.<sup>7</sup> A gigantic transfer of the wealth of labour towards capital has been happening permanently since the end of the 1970s, whatever the coalition in power. It is not by chance that the curve of community agitation has risen over the same time; it tends to follow that of austerity. More-

over, austerity fed the electoralist inclination of the entire political class — and not only of the nationalist demagogues — to conceal its demands for sacrifice behind the necessity of reaching a compromise with “the Flemish” or “the Francophones”, as the case may be.

Social security — one of the best systems in Europe — will increasingly be the prime target for transforming social questions into community questions, and vice versa. Its management has remained national, like that of the debt and tax policy. Some Flemish voices have been raised to demand at least a partial federalisation of social security and the debt, arguing that Flanders will recover more quickly without the “Walloon burden”.<sup>8</sup>

It is not astonishing that the Vlaams Blok, the Flemish liberals (VLD) and the Flemish employers association (VEV) have taken this line. But some sectors in the trade unions have also hesitated on what attitude to take. In the end, the eventuality of a division of responsibility for social security has been ruled out by the forces dominant in the state, in the parties in power, in the trade unions and the employers’ associations. The reasons are obviously different; for the unitarists nostalgic for the Belgium of their fathers, social security is a precious supplement to the soul of the national state and its monarchy; for the trade unions, it is the guarantee of solidarity between active and non-active workers in the north and south; for the employers, they fear that federalisation is a step towards the dissolution of economic and monetary union.

### **Death knell**

What holds this unwieldy coalition together? All agree in believing that a federalisation of social security under the pressure of nationalist outbiddings will sound the death knell of the Belgian state and its system of social relations. But all agree at the same time on the necessity of governing the ensemble of the public finances/social security by an austerity policy — to ram through Maastricht. And

5. The chamber is only competent for the control of the executive, theoretically.

6. To ratify Maastricht, it was first necessary to modify the constitution so as to inscribe therein the right of non-Belgians originating from an EC country to vote in communal elections. The government refused to do so, so as not to open the Pandora’s box of the status of non-Belgians in general.

7. Report of the National Bank, 1992.

8. Due to the higher rate of unemployment, Wallonia draws more heavily than Flanders from the coffers of Social Security. It is this which feeds the campaign of the nationalist demagogues in Flanders, against the “hundreds of billions of Flemish money transferred to Wallonia”. In fact, researchers in both north and south agree on the derisory figure of 3bn francs in transfers.

there lies the rub, for this policy, as has been seen, undermines the state at the same time that it attacks social solidarity.

Maastricht, as we know, stipulates that the member states must reduce their deficit to 3% of GNP and their indebtedness to 60% of GNP to accede to the common currency. A small country exporting semi-finished products, a springboard for the multinationals attracted by the single market, Belgium is warmly favourable to this project. The very influential national bank favours a strong franc policy, crowned for some years by a liaison between the Belgian franc and the Deutschmark.<sup>9</sup> But the Belgian deficit is still over 6% and the debt represents 120% of GNP!

The government has adopted a plan of convergence combining privatisations, tax increases and social cutbacks. A budgetary plan in March 1993 decided on a series of measures for a total of 99.5bn francs. The impact, according to the Planning Bureau, will be a decrease of household consumption by 1.26% and the loss of 7,000 jobs. Despite this, the Maastricht objective will not be reached and social security will remain in disequilibrium.<sup>10</sup>

### Austerity plans

To the outside observer, bringing this deficit down from 6% to 3% might seem possible. But this impression changes if one takes into account the threshold already reached by the Belgian people. The net balance to finance surpassed 10% at the beginning of the 1980s. Since then, austerity plans have succeeded each other at the rate of one or two a year.<sup>11</sup> All the traditional parties have attempted to tackle the bottomless pit of the public debt. From 1982 to 1987, a centre-right coalition launched a deep going attack on social gains, to the extent that the Christian trade union federation had more and more difficulty justifying its refusal to join the socialist trade union federation in opposition. At the end of this period, the return of the social democrats to government was indispensable to avoid the breakout of still graver problems. It became politically possible when the PS, ready to assume its austere duty, had profited from the disarray caused by the defeat of the struggles of 1982-87 to reinforce its control on the leadership of the FGTV trade union.

Since 1988, centre-left governments have taken up the cudgels of austerity. They have taken care to maintain an image of "justice" and attempted at first to spare the "least favoured". But the margin of manoeuvre for this was quickly

eaten away by the high rates of interest and by the economic recession. After the elections of November 24, 1991, an attempt to form a liberal-socialist-ecologist coalition was defeated. The centre-left team re-emerged in power under the leadership of Dehaene. His government is one of the least popular the country has known in a long time, and has come close to falling on several occasions.

Resting on an alliance of the trade unions with the bosses against the liberal right, or on the bosses and the liberal right against the trade unions. Exploiting the fear of the vacuum and the fear of elections. Exchanging the support of the Greens for Saint Michel against a system of "green taxes" and fixing itself two "historic" missions: to successfully reform the state and to satisfy the Maastricht criteria. The first mission is realised but the second seems increasingly impossible. On the eve of the Belgian presidency of the EC (second half of 1993), recognition of this leads to all kinds of debates.

Economists and influential think tanks have openly advocated the revision of the Maastricht criteria. The Institute of Economic and Social Research (IRES) at the Catholic University of Louvain says, "There are hardly any fiscal and para-fiscal increases that we can now impose without endangering the juridical security [of the enterprises] and thus the economic perspectives. And, as regards expenditure, the administrative, economic and social objectives of the state are already deeply mortgaged."<sup>12</sup>

Their conclusion: no more reimbursement of capital and an assurance of interest payments on the debt at a rate higher than inflation, indexed but lower than the current rate. Needless to say, the creditors, 90% of them Belgian, are not ready to accept this kind of solution!

### Crisis?

Economic crisis, social crisis, political crisis, crisis of Maastricht, crisis of the Belgian state: all this stretches tension to the extreme. This is as it was in 1986-87, after five years of centre-right government led by Martens, but with two significant differences: Firstly, the FGTV and CSC trade unions are united in a common front which, despite unemployment, could represent a powerful force. Secondly, the crisis of legitimacy of the traditional parties is deeper than it was five years ago.

The political situation in Flanders is particularly worrying for the ruling class. The Social Christian Party (CVP)

remains in profound crisis. Its base was eroded on the left by the ecologists. It has been overtaken from the right by the new liberal formation, Verhofstadt's VLD, which also fishes in the muddy waters of the Vlaams Blok. Verhofstadt has already been touted as prime minister, but his party does not offer the same guarantees of social control as the Christian Democracy. Short of an economic upturn or a revision of the Maastricht norms, it is hard to see how Belgium can cease to sink further into political quicksand, social malaise and inter-communal chaos.

### Alternative

Only an alternative to austerity, unemployment or Maastricht can counter both the authoritarian tendencies and the centrifugal tendencies which threaten to break up the country. That is to say that the powerful trade union movement (2,500,000 members) holds the key to the situation. Social and democratic advances (the eight-hour day, the 40-hour week, universal suffrage, social security and the steps taken in the direction of federalism) which have contributed to the fashioning of a certain Belgian specificity, in spite of the artificial origin of the country, are the historic product of its action.

They can only be saved through new internationalist advances. But the trade union leaderships do not understand this; they confuse defence of the common gains and defence of the unitary state, fearing confrontation with the employers, supporting the EC, and refusing to advance openly into the political field. They should ponder the warning of Peter Praet, chief economist of Belgium's principal bank: "In case of recession, the public debt will be out of control and this will call for very authoritarian budgetary measures which will not be without political risks."<sup>13</sup> Against separatism, big capital is polishing its weapons. Will the left of the social movement do the same? ★

9. A curious fact: nobody dreams of asking why Belgium must pay to achieve something it already possesses, a common currency with Germany!

10. *Le Soir*, May 19, 1993.

11. The social consequences, in some figures: one child out of seven lives in a state of poverty (32% for those who have a single parent working, 38% for those who grow up in a single parent family); 14.5% of housing lacks the basic amenities of running water and an inside toilet and shower; 21% of households live in a situation of objective material insecurity. *Ekonomisch en sociaal tijdschrift*, No.1, 1989, Fondation Roi Baudouin, Institut national de statistiques.

12. *Le Soir*, August 21, 1992.

13. *Le Soir*, May 18, 1993.

# Auto-coup — auto-exit

**MALCOLM Coad**, the British *Guardian's* chief Latin American correspondent, is an incurable liberal optimist.

He is though, astute. In his report on Jorge Serrano's May 25 "auto-coup", he noted that "the new democracies (in Latin America) are beginning to show serious signs of strain." He feared a return to the bad old days.<sup>1</sup> This fear is not uncommon. It is a theme that has been taken up as much by the left as by the 'concerned' liberal intelligentsia.

**ROLAND WOOD** — June 16, 1993

**H**OWEVER, Malcolm Coad also professed a "faint hope" that with the cold war over, America would be able to intervene into the region on the basis of respect for "human rights and a measure of social justice."<sup>2</sup>

A faint hope indeed, one might have thought. But the situation changed rapidly.

The military, who had clearly encouraged and then supported Serrano's initial action, quickly turned against him. Only eight days after he assumed dictatorial powers he had to negotiate his way into exile in El Salvador.

Now, human rights prosecutor, Ramiro de León Carpio, has been elected and sworn in by congress as the new President. An act which is unprecedented in a country with such a poor human rights record and a 33-year civil war, the longest in Central America. Indeed, de León was one of Serrano's first targets for repression, ordering troops to surround his house. De León escaped over his roof.

So, Guatemala has a human rights activist as head of state and America certainly played a role in the way and pace at which events unfolded. Has Mr Coad's wish fulfillment blossomed into something real? No one should hold their breath.

There is still considerable concern about the military's possible reaction to the choice of de León, who has always been a sharp critic of the security forces for their widespread abuse of human rights. As in other Latin America countries the process of so-called democratisation in the 1980s did not prevent the military from retaining significant power and influence, not just within civil society but within the structures of the state. Moreover, these were structures that were invariably of their own creation. They can threaten to sweep back into the central corridors of

power with such apparent ease — because they have never really left them.

The wave of corruption scandals and impeachments in the region have provided much of the impetus and succour to the military's new found confidence. Serrano's declaration that there was a need to "purify the state of all its corruption",<sup>3</sup> if necessary with an "iron fist",<sup>4</sup> was greeted by the military with much enthusiasm. However, while Serrano, in contrast to Brazil's Fernando Collor de Mello and Venezuela's Carlos Andrés Pérez, appeared, as head of state, to be spearheading the fight against corruption his motives were more than likely self-preservation.

His coup pre-empted the presentation in congress of a petition, bearing 5,000 signatures, for his impeachment on several charges of corruption.

## *Struggle against austerity*

Concurrently, there had been a growth in social struggles. The May 1 march in the capital, Guatemala City, mobilised 50,000. Regular demonstrations against Serrano's austerity policies, state privatisations and military repression continued throughout May.<sup>5</sup> In the days leading up to Serrano's coup military leaders pressed for a tougher line against the unions and student groups who had been central to the organisation of these demonstrations.

The return of the refugees and the stuttering talks between the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and the government have also had a considerable impact on the situation.

While at the beginning of March there had appeared to be substantial agreement that progress was being made in the talks, by the end of that month they were being described by the URNG, the official mediator Archbishop Rodolfo Quezada

and others, as a "failure". Human rights have remained the stumbling block since the negotiations began in April 1991.

Amnesty International, in a report issued on May 19, noted that "the killings that have plagued Guatemala for decades are still going on despite the promises of the civilian government." The report adds that: "Harassment, intimidation and death threats are on the increase, violators from the past are still walking free and the repressive structures are still in place."

There had even been failure to agree on a name for the commission which would review past human rights violations. Should it be the 'Truth Commission' (as in El Salvador) or the 'Commission of the Past'?

## *"Bilateral" ceasefire?*

The prospect of a ceasefire by the end of August seems slim. The government has insisted that the URNG should move into concentration areas to start disarming and demobilising. The URNG's pre-condition for acceptance is that the ceasefire is "bilateral" and that agreement is reached on the "strengthening of civilian power and... (on) ...the role of the army in a democratic society."<sup>6</sup> The military will certainly have problems swallowing that.

They have sought to sidestep an official government commitment not to militarise the areas that have been designated for the settlement of refugees returning from Mexico. This has taken two forms.

- Refugee organisations have reported that the military have conducted operations against settlements considered to be supportive of the URNG. Last December defence minister, General José Domingo García Samayoa, said that the military had seized documents that proved the existence of links between the URNG and refugee organisations.

- In other areas the military have attempted to incorporate the returnees into their network of 'civil defence commit-

1. *The Guardian*, May 27, 1993.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Latin American Regional Reports*, June 17, 1993.

4. *International Herald Tribune*, May 21, 1993.

5. *alaj servicio informativo*, May 25 1993.

6. *Latin American Regional Reports*, June 17, 1993. The 'Querétaro accord' signed by the government and the URNG back in 1991 called for the "strengthening of a functional and participative democracy", with both sides committing themselves to ensuring the "pre-eminence" of civil society over the military.

tees'. These committees are seen as central to the military's counter-insurgency policy. Comparisons have certainly been made between Serano's coup and that of Alberto Fujimori's in Peru. The military's attempts to incorporate, often very vulnerable sectors of the population into their war against the URNG extends the comparison further. We would not, however, draw any comparison between the URNG and Peru's Sendero Luminoso.<sup>7</sup>

In each instance the aim of the military has been clear: to reassert their influence and authority in every area of society. So far, they have proved to be more tactically astute than one might have bargained for.

Perhaps the military knew that there was a gamble involved. They were certainly quick off the mark to draw some distance between themselves and Serano immediately following his coup. While on the one hand chief military spokesman, Captain Julio Yon Rivera, said that they supported Serano because he was commander in chief; on the other, he dismissed reports of a military role in the President's decision. The military were more than happy to arm the President; but they preferred that he actually fired the shot himself.

In the days following the coup the military had the necessary flexibility and space within which they could plan their next moves.

Is it so surprising that they chose to side with the business classes and oust Serano?

### **Re-thinking aid**

The business and political elites had their eye on one thing. International aid. Serano's coup stood in their way.

A number of advantageous financial agreements had recently been reached. Having cleared its arrears with the World Bank new loans totaling US\$168 million had been granted. The government has a 15 month standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund which started last December, although the US\$54 million available under the scheme has not, as yet, been touched. All such programmes were immediately thrown into jeopardy. Direct aid packages of US\$50 million from America and US\$100 from western Europe were frozen within 24 hours.

Given that the major international financial institutions are still entrenched within the framework of American foreign policy it is not difficult to see how America was able to use economic muscle to

influence the course of events. But there are signs that the new Clinton administration is set to rethink traditional aid related policy. This is what worries significant sectors of the Latin American bourgeoisie. The present system of aid is essential for underwriting the process of privatisation (that is demanded by the donor countries or institutions in order to qualify for aid/loans), even though it means remaining within the deep quagmire of the debt cycle. If American priorities shift, even a small amount, and consequently effect the priorities of the international institutions, Latin America's ruling elites will be caught on the hop, even though the warning signs are there.

Washington wants to re-define the role of aid in the cold war era. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the predominant rationale for US foreign policy and aid decisions disappears as well. Tomorrow, the path to growth and development for a region like Latin America will lie in free markets and some reform of state structures. The North American Free Trade Agreement is a sign post to the future. Moreover, when there is a budget deficit to be cut the new free markets will be a significantly cheaper form of imperialism

to maintain.

The military in Guatemala was willing to listen to the business classes. They will expect to be listened to in return.

And this is why the choice of Ramiro de León Carpio as the new President may seem so surprising. Gabriel Aguilera, a political analyst in Guatemala, has said that "This is Congress responding to the street." Certainly the mobilisations prior to the coup, as we have noted, and those against the coup itself have been powerful enough to make Congress think. But, again as we have noted, the military will not be happy. The Congress decision seems to be based on the premise that, at this stage, a respected human rights leader will be better placed than any other to head off popular dissent. This though, ignores the extent to which demands for human rights and democracy were inter-connected with those against austerity and privatisations. Unless the new President attempts to reverse current policies (which would place him against the grain in Latin America), a revitalised mass movement could again begin to cause considerable headaches for the government. It is in just such a situation that military fingers could, again, begin to twitch. ★



7. For an examination of the Peruvian military's counter-insurgency tactics see the author's article, Fujimori's propaganda coup, *International Viewpoint* 235, September 28, 1993.

# Beyond the domesticated left

**JULIO Mareneles is one of the "veterans" of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Tupamaros (MLN); a member of its leadership, he is an important spokesman for one of the main forces on the Uruguayan left. Our correspondent, Ernesto Herrera, talked with him about the themes that today are at that top of the political agenda in Uruguay and Latin America as a whole; the changes in the international situation; the relationship between government and real power; the debate around programme versus alliances; and the construction of a collective, radical vanguard, in a period when positivist "realism" is gaining more and more adherents.**

**INTERVIEW — Montevideo, May 3, 1993\***

**I** *t is almost inevitable to begin by referring to the new international situation. The collapse of so-called real socialism, the defeat of the Sandinistas, the isolation of Cuba and the uncertainties which have opened around the peace agreement in El Salvador have generated a neglect of strategy on the Latin American Left. Capitalism has assumed a historic victory over Marxism and has unleashed an ideological offensive with few precedents this century. For many comrades there no longer seem to be possibilities for an anti-capitalist alternative and so they are taking up what might be called a left positivist position. What effect is all this having on the MLN?*

It is a very difficult and complicated situation. The Russian and Chinese revolutions were authentic revolutions, which despite their mistakes and deviations, achieved great transformations and played a progressive role on the international stage. In their own way, they also served as support for third world liberation struggles. For example, despite all the criticisms which can be made of the USSR it was fundamental to the sustainment of the Cuban revolution. With the fall of the socialist camp, revolutionary struggles have suffered. A case in point is Nicaragua, which was able to survive and also confront the counter-revolution thanks to practical and military support from the Soviet Union. All this has gone with the disappearance of the "strategic rearguard",

despite all the criticisms which could be made of it. Imperialism now has a completely free hand for there is nothing to obstruct it. Accordingly, possibilities for the revolutionary movement seem remote.

In the MLN we have always taken account of the international situation. We do not believe that it should be permitted to adversely affect the revolutionary struggle but we must try to see what the forms of struggle might be at this time. In



particular, how do we again unite, for in the face of this great collapse, there are many who have stopped believing in the possibility of revolution and turned to social democracy; and there are others who, without ceasing to believe in the necessity of revolution have become demoralised and will not take up a militant position.

And there are ourselves, who continue to define ourselves as revolutionary militants but who see how difficult it is to make advances when it is not easy to speak of socialism, because it is looked down upon and the rightwing offensive is so great. This is not to say that we hide the fact that we are socialists, and in certain

circumstances we will raise socialist ideas. However, in daily practice, in contrast to what happened in our country twenty years ago — when it was possible to speak freely of socialism and this was accepted by the people — it is now necessary to look very hard for ways which allow us to fly our colours and also to oppose the tremendous advance of the right.

We must, using all possible means, raise issues more subtly, stay with the people and accompany them in their apprenticeship in practical politics.

*In an interview which you gave some years ago to the French language Inprecor (one of IV's sister publications) you said "Today, as yesterday the issue of power is central to us." A few weeks ago, you stated in the weekly, Búsqueda, that it was illusory to talk of power if there was no control of the fundamental economic mechanisms or of the army. You gave Popular Unity in Chile as a perfect example that government must not be confused with real power. The Uruguayan left presently faces this problem, because there is the possibility that the Frente Amplio (FA — Broad Front) will win the 1994 elections. What questions of strategy would such an eventuality pose for the MLN? Is it possible that an FA victory would produce a radical change in the balance of forces which would allow a struggle for hegemony and so for power?*

This is a huge issue. We believe that if the FA becomes the government, not very much will change.

We also believe that this must be made clear to the people, first and foremost to the FA rank and file. To not say that if it wins government in 1994, little will change, has been one of the serious mistakes committed by certain leaders of the FA.

\* The interview was originally published in *Beyond the Possible (Más allá de lo posible)* journal of the Socialist Workers' Party (PST — Uruguayan section of the Fourth International).

What could happen, but this depends on the FA, is the beginning of such a process. There would be an extremely complex situation; it is a subject which we know we must consider in depth more than previously. It must also be seen with what we call the question of the establishment. By this I mean that we realise that if the FA becomes the government, it will not have real power, in short, we will have to exercise government within a system in which the real power is held by our class enemies.

I say enemies because the MLN does hold a definition of class. The FA does not have this and there you have a major problem. Looking at historical events we see that those progressive movements which have arrived at government but have not considered their situation have ended in failure. I always think of the example of what happened to the Bolivian Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, which no one except old people now remember.

When one listened to Paz Estensoro, it was clear that it was a progressive movement; however we know how it ended through lack of self-analysis. Similarly with the Venezuela's Acción Democrática and with the APRA of Haya de la Torre more than forty years ago. What happened to all these movements? They rotted; they did not examine the political and social processes and made no advance towards the revolution.

So, when we speak of the question of the establishment, it is important to ask how much being the government would mean taking a step towards real power. What we have seen of government within the capitalist system is not encouraging for the revolutionary left. There is the example of what happened with one of our comrades in local government who went to fill a position at the request of the Movimiento de Participación Popular (MPP)<sup>1</sup> and who we had to expel. What is the solution to a case such as this? How should a revolutionary militant behave within the framework of the system?

We do not believe that it is possible to have one approach outside government and another once inside, for the sake of some supposed political reality. However, we do need to discuss this more, because equally we do not want to remain on the margins. Up to now, no one has found a solution to the problem of participation within the system. I think that there will have to be some serious thinking before it happens.

***A debate has begun in the FA around its programme and also its alliances; it seems to appear***

***that the reformist elements are demanding a retreat from the anti-oligarchical and anti-imperialist principles of the programme on which it was found-ed. Their logic appears solid enough: "Even if the FA wins the elections, the left will not gain an absolute majority, therefore power will have to be shared with the traditional parties. The programme should accord with this reality and be based upon broad alliances which will en-sure a parliamentary majority. Further, it must only be an out-line and low-key, so as to avoid any possible confrontations with the ruling class or imperialism. To win government it is necessary to negotiate, make pacts and also, accept the idea of a centre-left government." This view is not only held by some in the FA, but also by members of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT), the Nicaraguan FSLN and El Salvador's FMLN. They say that in the prevailing international situation there is no possibility of there being leftwing governments with radical programme. Is there, in your view, an alternative to this way of thinking?***

I believe so. It is all rather like what comes first — the chicken or the egg? If we do become the government, then in order to be successful it is necessary to pare down the programme. However, so that the people actually vote for the FA, it must also reflect their needs. The two things are inextricable. If the FA does not reduce its programme and keeps that of 1971, then less people will vote for it and so the possibility of achieving government will be reduced. But we believe that it should keep the 1971 programme nevertheless.

***Even if this places the chance to be the government at risk?***

Even then, because what interests us is not achieving government but transforming the country; our aim is a real mass movement; for an FA government will meet such tremendous resistance that there is a real need to work for a politically conscious vote. The most important thing is that the FA should cement its advance

and its popular support. We want to keep the 1971 programme, including the part on land reform — which is not spoken of today — but also for it to have convinced and organised support from the people, because it is going to meet with massive resistance from the bourgeoisie. Only the support of the people can keep an FA government in power. If the vote has shallow roots they will not come out to support an FA government should this become necessary.

For this reason we say that any desire to achieve government at any price is completely mistaken. It is not only counter-productive but could also lead to defeats the effects of which could last for decades. If the FA falls we shall all be damaged. So we are opposed to the reduction of the programme for the purpose of making agreements. For us the alternative is clear. The programme must be maintained at all costs.

***Recently the problem of the external debt has again been raised. There appear to be voices within the FA which say that it must be paid because the country has sufficient reserves, that it would not limit social investment in the future and also because non-payment or a moratorium would result in an immediate economic embargo. Do you still support the original approach, taken in 1985, of non-payment?***

The problem of the external debt continues to be fundamental to us to the extent that we will soon be making a fresh analysis, given that our present position is now some years old. However, one thing is clear: if the drain of interest continues in this country — for in reality the debt itself is not being repaid — there will be no money available for investment. It is impossible to take any more money from the people.

If a large part of our money goes abroad, then obviously it will not be available for the investment we need for development. For this reason we agree with the MPP's proposal that there should be a moratorium for three years and then we will see. I think that at best, a further moratorium will then have to be declared.

To those comrades who think that if we declare a moratorium or state that we will not pay there will be reprisals from the

1. The MLN forms part of the MPP; the MPP forms part of the FA.

international banks, I would ask the following: if non-payment of the external debt would have serious consequences for the country, what is payment going to bring? By which I mean, with the huge social deterioration which is happening throughout the country, combined with the effect which the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) is already having, even though not yet in operation, surely it is better to face the possibility of a blockade in case it really does happen. I only say the possibility of a blockade because there is at least a doubt that it would in fact occur — Uruguay is a very small country and its external debt is minimal compared to that which exists internationally. I believe that what could happen if we do not pay has been over estimated. At any rate, we will work on our feeling that the people will stand against the disastrous effects of paying the debt.

***Some leaders of the FA, Seregni amongst them, have raised the idea that if it does not win the 1994 elections but becomes the second largest national political force, it is almost inevitable that it will share in government, including in the cabinet. What do you think of this?***

Comrade Seregni's position is in keeping with particular approach held by others as well as him. In contrast, we believe that it is equally possible to be the opposition. The problem is that due to the multi-class character of the FA, there are a number of comrades who do not hold an anti-capitalist position, which involves believing that this system should be destroyed and replaced by another. We who hold a socialist position are always seeking a coming-together of forces which will change the system.

Others, who consider themselves progressive, would merely improve things a little. We do not see why the FA must co-govern. Why should it? This attitude of seeking co-government explains certain positions which the FA have taken at various times; we saw one instance when Bush came and they gave him the keys of Montevideo, because in that way they could act as if they were the government. We see it when comrade Tavaré Vázquez says that he is the governor of all the citizens of Montevideo; he forgets that he must govern on the FA programme.

We are in total agreement with what Baille y Ordóñez said about "government by the party", in other words, you must be loyal to the programme. After all, most of the people who voted for the FA in

Montevideo did so for its programme and for its proposals for local government. This is a matter which needs to be aired in the FA, because there are many comrades with different views.

***It is three years since you became the local government in Montevideo. I remember from an editorial in Tuparamos, that you said that the council (Intendencia) would open up a new front of struggle with the possibility of generating self-organisation of the masses; and that the area community centres (CCZ) could become "sources of popular power." What have you achieved?***

I would say that we have advanced very little. The experiments being carried out by the CCZ are far from the beginning of a process of popular participation. I would say that this is where the least progress has been made. The FA council has carried out certain works, repaired some streets and so on; but for us, what was most important was to transform council into an experience of participation and political decision making — but this has not been achieved. We in the MLN are also responsible for this as well as the MPP militants. We have not followed through the CCZ into participatory and decision-making organisations. This must also be discussed within the FA, because many of the people now see the council only as a provider of services. This is how comrade Vázquez also sees it.

***Do you still think that rather than speaking of a democratic state we should speak of "prevailing legality"?***

Yes, because for us democracy cannot be said to exist. For us democracy has three dimensions — political, social and economic. We now have a number of political liberties which cannot be under-rated; things are different than under the military dictatorship. Yet, democracy does not exist. I do not mean this only in political terms. For example, access to the means of mass communication is very difficult for us, for, as we all know they are in the hands of the rich. Sometimes progressive forces are given access (I myself have been able to speak on television for a few minutes) but, in reality, they are not available in the same way.

***How then do you explain that***

***the left can govern the capital, Montevideo, win a referendum against privatisations and possibly become the next national government?***

Yet how much do these things affect real power? Has the system been changed in any way? are the rich less rich and the poor less poor? I would say no.

***The appearance of change could become useful for bourgeois democracy.***

Certainly. Although the left has made headway in the institutions, it is not proposing any drastic change to them. So long as the ruling class do not see their privileges threatened, a domesticated left is an escape valve. The apparent liberty now given by the system has created false illusions amongst sections of the left, but I have no doubt that as soon as the ruling class consider their interests in danger, the same will happen to us as in Chile.

***Does your anti-establishment position explain why the Tupamaros are not putting up candidates in the elections? Will you keep to this decision?***

Possibly, but it is subject which will be discussed again so that we know what to do in the future. We cannot pretend that the establishment does not exist. We are not on principle opposed to intervention in the institutions.

***The MLN is having its sixth National Congress; within a few months the MPP will have its second Congress. Why is the MPP not being discussed at the MLN Congress?***

There was already a firm position on the MPP, that it must be an organisation of the masses while the MLN will realise its work for the masses separately from the MPP. By this I mean that our comrades will carry out tasks on different fronts — with workers, with women, in the slums, through the medium of the MPP. This is because we define ourselves as a militant cadre organisation, although this is as yet more an aspiration. Membership of the MLN is selective. There is a need for a political organisation where the masses can build political experience and the MPP is adequate for this. ★

# "As British as Bexley"

IN an article published in *The Guardian Weekly* of April 4, Dick Spring, the Irish Labour Party leader and now Foreign Minister, threw in his lot with the British government's latest (in a long line of) proposals to find a settlement in "Northern Ireland".

He was concerned, as he put it, that "the Northern Ireland problem falls proportionately about four times heavier on the Irish taxpayer than his or her British counterpart."

It should come as no surprise that the British government expects the Irish people to pay for the privilege of having a part of their country occupied. Nor will Dick Spring's attempts to prostrate himself at the feet of British proposals be unexpected.

But, as our correspondent explains, following the recent local government elections<sup>1</sup> these latest plans and pipe dreams are looking a little shaken.

JOHN NORTH\* — Belfast, June 7, 1993

AS British as Bexley" — that is the claim that the British right and their local counterparts in the occupied six counties of Ireland like to make about their Northern colony. It was the first casualty of the local government elections on May 17, when the recently organised local section of the British Conservative party was wiped off the political map.

Of course this election had very little to do with the traditional concerns of the British electorate. Every election in the six counties is a referendum on partition. It features faction fights between republicanism and bourgeois nationalism on the one hand and unionism and far right loyalism on the other. This particular election was also seen as a test for British plans to impose a political settlement.

One clear achievement of the struggle in the North has been to fragment the once homogeneous Unionist bloc. British strategy has been to protect imperialism's strategic interests by building an internal settlement. Central to this has been the mass base of local unionists but, as they have no other programme other than military repression of the nationalist population, it has proved difficult to strike a deal with the Irish bourgeoisie.

The last attempt at talks took over five years and ended in total collapse. They were however very useful for the British, who were able to act as referee without anyone being impolite enough to point out that they ruled the area and have the responsibility to set out political proposals.

The British have now signalled that they will bring forward proposals. They will be firm with the unionists in the time honoured way of offering them most of what they want including the abolition of the Irish constitutional claim on the six-county territory in return for some concessions on local power-sharing and a nod in the direction of a paper all-Ireland council.

## Pragmatic

For this scenario to work the British Secretary of State, Patrick Mayhew, wanted some weakening of the Loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in favour of the slightly more pragmatic Official Unionist Party (OUP). Above all he wanted to see a further erosion of the vote of Sinn Féin, whose President Gerry Adams had been ousted as a Member of Parliament by the bourgeois nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in last years British general election.

Mayhew did not get what he wanted, and an analysis of the results shows some very bad news for his initiative.

On the Unionist side the DUP held its vote, but this was part of a game of musical chairs in which votes shifted somewhat from the loyalist right. It was the loyalist independents in the last chair who lost their seats. The background was a low turnout outside border areas, indicating a certain demoralisation in the unionist population, and the collapse of the pact between the two main parties. It is here that we should situate the misfortune of the conservatives — the collapse

of a local clique seeking to preserve unionism by integration with Britain. Unionism is slightly weaker, more fragmented but remaining very volatile and with a great capacity for violence.

## Sinn Féin advance

On the nationalist side the position was even worse. With a high turnout the SDLP vote held up but in a number of areas the Sinn Féin vote made significant advances. These were precisely in major urban areas that the SDLP needed to win. The most dramatic outcome was in West Belfast. Here the SDLP had won the parliamentary seat following a secret deal with Loyalist paramilitaries and by breaking electoral law and massively overspending.<sup>2</sup> They had the advantage of British support, the banning of Sinn Féin from Radio and TV,<sup>3</sup> regular state harassment of Sinn Féin and state and loyalist murder bids. Despite this the Sinn Féin vote increased — and to such an extent that the SDLP have clearly lost the electoral battle in Belfast.

Just before the elections John Hume, leader of the SDLP, had opened talks with Sinn Féin. One motive was to encourage Sinn Féin supporters to transfer votes to the SDLP (the elections in the six counties are under proportional representation). This did not happen in any overall manner and indicates that the vote for Sinn Féin is also a rejection of the bourgeois nationalism of the SDLP.

In a sense this result came despite the Sinn Féin leadership rather than because of them. They had attacked their exclusion from the talks so far, while failing to deal with the exclusive imperialist agenda that would render Sinn Féin impotent if it were to join the talks. Recent policy has sought to internationalise the conflict while sowing illusions in the role of imperialist institutions like the European Community and the United Nations. They have failed to capitalise on successive capitulations by the SDLP and, in a move to the right, have been operating a concept of the 'Nationalist family' that looks to unity with the bourgeoisie against the

\* The author is a member of Peoples' Democracy (Irish section of the Fourth International).

1. These are elections for local councils, in a city or a county. This year, apart from the six counties, the elections were only for areas outside the metropolitan districts, i.e. major cities such as London did not vote.

2. There is a limit to the amount of money that can be spent by candidates in any one constituency.

3. For a recent example of this, see *International Viewpoint*, May 1993.



Loyalists and the British. It is clear from the results that the majority of their supporters have very different ideas.

The election was followed by dramatic military success for the IRA in which they planted four major bombs. Their opponents have trotted out the charges that these were as a result of the Sinn Féin vote. The reality is that the bombings were planned some time ago and timed not to be an issue in the elections — an indication of the political weakness of both the military and electoral campaigns of the republicans.

Hopefully this victory will give Sinn Féin militants the confidence to look again at the programme that they have been following. Hume will want to continue talks because he wants to use the republicans as a stick against the British. A Sinn Féin break from these talks and the political agenda they represent would strengthen it and weaken both the SDLP and the British. ★

### **Breaking the silence**

Understanding of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia is as confused in Ireland as it is elsewhere. This is as true of the left as of the right; indeed, until a fortnight ago, most public criticism of Serb and Croat expansionism in Bosnia had come from politicians of the rightwing parties. Most of those who got their basic political education in the 'Stalin' school are parroting the Belgrade line, and this has influenced any republican position on the subject. The larger revolutionary socialist organisations, the Socialist Workers Movement and Militant Labour, keep a careful silence.

On Thursday, May 27, People's Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International, ended the shame of the Irish left by holding a meeting in support of the Bosnian national resistance and for the ending of the embargo on arms to it. Despite the worst weather of the worst recorded May, the room was full as Matt Merrigan, former President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Kevin Keating of PD, and the Bosnian, Bratso Bergerovic opened a campaign of solidarity on four demands:

- For a secular independent Bosnia.
- For an end to Irish support for the embargo on arms to the Bosnian national forces.
- For the opening of European borders to victims of the Yugoslav wars.
- For support to the anti-war movements in Serbia and Croatia.

Following the meeting activists met to make plans for propaganda and agitation on the above demands. ★

# A Stalinist legacy

**THE former Yugoslavia is not the only region where, following the collapse of Stalinism, often long standing ethnic rivalries and unresolved territorial disputes have resurfaced, resulting in protracted and bitter conflicts. In this issue we are publishing two articles that examine the historical background to two disputes — between Abkhazia and Georgia, and Armenia and Azerbaijan — in the Caucasian region of the former Soviet Union.**

**Our correspondent draws our attention, in particular, to the establishment of borders during the period of Stalin's rule. These decisions were often crude and arbitrary. On other occasions they were specifically designed to favour one ethnic group over another. It is here that certainly some of the modern roots of current disputes can be found.**

**VICKEN CHETERIAN — Yerevan, June 1993**

**A** LONG the Black Sea coast stretching towards the Caucasian Mountains, Abkhazia occupies a surface of 8,600 km square covered with forests, rivers and sandy beaches. The charm of its nature had made Sukhumi, Pitsunda and Gagra among the favourite holiday resorts for the former Soviet elite. Nowadays, the hotels and the sanatorians are occupied by refugees or guarded by armed men, while Sukhumi is a war front dividing the country into two.

Tension existed between the Abkhaz and the Georgians all through the Soviet period. In this multi-ethnic region, the percentage of the Abkhaz population was in free fall, while that of the Georgians was rising.

The Abkhaz believed this to be a result of the nationalist policy emanating from Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. In 1978, the Abkhaz demonstrated, demanding to be a part of the Russian federation. Abkhazia had been a Soviet Socialist Republic between 1921 and 1931. Thereafter, Stalin — himself a Georgian — decided to incorporate it into Georgia. Abkhazia was given formal autonomy.

As Georgia was struggling to split from the Soviet Union the Abkhaz, fearing the Georgians, mobilised in favour of keeping the union. After the declaration of Georgian independence in April 1991, its parliament adopted the 1921 constitution which deprived Abkhazia of any form of self-rule. In response, the Abkhaz parliament voted for its 1925 constitution,

a time when Abkhazia was not part of Georgia. The situation became explosive.

Leonid Lakerbaya, the acting prime minister of Abkhazia, said that the Georgian authorities tried and failed to create a conflict between the local Georgian population and the other ethnic groups. He added that on the eve of Georgian military intervention, Georgian President Shevardnadze spoke by phone with the Abkhaz President Ardzinba, promising not to resort to military intervention and instead seek a peaceful solution.

The next day, August 14, 1992, five thousand Georgian National Guards entered Sukhumi — the capital — and by sea landed in Gagra. The pretext was the protection of the railway link with Russia. Most of these men were ex-criminals who spread terror by looting, killing and burning houses. Lakerbaya considered this to be a premeditated policy. The intention was to empty Abkhazia by driving the population out of their land.

The Abkhaz forces fled to the mountains, although the area surrounding Gudauta stayed under their control. In December 1992 they recaptured Gagra, as far as the Russian border. The victory was a surprise. On March 15, the Abkhaz forces crossed the Gumisda river and for two days kept parts of Sukhumi under their control before retreating. How could the Abkhaz, who are no more than a 100,000, challenge the power of the Georgian state?

Andre Sakharov had once described Georgia as the "mini-empire". In a state where 40% are ethnically non-Georgian

the ex-President Gamsakhurdia had made "Georgia for Georgians" and "five per cent for minorities" his main slogans. Even those identified as Georgians are composed of Kartvelies — or the "proper Georgians" — of Megrels, Svans and others, who are united by a written language but speak different dialects. The Megrels, who are supporters of Gamsakhurdia, do not participate in the Abkhaz war, and their relations with Tbilisi are unstable.

Not much changed with the coming of Shevardnadze. When the Georgian National Guard entered Abkhazia, Albert Topolian, the vice-President of Abkhazia, said that they equally harassed Armenians, Greeks, Estonians and other ethnic groups living there. Initially, he said, the Georgians were cautious with the Russian population, but now the Russians in Sukhumi — like other non-Georgians — are treated as hostages. Only those who can pay a high ransom are permitted to leave the city. Topolian's house and the house of his parents was burnt down, while his 81 year old mother was mercilessly killed. Such conduct has made many of the ethnic minorities join the Abkhaz cause.

### Support

From the first days of the war, Abkhazia received important support from the North Caucasian People's Confederation. Adygues, Cherkess, Kabardins, Chechens are considered ethnically related with the Abkhaz, and many have rushed to help. So did the Ossets, who had previously clashed with the Georgians over the status of South Ossetia, another 'autonomous region' within Georgia. Many from the Abkhaz diaspora have also joined the struggle, coming from Turkey, Jordan and Syria. Lately, the 200 Chechen volunteers fighting in Abkhazia have returned to their homeland, after tension between the Chechen President Dudaiev and his parliament.

The most significant support came from Russia, which is the source of weapons for the two camps. According to Topolian, Russia is supplying arms at a ratio of "60-40" in favour of the Abkhaz, enough to resist but not enough to cross the Gumisda river and re-enter Sukhumi. The border between Russia and Abkhazia is heavily guarded by Russian soldiers, who scrutinise every passing car or pedestrian. Yet, in the Abkhaz representation office in the Russian city of Sochi I met two Russian officers from the Special Forces, who said that they were on an official mission to Abkhazia. They also said that they had a certain amount of arms to be transported with them.

Georgian politicians clearly miscalcu-

lated when they decided to repress the ethnic minorities in their country, at a time when they were trying to escape Russian influence. In the future, Russia can also exploit the existing tension between Tbilisi and the Adjars in the Batumi region, or the Armenians of Akhalkalak for the same purposes.

From a total Abkhaz population of 550,000 before the war, 200,000 are now refugees. Most of them have crossed the border to find peace in Russia. It is difficult to produce an accurate figure on casualties, but according to the Abkhaz parliament, there were 1700 dead among the Abkhaz forces.

### Atrocities

Natella Akaba is head the Parliament's Human Rights Commission. She is collecting eye-witness reports about the atrocities committed by the "Georgian occupation forces". In Sukhumi, she has said, it is now forbidden to speak Abkhaz. She is worried about the fate of 30,000 civilians trapped in Tkvarchili, a town surrounded by the Georgians since August 14 last year. Evacuation has stopped after the

shooting down of a plane in December where 84 civilians died.

The Abkhaz leaders think that through their resistance, they acquired the right of self-determination. They say the ideal would be an independent, neutral, multi-ethnic Abkhazia. Switzerland is cited as an example. But the ideal does not exist in times of war, and the Abkhaz parliament has recently asked the Russian parliament for "patronage", to accept Abkhazia as an "autonomous republic" within the Russian Federation. If the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe become involved as mediators what will they decide would bring stability to the region; maintaining borders created by Stalin, or the peoples' right to self-determination?

It may be too early to predict the final outcome of the conflict. The Abkhaz forces might try to recapture Sukhumi. They are counting on possible conflicts within the Georgian camp. They are in contact with the Megrel militia chief Kobalia Loti. If there was a conflict between the Megrels and Tbilisi — the Georgian forces in Abkhazia would be completely surrounded. ★

## Memories live on

**Y**EREVAN, April 24. Thousands of people, line after line, have walked all day long towards Dzidzernagapert, a hill near Yerevan. There, they put flowers on the monument built for the memory of the Armenian victims during the First World War in the Ottoman Empire. What does the day signify to them. "It is a day of commemoration and mourning", said a 72 year old man. "It is a day calling for vengeance", said a young man in military uniform.

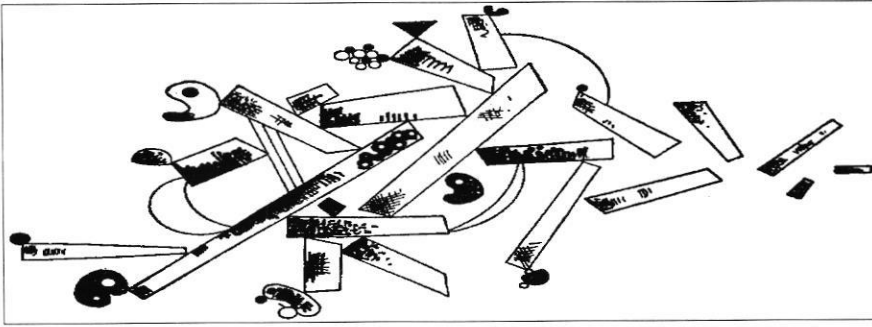
The memory of the genocide is the cornerstone for the modern Armenian national identity. Religious ceremonies and demonstrations are organised in most diaspora Armenian communities. In 1965, the first mass demonstration took place under the Soviet regime, after which April 24 is commemorated year after year. For a people with a 3,000 year old history, their memory is haunted with this single event.

On April 24, 1915, 400 Armenian intellectuals were arrested in Istanbul and later assassinated. Armenian servicemen in the Ottoman Army were disarmed and execut-

ed. The civilian population were driven out of their towns and villages into the Syrian desert, to be killed on the way or to perish from plague or starvation. In three years, 1.5 million Armenians died. West Armenia, their homeland for thousands of years, was emptied of its Armenian population. The survivors were scattered around the world, some finding refuge in Armenian territory under Russian rule.

In Turkey, history is told differently. Turkish historians speak about incidents during WW1, where the Armenian population near the Russian border were taken into interior provinces, for fear of collaboration with the enemy. During these events, they say, an estimated 300,000 Armenians died. No genocide. No question of compensation of any sort.

The Turkish refusal to recognise the genocide has made the nightmarish memories omnipresent in Armenian memory. In the 1970s, a terrorist movement known as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) carried out assassinations and bomb attacks to attract international public opinion, and force the Turk-



ish government to change its position.

Present day symbols are mixed with that of the past. In front of the 1915 monument stands two khatchkars — or stones engraved with cross — for the memory of the Sumgait and Kirovabad victims, two pogroms that took place in 1988 in Azerbaijan. Next to it lies six tombs of fighters who died in Karabakh. The Armenian TV programme of that day did not show the traditional pictures of the genocide victims heaps of human skulls, or children starving in the desert. Instead, a historian talked of the villages which showed resistance against the Turkish Army. A report about the newly founded Armenian National Army followed.

When the Armenian National Movement (ANM — which had evolved from out of the 1988 Karabakh Movement) called for independence, it was challenging not only traditional Armenian relations with Russia, but also the traditional Armenian fear towards Turkey. Soviet Armenian historical stereotypes described Russia as the “friendly people”, Armenia’s sole protector, without which Turkey would repeat the 1915 genocide. Soviet legitimacy was discredited in the eyes of the Armenians with the pogroms of Sumgait and Kirovabad, when the Soviet state could not protect the Armenian civilians from the Azeri mob.

It was evident that the Moscow leadership could not find any solution for the Karabakh question, on the contrary, it tried to repress it by force, or to manipulate it. Gerald Libaridian, the deputy foreign minister, wrote in 1991 that the ANM had concluded that: “Pan-Turkism is the scare-crow which distorts the nation’s view of the past and denies Armenians the right to imagine the future, thus serving the interests of Russian imperialism alone.”

Newly independent Armenia had an experimental foreign policy. “The basis of our policy is good neighbourhood...”, a foreign minister told me a year ago. The Armenian government hoped to establish trade relations with Turkey, which would lead to a normalisation in political relations. There were plans to enlarge the Turkish port of Trabizond on the Black Sea, to make it the centre of exchange between Europe and the Caucasian republics. In 1992, Armenia was encouraged to enter the Black Sea Eco-

nomie Co-operation Zone. What about the first genocide of our century? Armenian authorities thought that after normal relations had been established, the touchy subject of past barbarism could be approached in a more civilised way. Humanity already had an example. Didn’t German politicians publicly apologise for the crimes of the Nazi era.

The war in Karabakh complicates the already difficult relations. Turkey projects itself as the protector of Azerbaijan (which has a mainly Turkish population) in the international media. For example, the peace negotiations organised by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, rejected any change in the actually existing borders. When the Armenian forces occupied the Kelbajar region in early April, Turkey threatened military intervention, and cut its air and land routes with Armenia, worsening the isolation of the republic. “The Armenians did not learn their lesson from their last tentative adventure in Anatolia, and forgot the punishment they had suffered”, declared the late Turkish President, Turgut Ozal. According to reports in Yerevan, Turkey is providing arms and military advisers to Azerbaijan, which has a majority ethnic Turk population.

In spite of this, Turkey has recognised Armenia’s independence, but there are no diplomatic relations between the two countries. Raffi Hovannessian, the former foreign minister, said that Turkey has demands which must be met before it can normalise its relations with Armenia. At one stage, he said, Turkey produced a document calling on Armenia to refrain from making any public reference to the genocide, or any demands for compensation. At another stage, Turkey had put additional conditions concerning the fate of Karabakh. Turkey, under pressure from Azerbaijan as well as nationalists at home, has not opened its borders with Armenia, coherent with the Azeri blockade to force Armenia to accept Azeri conditions on Karabakh.

The borders of present day Armenia were created in the 1920s by Russia and Turkey. Stalin, hoping to win over Kemalist Turkey, had placed two Armenian inhabited regions under Azeri rule. Nakhichevan, which then had a 50% Armenian popula-

tion, and was geographically cut off from Azerbaijan, was nevertheless given to Baku. An ‘autonomous republic’ of Mountainous Karabakh was created, and, although it was populated by 96% Armenians, again was placed inside Azerbaijan. Of course, such arbitrary decisions were parceled up in “internationalist” demagoguery.

During 70 years of Soviet rule, Nakhichevan was emptied of Armenians, and in 1988 it had only 2% Armenians (today there are none). Karabakh was increasingly faced with a similar fate and in 1988 its population went into the streets demanding to be reunited with Armenia. This has ignited a struggle which has not yet found a solution.

The official Armenian position towards Karabakh is more than ambiguous. Levon Ter-Petrossian came to power promising, among other things, unification. Soon, his position changed and last year Yerevan officially gave signs about its readiness for a compromise that would keep the enclave inside Azerbaijan in return for Azeri guarantees towards the Armenian population there. They considered that the war in Karabakh was between Azerbaijan and the Armenian population living in Karabakh. But Azerbaijan refused this proposal considering the war to be a result of Armenian territorial ambitions.

### *Political survival*

Nevertheless, the Armenian authorities have progressively been drawn into this conflict. After the occupation of the Shahumian and Martakert regions (a third of the enclave) last summer by the Azeri National Army, mass demonstrations took place in Yerevan. The authorities understood that their political survival depended directly on the survival of Karabakh. Since then they have started sending additional military and humanitarian supplies. For the first time, in April of this year, Armenian regular forces participated in operations in Azerbaijan, assisting Karabakh forces to capture Kelbajar, an Azeri enclave between Armenia and Karabakh.

Should there be a second look at the Caucasian borders? An Armenian officer, who had lead his troops to Kelbajar, was asked what he thought now that his troops are in Azeri territory. The officer explained that it was not natural to have an island inhabited by Armenians in the midst of Azerbaijan, that this was the result of a deliberate and repressive policy, that Kelbajar had been Armenian in the past, as hundreds of architectural remains prove. “It is strange”, he concluded, “that now that everyone condemns Stalin, at the same time they insist on keeping the borders he created.” ★

## EAST TIMOR

SINCE 1976, Indonesia has enforced its brutal annexation of East Timor, implementing a policy of extermination in a territory from which foreign visitors are barred. Nonetheless, while it has killed one third of the population, the Indonesian army has not managed to crush the population nor defeat the armed resistance.

Xanana Gusmão, leader of the National Council of the Maubere Resistance (CNRM), was arrested on November 20, 1992. His jailers extracted a statement from him renouncing the struggle — with the aim of discrediting the resistance, by giving the impression of a big upsurge in defections.

Gusmão's replacement was arrested on the day of the arrival in the Timorese capital Dili of the United Nations general secretary. According to the Jakarta government, he was "spontaneously denounced by villagers".

After a trial conducted in complete contempt of Indonesian law and previous commitments made by the government, Gusmão was handed a verdict of life imprisonment. Foreign observers, including the International Committee of Jurists and Amnesty International, were not allowed to attend. Gusmão was prevented from reading his defense, which he was nevertheless able to send abroad, and which declares that his "renunciation" had been obtained through force.

Many of the witnesses for the prosecution were Timorese who had previously been sentenced by the Indonesian authorities. On the day of the verdict, Gusmão announced that he was beginning a hunger strike.

Since 1976, the "international community" has practically remained silent in the face of the genocide of the people of East Timor, and has maintained its relations with the Indonesian government. Australia has even recognised the annexation of East Timor, something the UN has refused to do.

Some 20 oil companies have signed contracts with Indonesia and Australia for oil extraction in the Timor Sea, and the arms industries of several Western countries continue to profit handsomely from sales to the Jakarta regime. ★

## MEXICO

ON June 5, the workers of the Cuautitlan (36 kilometres from Mexico City) plant of the Ford Motor Company suffered another attack on their union and the process of internal democratisation, at the hands of the government-run Mexican Workers



Confederation (CTM). On that day, the main leader of the CTM, Fidel Velazquez, organised a bogus meeting with the objective of dismissing the legitimate Local Executive Committee (CES) and taking control of this militant section of the National Union of Ford Workers.

In early 1990, a struggle was brutally put down by CTM gangsters, leading to the murder of one of the workers and the installation of a local leadership which in no way represented the rank and file. Two years later, large-scale mobilisations led to the overthrow of this committee and the revival of democratisation in the union local.

This upset the plans of the employer and the union bureaucracy who had hoped to keep the workers under control while they went ahead with their plans to reorganize the workplace — making way for a flexible workforce — and implement wage austerity.

Nevertheless, pressures on the workers have continued to grow. In recent months, the speed of the assembly line has increased, producing a 12% increase in daily production — without any compensation for the workers. At the same time, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of firings and suspensions of the most militant unionists. Moreover, there are plans to fire about 1,000 workers who, in 1990, voted against granting the CTM the right to represent them in contract negotiations.

The workers of Ford Cuautitlan are asking for solidarity. Letters of protest can be sent to: the president's residence at Los Pinos, Mexico DF; to the Labour and Social Security Secretary, Periférico Sur 4271, Col. Fuentes del Pedregal, Delegación Tlapan, DF; and to the Ford Motor Company, Paseo de la Reforma 333, Col. Cuauhtémoc, Mexico DF. ★

## BOSNIA

A NEW campaign, Workers Aid for Bosnia, has been launched in Britain. An initiative of the London-based Campaign Against Fascism in Europe, Workers Aid is looking for concrete offers of help from across Europe for its aid convoy to Bosnia.

The humanitarian convoy, carrying medical supplies and other urgently needed goods will begin in Scotland on August 7, travel south, cross over into France and probably travel through Belgium, Germany, Italy and elsewhere, to the large mining communities around Tuzla in Bosnia.

The campaign has issued the following call for solidarity: "Being squashed out of existence by the expansionist Serbia and Croatia, multi-ethnic Bosnia must not be transformed into a few ghettos as the United Nations would have it.

The UN and EEC, far from helping Bosnians, is complicit in mass murder. The UN arms embargo is only effective against Bosnia, not imposed against Croatia, and laughed at by a Serbia already armed to the teeth. The EC has closed its doors to asylum seekers from the war-stricken area [...]

The European workers movement must stand up and be counted! We urgently appeal to working people in Europe to support this convey, raise donations in their workplaces and communities, and join the convey with their own aid."

For more information and to send donations, contact "Workers Aid" at PO Box 30, London SE15, Britain or phone (081) 694 9799. ★

## BRITAIN

THE third Socialist Outlook Summer School will take place from Saturday, August 28 to Friday, September 3.

Take a step back from the class struggle. Enjoy six days of education, debate and fun in scenic North Wales. The mountains of Snowdonia and the beaches of Ynys Mon are nearby.

This year's main theme is women's liberation with many different workshops on such issues as the family, socialist alternatives to the family, domestic violence, child abuse, women's revolutionary history, women and the revolutionary party, classic texts and much, much more...

The cost is £95/855FF waged and £35/315FF unwaged. For registration or further information, contact Socialist Outlook Summer School c/o 39 Conway Rd., London, N15 3BB Britain. ★