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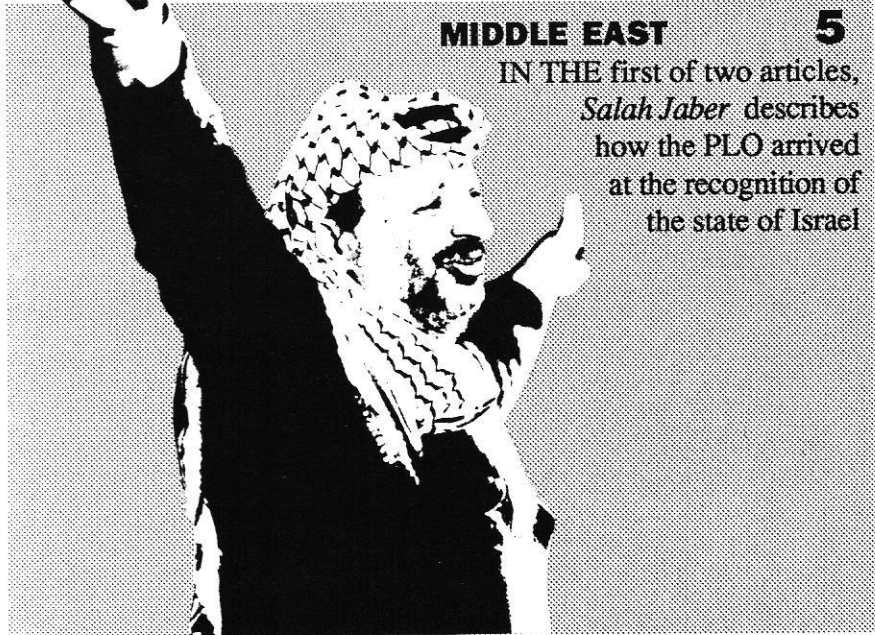
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Moscow compromises with Estonians

THE ELECTIONS for the new Soviet parliament on March 26 seem to be shaping up in the Baltic republics into a serious test of the Communist Party's to ride the winds of liberalization. In one by-election already in Lithuania, a candidate of the local People's Front, Vaisvila, won 62% of the vote, leaving his Communist Party opponent with only 15%.

In an article in the January 26 *International Herald Tribune*, Michael Dobbs quoted the successful candidate as saying: "The party is panicking because they think they might lose." The Lithuanian CP chief, Algirdas Brauzaskas, whose appointment last fall had aroused great hopes, was said to be suffering from disillusionment created when he used this popularity to prevent the republic's parliament from falling in behind the demands for sovereignty raised by the Estonian legislature.

"That tactical success is costing him votes," Dobbs wrote. "In order to recoup the political ground lost to Sajudis [the Lithuanian People's Front], Lithuanian party leaders have now promised to support a totally revised version of the Lithuanian constitution, including the controversial sovereignty clause"

GERRY FOLEY

ALONG WITH Armenia, tiny Estonia has posed the sharpest challenge to the prevailing relationship between Moscow and the formally sovereign republics. Its example is particularly important for its neighboring Baltic republics, Lithuania and Latvia. The Estonian people number barely a million. They still constitute about 60 per cent of the population of the republic, and speak a non-Indo-European language closely related to Finnish, which Russians tend to consider unlearnable.

The Estonian parliament aroused a violent reaction from the central authorities by demanding the right to decide whether or not all-Union laws were to be applied in the republic and that Estonian was to be the language of the republic. It seems also that a considerable part of the Estonian language press slipped out of the control of the party authorities. Attacks on it were contained in an article by republic parliament deputy Koltakov in *Pravda* of November 26 ("Why I voted against" [that is, against

the sovereignty resolution of the Estonian Supreme Soviet]) and in one by the chief editor of *Eesti Kommunist* in *Pravda* of December 3.¹

For the moment, the confrontation between the Estonian parliament and Moscow seems to have ended in a compromise. The Estonian linguistic law adopted offered extra guarantees to Russian speakers. And on January 16 *Pravda*, for the first time, opened its columns to a direct answer to its attacks on representatives of national movements and national demands. It was a half-page article on page 3 by M. L. Bronshtein, a member of the Estonian Academy of Science. (In fact, the entire page was devoted to three articles on the question, putting Bronshtein's piece in the context of a general discussion of the problem.)

Bronshtein explained that the decisions of the Estonian parliament had to be understood as a means of maintaining the CP's political control.

"Now I want to take up the decisions of

the special session of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR, which caused such serious disagreements....Let us be frank, a series of points in the draft changes in the constitution of the USSR were seen by the majority of the population of the republic as a rejection of the sovereign status of the republics inscribed in the present constitution and the line of the Nineteenth All-Union Communist Party Conference on strengthening economic and political democracy....

"Justified fears of Estonian population"

"There was a rapid and strong reaction. And the Communist Party of Estonia would have been isolated from the overwhelming majority of the population, would not have fulfilled its task of consolidating all the healthy forces and isolating extremist elements raising the demand for separation from the Soviet Union, if it had not taken into consideration the justified fears of the population. In this extremely sharp and tense situation in the republic, certain changes were made in the constitution of the Estonian SSR to reinforce the sovereignty of the republic in the economic (primarily control over natural resources) and political spheres."

The sovereignty of the republics, he went on to explain, raised uncertain unresolved constitutional problems, which is hardly surprising because it has not existed in reality since the bureaucracy seized political power.

"Most of the disputes were tied up with the change in Article 74 of the constitution of the Estonian SSR, formulated as follows: 'Laws and other regulations of the USSR will go into effect on the territory of the Estonian SSR after being registered according to procedure established by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR.' This decision conflicted with the present constitution of the USSR. But here, I cannot fail to note the problems that exist. What is to be done if a disagreement arises between all-Union and republic organs? Not push the thing, as some irrational hot-heads proposed, to the point of threatening to leave the Union. Some constitutional form of reconciling the two is necessary."

Bronshtein responded to the outcry in the Soviet central press against the demands raised for limiting immigration into Estonia.

"Try to understand the psychology of the older population of our republic, the Estonians. The land on which their ancestors have lived for thousands of years has been threatened by ecological disaster (and the threat would have become a reality, if the corresponding all-Union minister had begun the planned phosphate mining). As a result of the extensive development of industry and the resulting importing of labor

1. See IV 155, January 23, 1989.

from various regions of the country, the specific weight of the Estonians in the population of the country has been declining, from 90% down to 60%. And if this trend continues, we can predict exactly when the older population will become a minority on their own territory. The range of the use of the Estonian language has been steadily declining. When the Estonian people decided to link their fate with that of the Soviet Union in 1940, they could hardly have expected these circumstances."

In this last formulation, it is hard to know whether Bronshtein was being deliberately ironic. Unlike the case of other republics, such as Ukraine for example, there was nothing voluntary about Estonia's union with the USSR. It was simply occupied. Resistance, real and potential, was crushed, resulting in the death, deportation or exile of one quarter of the Estonian people, mainly in the most energetic age groups. (References to this in the Estonian-language press are one of the things that have come under sharpest attack in *Pravda*, for example.)

Ecological threat from mining projects

The recent Estonian restiveness was sparked by a TV broadcast in the fall of 1986 that revealed plans for developing phosphate mines in the northern part of the republic. This scheme threatened to pollute the ground water in a third of the republic, a region inhabited by a 400,000 people. Oil-shale mining in Estonia for the benefit of Leningrad has already ruined large stretches of countryside and had a disastrous effect on agriculture. The ministry authorities at first denied the phosphate mining scheme, but as a result of *glasnost*, it was possible for the Estonian journalist Juhan Aare to get the facts out.²

Bronshtein explained: "It has to be understood that the tension that arose between the republic and all-union organs is not the result of some plot by 'bourgeois nationalists' or anti-*perestroika* forces (although they might make advantage of it for their aims)."

He chided the central press, especially *Pravda*, quite sharply for one-sided and tendentious reporting of the Estonian developments.

"In *Pravda*, as in the rest of the central press, the full text of the decisions of the special session of the Supreme Soviet was not published. Place was not found in the pages of the papers for an article by a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR explaining 'Why I voted for' (it was published only in the republic press). But in fact there were many more deputies who voted for."

This note in the high-priestly *Pravda* is quite startling. ★

Interview with Estonian writers

"We are not so extreme"

REPRESENTATIVES of the Estonian writers' union held the following discussion with Göran Jacobsson, a reporter for *Internationales*, paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International, at the end of 1988.

THE ESTONIAN writers' union is a part of the People's Front, the most popular mass organization in Estonia. "We are something of a catalyst for the People's Front," Vladimir Beekman said. He was referring to a meeting that the writers' union organized last April 1-2. Journalists, architects, and in fact a large part of the Estonian intelligentsia, also participated in it. It is said that he was a Stalinist before. Today, however, he is a strong supporter of the People's Front.

The writers' union meeting demanded national sovereignty and economic independence. In the two following weeks, people constantly called the union to give their support and ask what they could do to contribute. On April 14, the People's Front was formed.

"It is the task of the intelligentsia to put forward this sort of demand, otherwise we would not be of much use," Beekman said.

Earlier, the relations between the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party and the writers' union were strained. Beekman explained that the CC is no longer trying to impose its view on the writers. To the contrary, more and more the CC is asking the writers' union for its opinion.

Vladimir Beekman has great confidence in Vaino Väljas, who was recently elected leader of the Estonian Communist Party. "Väljas was formerly a bit uncomfortable, since he was sent off to Venezuela and Nicaragua as ambassador. He has imagination and a positive attitude to change."

The writers' union has 188 members. Most of them live in the republic's capital, Tallin, or in the university city of Tartu. You can be a member if you have two books published. In Estonia, there is a long

series of subsidies for writers. Most of them are administered by the writers' union. "Half of our members live by their pens," Beekman explained.

There is a knock on the door of Vladimir Beekman's office. Jaan Kross, Teet Kallas, Paul-Eerik Rummo and Anu Saläär come in. Now nearly all of Estonia's most popular writers are present. We talk about freedom of expression. "We have expressed ourselves up to here. We have nothing more to say," says Paul-Eerik Rummo.

But they say that an article on Solzhenitsyn has been totally censored by the writers' union's own publication. This was the first intervention in a year. None of them can say what this censorship means. Is the situation tightening up?

None of them believe in the possibility of military intervention. "We are so flexible," Anu Saläär. "As long as the troops are in the Caucasus, there is no danger for us," Jaan Kross adds.

Paul-Eerik continued: "This is a different situation than in Poland. We have a centrist position. We are not so extreme. We are getting a hearing for our point of view throughout the Soviet Union."

"Of course, Stalinists and Brezhnevites are never going to accept us." Teet Kallas chimes in: "They will never voluntarily give up power."

"We have to wait until they are tired," snorts Jaan Kross. "Sclerosis is doing its job."

"Support for the People's Front is enormous"

"The support for the People's Front is enormous. In the Estonian republic, there are 1.1 million people qualified to vote. The People's Front collected 900,000 signatures in support of its program. Of these, 150,000 were non-Estonians resident in the republic."

"Russians and Russia are different things. Here in Estonia, we have six or seven democratic or pro-*perestroika* groups. In Moscow alone, there are over 300 groups that meet and discuss," Teet Kallas said. "They are more philosophical and not so active. They don't get anything done."

Freedom of expression is one thing. The writers' union is also demanding economic independence. The economic reality is quite another problem.

Some 90 per cent of industry in Estonia belongs to Moscow. The writers explained that the plants have their own workforces. They take raw materials from other parts of the Soviet Union and ship the finished products out of Estonia. "We have no need for such factories," they said.

"A commission came from Moscow to reassure us," Paul Eerik explains. "They said that 55 per cent of industry is going to belong to us and that 50 per cent of the income will stay here. They all laugh."

"It doesn't seem that we are going to get that." ★

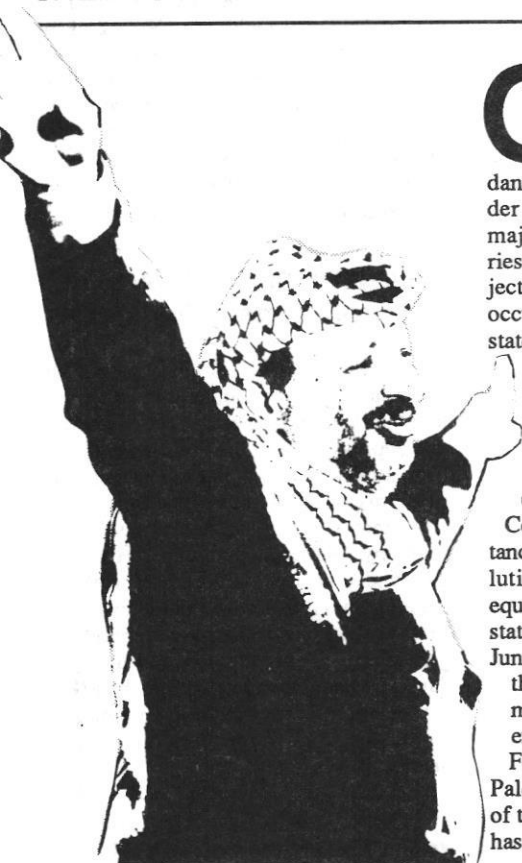
Where is the PLO going? (Part I)

The long march... backwards

ON NOVEMBER 15, 1988, Yasser Arafat proclaimed the "institution of the state of Palestine". The president of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) made his announcement at the end of the nineteenth session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the broadest leading body of the PLO.

It came just three weeks before the first anniversary of the heroic and still uninterrupted uprising of the Palestinian masses in Gaza and the West Bank; it came also three-and-a-half months after the official renunciation by Jordan's King Hussein of any claim on the West Bank — a territory that his kingdom had annexed following the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948 and which was subsequently occupied by Israel in 1967.¹ The PNC's proclamation of the Palestinian state was doubly necessary.²

SALAH JABER



ON THE ONE HAND, this proclamation was necessary to fill the juridical vacuum created by the brusque decision of the Jordanian monarch. It was also needed in order to reply to the expectations of the majority of inhabitants in the two territories of the uprising, whose immediate objective is to free them from the Zionist occupation and to set up an independent state. However, although the proclamation itself was indispensable, it was accompanied by other decisions that were absolutely not.

The most remarkable was the explicit acceptance of Resolution 242 (1967) of the United Nations Security Council. This, coupled with the acceptance of the UN General Assembly's Resolution 181 (1947 — see box p.7), was equivalent to the recognition of the Zionist state in the frontiers established before the June 1967 war. This decision is contrary to the beliefs and sentiments of the vast majority of Palestinians in Palestine or in exile.

For the refugees — that is, most of the Palestinian people — expelled from 80% of their territory on which the Zionist state has established itself since 1948, the rejection

of such recognition goes without saying. But this view is equally shared by the vast majority of those living in the West Bank (of whom less than half are refugees from 1948). This was shown in a poll conducted among them on the eve of the PNC's last session³: 98.6% of those questioned approved the creation of an independent state of Palestine, but 78% said they were against the creation of such a state if the precondition for it was the recognition of the state of Israel.

So if this decision did not meet the aspirations of Palestinians, it nevertheless certainly replied to other expectations. Firstly, those of the reactionary Arab regimes, notably Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, who over the past few years have never let up the pressure for a move in this direction. Second, those of the Soviet bureaucracy, whose current chief was careful to make his counsels public during his meeting with Arafat in Moscow last April. Third, those of imperialist Europe, in particular the French government acting in concert with Mubarak's Egypt. And finally, and most importantly, the US administration who, after obliging the PLO leader to spell certain things out, considered themselves satisfied, and decided on December 14 to start a direct dialogue with the Palestinian organization.

A new and major political turn

Without doubt, the PLO has just made a new and major political turn. In order to measure its significance and consequences, it has to be situated in the long trajectory of which it is the outcome for the time being.

The PLO was created in 1964 by the first summit of heads of the Arab states, meeting in Cairo in January. In Jerusalem at the end of May that same year, the first session of the PNC was held, whose members were designated under the control of the Arab states. It was inaugurated by King Hussein. The PNC was then composed essentially of representatives of the bourgeoisie and notables, including religious figures. An army (the PLA) was founded, linked to the armies of each of the states where its brigades were constituted.

A National Charter was also adopted, reflecting the Palestinian and Arab nationalist consensus. It stipulated that "the partition of Palestine in 1947 and the creation of Israel have absolutely no validity, whatever time has elapsed since then, because they are contrary to the will of the Palestinian people and to its natural rights to its home-

1. In the second part of this article, which will be published in the next issue of *IV*, we will explain why the recognition of the state of Palestine by the world's governments should be demanded.

2. After 1948, the Gaza Strip passed under Egyptian administration without being formally annexed.

3. *Al-Hayat* (London), November 12-13. Published in the journal of the Sons of the Country Movement (Abna El-Balad), printed in Nazareth: *Al-Raia*, November 25, 1988.

land." On the other hand, this Charter excluded the Palestinian territories not occupied by Israel — the West Bank and Gaza — from the PLO's sphere of sovereignty. In the Charter, the liberation of Palestine was envisaged as the responsibility of "the entire Arab nation, governments and peoples, the Arab Palestinian people being in the front rank." Lastly, vis-à-vis Jewish inhabitants in the Israeli state the Charter only proposed a distinction between Jews of Palestinian origin entitled to live in Palestine and the others — that is, the overwhelming majority, for whom it offered no perspective.

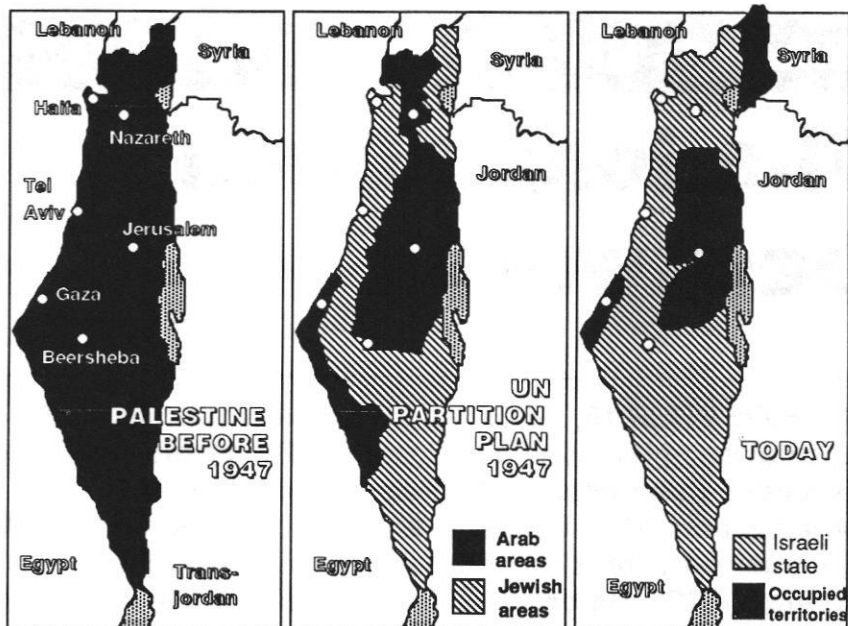
El Fatah profited from wave of radicalization

From 1964 on, however, the PLO was challenged by diverse Palestinian factions and by the left of the Ba'ath party.⁴ The criticisms they made, which were entirely correct, centred on two basic themes relating to the autonomy of the Organization. First was the method by which the PNC was designated, to which they counterposed the demand for direct elections by Palestinians of their representatives. Second was the nature of the PLA, in place of which they put forward the project of an army independent of the Arab states.

The idea of autonomous and immediate Palestinian armed struggle was concretized by a petty bourgeois group whose nationalism was strongly mixed with Islam, El Fatah. Launching its first commando raid against Israel on January 1, 1965, before all the other groups, it won a great deal of prestige. Such prestige that, when the Arab armies suffered their crushing defeat by the Zionist state in June 1967, El Fatah was the best placed to profit from the extraordinary wave of radicalization that swept the Palestinian people, extending to the young people in the countries where they were concentrated, as well as to the other Arab countries. It was under the pressure of this radicalization that, on September 1, 1967, the Arab Summit in Khartoum adopted the famous three "no's" in relation to Israel: "No to peace, no to recognition, no to negotiations". Less than three months later, Egypt and Jordan betrayed this triple pledge by approving UN Resolution 242.

Unable to contain the Palestinian radicalization, much less confront it, the Arab states set to work to take it over. Faced with the emergence of a far-left Palestinian current with the founding of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in November 1967, and a Ba'athist current, Egypt and Saudi Arabia chose to support Yasser Arafat's El Fatah. Egypt offered them control of the PLO, which was largely in its hands. Saudi Arabia started showering petrodollars on the Palestinian movement, which very quickly had at its disposal money that no liberation movement had ever dreamed of possessing.

6 The fourth session of the PNC, meeting



in Cairo in July 1968, amended the National Charter according to the wishes of El Fatah, so as to prepare the way for its integration into the PLO. The Charter was made more radical, but in terms of the ideological limitations of El Fatah: "The armed struggle is the only road for the liberation of Palestine". Now it applied to the whole of Palestine, including the West Bank and Gaza, all the more because these territories fell to the Zionist occupation in 1967. The accent was put on an "armed revolution" of the Palestinian people that the Arab states had a duty to support, notably by giving material aid.

Belief in a "democratic" solution

The nationalist maximalism that characterized El Fatah at the time shows up in the Charter's new Article 21 that "rejects all solutions substituting for the total liberation of Palestine". It combined with an explicit rejection of any inter-Palestinian class-struggle perspective, or of political struggle against the Arab regimes. This socio-political conservatism, a meeting ground between the bourgeois PLO and the petty bourgeois El Fatah, was the essential reason for the support given to El Fatah by most of the Arab states. "The PLO will cooperate with all the Arab countries", stipulates Article 27 of the Charter; it "will not intervene in the internal affairs of any Arab state".

On the eve of the fifth session of the PNC, in January 1969, El Fatah adopted a complementary platform that it got the PLO to ratify. It "categorically rejected" Resolution 242 and put forward, for the first time, the programmatic perspective of a democratic state "all the citizens of which, regardless of their religion, will enjoy equal rights". It was undoubtedly a step forward in relation to the Charter, but its

limitations were obvious: belief in the possibility of a "democratic" (bourgeois) solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question; of a solution in the limited territorial framework of Palestine (which meant, in the most generous hypothesis, the cohabitation of more or less equal numbers of Arabs and Jews in a Palestinian state); and, finally, a solution that only envisaged the Israelis as a religious community, ignoring the national character of the new society created in Palestine by Zionist colonization.

When the fifth session of the PNC met a month later in Cairo, it sealed the integration of El Fatah into the PLO, El Fatah taking the leadership with the blessing of the Arab guardians. It was the fusion of a petty bourgeois movement, in the process of bureaucratic and bourgeois degeneration under the impetus of a corruption accelerated by Arab petrodollars, with a bourgeois institution where the Palestinian bourgeoisie was largely and directly represented.

Organization closest to revolutionary Marxism

For a while, the PFLP, a left, petty bourgeois nationalist organization, refused to join the PLO, challenging its undemocratic makeup. Boycotting the PNC, where it had been offered some minor positions, the PFLP organized 40 mass meetings among Palestinians in Jordan, presenting them as so many "national councils". However, they ended up joining the PLO, while demanding that it be transformed into a parity front of the Palestinian armed-struggle organizations. Subsequently, and until this day, they demanded in vain that the PNC's composition be revised by taking into account the real representativity of its members.

4. This faction was ousted from power in Syria and repressed by Hafez El-Assad in November 1970.

Also in February 1969, a left split led by Nayef Hawatmeh left George Habash's PFLP to form the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP, today the DFLP). During its first two years of existence, the DFLP was the Palestinian organization closest to revolutionary Marxism, not hesitating even to quote Trotsky, but not without eclecticism and theoretical confusion. It put forward the programmatic perspective of a revolutionary socialist solution to the Palestinian question in the framework of a socialist, federal Arab state, a unitary Palestinian state where Jews would enjoy the right to "develop their national culture". Although stopping short of developing a consistent internationalist programme such as the one adopted by Trotskyist groups in the region in 1974⁵, the theses of the DFLP were far in advance of other tendencies in the Palestinian resistance.

Starting from an approach inspired by the theory of permanent revolution, the DFLP criticized the Palestinian and Arab policies of El Fatah, notably its conception of "national unity" and its principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries". It explained how harmful this principle was, even from a narrow Palestinian-centrist point of view, since the Palestinian resistance was developing on the territories of Arab states that did not hesitate to "interfere" in its affairs.

Crushing defeat in Jordan 1970-71

As for Palestinian "national unity", the DFLP noted that this was established "under the leadership of feudal lords and millionaires... up to the PNC, which grouped together many representatives of the Palestinian reaction led by a clique of millionaires, bankers and big businessmen, to which were added the representatives of the fighting organizations after the fourth session". This radical critique of the PNC did not prevent the DFLP, in its revolutionary phase, from using it and other PLO bodies as a propaganda platform.

El Fatah's hegemony over the Palestinian movement and its political line of rightist self-limitation led to the crushing defeat of the movement in Jordan in 1970-71, in spite of the exceptionally favourable conditions at the outset. The Palestinian left has explained at length the right-wing's responsibility for this defeat, suffered under the double aegis of "non-interference" and "unity of Arab ranks against Zionism".

The scale of the catastrophe — a massacre of Palestinians and their vanguard and the loss of the main mass base of the Palestinian resistance — found expression in a rightward slide of the entire movement and the retreat to Lebanon. Starting in 1972, Hawatmeh's DFLP turned progressively and definitively towards an alignment with the pro-Soviet Stalinist current. But this was small fry in comparison to the qualita-

tive completion of the double degeneration (bureaucratic and bourgeois) of El Fatah, which became so fully integrated in the PLO that it became hard to tell the two apparatuses apart.

From this time on, we explained that the El Fatah/PLO had become a "state apparatus without a state looking for a state at the least cost".⁶ A report on the "PLO's structures"⁷, edited by "Yasser Arafat's office head", after describing at length the different legislative, executive and judicial bodies of the Palestinian organization, including its courts, prisons and departments as various as those of any state administration, concluded: "The PLO differs in nature from other organizations who have represented, or who still represent, their respective peoples in their struggle for national liberation. The PLO is not a political party, it is bigger than a liberation front. It is an institution with a state-like nature."

Denunciation of peaceful coexistence perspective

This transformation of the El Fatah/PLO inevitably demanded a programmatic adaptation. The maximalism of the early years, suited to its social base of refugees in the camps — an impoverished and marginalized population — was no longer suitable to the enormous bureaucratic apparatus and its summit with their considerable privileges. A shortcut had to be found to provide the state apparatus with a territory, even if at the price of an accommodation with imperialism and the Zionist state. The DFLP prepared the ground politically: aligning with Moscow — which had always recognized the "legitimacy" of Israel and had until then therefore considered the Palestinian organizations as dangerous leftists — they were the first to propose a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

They were fought by the rest of the Palestinian left: the left of El Fatah and the PFLP. These currents denounced with just cause the implications of this project, that is the perspective of a negotiated settlement and, in spite of the denials of the DFLP, of peaceful coexistence with the Zionist state. In short, a way of eliminating the Palestinian question, which is a long way from being reduced to just 20% of Palestine occupied in 1967. But the maximalism of these same currents prevented them from formulating counter proposals with a transitional content, such as "the total and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli

5. Resolution on the "Arab revolution" published in an IMG "Red Pamphlet" (London). It foresaw, after the destruction of the Zionist state, in the framework of the right to self-determination of "the Jewish national minority in Palestine, including their right to form an independent state on a part of Palestinian land". This was under the proviso that the exercise of this right in no way harms the Arab Palestinian people.

6. See *Inprecor* (English edition) 19, February 13, 1975.

7. French translation published in *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes* 21, Autumn 1986.

United Nations Resolutions 181, 242 and 338

Resolution 181: Adopted on November 29, 1947, by the UN General Assembly, it divided Palestine into two states on the eve of the British retreat from this territory under its Mandate. The Jews, mostly immigrants who had arrived during the previous 15 years, at that time constituted one-third of the country's population, and only possessed 6% of the area. Nevertheless, the Jewish state obtained more than 55% of Palestinian territory, on which half the population was Arab! The Palestinians, supported by the Arab states, rejected this partition. After the British withdrawal in May 1948, the first Arab-Israeli war broke out during which the Zionists seized in total nearly 80% of the territory of Palestine, the overwhelming majority of Arab inhabitants being forced to flee, never to be allowed to return. In June 1967, during a new Arab-Israeli war, the Zionist state seized the remainder of Palestine (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), as well as the Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Resolution 242: Adopted on November 22, 1967, by the Security Council, it proposed that, in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal "from occupied territories" in 1967 (not all the territories), there would be a "termination of claims or states of belligerency", a recognition of all the states in the region and their "right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force" — including via "the establishment of demilitarized zones". The Palestinian people were not even mentioned. The resolution was content to advocate "a just settlement of the refugee problem".

Resolution 338: Adopted by the Security Council on October 22, 1973, to stop the Arab-Israeli war triggered off 16 days previously. It confirmed Resolution 242 and decided that "negotiations be begun between the interested parties under the appropriate auspices and with the goal of establishing a just and lasting peace". ★

army from the territories occupied in 1967".⁸

El Fatah/PLO seals alliance with Moscow

However, the El Fatah/PLO remained dependant on its social base grouped in the Lebanese camps, without which it would lose its usefulness in the eyes of its Arab sponsors. In order to adapt its official programme it was necessary to wait for propitious political circumstances. They were furnished by the October 1973 war launched by Sadat's Egypt, and described by the Arab and Palestinian revolutionary left as a "war to open the way for a settlement". The so-called Arab victory in October gave Sadat the political means for embarking on a course that would lead to Camp David five years later. The first initiative in this direction was the Geneva Conference, under the auspices of the US and the USSR, which opened up negotiations for a settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The El Fatah/PLO had to put itself in a position to profit from an eventual settlement. In expectation of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, in direct competition with the PLO was King Hussein, who laid claim to the same territory. So it was necessary to proclaim the demand for an independent Palestinian government in this territory. However, pressure of the mass base — the 1948 refugees — was such, at the time, that the new programme had to be formulated with extreme delicacy so as not to appear to be betraying the cause. The result was the "ten-point programme" of the June 1974 PNC, a revolutionary programme in comparison to the PLO's recent positions.

Reaffirming the "strategic objective" of the "democratic state" and the rejection of Resolution 242, the 1974 programme stipulated that the PLO would establish "a national, independent and fighting government, in any liberated part of the Palestinian territory". It added: "The PLO will fight against any project for a Palestinian entity whose price is the recognition (of Israel), peace, secure borders, the renunciation of our national rights" and so on. In addition, against the Jordanian butcher of the Palestinian people, the 1974 programme formulated the objective "of installing in Jordan a national democratic government, closely linked to the Palestinian entity, which will be created thanks to our struggle".

However, beyond these good resolutions, the inter-Palestinian debate became concentrated on the question of the Geneva Conference. The PFLP correctly denounced it as being incompatible with the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Nevertheless, the leadership of El Fatah/PLO openly looked for ways to participate in it, sealing an alliance with Moscow that had been made pos-

United Leadership of the Intifada Four-point programme from Communiqué 26, September, 1988.

- 1** Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian and Arab [Syria, Lebanon] territories occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem;
- 2** Rescinding all measures of annexation and the like, and elimination of the colonies established in the occupied territories;
- 3** Placing the occupied Palestinian territories under the auspices of the UN in order to give a guarantee to the masses of the Palestinian people. This should not last for longer than several months, and should prepare the way so that the Palestinian people can freely exercise their right to self-determination;
- 4** Holding the International Conference with full powers under the auspices of the UN and on the basis of its resolutions relating to the Palestinian question. [Point 4 refers to the resolutions of the General Assembly underlining the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and not Resolution 242, which does not even mention this people.] ★

Source: Al-Raia (Nazareth), September 30, 1988.

sible by the PLO's turn. Condemning this "historic deviation", the PFLP organized a "Rejection front against capitulationist solutions" and withdrew from the leading bodies of the PLO.

PLO recognized by UN General Assembly

Having become acceptable to Moscow and for the legitimacy defined by the United Nations, in October 1974 the PLO was recognized by the UN General Assembly as "the representative of the Palestinian people" by a big majority that included the vote of the French. A few days later, the Rabat summit of Arab heads of state recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". The Arab states had opted for the PLO against King Hussein, whose narrow interests — that had temporarily been submerged — did not correspond to theirs. The Arab states needed the PLO, as was clearly explained by George Habash in a long interview/balance sheet given to the organ of his Front, *Al-Hadaf*, in December 1987:

"The policy of settlement has been followed by the rightist leadership hegemonic in the PLO for a long time, particularly after 1973, and it continues the same today.... This policy was a cover for the official Arab capitulation. The reactionary Arab regimes, incapable of confronting the Zionist entity, waited until the leadership of the PLO gave them the chance by proclaiming the possibility of coexistence with this entity in order to commit themselves to a defeatist peace with it, as the Egyptian regime had done...."

"The alliance between the Palestinian right leading the PLO and the Arab right is an organic alliance. There are many reasons for this of which the main one is, certainly, the need of the Arab right for a Palestinian cover for its capitulatory politics. This alliance meant, of course, that the Palestinian right got a great deal of support, both financial and in armaments, which contributed to tipping the balance in its

favour."

At the beginning of 1977 — having missed the second historic opportunity for the Palestinian movement after Jordan, offered at the onset of the Lebanese civil war in 1975-76 — the PLO leadership accelerated its rightist course: in February it made an official reconciliation with the Jordanian butcher and adopted a relatively watered-down programme at the March PNC, which, of course, did not mention any task in Jordan. The 1977 programme explicitly demanded that the PLO should "participate, independently and as an equal partner, in all conferences, meetings and international attempts to discuss the Palestinian question and the Arab-Zionist conflict". However, it specified that the aim was to liberate the occupied territories "without peace with, or recognition of, Israel". The only positive consequence of the 1974 turn still reflected in the 1977 text was the greater attention given to mass mobilization in the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO leadership had understood that it was on this that its project for a Palestinian state rested.

Sadat begins direct negotiations with Israel

In November of the same year, 1977, Egyptian president Sadat began direct negotiations with the Zionist government with his famous visit to Israel. Under the patronage of the United States, they led to the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 and later to the Egypt-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.

In reaction, a "Steadfastness front" was set up, in which the PLO found itself side by side with Algeria, Libya, Syria and South Yemen. Under pressure from this Front, the most reactionary Arab regimes broke with Egypt against their will. Because of Jordan's scheming to get involved

8. A demand that figured in the 1974 programme of Trotskyists in the region, linked to the perspective of a "Palestinian or Jordanian/Palestinian government, as that of a national revolutionary workers' and peasants' government" in these territories.

in the negotiated settlement discussions opened by Sadat, the "Steadfastness front" — including the PLO — boycotted the Arab summit meeting in Amman in November 1980. The influence of the Iranian revolution made itself felt. The "Rejection front", led by the PFLP, returned to the leading bodies of the PLO in 1981.

The invasion of Lebanon by Israel, in June 1982, was a fatal blow to the relative rectification of the PLO's policies during the previous five years. But while the leadership of the El Fatah/PLO, after the evacuation from Jordan in 1971 needed more than two years to make its political turn, it undertook its new right turn immediately after the evacuation of Beirut.

On September 1, 1982, while the last contingent of fighters was leaving Beirut, Ronald Reagan threw out a line to the PLO leadership by proclaiming a peace plan that foresaw the establishment of "self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan" after an Israeli withdrawal. Calling on the Palestinians to recognize Israel and its "right to a secure future", and lauding the merits of Resolution 242 as a basis for negotiation, Reagan added: "I wish fervently that the Palestinians and Jordan would seize this opportunity".

Prevailing climate of defeat

The US president's wish was soon granted. On September 20, while the blood of the Sabra and Chatila martyrs was still not dry, King Hussein called on the PLO to discuss with him the establishment of a future Jordanian-Palestinian "confederation". Arafat arrived in Amman on October 9, in response to an invitation from the king. A few months earlier, such a gesture would have been unthinkable. Nevertheless, a climate of defeat prevailed, while the dispersal of the combative Palestinian rank-and-file to the four corners of the Arab world left the PLO chief with a free hand.

Meanwhile, Arafat wanted the PNC to ratify his new policy. Meeting in Algiers in

February 1983, the Council adopted a political resolution that marked a new slide to the right for the PLO, in spite of the efforts of the nationalist factions and the left to tone down its formulations.

PNC won over to support Brezhnev plan

By way of a compromise, the resolution stated that "future relations with Jordan must be established on a confederal basis between two independent states", at the same time explicitly rejecting the idea of a common delegation with Jordan (whilst not being explicitly mentioned, this meant a joint delegation to negotiations for a settlement). Skilfully, the Arafat leadership won the PNC to emphatic support for the Brezhnev plan, published a few days after Reagan's. They knew perfectly well that the PLO left could not oppose it — neither could the DFLP, aligned with Moscow for a long time, or the PFLP which, since the beginning of the 1980s, had followed slowly but surely in the footsteps of the former, its pace accelerating after 1982.

The Brezhnev plan already contained all the ingredients that made such a sensation at the PNC in November 1988. It affirmed Israel's "right" to existence and security, advocating peace between Israel and its neighbours, including a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. All this was to be realized by an "international conference on the Middle East" under the aegis of the big powers — "the permanent members of the UN's Security Council".

In fact, Arafat acted more in the framework of the Reagan plan chosen by King Hussein. This demanded that he adhere to the principle of a common delegation — the inclusion of Palestinian delegates in a Jordanian delegation — to the peace negotiations. On this point — which the PNC had already rejected — the El Fatah chief ran up against the veto of the Palestinian left and Syria (whose Golan Heights were occupied in 1967 by Israel, but were not even mentioned in Reagan's speech), and with a section of his own movement. He

decided to fight it out with all these opposing forces.

Evacuating the north of Lebanon after battles with his Syrian-backed opponents, Arafat went directly to Egypt to meet President Hosni Mubarak, thereby breaking the official Arab boycott of the Egyptian regime that had begun after the signing of the Camp David peace treaty. George Habash demanded — vainly! — that Arafat be deposed. Following on from this, the El Fatah/PLO organized the seventeenth session of the PNC, again in Amman, in November 1984.

This session was boycotted by all the other Palestinian organizations, with the exception of two tiny pro-Iraqi groups. It was opened by King Hussein, who had already inaugurated the very first session of the PNC twenty years previously. Meanwhile, he had massacred some tens of thousands of Palestinians. The 1984 PNC ratified Arafat's policy — both "joint action" with Jordan as well as relations with Egypt. In February 1985, the PLO chief concluded the Amman agreement with King Hussein. It involved a "common delegation" to the "peace negotiations" in the framework of an "international conference" on the basis of UN resolutions "including Security Council resolutions" (an allusion to Resolution 242). The accord also foresaw the establishment of an "Arab confederation between the Jordanian and Palestinian states".

King Hussein puts Amman accord on ice

This honeymoon did not last long. Parallel to this the Jordanian monarch was finalizing a plan with his old Labour Zionist friends, who were back in business in Israel under the leadership of Shimon Peres, to "share out functions" in the West Bank. Labour are partisans of an agreement with Jordan and of a partial restitution of the territories occupied in 1967, but they did not want anything to do with the PLO. Judging that the latter had become impotent, and using the pretext of its hesitation to openly and explicitly recognize Resolution 242 — an indispensable condition for any peace negotiations with Israel, Hussein suddenly sent the PLO packing in February 1986. He decided unilaterally to "freeze" the Amman agreement.

Following this total and lamentable failure of its policy, the leadership of the El Fatah/PLO came under growing pressure — including inside its own movement — to back-pedal and to make up with the groups aligned with the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, for an entire year they tried to reestablish links with the Jordanian government through the intervention of their allies, the Saudi, Iraqi and Egyptian regimes. When these initiatives failed, the PLO resigned itself to accepting the good offices of Moscow for the "reunification" of the PLO — that is,



the reintegration of the PFLP and the DFLP in the unified body.

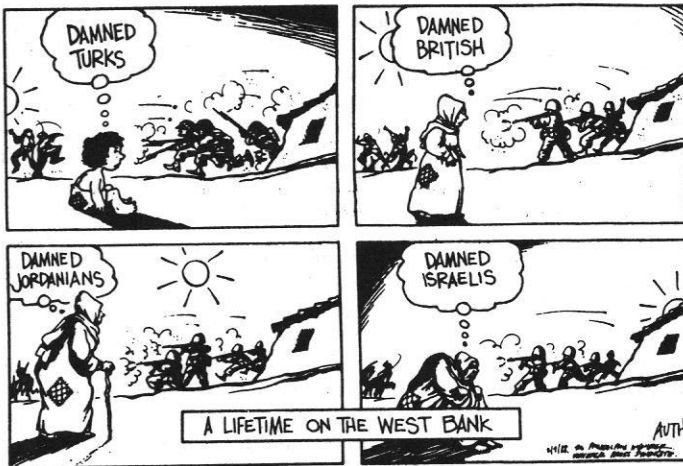
The "reunification" was sealed by the PNC in Algiers, in April 1987. However, the nationalist factions linked to the Syrian regime kept their distance, including the dissident wing of El Fatah. This meant that, despite the Palestinian right's very negative balance-sheet, there was not purely and simply a return to the positions previous to Arafat's Jordanian adventure. Rather, in the framework of a relationship of forces that was even more favourable to the right than at the 1983 PNC, the outcome was a new compromise including new concessions by a left led to do this by Moscow. The most radical faction of this left, the PFLP, is ending up progressively lining up with the "homeland of socialism". (According to George Habash's formulations, this is the final phase of the "transformation" of his Front from a "petty bourgeois" to a "proletarian" party.)

So, on the two key disputed points in 1983-86 — relations with Jordan and Egypt — the PNC's 1987 resolution virtually left the leadership of El Fatah/PLO with a free hand, while noting the obsolescence of the Amman Accord, repudiated by King Hussein. On the other hand, the resolution reaffirmed "the unrelenting rejection of Resolution 242", while reiterating support for an "International Peace Conference in the Middle East...with the participation of the permanent members of the UN Security Council". In exchange for its good offices, Moscow obtained the following clarification: the PNC "stresses that the International Conference must be invested with full powers".

Under the joint pressure of its Arab clients — Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia — since 1985 Washington had actually abandoned direct references to the Camp David accords as a framework for a settlement in order to take back on board the principle of the International Conference. Shimon Peres had followed suit. Only the Likud continued to cling to the Camp David accords, which had been signed by their historic chief, Begin, himself.

Period of rupture with the Palestinian left

The 1985 Arafat-Hussein agreement, in the period of the rupture with the whole of the Palestinian left and icy relations with Moscow, included the principle of the Conference. But the absence of any precision regarding procedure made this agreement entirely compatible with the Shultz/Peres interpretation of the Conference as a "fig leaf" (as *Newsweek* called it) for direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and a



Jordanian/Palestinian delegation — the goal of Shultz and Peres being to keep Syria and the USSR out of the real process. On this point, therefore, the PLO gave Moscow satisfaction in 1987.⁹

But hardly had the 1987 PNC ended when the Arafat leadership renewed its contacts with Egypt, to the great displeasure of the DFLP, PFLP and the Palestinian Communist Party. (The PCP, former West Bank section of the Jordanian CP, was brought into the PLO at the same PNC meeting to please Moscow. By way of compensation, a fundamentalist Islamic faction was also brought in, with twice the representation of the PCP.)

Palestinian masses begin the *intifada*

The PLO seemed about to repeat the scenario that led to the 1983 split. The El Fatah/PLO leadership launched itself once again into deals with its reactionary friends in Baghdad, Cairo and Riyadh, hoping for a reconciliation with Amman. At the Arab Summit that met in the latter capital in November 1987, Arafat, although treated as an underling, met with the Jordanian king in the presence of the Iraqi tyrant Saddam Hussein. A little later he declared that he had agreed with "His Majesty" to "begin where we had left off" (*Al-Yom Assabeh*, November 23, 1987).

The following month, understanding that from now on they had to count primarily on themselves and their own struggles, the Palestinian masses in the West Bank and Gaza began the *intifada*, without needing any signal from the outside. Very quickly it proved to be the most formidable episode in the Palestinian anti-Zionist struggle since the uprising of 1936-39. Before the PNC meeting in 1988, the Unified Leadership of the *Intifada* never at any time expressed any inclination to recognize the Israeli state and Resolution 242. On the contrary, during the first few months of the *intifada* many of the leadership's communiqués explicitly rejected the recognition of Israel and Resolution 242, and described the regime in Jordan as an "agent" [of imperialism]. As

for the state of mind of the population itself in the occupied territories, the poll cited at the beginning of this article — carried out on the eve of the last PNC — gives a good indication.

In view of the massive and undeniably majority nature of the *intifada*, its radical character in many respects and the downright hostile position to the Jordanian regime reflected in its communiqués, King Hussein could see how badly compromised was the project that he had nurtured for two years along with his crony Shimon Peres.

Hussein moves quickly to stop spread of uprising

The breadth and the strength of the insurrectional fires blazing in the West Bank and Gaza — that the Israeli army could not extinguish in spite of its impressive deployment — took away from the monarch any desire to recover these territories. Of course, King Hussein had already demonstrated in his own kingdom that he was ready to crush a mass movement by methods far bloodier than those to which the Zionist government limited itself through the pressure of international public opinion and of a section of the Israeli public. But, taking everything into account, the two territories would now cost Jordan much more in repressive outlay than it would yield.

Moreover, it was necessary for Hussein to act quickly to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading to his own kingdom, where nearly 60% of the people are Palestinians. He had to prevent the insurrectional blaze from crossing the Jordan river. His repressive apparatuses had already greatly increased their activity to put out the first sparks of agitation in support of the *intifada*. On July 31, 1988, Hussein announced his decision to "break legal and administrative links between the two banks of the Jordan" — in other words, to abandon his claim to the West Bank, which his kingdom annexed in 1949. One week later, he explained: "By opting for their own state, our Palestinian brothers have opted for independence vis-a-vis Jordan. If there is a split, therefore, it corresponds to their wishes..."

These oily phrases could not hide his real attitude, exposed even by the way in which the July 31 decision was taken — brutally, with no previous consultation with the PLO, such that it created a dangerous juridical vacuum and an economic problem. The legal vacuum could have been filled by the Zionist government, if it had been politically prepared to annex the territories concerned, as the Israeli extreme-right had

9. For a detailed analysis of the period 1983-87, see IVs 121 and 122, June 1 & 15, 1987.

demand. The economic problem — the wages of some 21,000 functionaries in the West Bank whose salaries had been continued to be paid by the Jordanian state — was partially resolved by Libya's promise to take them in hand. Of course, there was still the problem of the PLO being able to send in funds (\$5 million per month).

PLO had to proclaim Palestinian state

However, the most urgent problem was the legal vacuum. It became imperative for the PLO to proclaim a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. It could have done this without the least recognition of the state of Israel. (In 1949, Jordan did not recognize Israel and has still not formally recognized it.) The PLO could have combined this proclamation so fervently wanted by the vast majority of people in the two territories with the political programme outlined in September by the Unified Leadership of the *Intifada* in its 26th Communique.

This Communique, expressing a broad consensus of Palestinians inside the territories and among the PLO's various factions, included a series of immediate demands as well as four more long-term objectives (see box p.8). The first three of these, which repeat the elements of a platform adopted by the Arab Summit in June 1988 in a more radical way, are absolutely correct. The fourth objective includes an evident contradiction between the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the principle of an "International Conference with full powers" to decide their fate. This is evidence of the confusion that reigns in the minds of most Palestinians concerning this principle, which even the left of the PLO

hotly defends, dear as it is to Moscow's heart.

Moreover, a revolutionary PLO acting from the outside would have launched an appeal urging the Jordanian and Palestinian masses in Jordan to rise up alongside the *intifada* in the occupied territories to overthrow the hireling monarchy. This is the sole, indispensable means to break the repressive vice encircling the West Bank, to say nothing of the tyrannical yoke around the necks of the masses in Jordan, among whom there are at least as many Palestinians than in the West Bank and Gaza put together. The overthrow of the Amman monarchy is also a necessary step for the establishment of a Jordanian/Palestinian state free from imperialist and Zionist domination that would really be viable, unlike the project of a mini-state in the 1967 territories consisting of roughly 6,000 square kilometers divided into two parts by the state of Israel.

PLO leadership chooses not to fight

But without asking too much from the leadership of the PLO, simply adopting the programme in Communique 26, in the continuity of the PNC's 1987 resolutions, would have represented a decision to fight, a decision of a leadership based exclusively on the mass struggle and understanding that a just right is not something to be begged for. Sadly, this was not the approach of the PLO leaders. For a long time they opted for a strategy of a negotiated settlement with Israel, whose number one objective was to win recognition from American imperialism.¹⁰

However, the US government's conditions for establishing a dialogue with the

PLO were well known: they were fixed by Henry Kissinger in 1974. George Bush cited them in an interview given to *The Jerusalem Post*: "The PLO must not only clearly accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which recognize Israel's right to exist, but also renounce terrorism and the article in its founding charter advocating the destruction of Israel". (June 28, 1988.)

In an article in *Le Monde* on September 23, 1988, then Israeli minister of foreign affairs Shimon Peres added this clarification concerning his government, or at least his party: "The PLO must, in the final analysis, choose between two options: support from Syria...or dialogue with Jordan....It is only with the latter country that the PLO can work out a policy of negotiation with Israel."

Arafat had already received this message a long time ago. But the radical pressure of the first months of the *intifada*, the communiques from the inside and the PLO's left-wing partners — as well as the USSR and Libya — all pushed in the direction of reestablishing an alliance with Damascus. The beginnings of negotiations with the Syrian government, following the assassination of Abu Jihad by the Israeli services in April 1988, delighted all the parties mentioned previously, but not for long.

Indeed, Arafat intensively explored the Jordan/US road leading to negotiations with Israel. In March, he had pushed two PNC members who have US citizenship to meet with American Secretary of State George Shultz, in spite of the Unified Leadership of the *Intifada*'s explicit veto of any such meetings. Following the Reagan/Gorbachev summit in Moscow at the end of May — during which the chief bureaucrat of the Kremlin matched his views with Washington's on the Middle East question — Arafat, relieved, shifted into higher gear.

"Bilateral peace talks with Israel"

Boosted by the encouragement of the leading lights of Arab reaction meeting in Algiers at the June 1988 summit, the PLO chief published a feeler article by Bassam Abu Sherif, a renegade from the PFLP and now Arafat's official counsellor. Everything was already there: acceptance of Resolution 242 and "bilateral peace talks with Israel" in the framework of an International Conference (in short, the "fig-leaf"). The article provoked a general outcry from the left of the PLO, but it was very well received by those to whom it was addressed, in the United States and Israel.

Following the Jordanian measures on July 31, the PNC was convoked for September. The right projected the setting up of a "provisional government" speaking in

10. See the June 1986 resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, "The crisis of the PLO: a balance sheet", published in *International Marxist Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 1987.

"A crime towards ourselves and others"

“THOSE WHO try to disengage from the criteria set by the *intifada*, trying to get around it and turn it away from its objectives, are going to harm it definitively....There is every reason to fear that the *intifada* be exploited to support some latent political objectives that were just waiting for an occasion to express themselves. The situation is, very largely, similar to Sadat's use of the limited military exploits of the Arab armies in 1973.

“Sadat exploited the widespread moral support given by the war to Arab opinion to say that he was going into the political battle from a position of strength. The result was that Egypt left the terrain of confrontation and recognized Israel....

“If what certain people are now demanding is correct, then we have certainly committed a crime towards ourselves and others. We should have been able, for example, to spare ourselves the tens of thousands of deaths over the years and avoid all kinds of persecution and suffering, if we had accepted King Hussein's concept of peace....

“After all this suffering, it turns out that in practice, what certain Palestinian leaderships are proposing today, King Hussein had already proposed since the beginning of the [1967] occupation.”

Extracts of an article from the daily *As-Safir* (Beirut), October 29, 1988, by Abdel-Sattar Qassem, a professor of political sciences at the Al-Najah University in Nablus, West Bank. Since February 1988, he has been detained in the "Ansar-3" camp in Negev. ★

the name of the Palestinian people and composed of personalities acceptable to Washington. The left opposed this loudly and forcefully. Moscow intervened to pour oil on the waters. The PLO's Executive Committee met in Tunis at the beginning of October. It decided to postpone the governmental question, to call a meeting of the PNC at the end of the month and to proclaim a Palestinian state. The right-wing and Moscow's followers, the DFLP and the PCP, proposed to do this on the basis of the 1947 Resolution 181. Arafat wanted to add Resolution 242, but he was ready to reconcile himself to this provisional compromise, which amounted to recognizing the state of Israel without making a decision about its frontiers. George Habash made a sour face.

"Balancing the interests of concerned parties"

Moscow received a delegation from the PLO on October 10-11. Two messages came out of this. First, the PNC should be delayed so as not to proclaim the Palestinian state before the Israeli elections due on November 1 — in this way the "good Zionists" of Shimon Peres would not be upset. Second, the state of Israel should be recognized.

On October 11, the TASS press agency reported that the discussions had underlined the necessity for "concrete steps that must be founded on balancing the interests of all the concerned parties", that is, the oppressors and the oppressed. Habash resigned himself to accepting Resolution 181 as the lesser evil in a logic of the permanent compromise that governed the slide to the right of all the PLO factions via a series of chain reactions.

With less and less to fear from his left, Arafat went to Akaba in Jordan to meet with King Hussein and President Mubarak on October 22. *Le Monde* commented: "There is no doubt that, by thus displaying himself together with these two close allies of the US who are favourable to a negotiated settlement, Mr. Arafat wanted to reinforce his image as a man searching for peace....(He) has clearly shown the hardliners in the PLO that the way forward must be that of negotiation and compromise". From Akaba, Arafat and Mubarak went to Baghdad, this time to display themselves with Saddam Hussein.

The political choices made by the PLO leadership are clearer than ever: full steam ahead towards a capitulation à la Sadat. After all, Sadat, who has been called every name under the sun by the PLO, has only done what they are preparing to do. He recognized Israel in exchange for the recovery of Egyptian occupied territory, the Sinai, with a demilitarization clause guaranteeing the security of the Zionist state. The two capitulations are based on moral victories, the October 1973 war in one case, the *intifada* in the other — contrary to the previous

shifts of the PLO (1974, 1977 and 1983), which happened on the basis of defeats. This was eloquently highlighted in an article by Abdel-Sattar Kassem, one of the prisoners from the *intifada* (see box p.11).

Of course, at its meeting of November 12-15, the PNC proclaimed "the state of Palestine". This decision, in itself a challenge to the Israeli occupation, was impatiently awaited by the masses of the *intifada*. It galvanized them, reinforcing their hopes of seeing the day approach when the Zionist army would withdraw from their land. But if the proclamation of an independent state by the masses struggling under the occupation is an act of bravery, the same thing is certainly not true for the PNC meeting in Algiers. (They did not forget to salute "the fighting president, Chadli Bendjedid" barely one month after he had bloodily crushed another *intifada*!).

One could legitimately ask why it was necessary to wait until after the Israeli elections and leave the "judicial vacuum" caused by Jordan's July withdrawal decision to continue for three and a half months. Moreover, why was the proclamation not made long before, at the beginning of the *intifada*? Or in 1976, when the mobilization in the 1967 territories was already intense and the municipal elections there, although under Israeli control, resulted in the victory of PLO supporters? Or from 1974, when the PNC adopted the transitional principle of the Palestinian state in one part of Palestine?

Let us entrust the reply to Bilal El-Hassan, a close collaborator of Arafat's and chief editor of the unofficial journal of El Fatah/PLO: "Why was the state proclaimed at this particular time...? The crucial point regarding this is Jordan's (July 31) decision... which created a vacuum that someone had to fill. It was natural that the Palestinian leadership should take the initiative in this respect, given that this measure is a natural right as far as they are concerned. Jordan's decision helped the Palestinian side to take this step, given that it came at a time when it would not raise any conflict or problem with Jordan."

Implicit recognition of the state of Israel

"The PLO has always pushed to the fore the idea of the state as a militant and political objective, without accompanying this with any practical measures in order to avoid any premature and pointless conflict with Jordan. Now that Jordan has disengaged, the practical Palestinian measure could be implemented without raising any problem among Arabs". (*Al-Yom Assabeh*, November 28, 1988.)

In other words, this measure no longer had "the character of a challenge to the monarchy of Amman and its reactionary allies that it would have had if it had been made earlier". (*IV* 153, December 12, 1988.)

This is why a newspaper like *Le Monde*, for example, was right a few hours after the end of the PNC when it devoted its headline not to the proclamation of the state but to the following point: "The PLO has implicitly recognized the existence of Israel". Indeed, it was well and truly the shock decision of the PNC: the acceptance of Resolution 242, decided at the last moment and motivated as far as Arafat was concerned by Shimon Peres' circular to Israeli embassies just before the PNC meeting. This circular explained that only the acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 — and not Resolution 181 — would amount to a recognition of Israel within secure and recognized boundaries. (*Le Monde*, November 13-14, 1988.)

The text proclaiming the Palestinian state was based on Resolution 181, after 41 years and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian and Arab deaths in the struggle against the state that this resolution had established in the most iniquitous way. This same text, read by Arafat himself, declared that the Palestinian state rejects "the use of force, of violence or of terrorism against its own territorial integrity...or that of any other state".

Little importance attached to real self-determination

The PNC's political resolution goes even further. It reiterates the principle of the International Conference, but this time the phrase "with full powers" is replaced by "effective", in spite of opposition from Habash and others to this far from innocent change. Above all, the resolution specifies that such an International Conference "will meet on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338" — this after 21 years of total rejection of Resolution 242 by the whole Palestinian movement at the cost of tens of thousands dead. Only 15% of PNC members voted against this part of the resolution, including the members of the PFLP and some independents and Islamics.

Following in the footsteps of the resolution of the June 1988 Arab Summit in Algiers and Communiqué 26 of the Unified Leadership of the *Intifada* partly inspired by it, the PNC's resolution demands that the occupied territories be put under the auspices of the UN for a limited period. But while the two first texts envisaged this as a transition towards the exercise of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the November 1988 PNC saw this simply as the means to "create a favourable climate for the success of the International Conference, the reaching of a political settlement and the realization of security and peace for all, by mutual agreement and consent, and to allow the Palestinian state to exercise real powers over its territories".

This just shows what little importance the PLO leadership attaches to the free, real, direct and democratic exercise of the population's right to self-determination in these

territories. Equally significant in this regard is the total absence from the PNC's resolution of the central political demand contained in the communiqués of the Unified Leadership of the *Intifada*, from the beginning of the uprising up to the eve of the PNC: that is, free elections in the West Bank and Gaza.

It should be noted finally that, in spite of Jordan's July 31 decision and the sentiments expressed by the rebellious Palestinian masses¹¹, the PNC resolution reiterates the principle of the "confederation with Jordan". This is despite the fact that King Hussein himself had told Arafat, at their Akaba meeting, that he would prefer not to make any premature announcements on this question.

So it is understandable that the imperialist powers unanimously awarded top marks to the last PNC session; just as there were grandiloquent praises for the PLO's "flexibility" and "realism" by many of those who had described it the day before as "terrorist", and who still proclaimed their undying attachment to the state of Israel. The leadership of the El Fatah/PLO believed they had scrupulously adhered to the conditions laid down by Washington before they would sit around the same table with its representatives. Arafat had just played his "last card" for the mess of potage represented by recognition from Israel's guardian.

But to general astonishment, Shultz even refused to give Arafat a visa for the UN General Assembly in New York. However, the American secretary of state turned out to be much shrewder than those who accused him of lacking in judgement at the time appreciated — as if this old fox was as dull-witted as a Shamir.

In fact, Shultz knew perfectly well that he had Arafat mesmerized with his carrot of recognition, but he wanted to squeeze out of him an even clearer, sharper and more precise support for the American conditions.

What happened next is well known: the mediation of the Swedish social democrats, and Arafat's speech on December 13 to the UN General Assembly meeting specially in Geneva. Here, Arafat again confirmed the acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for an International Conference and for a settlement, and again condemned terrorism. Nevertheless, Washington once again turned a deaf ear. Shultz demanded

that the PLO chief declare explicitly, and with no ambiguity, that he recognized Israel *de jure* and renounced terrorism (a way of forcing him to admit that the PLO had been "terrorist").

Having decided to grovel to the enemies of the Palestinian people, Arafat went to the bitter end — the bitter end of humiliation. In a press conference on December 14 called to do just that, without beating around the bush Arafat pronounced himself in favour of the "right of all the parties to exist in peace and security, including the state of Palestine, Israel and their neighbours". He added: "We totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism, whether it be by individuals, groups or states".

Shultz was then able to consider himself satisfied and to declare that in future the US

decision was obtained thanks to "the tenacity of the militants of the *intifada*" (in sharp contrast to his own "flexibility"), and to "their natural and principal allies, Iraqi soldiers who defended the eastern door of the Arab nation". (*Al-Yom Assabeh*, January 2, 1989.) Only fools could believe this.

Abu Iyad, number two in the PLO, is more forthright. In October he confessed to the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Qabas* that: "We must recognize that the Zionist movement has succeeded in convincing the world of what it calls the basic principles for a political settlement, encapsulated in the recognition of Resolution 242.... Some people say: Why must we give in to this blackmail? My opinion is that the Zionist movement is not so much blackmailing us, but Europe and the world".

Leaving aside the misplaced boasting,

Abu Iyad acknowledges the capitulation. But he presents it as inevitable in the face of an all-powerful enemy, "the Zionist movement" that "succeeded in convincing the world". This is an old refrain of right-wing Arab nationalism and serves as an alibi for all the surrenders. The Zionists (if not to say the "Jews") "manipulate" the United States, and not vice-versa. And this is at a time when, precisely, the strength of conviction of the Zionist movement is at its lowest ever historical level faced with the *intifada*. At the same time as the struggle of the Palestinian people against the Zionist state had reached its highest ever level for half a century.

George Habash was right when, addressing the leaders of the Palestinian right who are hegemonic in the PLO, he

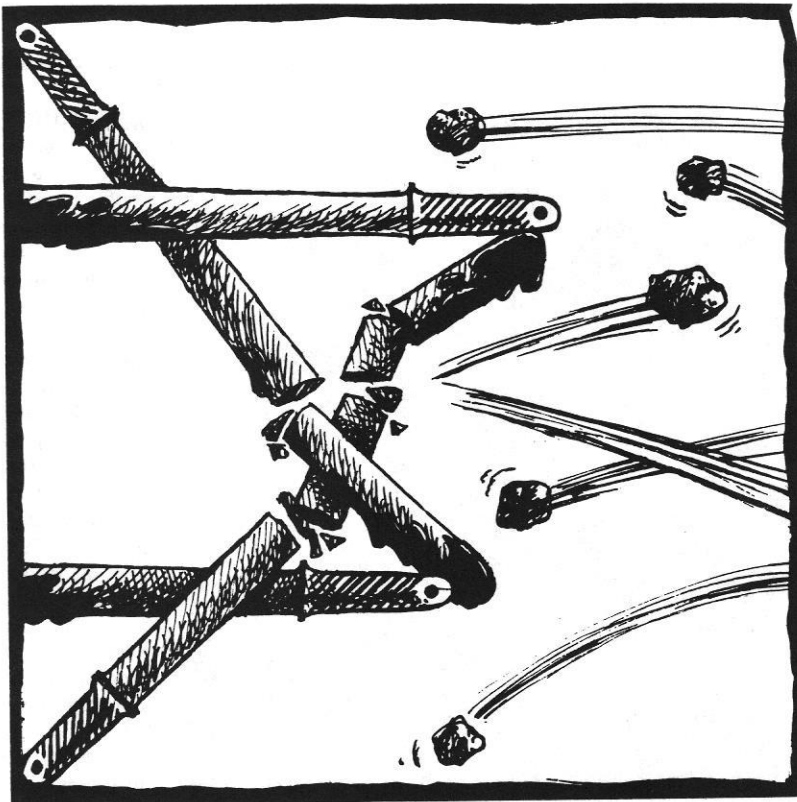
asked them: "Is this the time to make new concessions? We are in a period where the International Conference has not yet begun, and they already want us to take off our jacket.

"That's not enough for them, they want us to take off our trousers. And that doesn't satisfy them either — they want us to take off our underclothes. They want us to go to the International Conference totally naked!" (*Al-Qabas*, reprinted in *Al-Raia*, August 5, 1988.)

The PLO's trajectory indeed resembles a political striptease. ★

would be "ready for a substantial dialogue with representatives of the PLO". Even the B'nai B'rith League, an American Zionist organization, said now that they understood that "the PLO having accepted the conditions set by the United States, it was proper to respect the commitments". (*Le Monde*, December 16, 1988.) Grateful, a few days later Arafat offered the help of his intelligence services to Washington in the inquiry into the Pan Am Boeing explosion.

If the American decision to establish direct contacts with the PLO was a "victory" for the latter, it would be interesting to know what constitutes a defeat! Of course, Arafat — a grand organizer of defeats and grand master in the art of going through them making a V for victory sign — did not hesitate to explain that the American



11. According to the poll already cited, only 22% of West Bank inhabitants approved of a confederation with Jordan.

The growing problems facing immigrant workers

IMMIGRATION and the super-exploitation of foreign-born workers are new problems in Italy. The recent legislation, Law 943, is similar to that adopted by the Union of the Left government that came to power in France in 1981. It offers immigrants certain possibilities to regularize their status, but does not attack the problem of super-exploitation, with the result that if immigrants acquire legal residence and

the protection of the labor and social security laws, they risk losing their employment.

The following article from the January 1989 issue of *Bandiera Rossa*, the paper of the Italian section of the Fourth International, discusses these problems.

IGOR ZECCHINI



THE DEADLINE for foreign workers filing requests to regularize their status, in accordance with Law 943, ran out on October 30. This law was adopted by the Italian parliament in 1986, with the support of the entire parliamentary left. Since that time, the noose of this legislation, vaunted as Europe's "most democratic" immigration law, has been slowly tightening around the necks of thousands of immigrants from non-EEC countries.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of the Interior, there are 103,053 documented immigrants, of whom 60,217 are on the unemployed rolls and 42,836 have jobs. These figures represent only the tip of the iceberg. Reliable sources estimate that there are another 1,500,000 foreign workers in Italy (720,000 in 1984), a large proportion of whom have been forced into clandestinity by Law 943 and the rules governing the entry of immigrants into Italy.

Italy has been transformed from an exporter to an importer of labor power, and this presents not only the state legal system but also the workers' movement with problems that have to be faced urgently if we are to avoid the emergence of new dangers of division and defeat for all working people.

Super-exploitation of immigrant workers

The wave of immigration that has reached our country has features different from previous ones, which included thousands of Italian workers. These differences reside in part in the economic conditions in the immigrants' countries of origin, more and more strangled by imperialist exploitation, finding its most acute expression in the terrible restrictions imposed by the IMF. But above all, they lie in the fact that this wave of immigration does not corre-

spond to a demand for labor power but comes in a situation in which there is already a labor surplus (that is, three million unemployed in our country).

The immigrants are therefore forced to accept situations rejected by Italian workers: a total lack of protection, super-exploitation as regards hours and wages, marginal jobs in the dark corners of the urban economy, precarious earnings from selling costume jewelry, wallets and so on. And this hand-to-mouth existence is made worse by a more general marginalization, the impossibility of getting a house, linguistic and cultural ghettoization, the lack of social centers, lack of social welfare and, last but not least, the constant fear of being picked up by some overzealous cop, and then, maybe after a beating, being sent back to their countries of origin.

Social marginalization in the big cities

This situation offers a section of the petty bourgeoisie, condemned to proletarianization by the laws of capitalism, a chance to gain a higher profit margin through ferocious exploitation of immigrant labor and to enhance their own social image by employing three Filipino maids instead of one Italian one. On the other hand, it is producing a phenomenon of social marginalization that, especially in the big cities, is assuming very disturbing dimensions.

Episodes such as the one in Via Vasari or Lambro Park in Milan, where the cops cleared out dilapidated buildings devoid of the least hygienic facilities, even water, that had been used as dormitories for hundreds of workers, have pointed up the conditions in which tens of thousands of people are living in our civilized country. There are also the special problems of women immigrants, who in many cases are "acquired" for marriage or prostitution.

The situation is aggravated by another element. In the rest of Europe, the laws and regulations covering immigration and residence permits are leaving less and less room for immigrants, either clandestine or official. Italy remains the easiest country to enter because of its geographic position and less rigorous police checks. So, in addition to the stable immigrants, another layer of immigrants is developing who want to use Italy as a bridge to other European countries.

The answer of the state institutions and the Italian government to all this is quite clear to anyone who wants to see. For the bourgeoisie, certain partially contradictory needs have to be met:

- There is a problem of uniformity with the rest of Europe, demanded by the EEC with a view toward the Single European Market of 1992, involving a common blocking of the frontiers.

- At the same time, there is a need to maintain a reserve army of labor in order to intimidate employed workers in anticipa-

tion of the ferocious attacks the bourgeoisie is preparing against the workers and all the disadvantaged social layers.

- It is also useful to have a scapegoat, again in anticipation of a sharpening social contradiction, in order to be able to divert explosions of social discontent against the immigrants (as in the case of the Jews in the 1930s).

- It is necessary to safeguard the interests of those who are exploiting the immigrants' labor.

- At the same time, some sections of the petty bourgeoisie feel that they are being harmed economically by those whom the press denigratingly calls the "you buys" (the merchants, obviously).

- A further concern, but hardly an unimportant one, is to maintain the reputation of the happy Italian spaghetti-eaters, of capitalism with a human face, in order to facilitate economic operations at the expense of dependent countries (such as the accords reached recently with Senegal and Tunisia) or provide a cover for imperialist military actions.

These needs are hard to accomplish within the same legislative framework. That is why the state is operating on various levels, adopting a policy of flexibility.

The left, the trade-union organizations and sections of immigrants responded positively to Law 943. Today, more than two years after its approval, judgements are beginning to be more cautious, although they remain mainly in the framework of calling for reform of the law or denouncing the "failure to apply it."

For its part, the LCR immediately expressed a different sort of position, denouncing the discriminatory and racist intent of Law 943 and criticizing all the left parties, including *Democrazia Proletaria*, that supported its passage in parliament.

Repressive forces police immigrants

Today, when our assessment is being confirmed, it should be clarified in the light of the evolution of the situation. It is true that a part of the law has not yet been applied (especially as regards the setting up of consultative bodies, which in any case would have no serious financial backing, to deal with the problems of integrating the immigrants — those with papers, of course).

But the core of the law is fully operative. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants are being forced by the requirements of the law into an "irregular existence." In this way, regulating the flow and presence of immigrants is being left entirely to the repressive forces, who can apply "flexibility," tightening or loosening the margins of tolerance.

The conditions in which the immigrants are forced to live have no effect on this operation. To the contrary, the Mafia or other criminal organizations have the satisfaction

of having another social sector from which to draw labor power.

The proposals for changing the law under discussion in the government go in the same direction. The first, presented by Minister of the Interior Gava, aims at seriously tightening the rules on admitting foreigners and granting residence permits. All those who violate tax regulations or are found to have insufficient funds to maintain themselves will be liable to expulsion. All these rules will widen the discretionary powers of the police.

A second proposed change to Law 943 is to be presented by Minister for Special Affairs Rosa Russo Jervolino. The terms of it are not yet known, but the fact that it is being presented by the same person who proposed a police state against drug addicts is grounds for worry.

Trade-union organization is necessary

The workers' movement is lagging far behind the needs of the situation. It is necessary immediately to propose trade-union organization of the immigrants, thereby forming a common front with Italian workers against the same enemy. But to this end a change in policy is necessary.

The central problems for immigrants fundamentally are the same as for Italian workers — jobs, homes, social services. Only a general answer to these problems can prevent a division among workers and at the same time offer hope of victory. This is without denying any of the special problems that immigrants have also in these areas.

At this stage, it is an essential task to fight for a series of concrete objectives, perhaps even minimal ones, but still very important for instilling confidence and countering the dispersal of foreign workers. Local initiatives against any form of abuse of power, for opening public and self-managed reception centers for immigrants, for exposing and shutting down the concentration camp buildings in which many foreigners live, for fighting against unprotected jobs and defending foreign peddlers from the seizures that the police carry out daily — all these are important elements for building a national struggle in the future.

Today, alongside these mobilizations on such specific questions, alongside solidarity with immigrants and defending them against discrimination, it is necessary to oppose any police policy of regulating the flow of immigration.

If they are not accompanied by such concrete initiatives, responses in other areas (for example, the right to vote in administrative elections or cultural demands) run the risk of only being cosmetic operations. The substance of the problem, day-to-day marginalization and oppression of the immigrants, would remain essentially unchanged. ★

Pragmatic reformism and revolutionary rhetoric



THE TWELFTH CONGRESS of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was held in Porto from December 1-4, 1988. It attracted special attention because of its quite unusual character. In fact, the congress broke with routine because, for once, the delegates had to debate and decide on fundamental documents. The most notable of these was the proposal to revise the old 1965 program, which had been perceived as etched in stone.

But above all, for the first time in the history of this party, the opening of the congress was preceded by a very sharp internal and public debate. The PCP's crisis is all the more threatening and explosive because it is breaking open under the double pressure of the international debate over the reforms in the Soviet Union and a period of social agitation that has produced deep divisions among CP trade unionists.

FRANCISCO LOUÇA

TWO ORGANIZED groupings, appearing as de facto factions, confronted the historic leader, General Secretary Alvaro Cunhal. The "Group of Six" was the first to publish its positions. Six well-known PCP cadres were involved in it, notably an ex-member of the Central Committee, a former minister, former regional heads and a judge from the Constitutional Court, who is also one of the country's best known Marxist theoreticians.

They put forward positions that overall represented an alternative to the leadership's document for the congress. But they decided not to come to Oporto, pointing to the lack of democracy in the preparation of the discussion. They are beginning to be increasingly pushed to the sidelines within the party.

The second group was formed later on, and calls itself the "Third Road." It brings together a widely representative group ranging from former student leaders, to a member of the European Parliament, trade unionists, journalists, intellectuals and many active workers. This group even managed to win a majority in a meeting of the intellectuals' branch in Lisbon, and ended up with between 30 and 50 delegates

(theoretically, the ratio is one delegate to 100 members). It is a heterogeneous group, united in criticisms of bureaucratic centralism, but containing political positions that differ significantly.

One of its best known leaders, the European MP Barros Moura, was the first to advocate a position differing markedly from the PCP's initial intransigent opposition to the Common Market. He displayed a favorable attitude to the integration of Portugal into the European Economic Community (EEC). This new position was first adopted by the Portuguese General Workers' Confederation (CGTP), the union federation linked to the PCP; and then finally by the PCP itself. On this occasion, moreover, the PCP showed its great capacity for incorporating the most right wing of internal criticisms into its line.

On the other hand, some spokespeople of this Third Road have developed a very interesting critique of Alvaro Cunhal's conception that the Portuguese revolution is an ongoing process, continuing without interruption since 1974-75. Obviously this is a crucial question. This position might seem to be radical and surprising, but actually the PCP leadership has substituted the reflexes of a besieged fortress for political

analysis.

Indeed, Cunhal denies the fact that today Portugal is a bourgeois democracy, and maintains therefore that "the continuity of the revolution, notably, offers new opportunities for participation in the state apparatus". Thus party members are being educated in a mixture of a pragmatic reformism on a day-to-day basis and intransigent revolutionary rhetoric.

Other positions have appeared in the context of this crisis within the PCP, for example that of Zita Seabra, ex-deputy and one of the former principal leaders of the Communist Student Union (UEC). While still a member of the Political Commission of the CC, Seabra broke the party leadership's discipline leadership and shattered the official unanimity. First she was expelled from the Political Commission, and then from the Central Committee, but not from the party.

Political conflicts unleashed by *perestroika*

Obviously the big political question behind all of these debates is the *perestroika* process in the USSR and the political conflicts it is unleashing. For a party used to cultivating the image of a brotherly Soviet paradise on earth, the recognition of Stalin's crimes and of modern contradictions in the USSR has come as a severe shock. Moreover, Gorbachev's popularity and the opening he proposes immediately enabled all the critics in the party to identify with his political positions, arguing that the Stalinist heritage was at the root of the PCP's bureaucratic functioning and the major cause of its loss of influence. Incidentally, one of the arguments for expelling Seabra from the Political Commission was that she had been in contact with two Soviet citizens living in Portugal.

The attitude taken towards the Soviet Union has always been a litmus test for the leadership of the PCP. The contradiction was very clear during the congress itself. Vadim Medvedev, the Kremlin's representative, presented a conciliatory message at

the beginning of the Congress, extolling the institutional relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the president of the Portuguese Republic and the Portuguese government. The delegate from the Hungarian CP also presented a vigorous defense of the economic liberalization, and the economic reforms underway.

It was Georges Marchais, general secretary of the French CP, who appeared to speak for those who had reservations about Gorbachev. In his intervention, immediately following that of the Soviet delegate, he stressed that *perestroika* was a fine thing, so long as it stopped at the borders of the Soviet Union. Even if Cunhal now wishes to appear more enthusiastic about the CPSU leadership's policies, in fact, he is among those who have reservations, and is aligning himself with the France-East Germany bloc.

Throughout the whole period of preparation for the Congress, in each debate, Alvaro Cunhal reiterated that there was no crisis, large or small, in the PCP. The leadership tried systematically to minimize the impact of internal contradictions, not however, meeting with much success. All of the major documents of the opposition groups had already been published in the bourgeois press, thus easily accessible to all Communists.

However, the bureaucratic machine went into action, and the overwhelming majority of 2,000 delegates (thus, theoretically representing 200,000 members) was of course

already won over to uncritical support of all of the leadership's positions. Nonetheless, it was a surprise for them to watch critical currents speak up and even cast their fifty votes against, or abstain, in the case of the election of the new Central Committee.

Some of the themes raised by the oppositions were incorporated into the Congress' final document. But the leadership concentrated its efforts especially on presenting the concept of "advanced democracy" as a wonderful theoretical innovation capable of giving the party a new strategic profile. Curiously enough, this is the same great discovery of the French CP's Eurocommunist period, in vogue during the Union of the Left in 1972, and today it is being rediscovered by the same Portuguese CP which criticized it harshly back then.

Weakening of PCP's electoral strength

However, the open debate in the PCP at least had the merit of bringing into question all of the essential points of the new program. Among these were the stagist conception of revolution which is fundamental to the document on democracy, the concept of "advanced democracy" and that of taking power through electoral means, which are presented as substitutes for a struggle for power based on the direct action in working-class struggles. The situation is all the more contradictory since there is obvi-

ously a long-term weakening of the PCP's electoral strength.

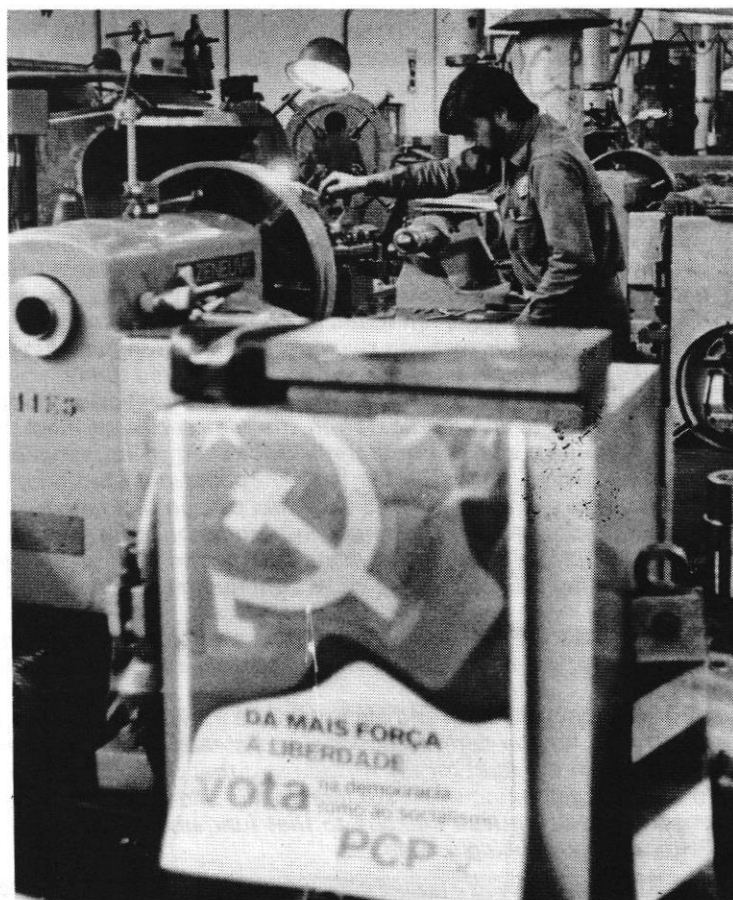
Once again the struggle against monopolies is being prioritized, and the class nature of the bourgeois democratic regime which came to power on April 25, 1974, is being treated as an abstract question. What is proposed is the creation of a new society lacking either any socialist option or the capability for responding to potential for mobilization that was revealed last year by the mass movement, especially during the general strike of March 1988 (see IV 139). Opposition to entry into the Common Market has been dropped in favor of a debate over how efficient this or that formula is for influencing regional or sectoral policies. The PCP refuses to place itself in the context of international struggle for building a strategic alternative to the EEC and the unification of workers' struggles on a European scale.

These are some of the themes debated during the congress in Oporto, where oppositionists, of course, criticized the official line. But still more important new developments also took place and were, in fact, the most surprising aspect of the meeting. For the first time in the history of the PCP, some union leaders and members openly took a critical position. The case that drew the most press and television coverage was that of José Judas, the central leader of the CGTP, who spoke briefly at the very beginning of the Congress in order to protest the internal regime of the presiding Central Committee and to propose the election of the new CC by secret ballot.

This was considered by all oppositionists as one way of enabling the congress to show its true feelings about the choice of a new leadership and the continuation — or not — of the older historic leadership core. The proposal was immediately defeated, but remains very important. In this way, Judas clearly came out in favor of the criticisms coming from the Third Road and as the spokesperson for the proposal that has been hardest fought by the Cunhal leadership.

CP's crisis reflected in trade-unions

From the social and institutional point of view, this position in favor of opposition currents taken by a major trade-union leader will carry great weight in the future debates in the party, and demonstrates that a section of its cadres is sensitive to concrete experience and to pressure from the mass movement. In fact, the PCP's internal conflict had already come out into the open in the union confederation itself, when the Communist leaders divided at the time of the struggle over the government's proposal for changing the labor code. One section of the CGTP leaders was in favor of calling a general strike jointly with the General Workers' Union (UGT, the confederation that has been influenced by the Socialist



Party and the right) for a general strike. This section ran up against other Communist leaders who insisted on the traditional sectarian position of having nothing to do with the UGT.

The current that was most open to unity in action was able to enforce its point of view, which permitted the CGTP to support the call for a general strike against the government issued by the UGT. Aware of the deep divisions that have existed workers' struggles, Judas and other Communist leaders tried systematically to come up with new ways of calling strikes, notably large united factory assemblies. This experience weighed heavily, no doubt, during the final discussion of the Oporto congress.

It is also significant that the Communist leader who came out of the congress uncontestedly the number two figure in the party was Domingos Acrantes, who was the leader and major advocate of the most sectarian current of CP trade-unionists.

In this sense, the debate and current crisis in the PCP has a point of departure quite different than that of the French CP. After a preliminary wave of protest centered primarily on the undemocratic methods of discussion and leadership, real strategic problems came to the fore. They were discussed under the pressure of the need to choose a political orientation for the mass movement, and most importantly for the unions. This question is all the more urgent since the second general strike is being prepared for the early part of 1989.

Growing isolation and loss of members

Despite its weakening, the CP maintains its basic core of social control, the CGTP, and its influence in the area affected by agrarian reform. Its room for maneuver has nonetheless been reduced, and it is faced with growing problem of isolation and a significant loss of members. The situation is such that today, for instance, the vast majority of the Lisbon regional organization, the most important part of the party, has an average age of over fifty!

A reaffirmation of the continuity of its leadership and policies therefore seemed to the congress to be the best response to the current and future crises. This attitude is, however, not incompatible with other, more surprising innovations, as for example in the area of friendly relations with other organizations. For example, during the closing session of the Revolutionary Socialist Party's congress (PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International), the representative of the PCP, a member of the Central Committee, allowed himself to be photographed with Alain Krivine, leader of the LCR (the PSR's sister organization in France), and even stated to the newspapers that he found it incomprehensible that a similar discussion at this level could not take place in Paris, between the LCR and the French CP... ★

PSR congress

THE REVOLUTIONARY Socialist Party (PSR), Portuguese section of the Fourth International met for its sixth national congress on November 26-27, 1988. The agenda included discussions on the political situation, the preparation of an anti-militarist campaign involving youth, and finally an organizational plan and a concrete work calendar. The political theses and the organizational resolution were unanimously approved, but the document on anti-militarist work (it covered a change in the PSR's traditional position and a defense of the slogan "No to the Army" as a general rejection of militarism) was criticized by some delegates, and finally passed with 80% of the votes, 10% against and 10% abstentions.

A few days later, the fifteenth anniversary of the foundation of the International Communist League (LCI), the predecessor of the PSR, offered the occasion for a public meeting in Lisbon, to publicize the results of the congress. During the day-long anniversary meeting, the PSR also organized a debate around the changes taking place in the USSR, with an opening talk by Alain Krivine, leader of the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), in front of around 200 people.

The Portuguese Communist Party was represented by a member of the Central Committee, and the Green Party sent their deputy. Other left organizations were also present, as well as trade unionists, former officers from the Armed Forces Movements [MFA, the political-military grouping that staged the coup d'état, beginning the "revolution of carnations" in 1974, a grouping including a wide range of political positions] and members from other currents.

A message from imprisoned comrade Natercia Campos was read. Campos was the PSR's candidate in the last legislative elections, and is now in prison for 13 years, accused of belonging to the same "terrorist" organization as Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. Lieutenant-colonel Otelo de Carvalho, who was one of the strategists of the 1974 "revolution of carnations," was condemned to 15 years of prison in December 1986, accused of being one of the "major leaders" of the clandestine left organization "People's Power - April 25" (FP-25) which is suspected of carrying out twelve assassinations and around twenty bombings since it was founded in 1980. Carvalho, who has always denied these accusations, also sent a message to the PSR rally, from Tumari, the military prison where he is being held. We publish extracts below.

Comrades,

The PSR is holding its sixth congress and commemorating its fifteenth anniversary. On this occasion, it is a real pleasure for me to offer hearty congratulations to all party members and leaders, sending to all my warmest fraternal greetings.

It is commonplace to say that the Portuguese left must find new paths, new forms of expression, and a new language that is the product of the intelligence and moral values that we hold, as well as the principles for which the left fights. I believe that, in this sense, the PSR is the party which is working the most for this change within this ideological sphere, which is so divided and fragmented today.

We have seen great examples of what I just described both in the perseverance of its candidates in the last series of electoral campaigns, as well as the documents published in its excellent paper Combate, without a doubt, the best left paper put out in our country. Vaccinated against the terrible sectarian poison that has destroyed all of the attempts to work together in a common framework of a non-aligned left, the PSR has always stayed open to the free debate of ideas, respecting those of others while continuing to fight non-stop for its own.

I hope that the PSR will win a large place among political parties, and that its young leaders will have a large role in the national political scene.

To everyone, militants and leaders of the PSR, I would like to express my thanks for the serious actions and steady pressure which have continued in the fight for my release and that of my companions, and in the struggle to find a just solution to this situation where the right of dozens of Portuguese citizens to that fundamental element of well-being, liberty, is being denied. ★

Behind South Korea's "economic miracle"

THE OLYMPIC GAMES were anything but non-political. With massive spending, the dictatorship of generals carefully disguised in civilian clothing sought to present a picture of the country to international public opinion that is in stark contrast to the reality. Behind its impressive economic figures are records of a different sort.

THE COLLAPSE of the economic and social structure in the countryside drives nearly half a million people a year into the cities and industrial centers. Working hours are the longest in the world — 11 hours per shift and 54 hours a week are the norm. Wages are low. According to the government's own data, they meet only 60% of wage earners' needs.

The on-the-job accident rate is the highest in the world. For example, in 1987 alone, 142,500 people suffered injuries at work. Of these, 1,771 died, and 22,500 were crippled. Only the rudiments of a social security system exist. According to a study published in 1988, the capital Seoul is the most polluted city in the world. Japa-

nese firms move production sites there solely to escape Japan's stricter environmental protection laws.

An opposition movement of massive proportions

There can be no question of "peace and democratization" as long as the picture is dominated by a military machine of 620,000 men, 42,000 US soldiers in the country, generals in civilian clothes in the government, an extensive network of secret services, a police designed for civil war, as well as many legal and de facto limitations of democratic liberties and civil rights.

In the name of anti-Communism and defending national security, the regime in the southern half of the divided peninsula is trying, now as before, to brand any opposition movement as North Korean subversion and on that basis suppress it.

But the wind has shifted. The majority of the 40 million people in South Korea are no longer ready to accept humiliating conditions in the name of absolute priority for export and for "the benefit of firm and fatherland."

Owing to the pressure of an opposition movement grown to massive proportions, the all-powerful president had to be directly elected. But the disunity of the big bourgeois opposition parties left Roh Tae Woh, a military man, in power.

In the March 1988 parliamentary election, the opposition parties won an absolute majority. But the president's party still formed the government, even though it got only 33%. Roh's predecessor, his crony and foster father, Chun Do Hwan, who held

power following the Kwangju massacre of 1980, is finding himself the focus of growing demands from democratic public opinion that those responsible for the repression and corruption during his dictatorship be brought to book and punished.

A new constitution has been adopted, but the reforms have generally remained dead letter. In an obvious maneuver, Chun Do Hwan publicly repented and entered a monastery.

The growing pressure for political democracy is not just coming "from below." The indications are increasing that in bourgeois circles as well there is an intense discussion about reorientation. Political and economic concessions are necessary in order to keep the climate from heating up any more. The rulers, however, fear the dangers involved in doing this. Any retreat would encourage the new workers' and trade-union movement that has emerged as a massive force on the scene since the strike wave of 1987.

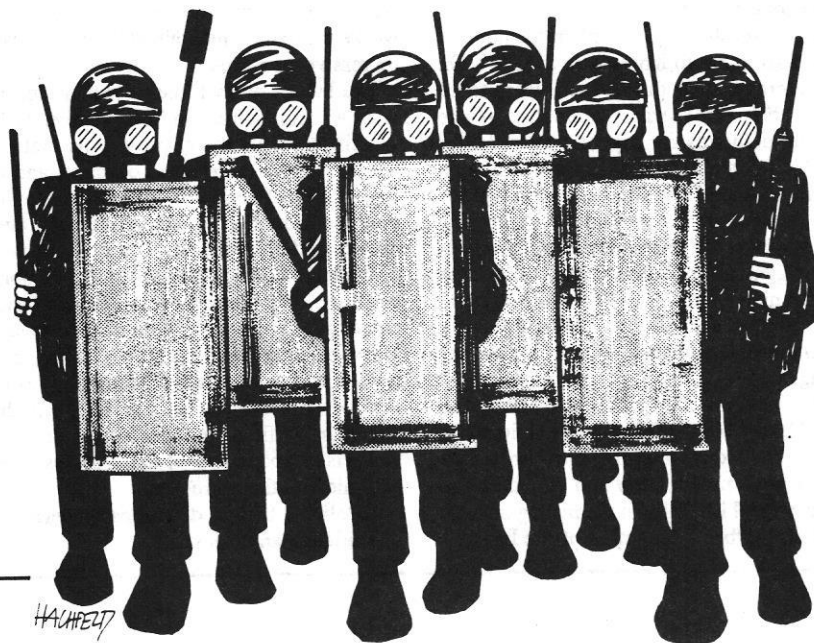
Moreover, the South Korean "economic miracle" and its advances in the export market are based on an extreme exploitation of labor. On the other hand, a relaxation of the hysterical anti-Communism seems necessary for economic reasons. Korean monopoly capital — the "Chaebols" — is narrowly focused on export and extremely dependent on the market and business cycles in the US and Japan. Therefore, since Korean big capitalists have run into problems and limitations on the traditional markets, they have undertaken a series of initiatives in order to widen their export market and to diversify.

Consolidating the country's partition

For example, more than 97% of South Korean exports to the US are industrial goods, of which about a third are machinery, vehicles and equipment. At the same time, almost 43% of its imports from the US consist of raw materials and foodstuffs, which have severely harmed the local rice farmers. The US trade deficit with Korea was probably about \$13 billion in 1987. South Korea's trade surplus with the US is supposed to be reduced to a maximum of \$5 billion, after being almost \$10 billion at the end of 1987.

Trade with the EEC and Japan is still showing only slow growth. In the meantime, negotiations and economic accords with the Comecon countries are on the rise. An agreement was recently signed for setting up a Korean electrical appliances factory in Hungary. To a large extent, thus, the Roh regime's new "Northern policy," its increasing readiness for negotiations with the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, is also dictated by economic considerations.

A "normalization" of relations, corresponding to the type of relations that exist between West and East Germany, would



benefit the rulers in South Korea in two respects. On the one hand, it facilitates a wider opening to the noncapitalist countries, especially the opening of economic relations. On the other, the regime can relate in a "positive" way to the demands of students and broader layers of the population for steps toward national reunification.

In this, the South Korean big bourgeoisie is of course not even dreaming of a reunification in which it would achieve its economic and power interests. Its basic principle — since a violent reunification

under capitalism proved impossible in the Korean war — is to consolidate the partition of the country. This has also long been a pillar of US policy in Asia, which the Seoul regime generally accepts.

An opening to the non-capitalist countries and North Korea, with which even post and telephone communications are still impossible, threatens, however, to undermine anti-Communism as a state doctrine. And this doctrine has been used up until now to justify almost every repressive measure. ★



SKETCH by Morgan Chua

President Roh Tae Woo

The new trade-union movement

THE RISE of a militant workers' movement in Washington's east Asian anti-Communist fortresses is an important new factor in the world relationship of forces.

Along with other West German unionists, Hermann Dirkes attended an international conference held by the Korean union movement in the fall. He wrote the following report on the South Korean class-struggle unions for the January 5 issue of *Sozialistische Zeitung*, the paper of the United Socialist Party (VSP) in which Fourth Internationalists participate.

KOREAN WORKERS are taking advantage of the new relationship of forces that arose in the southern part of the divided country after the massive strike wave of the summer of 1987. The most important gain of the workers' struggles in South Korea is undoubtedly the construction of new, independent trade unions at the factory and regional levels.

The new trade-union movement, known in Korean as Minju No Jo, of course still suffers from many political and organizational infantile disorders. But it has the potential to lead a deepgoing transformation of Korean society. Throughout the country, the new trade unions are trying to win recognition. The opposition they face comes from the scab official union federation, the FKTU, as well as from the capitalists and the military regime.

This was the basic message gotten by the trade-unionists from 14 countries and territories who were able to attend an international conference of the new Korean trade-union movement.

In the framework of the conference program, we were able to visit factory locals, plants, union officials, rallies and coordinating meetings in all South Korea's indus-

trial regions.

- Seoul-Inchon, where 10 million people, a fourth of South Korea's population, is concentrated.

- Ulsan, the center of the giant mixed trust Hyundai.

- Kwangju, where the crushed uprising of 1980 was centered.

- Masan-Changwon, the notorious free-trade zone in the south.

Between July and September, the number of strikes in South Korea rose to 3,372. On the average, over the last ten years there been about 200 strikes annually. While raising demands for higher wages, better working conditions and respect for human dignity, most of the strikes have sought to win recognition for *genuine* trade unions. The new Korean unions insist on the adjectives "genuine" or "democratic" in order to distinguish themselves from the official scab unions. By 1988, 4,729 new factory locals were established, 74% of all the existing ones.

The official union confederation, the FKTU, of which 200 leading functionaries are also leading members of President Roh's government party and which on the factory level is totally in the management's pocket, has been a member of the Interna-

tional Federation of Free Trade Unions since 1948.

The suppression of independent unions and workers' parties has been a feature of the Republic of Korea since its founding, under the archreactionary Syngman Rhee, as well as the successive regimes of generals Park and Chun and today under Roh. Demonstrations have been, and continue to be, broken up with tear gas and clubs. Strikers and their supporters are arrested and sentenced to prison terms. People continue to be killed and badly wounded. Even torture has not yet disappeared.

Labor law restricts workers' right to organize

The spring 1988 presidential and parliamentary elections seem to have relaxed the situation somewhat. The Roh regime is trying to put up a democratic facade and, to a certain extent, tolerates political demonstrations. Even the customary local police attacks on strikers seem to have been reduced a bit. After the Olympic Games, it is not certain how long this situation will last. In any case, the exploitation of the workers is being maintained by many other repressive measures.

The labor law in force — which underwent a cosmetic reform in November 1987 — still contains many provisions that severely restrict the right to organize and to undertake collective action. For example, only the formation of factory unions is permitted, and only one per factory. (Article 3 of the labor code.) Attempts to form unions worthy of the name run into massive resistance from the bosses. One of their customary countermeasures is to form scab unions with a handful of "company loyalists" or workers that they pay off. Then, the necessary official recognition of the real union is as good as ruled out. Various other antiunion methods are used:

- Political firings, disciplinary measures, intimidation and blacklists.

● Conscription into the army. A period of at least five-years work in an arms factory is established as the equivalent of three years military service. Since, in the name of "national security," any action by the workforce is banned in plants that are classed as belonging to defense industry, any attempt by the workers to organize themselves independently runs up against particularly hard resistance from the reactionaries.

In June 1987, the Ministry of Labor published a set of "guidelines" for "dealing with industrial conflicts in important defense industries." Among the 72 companies listed were the following: the Ton Il Co. (an armaments factory controlled by the internationally notorious cult leader Sun Myung Moon); Hyundai Precision Engineering in the Masan-Changwon free zone; the Daehan shipbuilder and the Daewoo Precision Co. in Pusan; the Daehung machine factory in Incheon; and Samyang Metal in Asan. All these factories play an important role in the workers' movement in their respective regions.

Banning of union political activity

Samgong Products in Incheon is also classified as a "defense industry." It makes gas masks for riot police. The same goes for Samyang Industries, which makes tear gas. Even the National Plastic Company, whose main line is household goods, was included in the category of "defense industry" because it makes the plastic parts of tear gas grenades.

● Banning recognized unions that engage in political activity. (Article 12 of the labor code.)

● Stalling in the recognition process. Won Mee Koung, the chair of the factory union at Se Chung Products, a ceramics manufacturer, told us: "First the documents and signatures were stolen from us by a group of thugs in the factory. Later, the regional Labor Ministry claimed that they had never received the application."

● The existing labor code (Article 12) bans any form of solidarity with workforces involved in struggles. Even church aid agencies, such as the Industrial Mission, are in principle not supposed to "interfere." Many people are arrested and jailed under the pretext of "interference of a third party." In a meeting with the trade-union regional coordinating committee in Incheon, we were able to see how a Samyang Metal unionist, who had just spent three months in prison, was greeted. In July 1987, he was sentenced to 10 months in prison solely on the accusation of "interference by a third party." Numerous solidarity actions forced his early release.

● In cases of industrial actions (go-slows, groups of workers going to the toilet at the same time, factory assemblies and strikes), the management may order ruthless lockouts. Article 17 of the labor code

Sinae Electronics strike

ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1988, a section of the workers at the Sinae Electronics Company tried to organize a union. The factory has 350 workers, 280 of whom are women, and it makes car stereos.

As in many places in South Korea, new workers have to sign undated resignations. Work takes place under military discipline. The workplaces, cafeterias, toilets and accommodations (housing a large part of the workers) are under video-camera surveillance. Every morning, the workers have to take part in a religious service before starting work.

The factory manager, a certain Chung Jin-jong, whose father is a well-known preacher, preaches the sermon himself, admonishing the workers to obey his orders without hesitation. Moreover, he expects to be addressed as "father."

The workday starts between 7:50 and 8:30, with the unpaid time spent in the "religious service." The lunch break is 40 minutes, and in the morning and afternoon there is a 10-minute break. Women are obliged to work 100 hours overtime a month on the average; men, 140.

Women's wages are 5,100 Won (about \$7.50) a day (roughly 153,000 Won, about \$232, a month), while men get 180,000 (\$263). There is a yearly bonus of 220 percent of the basic wage of 115,000 Won (about \$167). For overtime, the bosses pay only the base wage, without the legal-required supplement of 50%.

On-the-job safety is unknown in production. The shops are constantly full of lead smoke, so that many workers vomit.

After the setting up of the factory union, which only 103 women and seven men joined, the bosses tried to break it by every means. After the first concessions concerning wages, working time and conditions, the factory was closed the next day for 48 hours. When the union members staged a sit-down strike against this, the unorganized workers were forced to work through the night.

On October 5, the union members were stopped from going into the factory. Once again there was a strike. Workers were fired for political reasons. After new negotiations, the management reorganized the workforce. Those who had participated in the strike were isolated in one shop.

On October 9, some 95% of the organized workers voted for a new strike. A secretary of the official metalworkers' union led a meeting with the unorganized and the management, in which he slandered the strikers as Communists. On October 18, the leaders of the factory union were fired without notice. When these unions tried to enter the factory, they were prevented from doing so by Ku Sa Dae thugs organized by the "union secretary," La Ki-bong.

The following day, there were violent attacks by the goons. After about 70 organized workers complained to the metalworkers' union, they tried to go back into the plant. But they were met there by the Ku Sa Dae, who threw bricks and sand mixed with chill pepper at them. The riot police intervened. Twenty women workers were seriously injured. A trade-unionist lost his right eye. After that, the women tried to mobilize support in the region. They visited all the unions in the district.

On October 21, at 7:00 pm, a joint demonstration was held. Again the police intervened, beating people brutally. Many were seriously injured. On October 22, the strikers again mobilized the public for a demonstration and collected money for the strike fund. However, since the police sealed off the rally site, the action had to be held outside the district.

The support committee for the women's struggle at Sinae Electronics has asked for solidarity messages be sent to the following address: Park Jong-Suk, 821 Kuro Dong, Juro Ku, Seoul, Korea. ★

explicitly permits lockouts.

● More and more, managements fake factory closures in order to force workers back to work and to break up the new unions. The threat of factory closures is ever present. Some foreign firms, such as Data Control, have in fact already withdrawn from South Korea. The Flair Fashion company, a subsidiary of the West German textile firm Adler, is in the process of doing this. It is opening up plants in Sri Lanka

and Peking, after it failed to prevent the setting up of a new textile workers' union in its Iri factory, where there were 1,500 workers.

Korean firms also are increasingly turning toward other countries. But up until now most of the projected factory closings have been ruses. As soon as they managed to choke off the new factory unions, in many cases the plants have been reopened.

● Use of commando forces. Private terror

groups have been employed more frequently in labor struggles in the recent period, inasmuch as the police have been held back. The formation of these groups, which call themselves "Ku Sa Dae" (roughly, "Save the Company commando groups") follows the same pattern everywhere. Backward members of the workforce but also people from outside the plants (unemployed, former cops and secret-service men) are hired by the management, boozed up and set loose on strikers. Particularly women workers are subjected to ruthless brutality.

At the end of October, 96 trade-union unionists were in prison. They included the chair of the Seoul subway workers' union, as well as the chair of the Hyundai Engine factory union, Kwon Yong-mok.

Despite this repression, the new workers' movement is growing in South Korea. It is young as a political force. In the South Korean factories, there is hardly a single old worker. Many workers, especially women, are under 20.

Job security unheard of in most plants

This is scarcely surprising. Only younger people can take a minimum 11-hour workday, with only a few days vacation a year.

Job security, to say nothing of working conditions fit for human beings, is still a foreign word in most plants. We were able to inspect chemical, metallurgical and wood-manufacturing plants that would be closed immediately in this country. Milling machine operators worked without protection, exposed to metal dust. Punch and other presses were not equipped with minimal safety devices. In the final stage in the production of cooking pots, the women workers stood continuously over rinsing tubs and breathed in solvents. Sharp-edged and jagged pieces of metal lay around. Production shops were unbearably noisy, and were either drafty or unventilated.

Many workers have only two free days a month, quite a few work every day. In the Sephoong lumber company in Kunsan, a 76 hour workweek is the rule.

The wages are as low as the workday is long. And the lowest waged workers are mainly women. Even when women do the same work as men, they get substantially less pay.

On the other hand, productivity and company profits have exploded to such an extent that the contradiction is becoming increasingly untenable.

Over the last decade recurring student mobilizations have taken the lead in the movement, and often stood alone. But today, an awakening working class, which has often lost its fear and respect of the patriarchal bosses and state apparatus, is joining in. While the democratic unions are still young and generally still organizationally weak, they have arisen in struggle. That gives them a certain strength that is often lacking in our unions.

For example, we were astonished to be able to go into factories and production shops without having to ask the management first. When we mentioned this to a fellow unionist in a Seoul factory, he answered graphically: "If the management prevented the union from bringing in visitors, the union would also turn away the management's visitors."

Being an officer in a Korean union brings no advantages. The repression comes down on them most directly and most severely. We did not see any factory where there had not been firings, arrests, arbitrary factory closings, violence or other forms of persecution.

The great majority of the trade-unionists we met and talked to were clear about the fact that their struggle goes far beyond questions of wages, working hours and other factory demands. The average wage increase of 13.5% won has, moreover, already been wiped out by price rises. The feeling is widespread many of their problems are the result of the political domination of Korea by foreign powers, especially the United States, and economic domination by foreign firms.

In Hyundai, the Japanese company Mitsubishi is deeply involved; in Daewoo, the US company General Motors (Opel in West Germany). West German concerns, such as Adler Textil, C&A and Peek & Cloppenburg, extract huge profits from the exploitation of Korean textile dressmakers and seamstresses.

The new unions are fighting not only for better working conditions. They want to change the entire society, and they know that they have to take the leading role in accomplishing this. They expect no gains from the continuing existence of capitalism. And they insist that their struggle is not separate from that of the entire Korean people for democracy, independence and reunification of the country.

Discussions inside the trade-union movement

The most important issues being discussed today in the new trade-union movement are the following:

1. How can the organizational problems at the factory level be overcome, and how can the unity of the workers' movement in the entire country be restored and consolidated?
2. What sort of relationship should there be to the state-controlled confederation, the FKTU, today and in the future?

On the first question is there is a broad consensus today. It involves drawing the lessons of the previous struggles, consolidating internal democracy and developing a systematic educational program for the mass of members, as well as building a leadership, in order to achieve greater unity and higher consciousness.

In this connection, the campaign that has been going on since June for reform of the

labor code is playing a crucial role. The fight for revising the labor laws can be understood as an effort to take advantage of the present political situation, in which all the repressive aspects of the dictatorship are being challenged. Since the presentation of the new draft labor law at an open hearing of the trade unions, numerous actions, demonstrations and rallies have developed in the individual factories, up to and including converging regional marches and a national mass petition campaign.

Independent union movement must be built

The movement's growing political and organizational unity is reflected in the emergence of inter-enterprise alliances. At the moment, there are eight territorial democratic union confederations, that is, regional union councils, four nationwide confederations in specific industries and three individual territorial unions.

The three territorial unions are the Chungye Textile Workers' Union, the Seoul Shoe Industry Workers' Union, and the Seoul Printers' Union.

The four industrial unions are: the National Confederation of Hospital Workers, including 140 workplace unions; the Union of Research and Scientific Workers; the media union; and the union of workers in financial institutions (other than banks).

All-industries regional confederations exist in Seoul, Incheon, Seungham, Pusan, Jinju, Masan-Changwon, Northern Chulla and Kwangju/South Chulla.

In two other regions, including south Kyungi, preparatory work is being done to set up confederations. The regional confederations at the moment include more than 250 unions with over 85,000 members. The first regional confederation of the new unions arose in the notorious Masan-Changwon free-trade zone in December 1987, as the result of the political struggle in June, as well as of the strike wave that lasted from June until September 1987. A nationwide committee has been formed to lead the campaign to reform the labor law.

After they gain official recognition, unions have to join the FKTU, but in most cases their membership remains a formality. The FKTU is fighting the new union movement with every possible means.

FKTU functionaries themselves organize Ku Sa Dae commando groups. They try to win over newly organized unions. However, in some localities the Minju No Jo has managed to win the local confederations. We met a whole number of trade unionists that consider reform of the FKTU possible in the longer run.

But the great majority think that directly building an independent union confederation is an unavoidable task. "Building an independent union confederation would also step up the pressure on the FKTU," thought a trade unionist in the highly organized Seoul taxi drivers' federation. ★

"We can have no more illusions in the Aquino government"

HOW DO most workers and peasants in the Philippines view the Aquino government today, and how have their views changed since the revolution in 1986?

Well, I wish to impress upon you that when we ousted the dictator Marcos and we placed Corazon Aquino in power, we built up great hopes that the basic problems of the people would be addressed and that there would be some concrete change in the lives of the people, especially among the basic masses.

But then, although we opted for a position of political collaboration in the early months of the Aquino government, the next thing we knew the promises she made during the elections and the claims of what her government would do were in stark contrast to the actual performance of her government. This clearly showed that she and her government were incapable of delivering on the basic promises made. There has been a failure to make swift and decisive reforms in the country.

"Militant organizations had great hopes in the new government"

Bayan, as a federation of territorial and sectoral organizations, includes the organized workers and the organized farmers in my country. I am referring to the militant workers' union, the nationalist and militant workers' union, the KMU, and the militant peasants' organization, the KMP. These organizations also had great hopes in the new government to address the basic demands of the workers and peasants. But then they realized that when the workers continued to exert their right to organize and to go on strike — as the highest and ultimate expression of their demands — they were still confronted with the force of the military. This is that same as what had been done to them during the time of Marcos.

So, for instance, I want to call your attention to what happened to the farmers in January 1987 when they marched to the Mendiola Bridge near the home of the president, Malacañang Palace. They had a very basic demand which was land, land ownership. The farmers knew that the central issue of the struggle is land ownership. They knew that seven out of ten farmers are landless, and that a few families own and control the land in the country. But when they marched they were simply met with the full force of the marines, instantaneously kill-

ZENAIDA UY is the general secretary of Bayan, an umbrella coalition of labor and other mass organizations in the Philippines, including the main trade-union federation (May 1 Movement, KMU) and the Philippines Peasant Movement (KMP). During a speaking tour of the United States in September, Uy was interviewed by Sarah Lovell. The interview was first published in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* 59 in January this year.

ing 18 young farmers. And so the farmers, especially now after 30 months of power for the Cory Aquino regime, realize that their hope for ownership of land will never be realized under this government.

So they have resorted to what they call peasant initiatives as the basis of our focus for authentic land reform, which will include the following steps:

- We concentrate on lands which are idle, lands which are owned by government. We strongly suggest that these lands, which will remain idle as long as they are owned by government, be redistributed to the landless farmers for free.
- There are lands that were acquired by Marcos, the deposed dictator, and his cronies as well, through illegal and immoral activities. We insist that these lands, because they were immorally procured, also be given to landless farmers for free.
- There are lands that are foreclosed by government banks which are just lying idle. We strongly propose that these lands also be redistributed to the farmers free of charge.
- And, finally, since there are vast tracks of lands — hundreds and thousand of acres — owned by just a few families, we strongly propose that the government negotiate with the owners and purchase a good proportion of it. Enough acreage should be left for their families and their children to own, but we insist that the rest of this private land should be purchased by government at



Corazon Aquino (DF)

the current market price, and then turned over to the farmers who need it for free.

Meanwhile, the big landowners may be motivated to open business concerns to generate employment. That is the whole approach of the KMP and Bayan as far as an authentic land reform program is concerned.

"The country is rich with the resources needed for industrialization"

But we do not end with simply redistribution. We insist that redistribution is not enough. There should be a complete financial and technical assistance program established to help the farmer who receives land to become productive, self-reliant, and self-sufficient. For once he should have an adequate surplus product from his land so that he can purchase the goods which are produced by the working sector, by the working class. We see a relationship between the power of the farmers and power of the workers. By becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant, the good produced by the working class will now be affordable to the farmers.

The flip-side of an authentic land reform program is what we call the nationalist industrialization program, initiated by the workers. What does this mean? Realizing that the country's economy is basically dominated by foreign big business, we strongly insist that the time has come for us to exert our right to a nationalist industrialization program. The country is rich with the resources needed for industrialization. We have the labor power — skilled, dedi-

cated, persistent, patient labor power. And finally we have an educated layer of the population which could possibly help with this development.

Here is what we intend to do: First we look into basic industries that are now in the hands of foreign big business. We strongly propose that about 11 or 12 basic industries be owned and run by the government. Why? Because first and foremost these enterprises should be run on the principle of service to the people rather than as a source of profit. What are they? The drug industry, chemicals, communications, transportation, food processing, garment manufacturing, light and water. These are examples, there are others. We believe that these should be owned and run by government (but should include at the same time built-in mechanisms to control corruption). For example, if light and water become a concern of government, a service and not a basic source of profit, it will have affordable rates.

In addition to the basic industries which would be owned and run by government, we propose very strongly the formation and development of more cooperatives — cooperatives of farmers, workers, consumers and for credit, and so on. We know of countries that have been successful along these lines. There is no reason why the Philippines cannot adopt these ideas. There are already some cooperatives in place, but we still insist that this approach be studied very thoroughly and promoted by the people.

Thirdly, there are private Filipinos whose skills need to be tapped to come up with what we call the development of a Filipino entrepreneur class. This private business sector should be promoted. And, finally, knowing that we are part of a global village, there are foreign investors who should be welcomed — so long as the Filipino people control their overall activity.

What I'm trying to say is very self-evident. If we are to have a 60% ownership in an industry in favor of the Filipinos, then let this be in writing and let it be implemented to the letter. Let's not just have a simple paper title — 60% on paper but not in practice. Let us have a mixed economy, and only then will the workers be able to achieve just wages.

These are the two sides of our approach to the economic betterment of our country. After 30 months of Aquino's presidency, we in Bayan have definitely reached a conclusion. After all the anti-people, anti-poor activities of the government, we now believe that we can have no more illusions about the ability of the present government of Corazon Aquino to deliver basic change. It has become instead anti-people, anti-poor and pro-US.

■ Can you tell us how the guerrilla forces, the New People's Army (NPA), have fared since the breakdown of the cease-fire with the army? Are they gaining ground, or

has the government been able to consolidate its position?

This is really an interesting question. According to the reports from the military itself, as they appear in the newspapers in my country, General Fidel Ramos insists that armed resistance has grown. At the same time, even though it is growing, things are still under control and they even have a timetable for the final destruction of the armed resistance — a maximum of three years.

But then the former defense minister and now senator Juan Ponce Enrile says, on the contrary, that the military is having a difficult time. So we read in the papers that the New People's Army troops are getting killed and their hideouts are being discovered, which is open to question because no less than the former defense ministers says the opposite.

■ You don't know which of these views represents the facts and which is disinformation intended to influence public opinion?

It is stated in the papers that the NPA can now strike at will. So even if in fact there is success by the government in killing the guerrillas we know that there is a running war in the countryside. The NPA can strike at will, and some experts say that there is an indication of organizational capabilities. But there are others who think that perhaps, by itself, the armed resistance will just slowly fade away.

I want to look at the whole situation from a very objective viewpoint. If we look at the conditions which exist in Filipino society now, there is continuing impoverishment of the people, injustice, a double standard of morality — one kind for the rich and another for the poor. There is escalating corruption, there is grim and gruesome repression, there is a frightening escalation of human rights' violations. The very poor people — landless peasants, underpaid workers, dislocated urban slum dwellers, marginalized indigenous peoples, underpaid professionals — are the very victims now of this wave of human rights' violations.

So if you look at the conditions, there is nothing discernible in the objective situation that has changed. The conditions which led to the development of the armed resistance remain.

If we could say that conditions are much better, the armed resistance would simply have to terminate its activities. But the contrary is true. As the democratic space has closed down, become more and more constricted, it's pushing people to the wall. Their options, which would exist if the democratic space were wider, are now reduced and reduced again. Some will choose, as their last options, to defend themselves and their lives through armed resistance. And so, while General Ramos says that things are under control, that is exactly what was said by Marcos in his time.

■ You say that the workers and farmers are being victimized by the government and vigilante groups.² It certainly seems that there is need for self-defense.

Yes, this is true. But still I wish to impress upon you that we in Bayan will continue pushing for a peaceful, non-armed, but militant approach to change.

It is particularly sad — and this is also one of our concerns — that the very people who have been victimized under the Aquino regime, who have been assassinated, abducted, or just killed, are men and women who have opted for a peaceful approach to change.

Our previous general secretary, Lean Alejandro, was a young man and father of a seven-year-old. He was a man of peace. He believed in protest, he believed in pressure politics, and he was assassinated within the gates of our office one afternoon last year, on September 19, 1987 [see IV 127].

While we in Bayan deeply respect those who opt for armed resistance, we will continue to exert our legality and we will continue pushing our right to organize and to express the people's views in favor of a change. This is guaranteed by the constitution for the first time in our history. We have a provision which states that legitimate people's organizations can be promoted and will be protected. These rights are what we have to exert.

■ What is your attitude towards the accord which was recently announced concerning the US military bases in the Philippines, and what is your attitude toward the US bases themselves?³

Let me say that we in Bayan have long articulated our misgivings about the position of the foreign secretary Raul Manglapus, which is simply in favor of amending the original mercenary approach to the whole issue of the bases. We consider the bases to be the tombstone of our lost sovereignty. We strongly propose that steps be taken for the eventual termination of this agreement. That would be the proper course.

It is very painful that the focus of attention around the military bases' review has been the proposed rent increase for the next two years. Of course, this could be maximized to the benefit of those who would like the bases to stay, but we in Bayan have long articulated our contrary position.

There are half-truths and lies that must be told to our people to justify the bases. First,

1. The NPA guerrillas are led by the Philippines Communist Party (PCP), with around 30,000 fighters.

2. The vigilante groups are paramilitary organizations supported by the government, which participate in the counter-revolutionary struggle, mainly organizing attacks against left-wing political personalities. See "Amnesty International denounces human rights violations", IV 141, May 16, 1988.

3. This accord, signed in Washington on October 17, 1988, allows the US to use the Clark and Subic Bay bases in the Philippines (the biggest American bases in Asia) until 1991, the expiration date of the lease signed in 1947. The US will increase its rent up to \$481 million a year.

the US claims that the bases are necessary to protect the Philippines. Historically, there is no proof of that. American soldiers were there when the Japanese attacked and they could not help us.

Number two, they claim that the military bases in the country are needed for the maintenance of peace in the region. This is also not substantiated historically. As early as 1900 we have, of course, data showing that the military bases in my country were used as launching pads for military intervention in the Pacific — in the Boxer Rebellion in China, in Siberia, in Cambodia, in Korea, in Vietnam. So we see that the US presence in my country has been used to make war and for aggression, rather than for peaceful purposes.

Then, if you look at the social and moral cost of the bases, we have data showing that the number of prostitutes and child prostitutes is increasing. The youngest child registered to be a prostitute is seven. They have even resorted to putting prostitutes in a boxing ring, and of course we know that the number of children born out of wedlock and with American paternity is increasing. We also know that there is a confirmed growing number of AIDS victims. Though some of this may be related to foreign tourists, a good many of these social ills are directly caused by the presence of foreign military servicemen.

So we in Bayan have long insisted on the repudiation of the bases, the termination of the agreement by 1991, and the conversion of the bases for more peaceful uses. For example, Clark Air Base could be converted to a huge international airport with shopping and an industrial or commercial complex. Subic Bay Naval Station can be converted to a huge shipbuilding complex — for repairs, maintenance and so on. The only other such complex in the region is in Singapore. Subic is one of the best ship-landing marine areas and it could be maximized for productive purposes. We are very sad that instead of pursuing this line, the focus of the negotiations was for an increase of the financial rent. That is mercenary and criminal.

■ **Has intervention by the United States declined from the time of Marcos, or does it continue as before, or has it grown?**

Well, let me just cite an example. We have experienced five coup attempts since Aquino came to power. The most serious involved Colonel Gregorio Honasan [see IV 126]. We have data showing that your very own American military expert, Colonel Victor Raphael, was very visible in the area where the forces of Honasan organized. He was found giving direct orders to the Filipino armed forces not to shoot members of Honasan's group which was staging the coup, and when the investigations were started he was simply sent out of the country.

We have data showing that there is an increase in CIA personnel and an increase in



the CIA budget for the Philippines. That is, of course, not accidental. We are also seeing a growing number of American statesmen visiting the country.

There has been dislocation suffered by the mass movement, and we in Bayan suffered because of the killings directed against our leaders and members. And of course there was the setback that immediately resulted from the electoral boycott error.⁴ And yet despite this, after a year we experienced a resurgence of the people's organizations, which indicates that more and more people realize that if they act individually they will just beat their heads against a stone wall. The lessons of the past year, and of the years under the Marcos regime, accentuate the lesson which must always be kept in mind: only a people united, organizationally pursuing much needed structural changes in the system, can really succeed in transforming society.

And so we witnessed a resurgence of people's organizations in their sectors and in their territories — more activities, more marches, more protests, and of course the coalitions of different groups based on particular issues. This is the picture for the year 1988. For example, there are groups of different political persuasions now united on the issue of the foreign debt. They know that the foreign debt service must be re-

duced to 10% instead of 40%. They know that there should be selective repudiation of the foreign debt. They know that somehow the possibility of a moratorium must be studied. Now there are groups all over the land that are united on the issue of the foreign debt. They may have differences on other matters, but they are united on that.

There is another coalition, the anti-bases coalition. It consists of groups that may not be united on the question of the foreign debt but are united on the bases. And then there is a group that may not agree on the bases and may not agree on the debt, but is united on the issue of civil liberties. This is the National Movement for Civil Liberties. And then there are groups of farmers that are united on the issue of land. And so there is the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform. These things indicate that more and more people know the meaning of collective efforts, pushing and pushing for basic reforms.

■ **I understand that Bayan is the largest mass organization because it unites other organizations, includ-**

4. Bayan, like the PCP, boycotted the February 1986 elections that brought Aquino to power. Since then, the PCP has made a self-criticism on this question. See the articles by Paul Petitjean in IV's 100, 102 and 103, June/July 1986.

ing the trade-union federation **KMU**. The **KMU** is an alliance of various trade unions and has been growing. There are also various political parties. Is there an ongoing discussion among these organizations?

Yes, and these are very healthy signs that eventually the principle of political pluralism will become a reality. For us this is meaningful because these are basically the indicators of a true democratic process. We would like to encourage more and more of this flowering. More and more groups and ideas are needed to discuss and decide what is to be done in a truly free and democratic manner. We in Bayan strongly insist on the need for respectful political pluralism.

But that is not what is actually happening, because now the problems of the country are being reduced simply to a problem of "democracy versus communism." And so all these groups fighting for change — the farmers fighting for land, the workers fighting for decent wages and humane working conditions — are simply lumped together as indicators of a communist trend. That is very sad. And despite this, more and more people also realize something else: If it is true, for example, that the call for all workers throughout the world to unite is a communist idea, then it is still not a bad idea. It is a just and proper call and should be supported. Some of the half-truths and the myths are beginning to be rethought.

They say that working for land reform is communist, so more people say "what's wrong with that?" The same is true of working for just wages — because the contradiction between workers and the capitalist is getting stronger. For the workers who demand what they truly deserve in terms of wages so they can support a family, "what is wrong with that?" This should be the direction of the struggle of the workers. And so, precisely because the communist hysteria is really strong, more and more people have come to realize that the myopic way of posing the problem in terms of "democracy versus communism" is in fact only half true. So there are glimmers of hope that as more and more people look at things objectively and scientifically and historically, they can begin to appreciate the validity and the justness of the people's struggle.

■ So would you say that people are getting educated in the struggle and that there is a resurgence in the Philippines today?

The rising expectations at the time of

Aquino's election simply could not be sustained. The problems are still there. It's even getting worse. The people who are poor — and these are the basic masses — are the very victims of militarization and the very targets of the so-called war policy based on the philosophy of low-intensity conflict. Now as repression increases you see a corresponding response from the people, which is to organize people's power,

So if we in the Philippines want the bases to be removed, we will also see to it that they do not just get transferred somewhere else in Asia.

We are encouraged because we also know that worldwide there is a growing disarmament movement, there is a growing anti-nuclear movement and there is a growing peace movement. We hope that together with all the freedom-loving peoples in other parts of the world we can overcome. We shall overcome.

■ I have two questions now that really fit together. What has been the response in the US to your tour so far? What can you advise us to do here to affect US policy?

Yes, I'm glad you raised that. As I go around I can't help but appreciate the enormous reservoir of goodwill from the Americans whom I have a chance of interacting with...

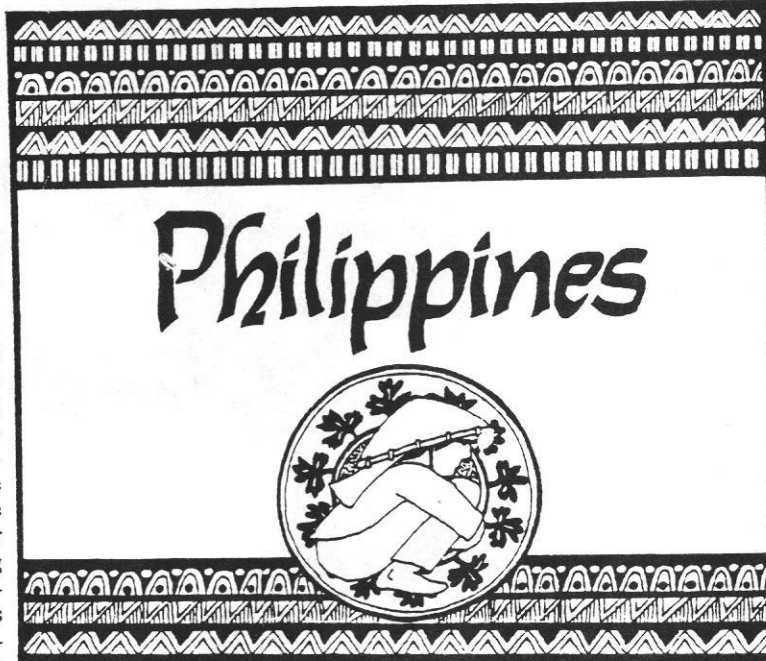
Those corporations owned by Americans will have to be dealt with because, although we know that some kind of employment has been generated by the presence of these companies

in the Philippines, we know that wages paid to the Filipino laborer working on a Dole plantation or for Del Monte are worlds apart from those paid to the Japanese or Korean workers by the same companies here on the mainland...

I see no reason why we cannot pursue changes peacefully. I see, for example, that more and more Americans understand the need to transform their own foreign policy and to solve their own internal problems — given how many Americans go to bed hungry every day. More Americans realize this and therefore are concerned over the fact that a good percentage of their tax dollars, which go to the Pentagon, are being channeled to military aid which is used against our people...

I just wish to point out to Americans that the struggle back home is very simple. It is a struggle for freedom. It is a struggle against hunger and exploitation. It is a struggle for freedom from injustice and exploitation. It is a struggle against US intervention. And, of course, it is a struggle for self-determination. It is a struggle to put an end to the continuing rape of our environment, the continuing plunder of our resources...

I call on all concerned Americans, especially those who are organized, to see the importance of coming up with something like a mass movement in the United States to bring about the greatest possible pressure to put an end to US intervention in my country. ★



exerting themselves for basic reforms.

What worries us in Bayan is that there are two possibilities. The Pentagon knows that more and more people now appreciate precisely the nature, the methodology, and the focus of US intervention. As the growing people's movement continues to exert its right to self-determination, it is the geopolitical/economic interests of the United States that are at stake. As more and more people insist on the need to put an end to US intervention, it is perhaps possible to continue the surrogate war, this proxy war being fought for the US by the Filipino armed forces. But we also see the possibility of an escalated war, a full-scale war, where once again American troops will be sent, as they were to Vietnam.

We do not want this to happen. This war is an internal matter, a question of Filipinos exerting their right to self-determination. Sending American soldiers will only lead to another Vietnam. Many of us know that we were indeed the first Vietnam, with the US being instrumental in the defeat of nationalist guerrilla forces in our country in the past. We have a legitimate fear that perhaps this could happen again.

This can be prevented by pressing the need to transform US foreign policy, which hinges around maintaining control of the Pacific and insists on a clear division of the world, that you are either pro-West, or you are pro-East. But we see glimpses of hope because there is a growing move among people in the Asia/Pacific region to unite.



SPANISH STATE

Women against violence

MORE THAN 2,500 women participated in three days of meetings organized around the theme of Violence Against Women, sponsored by the Coalition of Feminist Organizations in the Spanish state on December 4, 5 and 6, 1988, in San Diego de Compostello, Galicia. The mere presence of so many women, drawn from every region in the Spanish state, testifies to the remarkable health, vigor and militancy of the women's movement and the political space it has carved out in recent years.

More than thirty reports enabled those gathered to get an idea of the broad array of institutions that have an effect on the socialization of children. One of the themes raised was violence against women in the workplace, and the Women's Secretariat of the CCOO (Workers' Commissions, the trade-union confederation with links to the Communist Party), described workplace harassment in the following terms: "...a problem that is not named, that is not mentioned in statistics, that is not documented, nor defined, nor ruled on".

Three proposals were made after this report. First, that women report these attacks, and no longer stay silent; second, that the unions take this theme up as a regular part of their daily activities; and third, that the reports become more public, not restricted to the workplace where they occurred.

Although it was clear that much progress has been made in bringing domestic violence and rape out of the shadows of the "private" and into the public sphere, it was equally obvious that many public institutions still do not take sexual harassment seriously, and that the government's response of endowing women's commissariats, information centers, and battered women's shelters is no more than a band-aid. The fact that violence within the home has been officially recognized is, of course, a gain for the women's movement, but the women's commissariats have not made inquiries more efficient, and the shelters do not cover existing needs.

Nonetheless, the outcome of the meeting was upbeat, as women reaffirmed their self-activity, and celebrated the movement that has permitted so many new ideas, reflections and actions to grow. They ended by endorsing the general strike called for December 14 (see IV 155). ★

FRANCE

LCR congress

THE Revolutionary Communist League, (LCR, French section of the Fourth International), held its ninth congress from January 19-22 in St. Denis, near Paris.

Around 250 delegates and observers were present to vote on documents covering the political situation, women's liberation, and the construction of a revolutionary party. One thing they could all agree on was that their gathering had certainly provided a very high level of discussion, and demonstrated the active involvement of the LCR's members in all the major working class struggles taking place in France today.

The major area of contention for the competing platforms, whether they supported the general line of the outgoing Central Committee's political theses or not, concerned the LCR's involvement with and attitude towards the ex-Juquin committees, most of which have now been transformed into an organization called the Nouvelle Gauche (New Left).

The general line of the political theses presented by the outgoing CC majority was approved by a clear majority of votes (55.3%), but the congress was much more divided on the theses on the construction of a revolutionary party.

One grouping of the outgoing majority received largest minority vote of 38.86%, and another, in agreement with the general line of the political theses but not with the line taken over the last few months in the ex-Juquin committees, got 13.74%. The largest tendency opposed to the majority line won 25.12%, and another, 12.78%.

Finally, two smaller groupings received 5.68% and 2.08% respectively. The new 55-member Central Committee was elected on a proportional basis according to the support for different positions.

The other major discussions were around texts presented on women's liberation work and feminization of the LCR. The document of the Women's Secretariat was adopted by a 52% majority, and the delegates voted to elect a minimum of 30% women onto the Central Committee (36% were actually elected), with the aim of reaching gender parity by the next congress.

Unfortunately, against the decisions of the congress, a few comrades from "Tendency 3" (represented by two delegates) decided to leave the LCR and join the Nouvelle Gauche, which they saw as the only existing framework for a political recomposition to the left of the traditional workers' parties.

Now that the show is over, the real task of continuing to build an active force to intervene in the workers' movement and French political life must be resumed. The League Communiste Révolutionnaire will be standing independent candidates in the forthcoming municipal elections, and organizing a campaign around the European elections — against the Europe of the bosses, of austerity, of unemployment and armaments. ★

OBITUARY

Max Goldman (1905-1988)

ON DECEMBER 23, 1988, a memorial meeting was held in Los Angeles for comrade Max Goldman, dead at the age of 83, after literally a lifetime of revolutionary commitment. Many speakers, both from Solidarity, the revolutionary organization in which Max was active even in the last few weeks of his life, and from the Socialist Workers Party, his former party, gave moving commentaries on his life of activism, and read some of his poems.

Max was born in Jacobovitz, Poland, in 1905, and came to the United States at the age of eight. He adapted to the new country quickly, and studied hard at school. Although he had to leave school at thirteen to work and help support his family, he never lost his desire for learning, managing to take night courses in Philosophy, History and English at the New York City College. After finding Max Eastman's Russian Revolution in a bookstore, he became interested in the socialist vision of a world free from want, misery and violence, and eventually dedicated his life to the fight for such a world.

His life spanned the working class and progressive struggle of the twentieth century, from the Sacco and Vanzetti defense campaign in the 20s, to organizing the unemployed in Minneapolis in the 30s, to the civil rights and anti-war struggles of the 60s, to pro-choice demonstrations in the 80s.

His organizational ties were just as consistent to his principles. After first joining the Young Communist League in 1926, he quickly saw the process of degeneration taking place, and before even reading Trotsky's draft program, decided to join the Communist League of America, forerunner to the SWP. After his expulsion in 1983, he began the search for a new revolutionary direction that would protect the continuity of revolutionary Marxist thought. He helped found Solidarity, and both he and his wife Shevi made an invaluable contribution to that newly conceived organization.

The international revolutionary movement will miss his dedication, knowledge and the historical link he represented. He will not be forgotten. ★

Deepening economic crisis forces Jaruzelski to negotiate

THE FAMOUS ROUNDTABLE around which Jaruzelski's right-hand men were supposed to sit along with Solidarnosc leaders has been reinstalled in the Jablonna Palace near Warsaw, after being dismantled last fall. There is renewed talk of legalizing the banned union under certain conditions, as well as an agreement on a social pact enabling the regime to carry through its economic reform.

CYRIL SMUGA

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the opening of negotiations between General Jaruzelski's team and the Solidarnosc leaders around Lech Walesa and Jacek Kuron is no bolt from the blue. The regime's crisis has reached a point of no return:

- An economic crisis, with falling production, galloping inflation (60% in 1988, according to official estimates) and growing difficulties in meeting the interest on the foreign debt.

- A political crisis within the bureaucracy shown by the resignation threats made at the last Central Committee Plenum of the Polish CP by the four main leaders of the regime (first secretary and chief of state Wojciech Jaruzelski, premier and Politburo member Mieczyslaw Rakowski, as well as ministers of the interior and defense Czeslaw Kiszczak and Florian Sawicki).

- A social crisis, of which the recent strikes in Elblag and Lodz are only the first rumblings.

- A crisis of social control, with the revival after the spring and summer 1988 strikes of independent mass structures of Solidarnosc in the factories, the weakening of ties between these structures and the union leadership grouped around Lech Walesa, as well as the appearance of groupings seeking to replace this leadership. In this context, the Rakowski government has chosen to accelerate the restructuring of its power base.

The government's objective, tacitly supported by the imperialist bourgeoisie and the IMF, is to integrate the country's economy more into the world market and, together with this, to open the way for the

growth of a new private sector.

It is clear that such a reform will result in increased exploitation of the workers and the closing of many unprofitable enterprises — in short, in worse conditions for the workers.

In order to carry through this project, the regime needs the explicit support of recognized working-class leaders, who are the only ones capable of heading off an intensive social explosion. This is the meaning of the proposal for negotiations formulated by the recent CP Central Committee Plenum.

The regime suggested that there was a possibility of legalizing Solidarnosc if the union leaders pledged to prevent a blow-up, in particular a spread of strikes, over two years; supported the economic reform project; worked to increase production; condemned "extremists"; and promised not to accept material aid from Western unions.

Depriving Solidarnosc of political independence

In short, the proposal was for no less than "normalizing" Solidarnosc, as Rakowski said to the Plenum, by depriving it both of political independence (through the signing of a social pact) and material independence (through ending international trade-union aid).

In a telephone interview, Jozef Pinior, leader of the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PPS-RD), noted: "Up until now, the nomenklatura has owned the country without having the attributes of ownership, which created a

highly precarious situation. The aim of the reform is to at least partially give nomenklatura members the legitimacy conferred by genuine ownership."

This phenomenon is not new. What has changed is the scale. In a telephone interview, Andrzej Gwiazda, one of the founders of the independent union and vice-chair of Solidarnosc when it was legal, said:

"We are seeing a generalization of phenomena such as the creation by several directors of limited companies taking exclusive charge of selling all the products made by the factories that they manage....The managers thus profit from their positions and from the public infrastructure to pocket income from selling state production to other state enterprises. This is robbery."

Solidarnosc activists should organize

A similar view was taken by the Working Group of the National Commission of Solidarnosc in a document drawn up in December and republished in mid-January in the official weekly *Polityka*.

"Thanks to the support of the US State Department, the policy of an understanding and reform has gotten the upper hand....The understanding in question has to be one by which the group ready for compromise...will get political concessions in exchange for guaranteeing the economic interests of the system. That means a commitment on the part of the opposition groups to keep the society from rebelling against a decline in its standard of living and therefore against an increase in exploitation. The economic reform, as can already be seen, means transforming the state enterprises into limited companies formed by private organizations and individuals."

Therefore, the Working Group is calling on Solidarnosc activists to fight for wage increases everywhere, to organize union groups in the limited companies and in the private sector.

Lech Walesa has said that he is ready to negotiate, and this agreement was confirmed by National Executive Commission (KKW) of Solidarnosc. This does not mean, however, that the Solidarnosc leaders are ready to accept all of the regime's conditions.

The KKW resolution stresses in particular the need to protect the interests of society [i.e., the masses] harmed by the economic reform and to respect Solidarnosc's statutory framework.

If the union negotiators maintained this position at the roundtable, the negotiations could not lead anywhere, unless that bureaucracy were driven into a corner by a new nationwide wave of strikes. Thus, simply agreeing to negotiation may be badly received by many opposition activists, who consider that overthrowing the regime is on the agenda. ★