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An Phobacht

Political Status for Republican Prisoners! **British Labour Party Debates Ireland As Thatcher Stonewalls**

Exclusive Feature

*Interview With Polish
Opposition Leader Jacek Kuron*

Middle East

*Behind Israeli
War Threats*

Reagan Uses 'Food Weapon' Against Vietnam

Why Capitalists Fear Effect of French Election

By Will Reissner

The reactions to Socialist Party candidate François Mitterrand's sweeping victory in the May 10 presidential elections in France showed that voters there did not view the results as simply a change of faces or personalities. Mitterrand's victory was seen universally as a mandate for major changes in French society.

French capitalists were plunged into deep gloom by Mitterrand's 52.2 percent of the vote in metropolitan France. Working people, on the other hand, celebrated the Socialist candidate's victory with spontaneous demonstrations and dancing in the streets of cities and towns throughout the country.

Mitterrand was elected on the basis of a program calling for the nationalization of major sectors in French industry and improvements in social benefits for working people.

His program promised to move toward institution of a thirty-five-hour workweek. It pledged to substantially increase the minimum wage and old age benefits on July 1. It promised to increase pensions and allow people to retire at age sixty with 50 percent of their regular salary rather than the current 25 percent.

Family allotments would be raised 25 percent and housing allocations 50 percent on July 1. Young people seeking their first job would receive benefits pegged at 50 percent of the minimum wage while looking for work. Mitterrand also pledged to create 210,000 new public service jobs.

Giscard Defended Austerity

By contrast, incumbent President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had to defend his policy of making the workers bear the costs of the international capitalist recession through attacks on their standard of living and social benefits. Giscard's reelection would have meant continued cuts in social benefits and government spending, while allowing unemployment to rise beyond the present 1.7 million without any substantial jobs programs.

In fact, Giscard's program was the same one now being carried out by Britain's Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Reagan.

French capitalists gave clear testimony to their view of Mitterrand's victory. In the first two days after the election, prices on the Paris stock exchange nose-dived 22 percent. Investors saw the paper value of their assets shrink by some \$7.27 billion.

The exchange rate of the French franc also plummeted on international money

markets as the rich tried to convert their assets into other currencies or gold.

Although stock prices revived somewhat in subsequent days, they stabilized at a level 14 percent below the pre-election mark.

The gloom of the capitalists was deepened by the spontaneous outpouring of enthusiasm by French workers over Mitterrand's victory. Throughout France workers took to the streets to express their excitement over what they saw as a dramatic improvement in the relationship of forces between them and the employers.

In Paris more than 100,000 people converged on the Place de la Bastille, the city's traditional working-class gathering place. There they heard victory speeches by leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties.

Outside Paris the response was summed up by a headline in the French daily *Le Monde*: "People Rejoice in Provinces."

'We Won, We Won!'

In Lille, thousands of workers poured into the streets to celebrate. In Grenoble, the main arteries of the city were impassible for hours. Huge traffic jams were caused by thousands of celebrating, horn-blowing motorists. The Socialist mayor of Grenoble organized a "people's fête" in the city's sports arena, providing a free buffet for thousands.

In Nantes, huge crowds surged through the city chanting "We Won, We Won!" There was a spontaneous party downtown, with dancing in the streets late into the night.

At one thirty-story housing project in Nantes, residents threw open their windows and began cheering when the television news announced the voting results. They quickly descended to the project's parking lot, bringing food and drink to set up a buffet and party. In the words of a *Le Monde* reporter, there was "drinking and dancing for much of the night."

"In other cities in the provinces," the report continued, "there were very large and spontaneous demonstrations of enthusiasm. Concerts of horn-blowing, dancing in the streets and parades marked the election of Mr. Mitterrand. The joy of his supporters was particularly seen in the streets of Bastia, Rouen, Nimes, Tour, Nice, Clermont-Ferrand, Guéret, Le Havre, Montpellier, Toulouse, and Bordeaux."

On the day after the election, workers staged victory parties in many factories. Mitterrand received the votes of 70 percent

of industrial workers, and they saw his victory as a victory for themselves.

At the mammoth Renault auto plant in Billancourt, outside of Paris, the day after the election was one Monday morning where "there are smiles on the rain-soaked faces" entering the factory. When workers were asked "How's it going?" they responded "It's going much better today," *Le Monde* noted.

The Renault workers discussed how Mitterrand's victory could help their struggle for a thirty-five-hour workweek and in negotiations with management on wages, retirement, jobs for young people, and other concerns.

Workers Feel Stronger

French workers feel stronger since the election. In particular they see Mitterrand's victory as a blow against the bitter sectarianism and disunity that has characterized the working-class parties and union federations in recent years. Because of that disunity, their ability to respond to attacks on their standard of living has been hampered.

But the fact that Mitterrand overwhelmingly received the votes of Communist voters as well as Socialist voters, and the Communist Party leadership's statements that they are willing to cooperate with Mitterrand, shows that the disunity can be overcome by pressure from the ranks.

This is particularly important since Mitterrand has stated he will dissolve the National Assembly, France's parliament, and call new elections for June. Although the two biggest workers parties had been expected to win a majority in the last legislative elections in 1978, their sectarian in-fighting during the election campaign led to a majority for the capitalist parties.

The focus of workers struggles now is to force the Socialist and Communist parties to cooperate in the legislative elections to insure a majority for the workers parties in that body in June.

This is all the more important since the legislative districts were drawn up by the rightist parties in such a way as to put the SP and CP at a severe disadvantage in translating their votes into parliamentary seats. For example, in the 1978 elections the Socialist Party outpolled both the Gaullists and the Giscardians, but ended up with far fewer seats than either.

The presidential results show that the workers parties can win a solid majority. As Alain Krivine, a leader of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the French section of the Fourth International, noted:

"Despite the immense resources available for the reelection of the incumbent president, despite the years of divisions of the workers movement, the tremendous desire for change was stronger."

Krivine added: "We must concretize this desire for unity by insuring that there is a parliamentary majority for the parties of

the workers movement and by imposing a government made up of the Socialist Party and Communist Party."

Rejection of Austerity and Militarization

In terms of both domestic and international policy, the Mitterrand government will be under strong pressure from the workers to follow a different course than the governments of its major NATO allies.

At a time when Ronald Reagan has announced cuts in Social Security retirement benefits and an increase in the retirement age, at a time when Margaret Thatcher is holding fast to her program of cutting social programs to the bone, the new French president is committed to a program of increasing social benefits and providing new government-sponsored jobs.

Internationally, while the Reagan administration is trying to crush the Salvadoran revolution in blood and orchestrate a campaign to destabilize and turn back the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions and increase the isolation of Cuba, French workers have elected a president who is a member of the Socialist International's Committee for the Defense of the Revolution in Nicaragua.

While Washington had counted on a continuation of Paris's military help in defending imperialist interests in Africa, the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere, French voters turned out of office an administration that intervened with French troops in Africa on numerous occasions.

Mitterrand's victory will encourage left-wing groupings in other Socialist parties in Europe. In West Germany, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt is already under fire from left-wing forces in his party over Schmidt's support for the NATO decision to place 572 U.S. nuclear missiles aimed at the Soviet Union in Western Europe.

Large antinuclear forces also exist in the Labour Party in Britain and in the social democratic parties in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and elsewhere in Europe. And in Britain in particular, strong opposition building up to the capitalist austerity drive is being expressed by the leftward shift of the Labour Party.

The Reagan administration and the major U.S. dailies have expressed concern over the impact of Mitterrand's election. While Reagan sent belated congratulations to Mitterrand on his victory, that message was released to the press at the same time as State Department expressions of concern over developments in France and warnings that Washington is "watching carefully" the composition of Mitterrand's government.

Washington is especially fearful that Mitterrand may form a cabinet that would include members of the Communist Party. Such participation would make it far more difficult to incorporate the French government into Washington's anti-Soviet propaganda campaign, and would make it harder to prevent the participation of other

Communist parties in coalition governments, especially in Italy and Spain.

Even worse than the participation of Communist ministers, in Washington's view, would be a Mitterrand cabinet that did not include any representatives of the capitalist parties.

Washington clearly hopes that Mitterrand will reject any participation of the Communist Party in his cabinet and will instead opt for some coalition with forces from the Gaullist party or Giscard's former supporters. Such a decision by Mitterrand would result in keeping the workers movement divided, while increasing the ability of the capitalists to limit measures undertaken by the government.

The May 12 *Washington Post* editorial-

ized that "not in a generation has France had a government so far to the left as the one to be formed now by Francois Mitterrand." The editorial noted that Mitterrand's "victory adds another element of uncertainty to the task the Reagan administration has set for itself of restoring the strength and unity of the West."

Making the same point from an opposing perspective, Cuban President Fidel Castro sent Mitterrand a message expressing "deep satisfaction with your victory." The message stated that Mitterrand's "support for the cause of democratization and independence of the Caribbean and Central America is a source of hope for the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean." □

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British Continue Policy of Provocation in Northern Ireland

By Gerry Foley

BELFAST—The British government is continuing to pursue a policy that is designed to provoke an explosion of desperation and rage in Ireland. Faced with the growth of a sweeping mass movement in support of the republican political prisoners, the British have apparently concluded that a spontaneous and uncontrolled outburst by the oppressed Catholic population will give them the best opportunity for containing and crushing the struggle here.

This is a risky course, especially for a government as unpopular as that of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. But the way in which the police were allowed to treat the funeral cortège of Francis Hughes, who died on May 12, the second republican hunger striker to die in the past two weeks, made absolutely clear what they were trying to do.

The hearse carrying the coffin of the hunger striker was commandeered by the police. They refused to let it go through nationalist West Belfast, where a crowd was gathering to pay their respects.

Less than a week before, more than 100,000 persons had marched in a funeral procession for Bobby Sands, the first hunger striker to die, indicating the extent of sympathy and respect of the oppressed Catholic population for the protesting prisoners.

Thus the police sequestering of the coffin of Francis Hughes was a deliberate act of contempt and defiance of the Catholic population of Northern Ireland and of the Irish people as a whole.

Gauntlet of Abuse

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) forced the Hughes family to run a gauntlet of insults, intimidation and physical abuse. The family issued a statement saying, among other things:

A large force of RUC followed the hearse from the hospital. A few minutes later the RUC forcibly stopped the hearse, which was surrounded by a number of Landrovers.

The RUC tried to pull the driver from the hearse. Francis's father was assaulted by the RUC, as were other friends and members of the family.

We then proceeded once more. Within a few minutes, we were stoned by a royalist mob who had gathered in a housing estate into which we were led by the RUC. The RUC made no effort to protect us.

At the Randalstown slipway, the RUC again forcibly halted the hearse and blocked it off from the family, who were diverted by the RUC toward Toome Bridge. The RUC refused the family permission to accompany it. . . .

The family and friends were blocked at every

Hunger Strikers' Demands

1. The right to wear their own clothes.
2. The right to refrain from prison work.
3. The right to free association among political prisoners.
4. The right to organize their own educational and recreational facilities and to receive one visit, one letter, and one parcel a week.
5. The right to full remission of sentences (meaning the usual time off for good behavior).

junction by the RUC and were continually harassed by RUC mobile and stationary units. All side roads were blocked and we had to run a gauntlet of sectarian [anti-Catholic and antinationalist] insults and remarks.

The statement concluded:

We the parents, brothers, and sisters of Francis Hughes, murdered by the British government, wish to protest in the strongest possible way the manner in which Francis's body was hijacked by the RUC, who were obviously acting on the orders of their political masters.

We totally reject the RUC statement and their explanation for the disgraceful way they treated us and our dead brother. We wished only to bury him in peace and in a manner befitting his death. Are we to be denied even this simple and reasonable request?

Throughout the North, the oppressed population could see the harassment of the Hughes family on television, they could see the humiliation and desperation of his mother and young sisters, and they will not soon forget that.

After these scenes, the most moderate Catholic politicians are saying that the RUC will never be tolerated in Catholic neighborhoods.

At the Hughes family home in Bellaghy, a crowd of more than 20,000 mourners assembled for the funeral May 15. It was the largest funeral ever seen in this rural area in the south of County Derry.

The crowd left no doubt that the dead hunger striker was a hero to tens of thousands of people. Even the most cynical reporters for the bourgeois press were struck by this. Fionnula O'Connor wrote in the May 16 *Irish Times*:

"The ritual volley of shots came early in the day, within the hearing of the RUC

cordon, fired at the bottom of the tree-lined lane to the Hughes home. When three masked young men stepped out from the crowd and raised their rifles, the cheers must have reached the army helicopters sweeping low overhead."

That was the IRA's traditional salute to a fallen soldier.

On May 14, IRA prisoner Brendan McLaughlin, twenty-nine, went on hunger strike, replacing Hughes.

British Hypocrisy

The British government has repeatedly claimed that Francis Hughes was a "murderer," obviously thinking this would strengthen its case that the imprisoned republicans are criminals and should be treated accordingly. In fact, the example of Francis Hughes shows the hypocrisy and arrogance of the British government's declarations.

Hughes was convicted of murder for killing a member of the Special Air Services (SAS) in a gun battle in which he fought alone against a whole squad of this murderous counterinsurgency commando force. In the fighting, Hughes wore a military uniform. He was gravely wounded and he had no one to help him. After he managed to escape, he lay under bushes for three days, nearly bleeding to death.

As for Hughes's adversary the SAS, it is a unit specially armed and trained for murder, and equipped with all the technological resources of an advanced modern army.

During the year after the gun battle in which Hughes was wounded, the SAS murdered at least a dozen Catholics, including a sixteen-year-old boy who was foolish enough to come and see if an arms cache he had reported had been taken away.

The SAS has disregarded not only British law but international law, going on killer operations across the border into the formally independent part of Ireland. The SAS murderers are trained to be cold-blooded professional killers.

Unlike the SAS, Hughes fought to strike back against oppression. He joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) as a youth after being dragged from his car and systematically beaten by police, an experience suffered by many ordinary Catholic youths, then and now. Also unlike the SAS, Hughes was not part of a murder machine but had to depend on his own courage and intelligence, and on the support of an oppressed people fighting for its liberation.

Finally, crippled and imprisoned under brutal and humiliating conditions, Hughes slowly starved himself to death in order to defend his own honor and the honor of the people for whom he fought.

Nor could Hughes or his family be accused of fanaticism. They are a calm, intelligent, dignified lot. I could see this riding in a car a few weeks ago with one of Hughes's sisters and watching the way she talked herself through one of the police cordons that had blocked the way leading to her home. I could see it watching her mother serve tea to a large crowd while her son was already approaching death.

Speaking in the name of the Hughes family, Francis's brother Oliver said shortly before the hunger striker died May 12:

"We are sad, but we are proud that we have a son and brother who is prepared to give his life for his country."

By its treatment of Francis Hughes, of his body, and of his family, the British government showed that it has no respect for any of the values that it claims to uphold—not for law, not for humanity, not for courage, not for patriotism, not for fair play, not even for elementary decency.

Thatcher's Provocative Course

The British government is obviously pursuing a provocative course. It has rejected every attempt by the most conservative Irish and Irish-American politicians to negotiate even some purely verbal concessions that would throw a veil over the arrogance of the British authorities.

When John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, tried to talk with Thatcher, he got such a steely reception that he told reporters afterward that he felt like walking out of the discussion.

Cardinal O'Fiaich, the Irish primate, who has made a point of condemning the Provisional IRA attacks on the repressive bodies, felt obliged to appeal to Thatcher, reminding her that the prisoners had a different national identity from her forces, that they came from law-abiding families, and that they were young.

He tactfully noted that her government's treatment of them could arouse memories in Ireland of historic problems in the relationship between the two islands.

The cardinal got a sanctimonious and cynical brush-off from Thatcher: "You in particular will, I am sure, appreciate the heavy load my colleagues and I bear in discharging our responsibilities. But the solution does not lie in our hands."

"It lies with the hunger strikers and their advisors. More directly it lies with the leaders of the Provisional IRA, who have taken a cold-blooded decision that the unfortunate men now fasting in prison are of more use to them dead than alive."

This reply was not only an insult to the Irish cardinal, it was an affront to the Irish people, who have watched the sufferings of the comrades and relatives of the



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Hughes's mother and youngest sister. "We are proud that we have a son and brother who is prepared to give his life for his country."

hunger strikers, and seen them come slowly to accept that these men had to sacrifice their lives and that they had to respect this decision.

Is it any wonder that this country is beginning to seethe with anger?

This can be seen by the way the Irish politicians in the South are squirming from the heat, and by the violent protests of the youth on the streets.

State of H-Block Campaign

Even the leaders of the proimperialist Protestant murder gang, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), have begun to warn the British government that it is driving the Catholic people to a rebellion, from which they too will suffer.

Sands's death has been followed by the growth of simmering violent protests. This has momentarily frightened some sections of the population in the South and disoriented the movement, preventing it from reaching out to organize new layers and increase the pressure on the Irish capitulationist leaders.

The leadership of the H-Block campaign understands this problem and is moving to try to overcome it. In particular the republican leaders in the campaign seem to be coming to a clearer understanding of the need to put pressure on the established political leaders, such as the Irish premier, in order to open up the way to uniting the Irish people against British imperialism. They are fighting to keep the campaign

focused on this task.

In Dublin, the republican leadership is striving for more and more massive, peaceful protest demonstrations.

The sudden influx of large numbers of young teenagers into the demonstrations to mark the deaths of the hunger strikers represents a major advance for the campaign. But it has also created certain immediate problems. These youth have a strong emotional identification with the hunger strikers, and they have their own reasons for hating the Southern bourgeoisie and police.

There have been some riots in center city Dublin. The first took place the day of Sands's death. Last week after Hughes died there were also a number of clashes. The immediate result was that the demonstrations after the first outbreak after Hughes's death became smaller and more exclusively made up of young males.

This process has enabled the proimperialists to go back on the offensive, claiming that the H-Block campaign is promoting violence and that the business closures and walk-outs in honor of the hunger

strikers are the result of intimidation.

The continued shift of public opinion against the British government, however, indicates that this setback will only be temporary, and that the proimperialists will pay a big price for their present counterattack. The H-Block committees should soon be able to get the campaign moving again.

One casualty of the present disorientation is that most H-Block activists have dropped the idea that was being discussed of using the local Northern elections to demonstrate support for the prisoners, as was done in Fermanagh/South Tyrone with the election of Sands to the British Parliament. Only the Irish Trotskyists and—for its own reasons—the more nationalist of the reformist parties in the North—the Irish Independence Party—are still trying to raise the H-Block issue in the elections. The two Trotskyist campaigns in Belfast, that of John McNulty and Fergus O'Hare of the People's Democracy group, have attracted interest among H-Block activists looking for ways of widening the impact of the H-Block movement.

However, in Derry at least, a major outbreak among the youth has been building up for some time and seems inevitable. The police and army, moreover, have been deliberately heating up this situation by intruding into the ghettos and systematically harassing the young activists. In the last weeks, three young people in Derry have been killed.

If the young Derry man among the H-Block hunger strikers, Patsy O'Hara, dies as he is expected to this week, it will almost certainly be the signal for an explosion in his home city.

It is obvious why the youth of Ireland are becoming desperate. There must be a growth of active international support that will make it clear to the young people of this country that Thatcher cannot get away with her defiance of truth and human values, that the people of Britain and the world have the same sense of justice and humanity that they do, and that people throughout the world will join in defending them if given the time and shown the way. □

Tony Benn Denounces Thatcher's Policy

Issue of Ireland Raises Debate in British Labour Party

By Geoff Bell

LONDON—For the first time since the current phase of the Irish struggle began nearly thirteen years ago, it is threatening to become a major question in party politics in Britain.

This was highlighted by a statement made on radio on May 12 by Tony Benn, the leader of the left wing of the Labour Party. Benn is currently campaigning for the post of deputy leader of the party. In the course of an interview, Benn called for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, saying "there is a very widespread feeling, which I share, that the present policy has reached a dead end, that the idea of maintaining a standing army in Northern Ireland to maintain law and order without a political initiative is failing, has failed, and is likely to fail."

Benn went on to say that "the British government has no long-term future in Ireland," that "the partition of Ireland was a crime against the Irish people," and that the "British troops cannot solve the problem."

Although Benn has spoken out before in favor of eventual Irish reunification, these comments were the most explicit he has made, and by making them, Benn has become the most prominent politician in Britain to come out in favor of the withdrawal of British troops.

His remarks reflect a growing sentiment

in the Labour Party, which has been recently fueled by the unflinching support given by Labour leader Michael Foot and the party's spokesperson on Ireland, Don Concannon, for the intransigent stance taken by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher over the question of political status for Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland's jails.

'Totally Insensitive'

Many Labour Party members were particularly angry with the visit that Concannon made to Bobby Sands, member of Parliament (MP), shortly before Sands died in the sixty-sixth day of his hunger strike. Concannon saw Sands for the sole purpose of informing him that the Labour Party was completely opposed to the hunger strike and to the prisoners' demands.

One Labour MP, Martin Flannery, described Concannon's ghoulish trip as "unimaginative, totally insensitive, and like sending a British tank to a Northern Ireland funeral."

Such criticism has put considerable strains on the Labour/Tory bipartisan approach to Northern Ireland, which has been in operation ever since British troops were sent back onto the streets of the north in 1969. Whatever those troops have done, and whichever political party has been in

government at the time, the troops have been uncritically supported by the opposition party.

For example, when nine years ago the Tory government of Edward Heath oversaw the British army's killing of thirteen unarmed civil-rights demonstrators on Derry's "Bloody Sunday," the Labour opposition in Parliament, led by Harold Wilson, refused to join in the worldwide criticism of the massacre.

Similarly, when the last Labour government phased out political status for the Irish prisoners in 1976, the Tory opposition gave its enthusiastic endorsement to the measure.

For some years there has been criticism within the Labour Party of the leadership's policy on Northern Ireland. But it has taken the hunger strike and the deaths of the first two prisoners, and the fact that in April Bobby Sands was elected to Parliament, for that criticism to find an authoritative voice.

It was the death of Sands that produced the first notable rebellion. On the day the death was announced, Patrick Duffy, a member of Parliament and former Labour minister responsible for the navy, accused Thatcher of "moral bankruptcy and colossal criminal incompetence."

Labour's leader, Michael Foot, a one-time critic of U.S. intervention in Vietnam,

was severely embarrassed by Duffy's remarks. Minutes before Duffy spoke in the House of Commons, Foot had reiterated his support for Thatcher's refusal to concede the prisoners' demands. Despite mounting internal party criticism, Foot has stuck to that attitude.

'We Should Get Out'

It is undoubtedly the case that among Labour MPs, a majority support Foot's stance. But whether that goes for the party as a whole is a different matter. For instance, in the recently held local government elections in Britain, Labour regained control of the powerful Greater London Council, and within hours of the election, the new Labour leader of the council, Ken Livingstone, declared:

"If I had been living in Fermanagh, I would have been working for Bobby Sands's election. The IRA are fighting for their national freedom, and their prisoners are as much prisoners of war as our soldiers in Germany in the Second World War.

"If we want to see an end to violence," Livingstone continued, "we should get out."

Most of such attacks on current Labour Party policy have come from the left wing of the party. However, there are limitations to the criticisms and the solutions put forward by the critics.

On the prisoners question, very few MPs have been willing to support the demand

for political status. Instead, the left wing of the Labour Party calls for reforms for all prisoners in Northern Ireland, to allow them to wear their own clothes and mix freely. And although thirty MPs put their names to such a parliamentary motion just before Bobby Sands died, Tony Benn has so far preferred to address himself to the wider political issue rather than express all-out support for the demands of the prisoners.

Even the more radical statements from Benn have not endorsed the traditional Socialist principle of unconditional support for Irish self-determination or its contemporary practical application—the immediate withdrawal of British troops with no strings attached.

For Benn, such troop withdrawal is dependent on the British army being replaced by a United Nations force, regardless of whether the Irish people as a whole sanction such a military deployment.

'Dog Fight Over Ulster?'

Nevertheless, the rising protests within the Labour Party over its leadership's support for what the Tory government is inflicting on the people of Northern Ireland are of substantial significance. For years the Tory/Labour bipartisan approach to Ireland has been an obstacle to the development of a mass current of opinion within Britain that would actively favor British withdrawal.

Although opinion poll after opinion poll

has shown that between fifty and sixty percent of those quizzed favor a British withdrawal, this has not been translated into the building of a mass campaign in Britain, still less a mass campaign on the basis of "troops out now."

The fact that prominent Labour Party members are now openly criticizing bipartisanship does open up the possibility, at least in the Labour Party, of building a campaign capable of applying impressive political pressure.

Such developments are a reflection of what is happening in other areas of British society. In the influential *Sunday Times*, John Whale, one of the newspaper's leading writers, wrote a May 10 article entitled "Time to Have a Party Dog Fight Over Ulster." The article called for "an end to bipartisanship, a return to open political discussion of all feasible alternatives."

For the moment, such a dog fight is likely to be confined to internal struggles within the Labour Party. Already Denis Healey, Tony Benn's main opponent for Labour's deputy leadership and the leading right-winger in the party, has publicly attacked Benn and other critics of bipartisanship for "grubbing up votes by offering political status to prisoners in H-Block." This was an exaggeration of what Benn and the left were actually saying, but the fact that the debate on Ireland now seems likely to become an issue in the battle for the deputy leadership of the party is a



Oliver Hughes, brother of hunger striker Francis Hughes, speaking at rally in Derry.

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further indication of how important the question is becoming.

Labour Party Study Group

The outcome of the deputy leadership contest will be decided at the party conference in October. That occasion will also see a major debate on what the Labour Party's policy in Ireland should be. For over a year a special Labour Party study group established by the party's National Executive Committee has been preparing a report on the Irish question.

Most forecasts suggest that this report will urge a continuation of bipartisanship and support for British presence in the six northeastern counties of Ireland. Such opinions will reflect the membership of the study group, which is dominated by the right wing. However, the majority of local Labour Party groups are likely to reject such recommendations, and indeed the National Executive Committee itself could well endorse the counterreport of a minority of the study group, which is expected to argue in favor of eventual Irish reunification.

Should such a policy come even near to attracting majority support at the Labour Party conference, the effect will be enormous. Labour has supported British imperialist policy not just in Ireland, but throughout the world. In that respect, Labour/Tory bipartisanship has covered all aspects of foreign policy. Even the hint of a break in such a tradition will open up a whole new area for debate and discussion within the party.

Effect in Ireland

But it would be in Ireland itself that substantial Labour support for Irish reunification and British troop withdrawal would have the most dramatic consequen-



H-Block protest in Dublin. Struggle in Ireland has begun to force discussion in British Labour Party.

ces. Already one leading loyalist, Andy Tyrrie of the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association, has suggested that Thatcher should make concessions on the prisoners question.

While Tyrrie has his own reasons for making such a call, there is no doubt that the Loyalists look with dread on the prospect of what is potentially the next British government adopting a pro-Irish-unity policy. Thus Tyrrie's plea for concessions to the prisoners is motivated at least in part by a realization that if the issue drags on, the Labour Party is all the more likely to

break with bipartisanship.

Michael Foot is fighting an increasingly desperate battle to head off such an outcome to the now raging battle over Ireland within the Labour Party. He is considering asking Benn to resign from Labour's parliamentary leadership team because of his pronouncements on the Irish question. Foot and Benn have many political differences, but the fact that it is on the Irish question that Foot is now threatening to try and silence his left-wing critic is just one indication of how important Ireland is becoming in British party politics. □



Pickets outside Prime Minister Thatcher's residence in London.

Behind Israeli War Moves in Middle East

By David Frankel

The Middle East is on the brink of a new war—one that could well lead to a confrontation between U.S. and Soviet forces, as almost happened during the October 1973 war.

The immediate cause of the war threat is the actions of the Israeli regime, which is massing its forces along the Lebanese and Syrian borders. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin is demanding the removal of Syrian anti-aircraft missiles that were moved into Lebanon following the shooting down of two Syrian helicopters by Israeli jets on April 28.

Begin is also demanding that Syrian forces pull back from mountain positions they took from rightist forces after the Lebanese rightists sought to make strategic gains in central Lebanon.

Why is it that the Zionist regime is threatening to go to war over these issues? Not even Begin pretends that the Syrian forces in Lebanon pose any direct threat to Israel.

The Israeli rulers, however, contend that their "national security" is threatened by the existence of the Palestinian liberation organizations operating in Lebanon. It is necessary "to prevent the attacks of the terrorists against Israeli citizens," Begin declared May 13.

In the name of preventing such attacks, the Zionist regime has been bombing Palestinian refugee camps and Lebanese farming villages for the past fifteen years. It has created hundreds of thousands of refugees in southern Lebanon, killed thousands of defenseless civilians, and laid waste to whole areas of the countryside.

'Our Right to Overflight'

Now, in order to defend what Begin called "our right to the overflight of Lebanon," the Zionist regime is threatening to go to war against Syria.

But the movement of five anti-aircraft batteries a few miles into Lebanon is merely the pretext that the Israelis were looking for. They have been urging on the rightist forces in Lebanon, stepping up their attacks in the south, and finally moved directly against Syrian forces. Begin knew very well that Syrian President Hafez al-Assad would be forced to respond in some way.

Begin later announced that the Israeli air force had been ordered to attack the Syrian missiles on April 30—the day after they were moved into Lebanon—but bad weather forced the postponement of such action. Then President Reagan stepped in to slow things down.

From Washington's point of view an immediate Israeli attack on Syria, coming only weeks after U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig had sharply attacked Syrian actions in Lebanon and conferred with Israeli leaders, would have been a diplomatic embarrassment.

Reagan dispatched U.S. envoy Philip Habib to the Middle East, supposedly to help avoid a war, but actually to cloud the U.S. role. While Habib shuttled from capital to capital talking peace, the Pentagon moved the aircraft carrier USS *Forrestal* off the coast of Lebanon and brought a second aircraft carrier, USS *Independence*, into the Mediterranean from the Indian Ocean. There are now some thirty U.S. warships in the Mediterranean, along with Marine combat forces.

Imperialist Offensive

Although Reagan has temporarily held the Israelis back from any attack on Syria, the fact is that the Zionists have been inspired to carry out their provocative policy precisely by the U.S. offensive against national liberation struggles the world over—from Central America, to southern Africa, to Indochina.

What the U.S. rulers are up to was made doubly clear May 17 by the leak of a secret White House plan for the overthrow of Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi is Syria's closest ally in the Arab world. Reagan wants to get rid of him—and of Assad too—because they have refused to go along with U.S. dictates. Their regimes stand as an obstacle to Washington's plans for a counterrevolutionary alliance in the Middle East.

The need of the U.S. rulers to drive back the Arab masses and the anti-imperialist movements throughout the Middle East, which were propelled forward by the victory of the Iranian revolution in 1979, is shared by the Zionist regime.

Because it was established in the first place by driving the Palestinian people out of their homeland, and in collaboration with the imperialist powers, the Zionist state is directly threatened by every advance for the anti-imperialist movement in the region. It seeks to keep the Arab world weak, divided, and economically backward.

Israel's very existence is tied to continued imperialist domination in the Middle East and it is only able to survive through massive amounts of U.S. military and economic aid.

Imperialism has consistently used the Zionist state as a club against the develop-

ment of any social struggles in the region. For example, in 1956, when Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, Israel joined Britain and France in invading Egypt.

After the Jordanian civil war of September 1970, it was revealed that Washington and the Israeli regime had agreed to intervene jointly if the throne of King Hussein was threatened.

And, along with Washington's CIA, it was the Zionist regime that provided training to the shah of Iran's torturers and secret police.

Israeli Role in Latin America

The Israeli regime is one of the main arms suppliers to the apartheid regime in South Africa and to the Chilean and Argentinian dictatorships in Latin America.

At the September 1979 Nonaligned Movement conference in Havana, Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega told the delegates, "Among the files abandoned by Somozaism we have found proof of the loans for arms that the government of Israel had given the dictatorship. Israel was an accomplice to the crimes of Somoza. Israel was the instrument that imperialism used up to the last minute to arm Somoza's genocidal dictatorship."

The Zionist regime also provides arms to the reactionary Central American regimes in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

In the Middle East, just as in these other areas, Washington and Tel Aviv are united in their desire to strike a blow at the anti-imperialist struggles.

As the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* pointed out May 17, "Israel's aggressiveness is to be explained first and foremost by the fact that its actions fit into the framework of Washington's wider plans for the Middle East." It argued that Syria was acting as "the main bastion of the Arab forces opposed to the Camp David agreements on the Middle East and the separate Egyptian-Israeli 'peace treaty.'"

The hue and cry over Syrian missiles in Lebanon is nothing but a smokescreen to cover the real issue, which is Israeli aggression against the Arab peoples and the overall imperialist offensive in the Middle East. □

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Andrew Pulley Testifies in Socialist Lawsuit

By Vivian Sahner

At the end of April, Andrew Pulley took the witness stand in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) trial against U.S. government harassment and spying.

Pulley was the SWP's candidate for U.S. president in 1980 and SWP vice-presidential candidate in 1972.

His testimony—and the cross-examination by government attorneys—touched on many of the key issues in the socialist trial. In particular, the FBI's use of informers, surveillance of socialists, and special hatred for Black rebels.

The first thing Pulley testified about was his activities as a GI opposed to the Vietnam War. Pulley explained that he joined the U.S. Army in 1968 when he was given a choice of going to jail on an incitement to riot charge or joining the army.

"The charge of incitement to riot came as a result of a protest in my high school; we were protesting the murder of Martin Luther King," Pulley stated.

At Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, Pulley became a reader of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*, which he explained had an offer of tape-recorded speeches by Malcolm X.

A growing group of soldiers began to meet regularly, listen to Malcolm's tapes, discuss Black rights, and the Vietnam War.

Later, Pulley testified, some of them founded a chapter of GIs United Against the War. Three of its members also belonged to the SWP.

"I was new to this whole thing," Pulley said, "but I had an immediate interest in being against the war, as well as just my identity with the rights of the Vietnamese people."

He was convinced that soldiers had an important role to play in the movement against the war. The GIs launched a "massive petition drive to solicit permission from our commanding officer to discuss the legal question of the war . . . we got hundreds of signatures," Pulley told the judge.

Pulley testified that they went from barracks to barracks encouraging soldiers to attend anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in nearby Atlanta.

For these activities, he and seven other soldiers were thrown in the stockade and threatened with a court martial.

The SWP, YSA, and others opposed to the war helped organize the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee on behalf of the Ft. Jackson soldiers. Bertrand Russell

was the honorary chairperson of the committee. Meetings were held across the country to discuss the case, and thousands of letters of protest poured into Ft. Jackson.

The Army finally backed down. After two months they offered the soldiers a dishonorable discharge in lieu of a court martial.

Shortly after, Pulley joined the YSA, and later the SWP.

International Travel

SWP attorney Shelley Davis asked Pulley if he made any trips abroad as a congressional candidate in 1970.

Pulley told the court that he traveled to

What Is the Socialist Lawsuit?

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) are putting the U.S. government on trial for illegal acts that have been committed against them.

The lawsuit, begun in July 1973, demands \$40 million in damages for years of government spying and harassment, and an injunction to halt any further illegal government activity against the SWP and YSA.

An important part of the lawsuit is the socialists' challenge to the U.S. government's antidemocratic thought-control laws and presidential executive orders, which try to make just the advocacy of socialist ideas illegal.

On trial are the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and other U.S. government agencies that have interfered with the political rights of the socialists.

These agencies claim they have the legal right to spy on, harass, and deport anyone whose political views they disapprove of.

The lawsuit has forced the release of thousands of U.S. government documents describing burglaries, electronic surveillance, informers, interception of mail, blacklisting, bomb threats, physical violence, and so on.

The trial opened on April 2 in New York City and is expected to last into July.

Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, and North Vietnam.

"One thing I wanted to do was get a sense of people in other countries, hear their views on the question of the war, and also be able to report to them that there was not majority support for the war in this country," Pulley said.

He also said he tried to visit South Vietnam. "I got into the airport there—that's as far as I got. . . . The South Vietnamese customs officials told me that the U.S. Embassy in Saigon had instructed them not to permit me to enter the country," Pulley said.

The U.S. government shadowed Pulley on his entire trip, as verified by government documents turned over to the socialists.

Davis also introduced as evidence an FBI report on Pulley's election campaign activities in the U.S. She pointed out to Judge Griesa that the 1975 Privacy Act bars the government from maintaining files on citizens' lawful activities.

Judge Griesa wasn't so sure.

"The government has a right, you know, some free speech rights, too, don't they? Can't they write about Mr. Pulley?" the judge asked.

". . . just imagine, during the Second World War when the United States was fighting the Nazis—let's suppose somebody was going around the country advocating or urging servicemen that the war was improper and that they should oppose fighting the Nazis. . . .

"I think the United States Army would be derelict in not making notes to see how successful he is," Judge Griesa said.

But Davis pointed out that running for office and speaking out against a war are rights that are supposed to be protected by the First Amendment.

Griesa was not convinced. "A person goes over to South Vietnam and the surrounding nearby nations and urges the people and the GIs there against the war," he said, "and to argue that the government should not even make notes of that is just preposterous. Now, let's just drop that," he said.

Support Irish Freedom Fighters

Pulley went on to describe his 1971 trip to Ireland in court.

"I went there to learn more about the Irish freedom struggle . . . and to indicate my support for their fight for such freedom.

"I wanted to convey to them what I felt was common interest between their fight for self-determination and the endless struggle of Blacks and Chicanos in this country," Pulley explained.

Pulley also talked about his travels as the Socialist Workers 1980 presidential candidate.

He described his trip to Grenada and how he countered the lies of the Reagan



Andrew Pulley on the witness stand.

administration and the capitalist news media about the gains of that revolution.

"That country, is, of course, a Black country and I wanted to see what had been achieved.

"The great drive against unemployment, free medical care in a country that is poor—the whole direction of things is one of providing more services to the people, more education, more jobs," Pulley said.

Cross-Examination

During the government's cross-examination, attorney Edward Williams sought to discredit the SWP's election campaigns, implying socialists run for office for nefarious reasons. What interested the government the most was the international issues raised by the SWP campaigns. They implied that such issues have nothing to do with American people or elections in the United States.

Pulley explained that, for example, in the case of Grenada, "we were interested in looking at a small, poor, new country ostensibly being able to apply in their own situation some of the things we think are urgently needed in the United States."

The government attorney asked Pulley, "When you campaigned for the presidency and the vice-presidency, did you advise your prospective voters that if elected to office, you would at all times be under the strict political control of the Socialist

Workers Party in office?"

Pulley told him, "I think the question of democratic centralism came up at one meeting, oddly enough. . . .

"And I used this instance to compare how democratic the Socialist Workers Party was compared to how totally undemocratic the Democratic and Republican parties were.

"That is, they adopted a policy and adopted a platform and basically it doesn't mean anything, especially when it comes to the great promises they make to the American people."

Pulley compared the Democratic and Republican conventions where "what the party decides at the convention means zero," to SWP conventions.

"The only way to have democracy is to have majority rule," he said. "Our party . . . has a convention where delegates are elected to come and decide policies and perspectives and candidates from our party . . . to seek office and present the party's point of view."

To illustrate this point, Pulley spoke about Black activist Mel Mason, who was elected last year as a city councilman in Seaside, California. Mason recently joined the SWP.

"Mel Mason agrees with the Socialist Workers Party, which is why he joined, and we are glad to have him," Pulley told the court.

"The policies he agrees with are also apparently the views—on certain questions—that the people who elected him favor and support.

"I think the people who voted for him voted consciously knowing that his were socialist views," Pulley said.

"And he represents the interests of the people out there in California, marching on every picket line, supporting the miners' struggle."

The FBI had recently been harrasing and spying on Mason, Pulley testified, "precisely because he was doing such a wonderful job out there." □

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Peking University Students Demand Democracy in China

In late 1980, elections were held throughout China for representatives to the People's Congress. Usually these are rather tame affairs, with the candidates carefully screened and selected by the authorities.

But this time in some districts, students and workers ran campaigns independently of the Chinese Communist Party and on the basis of specific programs that criticized aspects of the party's bureaucratic rule and that raised demands for democratic rights. (See *Intercontinental Press*, May 4, p. 435.)

Some of the most lively and heated discussions took place during the election campaigns at Peking University, where twenty-nine candidates ran. A report on the campaign, written by some of the electors at the university, appeared in the April issue of the *Monthly Bulletin on the Chinese Democratic Movement*, (Available from the Chinese Democratic Movement Resource Centre, P.O. Box 89278, Kowloon City Post Office, Hong Kong.)

The campaign lasted for a month-and-a-half, from early November until the actual elections in mid-December, when one of the candidates, Hu Ping, was chosen.

According to the report, "The different candidates and their teams propagated their election goals and their viewpoints on all kinds of social and political problems in the election columns which were erected in places assigned by the university. They also organised open forums and frank discussion sessions in the canteen, the hall and the lecture halls to answer questions and interrogations put forward

by the electors. Statistics showed that there were all together eighteen of these forums and discussion sessions in the period with twenty thousand participants. . . . In that month and a half, the whole campus was in a state of enthusiasm. Everywhere in the election district we could find big character posters and brochures with different points of view, all kinds of opinion polls and situation investigations, posters of forums and some candidates' opinion boxes."

A Step in the Struggle for Democracy

While some of the students were found to be unenthusiastic or indifferent toward the elections—largely because representatives to the People's Congress have no real power—others "clearly realised that this election was the first step in the struggle for people's democracy, an opportunity to propagate democratic thought and a means to openly express their political ideas to the public and the people in power.

That is precisely what many of the candidates did.

According to the report, Hsia Sin, among other candidates, maintained that "the shortcomings of the Chinese society at present originate from the extreme concentration of politics, economics, and ideology control. Reform must lead to the demolition of this concentration."

Many candidates favored freedom of speech, including Wu Ping, who, "at the early stage of the election, was already emphasizing that a basic aim of the present election was the promotion of the

freedom of speech and the freedom of press."

A poll of eighteen of the candidates did not find one who supported the trial and conviction of democratic-rights activist Wei Jingsheng, who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 1979 for his opposition to the regime's invasion of Vietnam. Some thought he should never have been prosecuted.

Wang Jun-tao, one of the most vocal of the candidates, proposed four areas of political reform. According to the report, these were "democracy inside the party, the separation of party and government, the division of powers and the checks on and balances of the different branches and institutions, and the supervision by the society."

Another candidate, Yang Li-chuen, stressed "the democratic management of workers' organizations and institutions."

Fang Che-yuen, in an article entitled "Socialism = Collective Ownership + Democracy," pointed out, according to the report, "that the collective ownership of the means of production has been realised in China but collective ownership is not equivalent to Socialism. Socialism must embrace a democratic system. Democracy is both a means and an end. Fang further added that if there is no democracy, collective ownership is but illusory."

One of the female candidates, Chang Oiling, emphasized the need for women's liberation. Toward the end of the campaign, she set up the Chinese Women's Study Association.

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Wang Jun-tao was the one candidate who attempted to assess the entire thirty-year history of the Chinese revolution. In an article entitled "History Reviewed," he criticized the numerous zigs and zags of the Chinese leadership.

Wang, according to the report's summary of his article, criticized the collectivization of agriculture for having gone "too fast and too far, surpassing what were possible under the then existing level of agricultural development productive forces." He denounced the Great Leap Forward for its "very disastrous social consequences" and criticized Mao Zedong's repressive treatment of "dissenting comrades."

In a public discussion at the university on November 29, Wang raised the question of whether Mao was really a Marxist. According to the report, Wang concluded that Mao "did not proceed from the core of Marxism nor did he adopt the position, viewpoint or approach of Marxism." Instead, Mao "practised a kind of oligarchic dictatorship inside and outside the Party. He clamped down [on] democracy and [the] leaders superceded the whole party and the whole people. [Mao] himself superceded all other leaderships in the Party."

Wang wrote three subsequent articles that elaborated further on his positions. Among the points that he raised in them, according to the report, was that "while Mao Tse-tung was no Marxist, the other main leaders of the Chinese Communist Party might not be Marxist either, including Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai."

Bureaucrats Charge 'Trotskyism'

In the course of the various campus meetings and forums on the election campaigns, the student electors themselves were able to express their views. Among the questions they asked were:

"Is China a socialist society? Does China have a sector of bureaucrats? Has this sector become a caste or even a class? Is the nature of Chinese society the same as Russian society?"

The lively discussions engendered by the election campaigns were a source of deep concern to the party and government authorities, whose privileged position is based on the denial of the most fundamental democratic rights, including freedom of speech.

Just one day after the first round of voting on December 11, all the big-character posters on the campus were torn down, despite the fact that the results had not yet been announced and another round of voting was yet to be held.

Following the elections, the bureaucracy wanted to expel some of the candidates, but this was opposed by the university chancellor, Zhou Peiyuan. Zhou was subsequently forced to resign.

Several months later, articles began appearing in the official Chinese press attacking the idea that China was ruled by



Peking's Democracy Wall. Chinese students promoted freedom of speech in recent elections.

a "privileged bureaucratic class." The first attack appeared in the February 16 *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth), the newspaper of the Communist Youth League. Another then appeared in early March in *Hongqi* (Red Flag), the theoretical journal of the party's Central Committee.

Then in May, the Peking University Communist Party committee launched a direct attack on the student activists at the university, accusing them of "Trotskyism."

According to the May 3 *Peking Daily*, the report rejected the "totally erroneous" views held by the students, claiming that their ideas stemmed from "the theories of the Western bourgeoisie, Trotsky and Chinese Trotskyist elements."

It also accused them of invoking the theories of the "Yugoslav anti-Marxist [Milovan] Djilas" for comparing the Chinese regime to "a new ruling class."

The authorities' reponse was not limited to verbal accusations. At Peking University, a number of student activists who criticized the regime during the election campaigns have been arrested, although the precise number is not known.

But the authorities will not find it easy to stifle the movement for democratic rights. What happened at Peking University also occurred to a certain extent in other electoral districts.

The report on the Peking University elections concluded that "the 1980 elections in certain constituencies indicated clearly that the Chinese people had a certain basic understanding of politics and had taken the first step to fight for their own power." □

Yugoslav Regime Takes Softer Line Against Dissident Professors

According to a report in the March 24 *London Times*, the Yugoslav government has reversed its earlier decision to fire a group of dissident Marxist professors at the University of Belgrade.

Known at the *Praxis* group after the philosophical journal they had published, the eight professors were barred from teaching in 1975 and their magazine was banned. The authorities repeatedly tried to get them to accept jobs outside the university in order to remove them from any contact with students there. Finally, in December 1980, the regime moved to fire them (until then the professors had been suspended on 60 percent of their pay).

According to the *Times* dispatch, the Yugoslav government has now agreed to set up an Institute for Social Research where the professors will be allowed to work.

"In recent months," it reported, "many leading Yugoslav politicians have been voicing serious misgivings about the policy pursued hitherto by the authorities towards various critics of the regime who were publicly attacked without being given a chance to publish their views and thus enable Yugoslavs to reach their own conclusions."

These "advocates of a dialogue with all who accept the Yugoslav form of socialism" warn that if the regime is too heavy-handed in suppressing dissent, it may alienate "the new generation now entering the political scene."

Behind Colombian Regime's Frame-Up of M-19 Guerrillas

[Socorro Ramirez is a leader of the Standing Committee for Defense of Human Rights and of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR), Colombian section of the Fourth International. She is well-known in Colombia as a defender of democratic rights, and at the time of the following interview had recently returned from a trip to Ecuador to investigate the denial of political asylum to a group of Colombian guerrillas from the April 19 Movement (M-19).

[Ramirez was interviewed April 19 in Bogotá by Matilde Zimmermann. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Question. I have seen the articles in El Espectador about your trip to Ecuador and know you were also interviewed by radio and television here when you came back. Could you explain the purpose of your trip and tell us what you were able to find out?

Answer. I went as a member of the Human Rights Committee and also as a journalist, after the newspapers reported that a group of Colombian guerrillas had been denied political asylum in Ecuador.

We learned March 16 that forty-eight guerrillas who were members of the Antonio José de Sucre column of the April 19 Movement had been turned over to the Colombian army by the Ecuadoran army. They had fled into Ecuador from Colombia because of persecution by the Colombian army.

The government of Ecuador knew as early as March 9 that Colombian air force helicopters were attacking the guerrillas near the Ecuadoran border. That's when the guerrillas began to move toward the border in order to ask for asylum.

I was concerned because this was a clear violation of international law and because I knew that once the guerrillas were turned over to the Colombian army they ran the risk of being shot or tortured. This often happens in Colombia, as a recent report by Amnesty International indicates. So in order to help launch a big campaign to save the lives of these guerrillas, I went to Ecuador to find out the facts and learn what people thought.

To do this, I conducted thirty interviews, with leaders of the Ecuadoran parliament;

with cultural figures like the painter Oswaldo Guayasamín; with sections of the church such as the bishop of Riobamba, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño; with leaders of the trade-union federations and peasant organizations; with leaders of the left parties; with very well known intellectuals and politicians; with leaders of the Party of the Democratic Left (PID), which has a majority in parliament; and even with sections of the Ecuadoran government.

As the articles in the Colombian press and the radio and television programs showed, all these interviews proved that there had been a violation of the international treaties between Colombia and Ecuador concerning asylum, and in particular the agreement signed in Caracas in 1954. There had also been violations of the international agreement on extradition, the Bolivarian agreement of 1911.

Among other things, there are the following facts. The guerrillas did ask for asylum. I obtained in Ecuador a letter signed by Commander Roseberg Pabón, who directed the taking of the American embassy and was the head of the first group that came looking for asylum. I have the letter here, and the Colombian press has published it. It shows that he requested asylum in the name of a group that arrived on March 15, fleeing the Colombian army.

Armored helicopters of the Colombian air force even crossed into Ecuadoran territory, violating the country's sovereignty, in their pursuit of the guerrillas.

In their asylum request they say that four of their comrades were shot on the frontier by the Colombian army. Gen. Fernando Landazabal Reyes, the head of the Colombian army, has admitted more than twenty members of this group of guerrillas were killed.

The guerrillas asked for asylum because they were being persecuted. They present evidence of political persecution. Everyone knows the M-19 is a guerrilla movement, a political movement.

And they made their request for asylum to the proper authorities in the Ecuadoran town of San Lorenzo, to the political lieutenant who was the one authorized to receive such petitions.

The day after Pabón's request, Commander Carlos Toledo Plata arrived with another group. In the town square he publicly thanked the residents for their help. The peasants of the area had even given the guerrillas clothes so that they could take off their combat uniforms and come to make their asylum request in civilian clothes. The peasants had given them food. They took care of them, because

after so many days of dangerous living in the jungle, they were in truly terrible physical condition. *El Espectador* published an interview I did with the doctor who treated some of these guerrillas.

So all the facts show that they did ask for asylum, that they were victims of political persecution. And yet their request was turned down.

Q. Why weren't they granted asylum?

A. All the facts indicate that it was a hastily-made deal between the armies of Ecuador and Colombia. A deal in which international treaties didn't matter.

I think what we are seeing is the Viola Plan [named after Argentine military dictator Gen. Roberto Viola] at work. In December, 1979, the commanders of the Southern Cone, of Colombia, and of the Central American dictatorships, got together in Bogotá, and approved a secret plan. It is a plan that neither the people nor the parliament of Colombia had anything to do with.

The Viola Plan is above the constitutions of the various countries. It is even above the presidents, because President Roldos of Ecuador found out about the decision to turn over the Colombian guerrillas who had asked for asylum after the first group had already been turned over.

The situation is even more serious. The Colombian army even used insignias of the Ecuadoran army in order to follow the guerrillas into Ecuadoran territory.

There is an obvious contradiction. While the common criminals that the CIA put up to taking the Ecuadoran embassy in Havana were supposed to be given political asylum after their armed takeover of the embassy, the Colombian guerrillas who arrived unarmed, and who were victims of political persecution, and whose lives were in danger, were denied the right to political asylum.

The interviews also show that the Colombian government did not comply with any of the laws governing how prisoners are to be turned over. Agreements that this government signed say among other things that no one who has asked for political asylum in another country can be turned over unless it is proven that he or she is a common criminal. Either a copy of the conviction has to be sent to the country, or a copy of the indictment showing evidence of common crimes. Not of rebellion. Not of political offenses.

The Bolivarian agreement says that if someone has been denied political asylum, that person cannot then be tried for political offenses in his or her own country, because these political offenses would have

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required the granting of political asylum. But many of these *compañeros* are now being tried on political charges in the La Picota prison in Bogotá, in a tribunal organized by the military. In other words, they are completely ignoring all the treaties.

Q. What happened to the guerrillas after they were turned over to the Colombian army?

A. As soon as the Ecuadoran army turned over Roseberg Pabón's group of fifteen, and then Carlos Toledo Plata's group of twenty-four, the Colombian army presented us with the following theory. They claimed that what had occurred was an invasion, and that the guerrillas were prisoners of war.

This was ridiculous. People cannot invade their own country. We had never been informed that Colombia was at war with itself. We asked the president when this internal war had been declared.

The military hid the guerrillas. For several weeks they would not allow their families, or lawyers, or reporters, or the human rights committee a chance to talk to them or to know whether they were alive or dead. They didn't want to release the names of the guerrillas, or the names of those who had been shot. They would only say that twenty had been killed in combat and were buried in a common grave.

Now they have moved the guerrilla commanders to Bogotá and brought them before the military tribunal that had previously been trying them in absentia. And they organized a new military tribunal in the city of Ipiales, where they are trying the rest of the guerrillas.

This military tribunal is completely unconstitutional. The Colombian constitution says that only soldiers in the army can be tried in military tribunals. These were set up simply to get convictions against a group of fighters who have rebelled against the current situation in Colombia.

It is impossible to know exactly how many are involved. It could be about a hundred. As I said before, not all of them were turned over by the Ecuadoran army. Some were captured in Colombia before they could get across the border and others in Ecuador before they had a chance to ask for asylum.

Q. Can you explain how this incident led to the breaking of relations with Cuba?

A. With the Colombian press and public demanding that the army produce the guerrillas to show they were alive, or at least reveal their names, the army suddenly called a news conference at a military base. There they produced one alleged guerrilla, seventeen years old. The only thing he was clear about, in an interview that the whole country realized was an army show, was that he had been trained in Cuba, and that the guerrillas

had come from Panama where they bought arms.

Without examining these charges, without asking the guerrilla commanders, without asking the Cuban government for their side of the story, the president of Colombia forty-eight hours later broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.

We consider this very serious. It was a democratic victory for the Colombian people to have relations with the people and government of socialist Cuba. We are mounting a campaign with the slogan "Turbay broke relations with Cuba, but the Colombian people did not."

Q. Can you tell us some more about what is being done to defend the rights of the guerrilla prisoners, both here and in Ecuador?

A. Here in Colombia, the defense campaign the human rights committee is leading has several aspects.

The committee has issued a statement and had an interview with a government minister. We selected a group of attorneys and sent them to Ipiales to defend the guerrillas. The military had assigned them official defense attorneys who were all military men.

We have gotten out the word about all these interviews, in spite of the censorship the newspapers, radio, and television have used against us. Next week a book will be published, with all the interviews, all the documents, all the telegrams from the village of San Lorenzo to President Roldós and the Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Alfonso Barrera. These show that the guerrillas did request asylum. They show the soldiers are lying when they say the guerrillas came into San Lorenzo shooting and that they never asked for asylum.

We are also thinking of making an appeal to the United Nations because of

the violation of important international agreements.

At the same time we are trying to organize popular tribunals around the country, to occur simultaneously with the military trials of the guerrillas. Tribunals in unions, neighborhoods, universities, and workplaces, where the government and the army would be asked to explain the hunger, unemployment, repression, and political persecution that are the life of Colombians.

This is one way to exposing the military trials. We say that an army and government that break international laws and torture people have no right to try these political prisoners who have rebelled against the desperate situation that exists in Colombia.

There have been many protest demonstrations in Ecuador as well. A group of students held a two-week hunger strike in front of the Foreign Ministry, demanding that Ecuador not break relations with Cuba and respect the right of asylum. At the very least, they demanded, any guerrillas still in Ecuador should be given asylum, and the government should use its influence to see that those already turned over are not killed or tortured.

All the trade-union organizations in Ecuador have made statements about the situation. Even the International Affairs Commission of the Ecuadoran parliament has issued a memorandum demanding to know why the central government was not informed and why international agreements were violated.

I think it important for this campaign to have an international dimension. A campaign to put pressure on the government and armed forces of Colombia in order to save the lives of these Colombians, these revolutionary patriots. To do this, a big international campaign will be necessary. □

Sandinistas Welcome Mitterrand's Victory

MANAGUA—The victory of François Mitterrand was front-page news here in Nicaragua. As soon as the results of the French election were known, Commander of the Revolution Bayardo Arce told reporters that the victory of the Socialist Party candidate had "enormous political importance for the FSLN."

"And not only for Nicaragua," he went on. "This victory will also have a positive impact in other Latin American countries, and it is something that the rulers of the United States will have to pay attention to."

Mitterrand is a member of the International Committee in Defense of the Nicaraguan Revolution, which was established by the Second International

at its last international conference in Madrid. The committee is scheduled to meet here in Managua in the last week of June.

According to reports here, Mitterrand during his campaign said that if he were elected France would step up its aid to Nicaragua. In particular he pledged to send wheat to help make up for the fact that the United States has cut off shipments of this vital grain.

Not all Latin American leaders were as pleased with the news from France as the Sandinistas. Julio César Turbay Ayala, the president of Colombia, told reporters he was "not at all enthusiastic." Turbay confessed: "I was not psychologically prepared for Mitterrand's victory."

Nicaraguan Farmers and Ranchers Form Union

By Matilde Zimmermann

MANAGUA—Three hundred and sixty elected delegates and several hundred observers met here April 25 and 26 to form the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG—Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos). The delegates represented family farmers and working ranchers from every part of Nicaragua.

The first day of the National Constituent Assembly, delegates discussed three basic documents drawn up on the basis of votes at local meetings and regional assemblies over the last few months. The documents were a central report, a declaration of principles, and a plan of action.

Dozens of delegates spoke after each report—and there were always more hands in the air than could be recognized. The discussion ranged from very specific technical, financial, and social problems, to general remarks about the ways in which the new organization was making it possible for campesinos to be involved in the political life of the country for the first time.

Besides adopting the three documents, the delegates elected a national council and a governing board.

Minister of Agricultural Development and Commander of the Revolution Jaime Wheelock opened the second day of the conference proceedings with a description of the country's economic situation. He cited the accomplishments of 1980—in which Nicaragua was the only Central American country to experience economic growth. But he also explained frankly how underdevelopment and the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis mean that there are no quick solutions to the problems agricultural producers face.

Wheelock explained how a few years ago a jeep could be bought with the proceeds of 20 sacks of coffee beans. Now eighty sacks must be sold to buy the same vehicle.

"Nicaragua in this sense is very much like, or really just the same as, a campesino. Both have land. Both produce. You produce beans, which are bought from you cheap. And you are sold pants, shoes, and everything else you need, at extremely high prices. You lose both ways. This is exactly what happens to Nicaragua. In the international capitalist market, Nicaragua is exploited in exactly the same way you are."

Wheelock promised that unused land would be turned over to peasants with little or no land, with the priority going to cooperatives or groups of families. He pointed out that small farmers already get loans at preferential interest rates. In 1980 total loans to farmers were twelve times what they ever were under Somoza.

Wheelock outlined the economic and military pressures on Nicaragua, and told the farmers they had to be prepared for the possibility of an economic blockade by the United States. He encouraged them to join the Sandinista People's Militias, as many already have.

"For the same reasons," he went on, "we need to become self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs. The better our reserves of food, the less people will be afraid when the imperialists do things like cut off our wheat. . . . So there are really three things we have to have here. Rice. Beans. And bullets."

After greetings from leaders of peasant organizations in Mexico, Panama, Cuba and Honduras, the conference closed with remarks by Commander of the Revolution Víctor Tirado. Tirado is the member of the FSLN National Directorate who has been

most directly involved in the formation of the new organization.

At a breakfast for foreign journalists the next day, I asked Tirado what he thought about the achievements of the weekend. He explained that the Sandinistas approached the problems of agricultural producers in a practical way, that they did not start with some abstract theoretical idea of what ought to exist. They called the first farmers meeting for December 14 in Matagalpa, an important agricultural area and long-time revolutionary stronghold. From then on, Tirado said, it was the farmers and ranchers themselves who determined the pace of events and the type of organization they wanted.

Tirado noted the speed with which the new organization became a reality—from the first gathering in December, through local and regional meetings all over the country in February and March, to a national assembly before the end of April.

An experience I had a few days later gave me a glimpse of the impact UNAG is already beginning to have on the lives of campesinos. I was riding in the back of a truck almost as far from Managua as you can get without leaving Nicaragua. The truck

U.S. Says No Cuban Cattle for Nicaragua

MANAGUA—The U.S. government has come up with a new economic threat against Nicaragua—the possibility of cutting off meat imports should Nicaragua bring in Cuban cattle for breeding purposes.

U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua Lawrence Pezzullo warned Nicaragua that Cuba was not on the U.S. list of countries free of aftosa—commonly known as foot-and-mouth disease.

U.S. regulations, according to Pezzullo, forbid importation of beef from any country which has not been declared free of aftosa or where beef may come in contact with contaminated cattle.

However, as Commander of the Revolution Jaime Wheelock, minister of agricultural development explained, Cuba is on the list of aftosa-free countries compiled by the prestigious Pan-American Center on Aftosa Fever (PANAFTOSA). It has also been declared free of the disease by the Pan-American Health Organization.

Moreover, Cuba does not appear on the lists of countries affected by aftosa compiled by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) or the Regional International Organization of Plant Protection and Animal Health Care (OIRSA), which was set up by the U.S. government.

In fact, in two meetings with Wheelock, Pezzullo produced no evidence at all that there is any aftosa in Cuba.

As the FSLN daily *Barricada* noted May 6, the exclusion of Cuba from the U.S. list of aftosa-free countries is a "unilateral action taken by the U.S. as part of its twenty-two year blockade against the Cuban economy and Cuban life."

Echoing the U.S. threats, the big Nicaraguan ranchers have invoked the specter of a cutoff of meat exports to the United States.

Barricada replied to these faint hearts in a May 7 editorial entitled "Aftosa and servility."

"Precisely because the thinking in our society is divorced from criteria like those used by FAGANIC [the organization of big ranchers] in relation to the importing of Cuban cattle, Nicaragua will never be a colony of the United States.

"The matter is quite clear. FAGANIC alleges that what is important is not the technical question (whether or not there is aftosa in Cuba), but that Cuba isn't included in the U.S. list. And without asking why Cuba has been arbitrarily excluded from the U.S. meat market, they urge us to accept the Yankee conditions and sacrifice the possibility of importing the Cuban cattle that will serve to improve the breed in our country.

"In other words, the directors of FAGANIC have raised the flag of neocolonialism and slavery against their own country."

—Arnold Weissberg

stopped and one of the people who got on was a rancher I had talked to at the UNAG conference.

After we exchanged greetings, other people started to ask him what happened at the conference. One campesino said he had been unable to go himself, but had listened to the whole thing on the radio and now believed for the first time that the government was not going to take away his land. He told us about a campesina who listened to the broadcasts with him. She had abandoned

her farm a year before, because she did not want to waste her time working the land if the government was going to take it away from her. After the UNAG conference, she went back to her farm.

That night I ran into the rancher again when he came into the mining town of Bonanza to slaughter a cow for the May Day holiday. I asked him if he was going to the workers' demonstration in Rosita the next day. "Sure," he told me. "After all, it's compañero to compañero with us now." □

As U.S. General Announces Visit

New Attacks by Honduran Army Against Nicaragua

By Arnold Weissberg

MANAGUA—The Honduran army has participated in new attacks against Nicaragua. On May 5, a band of twenty-five counterrevolutionaries was spotted inside Nicaragua, near the Honduran border, by a patrol of the Sandinista People's Army frontier unit.

The Somozaists fled toward Honduras. As the Sandinista troops approached the border, they came under heavy machine-gun fire from elements of the Honduran army. In addition, grenades were lobbed at them from a helicopter. The firefight lasted six hours. No details of casualties were immediately available.

The May 5 attack was one of several coming close together. On May 3 and May 5, Honduran army units crossed into Nicaragua and attacked in an area known as El Tablazo. Also on May 5, a flight of four helicopters with Honduran military markings crossed over the border into Nicaraguan air space.

These latest attacks confirm reports in the *Washington Post* that, with the urging and support of the Reagan administration, Honduras is seeking to provoke a war with Nicaragua.

These reports have been front-page news here and are seen as bearing out the same charges levelled by Nicaragua.

According to press reports here, the *Washington Post* articles have shaken the Honduran military, forcing it to deny any plans for such a war.

However, it was reported here May 6 that ex-CIA director Gen. Vernon Walters would visit Honduras the following week as a special emissary for Secretary of State Alexander Haig. The previous week, Honduran chief of Public Security Gustavo Alvarez had paid a visit to Washington.

The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry has released a "White Paper" documenting 120 attacks from Honduras since the beginning of 1980.

At a May 6 news conference announcing publication of the White Paper, Deputy

Foreign Minister Víctor Tinoco charged that Nicaragua has been "the object of a general campaign orchestrated by U.S. imperialism in the diplomatic, political, economic, and military fields, and this situation with Honduras is part of that plan."

The Honduran military regime of Policarpo Paz García has permitted the Somozaists to operate without interference, although the locations of their camps are widely known. On May 6, the Honduran Council for Peace and Friendship with Nicaragua (COHPAN) revealed the existence of camps with some 200 counterrevolutionaries near the Nicaraguan border, naming the exact locations and the owners of the property.

Dozens of Hondurans in the village of San Marcos de Colón, on the Nicaraguan border, have signed a petition to their government demanding the expulsion of the Somozaists in the area. The ex-Guardsmen, the population says, have "robbed houses, robbed private property, murdered, and threatened citizens," according to a report on Honduran radio May 7.

In addition, Honduran radio stations have been appealing to Miskito Indians living in Nicaragua to "flee from Communism."

The Honduras rulers have sought to blame the border incidents on Nicaragua and have undertaken a propaganda campaign in which the country's sensationalist capitalist press has played a major role.

The Tegucigalpa daily *El Heraldo*, for instance—whose slogan is, ironically, "the truth in your hands"—ran in its April 29 issue a screaming headline declaring "Honduras ready to defend its territorial integrity," featuring grisly photos of three corpses. All three were Somozaists—killed in Nicaragua.

Mexican president José López Portillo, meanwhile, during a visit to Mexico May 6-7 of Commander of the Revolution and Coordinator of the Junta of National Reconstruction Daniel Ortega, condemned "provocations from outside" that could lead to a war. López Portillo offered "all our efforts" to bring the two sides together and prevent a general conflict between Nicaragua and Honduras.

This coincides with Nicaragua's policy, which has been to seek direct talks with Honduras to work out any differences. □

Costa Rican Regime Breaks Relations With Cuba

MANAGUA—The government of Costa Rica broke diplomatic relations with Cuba May 11, citing as its reason the "tone" of a note from a Cuban representative to the United Nations dated December 30 of last year. The note was in response to a Costa Rican complaint to the United Nations about alleged political prisoners in Cuba.

Most Costa Ricans quoted in newspapers here attribute the rupture to pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the State Department. Even ex-Foreign Minister Gonzalo Falcó said he cannot accept the official explanation.

Leaders of the Costa Rican Socialist Party (PSC), the People United coalition, and the Revolutionary Movement of the People (MRP) condemned the move and accused the Carazo government of capitulating to Washington. The head of the People's Vanguard Party (PUP) called the action "a humili-

ation for our people, who are being treated like a colony." The head of the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce on the other hand called the break with Cuba a "very good move" and demanded that the government also break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

The Carazo government had suddenly closed its consulate in Havana on March 22 and withdrawn its consul general without offering any explanation. On May 8, the Costa Rican foreign minister announced the cancellation of its treaty of economic and technical cooperation with the Soviet Union. The only official explanation offered was that the treaty had become "inconvenient for Costa Rica."

The unilateral action of May 11 makes Costa Rica the second Latin American country in recent months to break diplomatic relations with Cuba, following the example of Colombia.

Poland: 'The Best Word for What Is Going on Is Revolution'

[The following interview with Jacek Kuron, a prominent figure in Poland's Solidarity movement, was obtained in Warsaw on May 2 by George Saunders and De Ann Rathbun.]

* * *

Question. Could you give your assessment of the present situation in Poland?

Answer. The situation is very complicated. I think it should be put as follows:

The best word for what is going on—with all due reservations—would be a revolution. The term must be used with reservations, because it is only an analogy, and analogies never apply completely.

I call it a revolution because, practically speaking, it is a movement involving all of Polish society, which is trying to change its life as a whole. I would say it is based on a revolution in people's moral outlook. People have decided that it is impossible to go on living as they used to. There is a general conviction that the way of life we were forced into was opposed to all basic human values, and the attempt to change our way of life in every aspect stems from that general conviction. This change of outlook, which I call a moral revolution, affects all human relationships—social, political, and all others.

This movement obviously is embodied first of all in the independent trade union Solidarity, but also in Rural Solidarity, the Independent Students' Union, etc. These are the organizational forms of the movement. This movement is found in every possible sphere of life—in factory relationships, in the area of workers self-management, in parliament, in town councils, in culture and education, schools, theater, literature, the system of orphanages—every sphere of life. And that is why I call it a revolution. And this change is occurring very rapidly.

The old order has practically ceased to exist. We have to create a new order. That is the first, approximate answer to your question.

And now we have to consider the complexities of the situation. I think that the basic thing that complicates the situation is the fact of Soviet domination of Poland. There is a general awareness of the fact that one day the tanks may appear, and then the Polish war would start, which would be a tragedy for our nation. This has to be avoided. At the same time, this revolution cannot be stopped, because nobody could ever stop a revolution.

I wrote an article on whether there would be a Soviet intervention, in which I had an idea on what has to be done in connection with this. The article was circulated widely,

and we are still considering the same question. Now I would like to clarify this. The premises for this concept—and I think of it as my former concept—of how to avoid intervention are as follows. The Soviet Union requires a political guarantee of its military domination over Poland. That is the necessary minimum, from their point of view.

I thought the statement in the Gdansk agreement which acknowledged the leading role of the party would be this necessary guarantee. It had to be connected with a strict definition of what the political leading role of the party meant. I formulated this as follows: The party would have exclusive authority over the army, over foreign policy, and over the police, particularly the political police. However, this did not mean authority above the law. Independent courts, and courts controlling the police, had to be guaranteed.

Also, the party and the central administration, that is, the executive authority, would have to follow a line in accordance with the wishes of society. I thought that within this framework we could build our democracy up from the lowest levels of society, with the stress on social control over the means of production.

This entire program has fallen to pieces, because a revolution has started in the party. Because this whole line of thinking was based on the assumption of the Soviet Union's trust in the party. And in the present situation I am afraid this trust is no longer possible.

Because of the external danger, the revolution has to be self-limited. At the beginning nobody knew whether the self-limitation of the revolution was possible. Generally speaking, revolutions are not able to limit themselves. However, in my opinion, it was within our power. I think perhaps we could have done it. The self-limitation of the revolution might have been possible. But now we don't know the answer to the basic question of how to do that.

This revolution has reached the party and now it is proceeding inside the party. And I don't know yet what should be done in this situation. I think there are many different ideas, but it is too early to talk about them. And that is the answer to your question about the general situation in Poland.

Q. We heard on Polish television a couple of nights ago that the government had agreed to let Solidarity have time on television. Is that true?

A. Yes. But it is not that the government agreed to it, but that Solidarity demanded it.

Q. You mean the demand has not been

agreed to by the government?

A. Full agreement has not been achieved yet. The argument is still going on. The problem is who is going to control this television program. They say that television belongs to the state and that they will decide what the final shape of this program is to be. But Solidarity says no, the government can have formal control, but Solidarity must have essential control, over the content.

But I think this is a matter of no importance, because in fact there is a fight going on for control over all of television, not just part of it, and this fight is going on throughout the society, and within the institutions of the television system itself. You have to realize that most of the television staff are members of Solidarity. And in fact this is a pressure on the television system as a whole and they won't be able to withstand it.

I think that in connection with your question you have to realize that in practice Solidarity is able to achieve anything it wants. But the question becomes, what is it possible for Solidarity to demand? The fact that we are not achieving everything we demand is because we realize that we cannot push them to the wall. When I say "we" I mean a trade union composed of twelve million members, in which different people have different points of view. And so this is a point of argument within Solidarity, that is, how far to push each demand.

Q. What is the role of the KOR [Committee for Social Self-Defense] in Solidarity, or the relation between the KOR and Solidarity?

A. In my opinion, the KOR should have been dissolved at the beginning of last September, because the KOR had served its purpose. In practice, the movement as a whole is doing what the KOR did previously. In fact the entire KOR movement is inside Solidarity.

But it is hardly possible for the KOR as an organization to be dissolved because of the natural conservatism of such an organization. In fact it continues to exist without any separate field of activity. The KOR has never been a political party. And it cannot be, because according to its program, it was organized as a body that would be above politics.

At this moment the need is not to have political parties, but political trends or clubs or something like that. And the KOR is not able to fulfill this need. This is something that is causing divisions in the KOR.

Q. Did members of the KOR play any special role during the August strikes?

A. First, from the beginnings of the strikes in July we organized an information-

al center that gathered all possible news about the strikes and made it public. Not only in August, but even in July, if a strike was declared somewhere in the country, people immediately got information about it and about all the previous strikes and demands. Issues of *Robotnik* were published containing "strike calendars" [chronologies of events in the strikes] and the demands of the strikers in each factory.

This was of great importance. In the previous moments [in 1970 and 1976] there were demonstrations, the burning of party buildings, blocking of railroad tracks, etc. Among other things, these were attempts to achieve publicity, to communicate. Workers were not able to simply occupy their factories because then the rest of the population would not know what was going on. Thanks to our efforts, everybody knew about every strike and every other activity. And this was a very important condition, allowing strikers to remain in their factories.

It should be added that during the preceding four years, the KOR had sought to convince people of a central idea which could be expressed this way: "Don't set fire to party committees; organize your own committees." This idea became very widespread in our society, in addition to the fact that the information the KOR provided was very good.

Because of this we were invited by strike committees and asked to advise them and help them, which we did. According to our knowledge about the strikes, our strike experience, we issued nationwide demands three times. In fact, the main strikes, of greatest importance, such as Ursus, Lublin, and Gdansk, were led by people connected with the KOR.

Q. Through Robotnik?

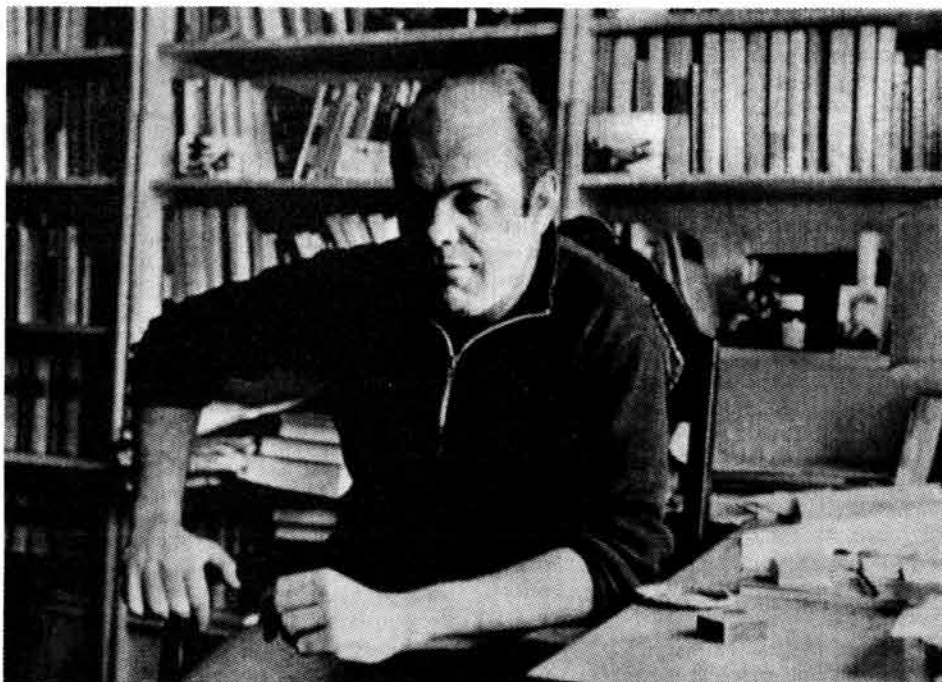
A. Yes, but also through Bogdan Borusewicz, a KOR member who was an observer on the Gdansk strike committee. He was delegated from the KOR to the Gdansk region. After we were isolated [by repeated 48-hour arrests] other people were delegated from the KOR information center to organize an information center at the shipyard.

In addition to Borusewicz there were three other KOR members in the Gdansk shipyard, [Ewa Milewicz, Miroslaw Chojcki, and Konrad Bielinski]—all from our editorial committee—and they put out the newspaper *Solidarnosc*.

Q. Has there been any new KOR statement of principles since August?

A. No, but recently a set of theses has been presented for discussion in *Solidarity*, a draft program being considered for adoption by *Solidarity* [published in issue No. 3 of the weekly *Solidarnosc*]. This is a document of fundamental importance.

This is a text I identify with completely. It is a program for the democratization of the country. It was very sharply attacked by the party authorities in the country and abroad.



KURON: "People have decided it is impossible to go on living as they used to."

Q. What answer do you give to those who accuse you and others in Solidarity of being antisocialist elements?

A. I was asked the same question yesterday by a journalist from *Czas* [Time], an official, party-oriented weekly published in Gdansk. I don't know if the interview will be published. My answer was that if what we have been living under for the last thirty-six years is socialism, I am antisocialist.

Q. What is the role of the Confederation for an Independent Poland [KPN], whose leaders are now under arrest?

A. That is the only role this group has played. For all practical purposes they did not exist before they were arrested. Since the leaders were jailed and there was a need to fight for their release they suddenly started to exist [as a factor of political importance]. And I cannot predict what the situation will be after they are released. They are exceptionally unskilled politically, and they may not be able to make use of the political capital that has accumulated as a result of their arrest.

At the same time I think there is a need in part of Polish society for this kind of nationalistic current. That is the source of their support. In fact the conservative wing in the party wants to make use of the same moods, because they have brought into being the Grunwald organization, whose members call themselves "national Communists." So this is the same as national socialism, but worse.

Q. Is this the anti-Semitic, pro-Soviet organization we have heard about?

A. Yes.

Q. And what role do they play?

A. Within the apparatus of the totalitarian movement [i.e., the official party] fascism is being born spontaneously. But it has no chance of success within society among other things because these are indeed national Communists, but no one can tell of which nation.

Q. The Polish movement has evoked sympathy and support all over the world—among the people. I don't mean the governments. How in your opinion can people in other countries best help Solidarity?

A. My personal opinion is that what is going on in Poland now is of fundamental significance for the whole world, I think that the solidarity of people is perhaps the most important. And I'm ashamed, because it is really a very important matter, that I can't say very much about it. I think that people should know as much as possible about us, everything about us. They should understand us.

This is especially important because I have a feeling that the Western press is doing us harm. It presents our situation as though it is within our power to stop the movement and as though it is unreasonable of us to continue. It is as though the Western press is justifying an intervention that has

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not happened yet.

The main point is that we cannot stop because the old order has collapsed and we have to build a new order. It is impossible for a society of thirty-five million people to live without a social order, without institutions of social life.

There is a need for all people in Western countries to understand that the Soviet Union is very dependent on Western governments, and in this connection, pressure by the peoples on their governments in defense of us is very important. Western governments would be able to stop Soviet intervention by their joint efforts. I want to stress that I am not calling on them to declare war.

That is all I can say on this question. Much more might be said, but my point of view is so Polish that it is very difficult for me to speak as if I were in your shoes.

*Q. In what ways have your views changed since you wrote the Open Letter, along with Karol Modzelewski, in 1965?**

A. It would be very difficult for me to answer your question because that would require a very broad theoretical discussion. Since then I have ceased to be a Marxist, and Karol has too, at least in the sense that Marx used to say: "I am not a Marxist." This is a theoretical question that we would not have time to go into.

As for the practical proposals in the book, my attitude is entirely the same, except that it should be within a framework of parliamentary democracy, that is, workers councils side by side with a parliament. Parliament was not included in the book. Both Karol and I already considered that to be a mistake three days after the book was published.

The other mistake was that the national question was completely overlooked, an example of the classical blindness of Marxism. In Poland that is a fundamental question. This was a basic mistake in analysis.

Q. In 1965 you were very definite about the need to form a new party. How do you see that question today?

A. The difference is significant. In 1965 I said that there should be a revolution in the Soviet Union and Poland, or in Poland and every country of the Soviet bloc. Today we are making the revolution in Poland. And in this practical situation I have to keep in mind the existence of the Soviet Union, and this places a limitation on my political program. The difference is that those were words and these are deeds. □

*"Open Letter to the Members of the University of Warsaw Sections of the Polish United Workers Party and the Union of Young Socialists," is included in *Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out, (1964-1968)*. Available from Pathfinder Press, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. US\$1.25.

Interview With Unionist in Polish Textile Mill

'We Are Fighting for Our Rights'

[The following is an interview with Mieczyslaw Wiatkowski, a representative of Wislula Textile factory MKZ (the local branch of the Solidarity trade-union movement) and the vice-president of his factory committee, which represents more than 1,500 workers. It was obtained in March in Krakow, in southern Poland, by Suzanne Weiss.]

* * *

Question. What do you want to say to the American workers?

Answer. The Polish workers are standing firm by their rights and we will continue to fight against anyone who wants to deny us these rights. We have a long struggle. We are fighting for our rights as workers within our factories. But we consider it our duty to win those rights for all workers in Poland.

Q. Are there many women working in the textile mills? Are they active in Solidarity?

A. Where I work it is 90 percent women. In the factory committee it is maybe 40 percent women. You must realize that women have a special problem. After eight hours of work, they must wait on shopping lines for many hours. After shopping the woman goes home to cook and take care of the family. Most men help the women shop by also standing on lines, but the family care is in the hands of the women. There is not much time for Solidarity work for women.

Q. Can you describe the conditions of workers in the textile mills.

A. Workers who work day shift begin at 5:45 a.m. and get off work at 1:45 p.m. The second shift begins at 2 p.m. and ends at 10 p.m. During the eight hours of work there are two fifteen minute breaks. You can eat lunch at that time. The breaks were longer, but the women wanted shorter ones because it cut into their pay. Instead of overtime pay they receive time off. This is a problem which is to be solved by Solidarity. However, workers do not get asked to work overtime often.

Workers receive four weeks vacation each year. Usually each factory closes one month during the year. Everyone takes their vacation at that time. Of course, all industries don't close for one month. But all workers get one month paid vacation. Women receive three months maternity leave. Solidarity is requesting more paid maternity leave.

Workers get paid by piece work in textile mills and in accordance with the kind of work you perform. Solidarity has pointed out that the particular job performed should not determine pay scale. Workers should get paid more equally. The manager of the plant

also paid bonuses according to personal preference. Solidarity has requested that before bonuses are paid out the manager must post an announcement.

The average pay in my factory is 4,500 zlotys per month [30 zlotys = US\$1]. The lowest pay is about 3,000 zlotys per month. Three thousand zlotys per person is considered the biological minimum. About a quarter of the women are heads of households. Women can retire when they are fifty-five and men when they reach sixty. However, the government gives retired workers only 2,500 zlotys per month, which is under the biological minimum. Solidarity is requesting higher retirement pay. I am optimistic that things will be better soon.

In Poland, the lowest paid workers are the farmers. The best paid are blue-collar workers such as miners and shipyard workers. They can receive as much as 10,000 zlotys per month. As a skilled textile worker, I receive 6,000 zlotys a month.

Q. What do the workers want to change in their factories?

A. We want better working conditions, such as air conditioning. We want to have better health service. There are too few doctors and not enough equipment. The women want gynecologists. The clinic is too small. For 1,500 people there is only one doctor and he only stays at the plant for two hours a day. Workers may not choose their own doctor. The health problem a worker suffers may not be job related. However, the worker must go to the doctor who visits the plant each day.

In textile factories, we suffer air pollution and too much heat. That is why we want air conditioning. We often have colds because of our working conditions.

You must realize of course, that workers in Poland do not concern themselves only with working conditions or problems in their particular factory. They are concerned as well that all workers have freedom of expression. We also want freedom of information. If we knew all the plans the manager had in mind we could give better suggestions on how to produce more efficiently.

Q. How do you think Poland should be run? Do you think it should be socialist?

A. I want Poland to be a socialist society that governs itself. We don't know what socialism looks like because it doesn't exist here. However, I hope in the future we can achieve socialism. Of course when I say socialism, I mean that a small section of society should not govern. We, as workers, know best what to produce and how to distribute the wealth. We know best of all what we

need. Every factory must have a say in the economy. The parliament should have the general plan. Our parliament should reflect the need and wants of the society.

The strike in August 1980 was so hot because the Polish people could not endure the situation in Poland, where no food was available and the living conditions were unbearable.

We want first of all to have freedom of expression, to write, to criticize, to receive information and statistics, to discuss. We also want a higher standard of living. If the workers had a voice in making decisions we could have all this. We would like to change the composition of the parliament. We have

not had free elections to the parliament since 1945. We want to see workers and intellectuals in the parliament.

There is a great deal of waste in production. For instance, we produce shoes that no one wants to wear. The shops used to be stocked with many manufactured goods, but no one wanted to buy them. They were ugly or most often of poor quality. Just recently a factory was ordered to manufacture pens that could not write. All the workers in the factory were aware that they were producing pens that did not write. They could not do anything about that.

We want self regulation of the economy. The government gives the workers direc-

tives, "You must produce this much; you must work this long. This factory must produce this type of shoes, this style, this amount." There is no concern about use value. The workers produce. The stores must stock the items. The people, however, refuse to buy. Then we end up wasting everything; money, material, human energy. For what? It doesn't serve any purpose.

We want the factories to be self-governed. If production at a factory is not satisfactory, we can change the manager, we can change the direction of production, the technology. It will not be possible then to waste anymore. We will have an effect on the production and the economy. □

Last Letter of Executed Turkish Political Prisoner

'I Am Proud to Have Been a Revolutionary'

[The following is the text of the last letter of Erdal Eren, a nineteen-year-old Turkish political prisoner who was hanged by the rightist military junta on December 12, 1980.]

[Eren was originally sentenced to death in March 1980, on charges relating to the death of a soldier during a demonstration in Ankara a month earlier. Following a campaign on his behalf by Amnesty International, however, the death sentence was reversed to a term of life imprisonment. But after the military coup in September, the death sentence was reimposed.]

[The letter, which was sent to Eren's family just before his execution, is taken from a February 17 press dispatch issued by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign in London.]

* * *

Dear mother, father, brothers and sisters,

I send you all my deepest respect and love. Up to now I haven't managed to write a proper letter to you. Besides, we have not had a chance to meet and talk with each other. Anyway, even when I was free, we didn't manage to speak to each other with mutual understanding. (On this matter, I was largely guilty of wrong behaviour towards you. But I hope you did not interpret my behaviour to mean that I didn't respect you.) Therefore I have many things I want to tell you about, and speak to you about, but there is no possibility of that. I will try and express my thoughts in this letter.

I can imagine the state you must be in at this particular moment. But I must say openly that my morale is good and I am not afraid of death. I know very well that it is very likely that all this will end in death. Despite that I am not afraid, pessimistic or demoralised, and I am proud to have been a revolutionary and to have taken part in the struggle. The reasons

why I think and behave in this way are due to my belief in the people and in revolution. Just because I say that I am not afraid of death doesn't mean that I don't want to live or that I am fed up with life. Of course I wish to stay alive and be able to fight. But if I face death I must not be afraid, I must face it with courage.

As you know this sentence was given to me because of the crime I was alleged to have committed. The real reason is to make an example of me, in order to prevent further struggle. As you are aware, they had to crush their own judicial rules in order to punish me.

In prison we screamed under inhuman torture (I think you must learn these things in detail). I have seen such barbarous and degrading things that these days living itself is like a torture. Under these conditions death is nothing to be afraid of. It has become a highly desired event, it has become liberation.

In this situation it is nothing for a human being to end his or her life by committing suicide. Under these conditions, I have carried on living by using my willpower at whatever cost. And even when I found out that one day in the near future I would die.

The reason I am writing these things to you is so that you are not under the misapprehension that I either don't grasp the seriousness of the situation or that I am fed up with living. Everything that has happened, everything that I have experienced, has increased my hate a thousand-fold and has inflamed my determination to fight. It could not destroy my faith in people and in revolution. I have no aim other than to raise the level of the struggle and to carry it to the end in the best possible way. So, in short, this is how I see it. But I know also that it is very different and very difficult for you.

The love between mother, father, and

child is very strong and it cannot be that easily destroyed. And I know also how painful the loss of a child will be for you. But no matter how difficult it may be, I want you to put aside these emotional aspects. I want you to know and accept that you have thousands of sons and daughters. So many of these will be slaughtered and lose their lives but will not be destroyed. The struggle will continue and they will live in the battlefields.

What I want from you is to understand this as it is and to struggle to grasp it. It would hurt me if you cry after me, as though I am a pitiful and desperate person. The stronger and more courageous you are about this, the happier I shall be.

I wish you all a happy and free life.

Revolutionary greetings,
your son,
Erdal

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Reagan Tries to Starve Vietnam Into Submission

By Fred Feldman

The Vietnamese revolution is a prime target of Washington's food weapon. The threat of growing hunger and malnutrition is being used in an attempt to exact concessions and break the revolutionary spirit of the people.

The scale of the danger Vietnam confronts was indicated by a team from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which toured the country late last year.

According to *Far Eastern Economic Review* correspondent Nayan Chanda, the FAO team "estimated that between October 1980 and September 1981 Vietnam faces a deficit of 4.4 million tons" of rice or equivalent, "affecting some 6 million people. The FAO experts believe that unless 380,000 tons of milled rice or equivalent are delivered as emergency aid 6 million Vietnamese face malnutrition."

Six major typhoons last year—the latest in the series of weather disasters that have plagued Vietnam since 1976—reportedly destroyed 40 percent of the northern rice crop.

Malnutrition

The shadow of malnutrition already hangs over the Vietnamese population. Dr. Doung Quynh Hoa, an official of a Ho Chi Minh City hospital for children, "has conducted a survey whose preliminary results show that 38 percent of the pre-school children in over 100 of the city's day-care centers suffer from malnutrition," wrote Murray Hiebert in the April 14 *Christian Science Monitor*. "She says that hunger problems are even worse in the north."

"Hanoi's leaders began cutting already-short rations last September," declared a May 4 *Business Week* article headlined, "Mass starvation looms in Vietnam with no aid in sight." The article noted that "in January another sharp cut was made that reduced the rice ration to below the U.N. standard of 15 kg per month per person. . . ."

"The food crisis and the resulting malnutrition have caused productivity to drop," asserted Chanda in the January 9 *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Washington's Campaign Against Vietnam

In an effort to head off an outcry by working people around the world for food for Vietnam, the Western media are claiming that the food problem has little or nothing to do with the devastation created by the thirty-year imperialist war or the subsequent economic boycott imposed on

Vietnam. Instead, it is said the crisis is all a result of bureaucracy, mismanagement, poor planning, and corruption on the part of the Vietnamese government.

A headline in the April 14 *Christian Science Monitor* summed it up: "Even Vietnamese blame food crisis and malnutrition on government mismanagement."

The article that followed did not back up this assertion, however. Instead, it quoted a State Department official who claimed credit for Vietnam's difficulties.

"Vietnam's food crisis suggests our policy may be working," this official was quoted as saying. "If it doesn't, we can find new pressure points."

One of these "new pressure points" was indicated May 2 when Reagan administration officials announced that they would provide open backing to a counterrevolutionary front against the Kampuchean government. The forces attempting to create this front are Prince Sihanouk, traditional right-wing politicians, and the commanders of the Khmer Rouge army headed today by Pol Pot.

The goal is to compel Vietnam to divert further resources to Kampuchea, where massive Vietnamese help—including food shipments—have played a vital role in beginning recovery from a decade of war, tyranny, and famine.

Another pressure point is the Chinese-Vietnam border. Peking boasted May 8 that its forces had killed 100 Vietnamese soldiers the previous day.

Despite media attempts to blame the Vietnamese victims for the food crisis, the record makes it unmistakably clear that the U.S. government and its allies are responsible.

Role of War

Vietnamese agriculture was shattered by a decade of massive U.S. bombing north and south, and by the wide use of herbicides, search-and-destroy operations, and forcible relocation of entire villages in the south. From being an exporter of rice, South Vietnam was transformed into a food importer.

At the end of the war, the country was pockmarked with 26 million bomb craters. Formerly rich agricultural areas had been rendered almost uninhabitable. The north's industrial base had been virtually destroyed.

During the war Vietnam's food deficit was met by substantial food shipments from the United States to the south and from Peking to the north.

Nayan Chanda writes: "Since the war's

end, not only has the food aid stopped but agriculture in the south, heavily dependent on imported fuel, fertilizer and pesticide, has declined." Behind the decline lies the ban on trade with Vietnam imposed by Washington within days of the entry of the liberation forces into Saigon.

Other factors that must be taken into account are the military attacks by the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea against Vietnam, which forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands from key agricultural areas, and Peking's invasion of the north in February 1979. Washington was complicit in both these efforts to undermine the Vietnamese revolution.

The campaign to impose an economic quarantine on the Vietnamese revolution has escalated since the fall of the Pol Pot regime in January 1979.

One result was cited by Hiebert: "Dr. Hoa's hospital has less than 1/10th of the milk it needs to nurse its malnourished patients back to health. The hospital's milk supply was cut when the European Community suspended powdered milk shipments to Vietnam two years ago. . . ."

Economic and Social Problems

These factors also have seriously disrupted the fulfillment of Vietnam's economic projections. In a report to the National Assembly in December 1980, the chairman of the State Planning Commission, Nguyen Lam, admitted that the second five year plan adopted in 1976 had failed. A plan covering 1981 only was put forward.

The 1976 plan projected rapid economic development and speedy achievement of agricultural self-sufficiency. It was deeply disrupted, however, by the military mobilization imposed on Vietnam by the counterrevolutionary alliance of Washington, Peking, and Pol Pot. According to some estimates, defense expenditures now account for half the Vietnamese budget.

In shaping the plan, Vietnamese officials had figured on aid from the West, but this never materialized. "We did count on the US\$3.2 billion reconstruction aid promised by Nixon," Lam reportedly told Nayan Chanda (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 27, 1981). But Washington reneged on this promise, which had formed part of the negotiations leading up to the Paris Agreement of January 1973.

The imperialist economic boycott and military pressure have created a critical economic and social situation, reminiscent in some respects of difficulties faced by the Soviet Union during the 1918-20 civil war

and its immediate aftermath.

"Our production is slumping in several ways," Chanda quoted a November 1980 party directive as saying,

and the livelihood of the labouring people . . . is deteriorating and encountering many difficulties. Negativism prevails in social life. The enemy and bad elements are taking advantage of this situation to incite the masses to sow division among us and attack our leadership in order to weaken the organisation of our party and state. [*Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 27, 1981.]

"Our party and state have committed the greatest shortcomings and mistakes primarily in economic planning," declared party General Secretary Le Duan. "Due to our shortcomings there continue to exist many problems which have caused the masses to be displeased."

Sporadic activity in the south by guerrilla bands led by former Saigon army officers and a group called Fulro (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races) has been a source of tensions. Fulro is a counterrevolutionary organization set up by British and French imperialism during the war of independence. It is based among sections of the minority peoples of the central highlands.

Rising Discontent

According to a 1980 interview with Vietnamese Communist Party official Nguyen Khac Vien, published by the English-language *Vietnam Courier* (see page 561), "the security forces have their hands full" dealing with such reactionary units.

Nguyen Khac Vien concedes that growing numbers who support the revolution are voicing discontent with economic conditions, authoritarian high-handedness, and corruption.

According to Nayan Chanda food riots occurred last autumn in Haiphong and Nghe-Tinh province in northern Vietnam.

In the context of the difficulties imposed by imperialism on the Vietnamese revolution, a massive reorganization of the Vietnamese economy, state, and Communist Party is now being attempted.

According to Chanda, General Secretary Le Duan strongly criticized the government officialdom in a recent speech. "The most important thing now," Le Duan stated, "is to perfect state organs from central echelons to the grass roots levels. [If this] is not improved, no economic policy can be carried out thoroughly . . . and no economic plan can be satisfactorily implemented."

Nguyen Khac Vien attempted to place the changes in a context broader than the immediate crisis:

Society today is nothing like the one we knew fifteen years ago. We have to change all our styles of work, management and even thought. A new generation has been born and is being brought up in our schools. Even the relationships between parents and children, relationships within the village have been changed. That's

why, besides the economic reforms, we have to lead a series of reforms in other fields during the 1980s. . . .

Sweeping Reform

Sweeping economic and political reforms have been undertaken. These are aimed at stabilizing living conditions, raising morale, and rallying the Vietnamese people in the face of continuing threats from imperialism and its allies in Peking.

A discussion has been spurred in Vietnam. "The atmosphere today is very different from that fifteen years ago, say," declared Nguyen Khac Vien. "The debates inside various organizations and in the Party are much more lively and impassioned, I would say, and much richer than before."

Along with steps to break the power of the big capitalist traders in Ho Chi Minh City in the spring of 1978, the regime launched plans to move more rapidly to the establishment of cooperatives in the countryside.

In the rich Mekong Delta, zealous cadres hastily organized cooperatives, often forcing unwilling farmers to join in. This, however, led to passive resistance. The area under cultivation dwindled and in many cases peasants sold or slaughtered their animals to avoid collectivisation. They also evaded agricultural taxes and avoided selling surplus grain to the state at low prices. According to a Hanoi-based analyst, the government could collect only 40% of its targeted food surplus from the south in 1979 [Nayan Chanda, *FEER*, January 9, 1981].

These methods were undermining the alliance of workers and farmers on which Vietnam's socialist revolution is founded. When this fact became apparent in practice, this course was reversed in favor of encouraging voluntary adherence to cooperatives where this would foster productivity.

As Nguyen Khac Vien put it, "the understanding and support of the people" is "especially important for forming agricultural co-operatives. . . . Many cadres have tried to go too fast and the co-operatives they have set up have failed."

Chanda reports that on January 13:

The central Committee issued a directive on giving contracts for producing food and stock raising to groups as well as individual peasants. The directive said that land tilling, water conservation and other heavy works would be done collectively, then individual peasant families or groups would be given a contract over a small piece of land to sow, plant, tend and harvest crops for two or three years. On top of work points received, members can also get any surplus over the contracted quota. The directive also gives freedom to each cooperative to work out its own form of contract. [*FEER*, February 27, 1981.]

Government subsidies which held down food prices to consumers are to be reduced or eliminated in order to make it possible to pay farmers more for their produce. It is hoped that wage increases and increased food supplies will make up for the resulting price increases.

Problems in Industry

One major difficulty in relations with the farmers is the regime's inability to provide farmers with consumer goods and farm equipment.

Here the effects of the imperialist trade and aid embargo multiply the impact of Vietnam's underdevelopment—another gift from the former imperialist masters of the country.

Currently many of Vietnam's factories operate only part time. Dependence on foreign goods which formerly could be imported and power shortages are among

Washington Bans Food Aid to Vietnam

As part of its drive to starve Vietnam into submission, the U.S. government has rejected a request by a Mennonite Church group to ship 250 tons of wheat from Kansas to Vietnam. Mennonite representatives say this is the first time that such a request has been rejected in recent years.

In a letter to the Mennonite Central Committee, the State Department declared that the Vietnamese government could alleviate the suffering of its people by "ending its diversion of resources from economic development to military conquest."

State Department officials also noted that the European Economic Community has turned down a request by Vietnam for food aid, Daniel Southerland reported in the May 13 *Christian Science Monitor*.

The following day Southerland provided additional details on the U.S. campaign against Vietnam. The World Bank ended its aid program to Vietnam in 1979 in response to U.S. pressure. Promised loans from the International Monetary Fund are now in doubt. The Asia Development Bank has refused to promise new loans.

According to Southerland, "The next target seems to be the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which has contributed over a five-year period \$49 million in economic development assistance to Vietnam, mostly to support food production."

UNDP officials had planned to increase that amount to \$90 million over the next five-year period, but Washington intends "to question that proposed UNDP contribution in light of UN resolutions that have called for the withdrawal of Vietnam from Cambodia."

the reasons.

Chanda reports:

The government hopes that completion of a number of medium and small hydroelectric plants will help reduce the country's power generation shortfall. . . . Planners hope that expansion of cement producing capacity with Soviet, French, and Danish help will bring annual production to 3.5 million tons in 1985 compared to less than a million tons now. "With larger amounts of cement available," [economic planner Nguyen] Lam says, "we intend to offer the Mekong delta peasants brick houses in exchange for a bigger supply of rice." [FEER, February 27.]

Piece rates and other incentives are being introduced, replacing a previous policy that tended to hold wages to a minimum. "The past policy of an average wage was egalitarian in appearance but in fact set up inequality," Chanda was told by Hoang Tung, editor of the party daily *Nhan Dan*.

In some cases, early results have been promising:

A leading organisation in this experiment has been the Con Dao state fishing company in Hau Giang province in the Mekong delta. After each fishing trip the cost of materials and depreciation is deducted from the value of the catch, and the balance divided between the government and the crew. This more than doubled the catch in 1980—15,000 tons compared to 7,061 tons in 1979.

On January 19, the government introduced the same system for all fishing enterprises and has, in fact, increased the fishermen's share to 60% of the catch. [Nayan Chanda, FEER, February 27.]

According to Chanda, a worker in a Ho Chi Minh City factory can now earn up to Dong 1,000 (US\$465) a month, compared to the average salary of Dong 50-100.

A party directive has also forbidden party and administrative cadres from interfering in the decision-making powers of industrial and agricultural cooperatives. The hope is that this will create more room for initiative in meeting production goals.

Small-Scale Private Enterprise

Small-scale private enterprise will also be encouraged. Chanda notes:

Ho Chi Minh City today has a much larger supply of locally made consumer goods than two years ago. Since the liberalisation of regulations concerning private enterprise in late 1979 more than 2,000 small family enterprises have sprung up in the city, making such things as plastic buckets, soap and electrical fittings. As long as the number of workers employed does not surpass 20 and the enterprise pays tax to the municipality, it is free to produce what it likes. [FEER, February 27.]

According to Chanda, Chairman of the State Planning Commission Nguyen Lam "even suggested that if certain industrial products could be better produced by the private sector 'we must boldly entrust their production to artisan industry, handicrafts and private capitalists.'"

"But," Chanda noted, "capitalist trad-

ers, other than small family operations, will be prohibited from continuing their business." (FEER, January 9.)

These changes "created controversy within the party," Chanda claims. Seeking to overcome resistance, *Nhan Dan* declared January 22: "It is baseless to consider that by encouraging the legitimate interest of the labourer, our peasants will neglect the interest of the collective and of the whole society."

In the same vein, Nguyen Khac Vien said "there is no chance that capitalism will rear its head again in the present conditions of Vietnam. Individual and family production do not necessarily lead to capitalism."

Combating Corruption

The massive emigration from Vietnam in 1979 drew international media attention to the problem of corruption there. Especially in the south, businessmen profited heavily by selling boats and arranging for emigration papers, working closely with certain officials. Some arrests and dismissals have followed.

And since 1975, the problem of official corruption has been the subject of frequent complaints by the Vietnamese masses. This was one reason for the establishment in 1976 of People's Control Committees. These are described by Nguyen Khac Vien as bodies "elected by the citizens" which "have the right to make enquiries into the working of the administration each time they receive complaints from citizens."

The media in the imperialist countries have exploited the problem to try to make it appear that Vietnam is as corrupt as any semicolonial dictatorship, and much more so than imperialist countries.

A contributing factor to corruption in Vietnam has been the low living standard that much of the officialdom shares with the masses. "Records show that some of the malnourished children in Pediatrics Hospital No. 2 are from homes of low-level government employees whose salaries have not been increased," wrote Murray Hiebert.

"With an average salary of Dong 90," wrote Chanda in his January 9 article, "cadres find it impossible to make ends meet when a kilo of rice costs Dong 4 and a litre of *nuoc mam* (fish sauce) Dong 35. An additional job (or bribes) have become the most frequent way of survival."

In an attempt to reshape the party and improve its image, the Vietnamese Communist Party leaders have resorted to a massive re-registration. This has taken the form of issuing party cards for the first time. One result appears to be a massive shift in party membership with an emphasis on youth.

Nhan Dan editor Tung told Chanda that out of 1.6 million party members, 700,000 have so far been given a card. "The new recruits were mostly young men from the Communist Youth League and the army."

Chanda states that the re-registration is aimed at bringing in a new generation and clearing out the "incompetent and politically unreliable."

The re-registration may be aimed in part at pro-Peking or other elements within the party and government apparatus opposed to the leadership's course. In the April 1981 *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Patrick De Beer asserts that the February 3 *Nhan Dan* carried an editorial referring to "the struggle between two lines."

According to De Beer, opposition is being "encouraged by Peking, where resides Mr. Hoang Van Hoan who sends messages calling on his compatriots to resist." Hoan, a former Vietnamese ambassador to China who defected last year, is reported by De Beer as having "friends in the country, whom he is trying to re-group."

Shifts in Vietnam's internal policies will not put an end to its economic difficulties or definitively lift the shadow of hunger from the country. They are intended above all to demonstrate to the population that the government and party are moving decisively to ameliorate the situation, and to mobilize and reinforce the will of the workers and peasants to defend Vietnam and its allies in Laos and Kampuchea.

But as Nguyen Khac Vien said, "not everything depends on us. Whether socialism is to be built with ease or with difficulty in our country depends not only on our own efforts, but also on the unfolding of our international relations."

Alignment With Cuba

Continued efforts to break through the imperialist economic embargo are being accompanied by moves to strengthen ties with other forces that are struggling against imperialism.

Ties between Vietnam and Cuba remain strong. Their foundation is the unshakable solidarity that the Cuban people have demonstrated toward the Vietnamese revolution. That solidarity was reaffirmed by Cuba's support to Vietnam in the conflict with Washington, Peking, and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge since mid-1978.

The Vietnamese have worked closely with the Cubans in the Movement of Nonaligned Nations.

With Cuban support, they have campaigned to expose Peking's alliance with U.S. imperialism.

Vietnam has also taken an interest in the revolutionary developments in Central America.

Shortly after the fall of Somoza, Vietnam sent a delegation headed by Premier Pham Van Dong to Nicaragua to express support for the revolution. The Nicaraguan invitation to the Vietnamese government was a major blow to imperialism's attempt to declare Vietnam a pariah nation in the wake of its move to topple Pol Pot.

Vietnamese diplomatic personnel have been frequent guests at meetings in soli-



Vietnam needs all the aid it can get to overcome devastation caused by war.

darity with the Nicaraguan revolution and the struggle in El Salvador. Most recently, members of Vietnam's mission to the United Nations spoke at a Vietnam/El Salvador solidarity rally in New York City May 9.

Moscow Cuts Aid

At the same time, strains have appeared in Hanoi's relationship with Moscow. These have their origins in Moscow's fear of the Vietnamese revolution as an obstacle to the goal of détente with imperialism and closer relations with neocolonial regimes in Southeast Asia.

As during the Vietnam War, the Soviet government has provided Vietnam with decisive aid, but not enough to overcome the ruin brought by the war or to put a stop to the attacks of imperialism and Peking.

And as occurred during the Vietnam War, when the Hanoi leaders attempted to resist pressure by Moscow and Peking for concessions to Nixon, the reduction of aid is Moscow's way of signalling displeasure.

Chanda reports that Soviet grain assistance to Vietnam dropped from 1.2 million tons in 1979 to 860,000 tons in 1980. There are indications that the Kremlin has also reduced shipments of oil to Vietnam.

"The Soviets are reported to have told

the Vietnamese they want to provide 40% less aid than was given during the second plan period," reported Chanda February 27.

"The Soviets are said to have quietly dropped their offer to help modernize the 1,800-km. railway line between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and instead want to help upgrade the 90-km. Hanoi-Haiphong line," he added.

Both Moscow and Hanoi have good reason for not pressing differences to a break. For the Kremlin, an alliance with Vietnam is a source of international prestige as well as an important chip in bargaining with Washington.

The reasons given by Hanoi leaders for close ties with Moscow were summed up by Nguyen Khac Vien:

Material and technical aid and economic and scientific co-operation with the developed socialist countries are decisive factors for the modernisation of our economy. We entertain economic relations with many capitalist countries, but these economic relations are subject to the fluctuations of the market and to the more or less hostile policy of the governments. It is only in promoting organic co-operation with the developed socialist countries that we can build up our economy.

Afghanistan and Poland

Nevertheless, the experiences of the last

several years appear to have made the Vietnamese leaders more critical of the policies and practices of the Kremlin and its East European allies.

"On other matters, too," wrote Chanda, *Nhan Dan* editor Tung "took positions different from the Soviets."

Asked if he saw any similarity between the Afghanistan and Kampuchean situations, he said there were certain similarities in the way the Chinese in Kampuchea and the US Central Intelligence Agency in Afghanistan had tried to use the Pol Pot and Hafizullah Amin regimes in their own interests. He added: "There are certain differences. Pol Pot attacked us [before the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea] but Amin did not attack the Soviets [before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan]. In Afghanistan, there are religious minority problems. In Kampuchea all the religions were suppressed and minorities like the Chams massacred."

Tung implied that unlike in Kampuchea, where the Vietnamese-backed government has won public support by reviving Buddhism, the Soviets have to cope with Muslim opposition. "I think that the situation in Kampuchea has improved very quickly. You cannot [say] the same thing about Afghanistan."

His analysis of events in Poland was sharply different from the Soviet view. Vietnamese embarrassment about Poland has been indicated by its silence about the crisis. However, asked to comment, Tung did not mention the "imperialist manoeuvre," the standard Soviet explanation of the Polish labour unrest but said the problem was that the Polish party had lost contact with the masses.

There has been economic development, but they lost touch with the masses, with the working class. If one loses contact with the masses one will lose everything," he said. He admitted, in fact, that Vietnam's effort to improve the economic situation was designed to avert a Polish-style problem. "One has to prepare in time, otherwise one can have a Poland on one's hands." [FEER, February 27.]

Food For Vietnam!

A review of the situation in Vietnam certainly justifies the assertion by Nguyen Khac Vien that "in home affairs, and especially the economy, we are beset by a thousand and one difficulties which we are making the greatest efforts to overcome."

Nguyen Khac Vien warned against drawing pessimistic conclusions from the problems, recalling other difficulties imposed by imperialism which Vietnam overcame: "I remember that between 1965 and 1970 when we met foreign friends, we could tell that they had great sympathy and even compassion for us, but that they considered the cause was lost. After that came the great victory in 1975."

Imperialism's efforts to starve Kampuchea into submission during 1979 failed in the face of the massive international demand including in the United States, that food be sent to that country.

Today imperialism is using hunger as a weapon against Vietnam. A similar international outcry is needed today to demand massive shipments of food and other economic aid for Vietnam. □

Vietnam Since the Revolutionary Victory—I

By Nguyen Khac Vien

[The following is the first half of an interview-article, dated February 1980, that was printed as a pamphlet by *Vietnam Courier*, an English-language magazine published in Hanoi. The author explains that it is based on discussions he had in Hanoi with members of the Medisch Nederland-Vietnam Committee. The article is divided into two sections, one on domestic problems and the other on foreign policy. We will publish the section on foreign policy in our next issue.]

* * *

Question. Could you please summarise for us the essential characteristics of the situation in Vietnam at the start of 1980?

Answer. If you ask any Vietnamese, from the Prime Minister to the man in the street, he will answer:

- in home affairs, and especially the economy, we are beset by a thousand and one difficulties, which we are making the greatest efforts to overcome.

- in foreign affairs, we are ready to repulse any new Chinese attacks.

In short, we have to build socialism on a nationwide scale—both north and south—while having at the same time to spend considerable energy on national defence.

Q. Countless difficulties and yet the certainty of defeating any eventual Chinese aggression, when China has 20 times Vietnam's population. Isn't there a contradiction here?

A. It is not the first time we have faced a similar state of affairs: internal difficulties while confronting a powerful aggressor. Remember that in 1945 Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-Shek) troops were occupying the North of our country, while under their protection the Nationalist Party was plotting to overthrow our government. The South was occupied by British troops opening up the way for the French expeditionary corps. Famine had killed two million of our citizens. Our government, set up on 2 September 1945, had at its disposal only 1 million piastres, a tiny armed force and a very rudimentary administrative set-up. Our people had as yet no experience of armed struggle; 90 percent of the population was illiterate. We were geographically isolated, totally encircled by the imperialist and Jiang Jieshi forces. Nine years later came Dien Bien Phu.

Remember also 1965. Massive American

forces were being landed in the South and the US was pouring bombs on the North, too. An American expeditionary corps of 540,000 ended up stationed in the South, supported by 100,000 soldiers of their satellite countries and nearly a million puppet troops. The American bombs—the equivalent of 700 times the bomb dropped on Hiroshima—were wiping out our towns and villages. In numbers, in firepower, in speed of movement, the enemy held absolute supremacy.

The North of our country, hit hard by the bombing, had to put in the main effort: to defend itself, to help the South and also to help the Lao and Kampuchean patriots. We lacked food and we had to spend a good part of our time in underground shelters. I remember that between 1965 and 1970 when we met foreign friends, we could tell that they had great sympathy and even compassion for us, but that they considered the cause was lost. After that came the great victory in 1975.

Q. So there is a way, a "secret" to resolve this contradiction: confronting a very powerful enemy when the internal situation is difficult.

A. The word "secret" (*bi quyet* in Vietnamese) doesn't mean at all that we're working like the old secret societies. On the contrary. The Vietnamese Communist Party gets its force from the fact that its actions are based on "secret" resources, that is to say, on the bases of the evolution of our country and our epoch. Since 1859, when the French conquered Saigon, the Vietnamese people had tirelessly pursued two basic aims: to win back national independence and to renew completely the socio-economic structures which had been bogged down for centuries in an outdated feudalism.

From 1859 to 1930, when the Communist Party was founded, there was no lack of patriots who sacrificed their lives to save the nation, but 19th century scholars as well as the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups of the early 20th century all succumbed before the powerful colonial and imperialist machine. The Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh, opened up a completely new road for the nationalist movement. National independence was to lead on to the building of socialism, with the Vietnamese revolution as an integral part of the world revolutionary movement. To lead the revolution, the Party had thoroughly to assimilate Marxism-Len-

inism, so that it would be able to define the best line in each stage, and the necessary means. The line that the Vietnamese Communist Party laid down was based on three principles:

- in internal affairs, to mobilise the national forces not with the sole objective of independence, but for a double aim: national independence and socialism.

- in international questions, not to float with the tide of events, but to stand firmly at the side of the world revolutionary and progressive movement.

- in ideological matters, not to be taken in by the allure of theories and ideas alien to Marxism-Leninism, but persistently and patiently to find out how the universal truths of Marxism should be applied to the real conditions of Vietnam.

Those are the secrets that made up our main resource in our fight in the past and which continue to inspire our action.

Q. Isn't there some political opposition these days, as some Western journalists who have visited your country say?

A. Political opposition exists when there is a party, a group or a personality in a country who can address the government and say "move over and let us in, we can do better than you," and when a sizeable part of the population is ready to follow that party or group. The French Left is in that category, for example. In Vietnam there is nothing of the sort. Many questions may give rise to dissatisfaction, but no group or personality can sincerely claim to be able to do better than the Communist Party or the present government.

People want change, ask for change, in this or that field, over this or that policy, but not a change of regime. They are well aware that many of the difficulties result from the long wars—since 1940—that our country has gone through. People are confident that the Party and government can set things right again when there have been mistakes, and, most importantly, they know that the only party that can lead the country forward and can lead the fight against the Chinese and imperialist aggression is the Communist Party. Fifty years of our history have proved it: the Party is deeply rooted in the heart of our nation. For fifty years communists have been the most resolute and effective patriots. The Party has opened the way forward not only by theoretical analyses, but by the blood of its militants. No-one de-

nies the leading role of the Party in the national struggle.

To sum up, the Internal situation can be described thus: a national consensus on the basic choices the regime has made, with many questions under discussion to do with the complex problems that crop up during the building of new social and economic structures.

Q. Aren't there some people who are outside this national community?

A. Yes, two categories. There are those involved with the networks of subversion maintained from abroad, by Washington and Beijing. Then there are those who prefer to go abroad and seek an easier life than the one they find in a Vietnam ravaged by war and threatened by China.

To look at the first category, let us take the case of Nguyen Thanh Tan and Nguyen Van Duc. These former officers of the Thieu army set up after liberation an armed group which committed various crimes. They assassinated the actress Thanh Nga and her husband: she had played parts of patriotic women. They kidnapped the son of Kim Cuong, another actress who had appeared in roles of women revolutionaries. These crimes were an attempt to terrorise cinema and theatre actors and dissuade them from playing in revolutionary productions. Please note that Nguyen Thanh Tan spent some time in a re-education camp, but once released he started his subversive activities again.

His case is not an exception. Right now in South Vietnam networks of agents maintained by Washington and Beijing are operating, assassinating cadres, sabotaging factories, hiding arms, forging money, carrying out psychological warfare, and engaging in economic sabotage. The security forces have their hands full. And it shouldn't be forgotten that the Americans had set up an army of over one million with at least 50,000 officers, a police force of 120,000, and a body of "pacification agents" specifically charged with assassinating revolutionary militants and numbering at least 30,000. To all that should be added the civil servants, and activists of various counter-revolutionary parties and organizations. All the conditions were ripe for civil war, especially as on our northern and southern borders the Pol Pot and Chinese armies began their provocations straight away.

Q. How was this civil war, the "blood-bath," avoided?

A. More than a million common soldiers and policemen were released without delay. We had to trust these men who had mostly been forced to take up arms against their compatriots. We were right to trust them, as we have since seen that very few of them have tried to re-form the subversive groups created by officers and political activists of the old regime. Security measures were only taken towards hardened officers and politi-

cal activists, those who were responsible for military operations, for mopping-up operations, who had ordered massacres or tortures or who had been exceptionally faithful and zealous servants of the Americans. If these people had been left in freedom, they would certainly have conspired in counter-revolutionary schemes, in co-ordination with Washington and Beijing's attacks from outside. None of these men has been executed for his past crimes, they have all been detained in re-education camps, as long as they are still judged dangerous.

Q. Why have they not been brought to public trial?

A. If they were judged for their previous offences, most of them would have to be condemned to death or to life imprisonment. We are wiping the slate clean and freeing them one by one as soon as we estimate that each is no longer dangerous. Many already have their liberty, for the others it depends on their attitude and on the general situation. Clearly, the war threats hung over our heads by Washington and Beijing are slowing down the freeing of these men. Obviously for these men and their families, the chance of eventual freedom is preferable to the death penalty or life imprisonment. There may be errors of judgement in certain individual cases, but we think this is the most humane policy possible towards men who, it should be remembered, are certainly all guilty of treason and of complicity with an aggressive foreign power. These officers were educated by the French and the Americans to betray their country. So those really responsible for their present detention are to be found in Paris and Washington: ironically it is these very people who are shouting loudest about violations of human rights.

Q. The Western mass media are making a lot of fuss about the people who are leaving Vietnam, the "boat people." What attitude should we take towards them?

A. There are two main reasons for these departures: the economy and the war. South Vietnam used to receive an estimated yearly average of two thousand million dollars worth of American military and economic aid. Certain people got accustomed to a life of luxury, thanks to this aid. After liberation, the aid was cut off, and so was Chinese aid to the North. Just afterwards came serious floods. Still the vast majority of those who used to live off American aid did make the effort to get back to hard work; they became peasants, factory workers, craftsmen, etc. Others preferred to go and earn their living in richer countries. The wars started by Pol Pot and by China worsened the economic conditions and fed the exodus.

For people of Chinese origin—the Hoa—both reasons operated. Many were traders who could no longer practice their trade (or traffic) and all of them were put in a difficult position by Beijing's aggression towards Vietnam. Which side should they take: that

of China, their country of origin, or that of Vietnam, their country of adoption? It is easy to see why many of them left rather than face this dilemma. If the number of people that the Americans evacuated with them at the time of their debacle, roughly 150,000, is added to the number of emigrés between 1975 and 1980, a total of around half-a-million is reached. Most of these have been Hoa. Is this a huge figure for a country of 50 million inhabitants,* wrecked by 40 years of war? Included in the number are the 200,000 Hoa whose homes were not far from the Chinese border and who crossed over into China so as not to be in the firing line of the two armies.

Who is really guilty in these cases? Firstly, Washington, where those political and military commanders who ordered the excessive bombing of South Vietnamese villages are still in power today. Secondly, Beijing, where the leaders' warmongering has put the Vietnamese Hoa in such a tragic situation, although the Hoa community had been part of Vietnamese society for centuries. We find again that it is the Washington and Beijing leaders who are wringing their hands most conspicuously over the fate of these poor refugees. For the Vietnamese people the emigrés remain compatriots and brothers. We ask the international community to give them all the help they need.

Q. Are re-education camps and emigration still great problems?

A. For the Vietnamese people these are only practical problems and don't occasion any political difficulties. Our position is quite clear. The Vietnamese people completely agree with the government's line, which fully conforms to the humane traditions of our people and revolutionary movement.

Q. Is there still a North-South problem?

A. When certain Western journalists speak of the domination of the South by the North, they are simply taking up under another form the argument used by American propaganda to justify the massive military intervention. The split is not a geographical one but has to do with class struggle. In North and South alike there are supporters and opponents of socialism. In the historical context of Vietnam, those who choose socialism are in the majority, the minority that stands against socialism gets the bulk of its strength from abroad. The real problems are therefore of a practical nature: problems of how to make changes in a society which was colonised by France for one century (1859-1954), dominated by American neo-colonialism for 21 years, and then shaken up and traumatised by a most atrocious war, materially as well as socially and morally.

The consequences of this long period of history can be summarised thus: considerable material destruction, traditional rural

*There are 1.5 million Palestinian refugees.

society turned upside-down (ten million peasants were displaced from their villages which had been bombed out of existence by the Americans), uncontrolled "urbanisation" without industrial development, growth of parasitic strata among a population continually enticed into the life of a consumer society, complex social problems, gansterism, prostitution, drugs, superstition, the disappearance of national cultural and moral values. Saigon and its surroundings epitomised this society. Beside the Cu Chi area, which was razed to the ground by bombs and military operations, was the town and its luxury flats, hotels, villas, bars and department stores, interspersed with pitiful shantytowns. Beside all this, the Chinatown, Cho Lon. Seven hundred thousand Hoa were crowded into this old town, a real State within a State.

Q. Some say that for the last five years Saigon has not been transformed by the revolution, but instead the city has badly contaminated the revolutionary movement. This would lead to a break-down of the situation which would be impossible to prevent.

A. These commentators see only one aspect. The US political strategy was implemented with huge resources and had a deep impact, but to counter it there has been powerful action on the part of the national and revolutionary movement. And in the end it is the national and revolutionary movement that has won. Visitors to Ho Chi Minh City today should look at both faces, firstly the serious and widespread consequences of the old regime, and secondly the considerable effort that has been made to build a new society.

The fight between old and new is going on in every field; from the security question, through the rehabilitation of drug addicts and prostitutes and the renewal of theatre and cinema, to the measures taken against the black market and other trafficking, and against the corruption of some public servants. It's a huge building site and if an observer is biased, he can point out only the old ruins and ignore the new buildings that are growing up. Food rations are small, shortages are many and serious, the black market continues, youths can be seen hanging around in cafés, and it must be admitted that there are still some young women soliciting in the streets, public servants who take backhanders, and armed attacks by gangsters as well as by pro-American or pro-Chinese agents.

But if you saw Saigon at the time of liberation in 1975 and compare it with the city today, the changes are striking. In spite of the occasional armed attacks and robberies that are still frequent, you can move around safely in the city, even in the evening, with no more risk than in any American city. Drugs and prostitution are no longer in the open, flooding the whole city, but have been pushed well back; food is still a great problem, but there is no famine, no-one dying of hunger alone on the streets.

Q. Some say the changes are too slow.

A. This is not an offensive like the one which liberated Saigon in April 1975, but a drawn-out war of nerves. We could have taken Pol Pot's way out and proclaim afterward that a radical revolution had taken place. Imagine our soldiers coming in to liberate the city, after years of suffering and deprivation. They have no more than 5-dong pocket money a month, to pay for all their needs. Then they see the black-marketeters buying 150-dong meals in the restaurants. The military command could have told the men "take your machine-guns and let the filthy bourgeois have it!" But the order wasn't given and our soldiers could only grind their teeth and put up with the sight of these people who had made their fortune out of the war and were continuing their trafficking and extortion, making money in the most scandalous fashion. They knew that this state of things would have to end. Society can't be changed by gunfire, but only in quite different ways. Let's look at some figures:

At the time of liberation there was not a single crèche in Saigon for working mothers, and the rich didn't need them. There were 3,800 children in nursery schools, but in rich areas only, and 395,000 school pupils. In 1979 the figures were: crèches 20,000; nursery schools 95,000; schools 870,000. This was not done overnight: it was necessary to mobilise not only teachers, but all the people. The only means at our disposal to do this were the villas abandoned by the wealthy people and which were taken over to house crèches and schools. Then there are the adults who have learned to read and write, who are taking evening classes to equip themselves to fulfil their new civic responsibilities. That's the real revolution, the real human rights. And what about the tens of millions of drug-addicts, prostitutes and gangsters, who, with medical treatment and above all with the devoted care of our activists, borne along in the revolutionary current that animates our country, have become normal people again. Better still, some have become militants themselves.

I think that there is no other country, even among those well-equipped materially and with doctors, psychiatrists, etc., which has succeeded in rehabilitating so many drug-addicts. Our doctors and educators succeed not because they are more able than those of other countries, but because they are working inside a society that is pushed forward by a wide and deep revolutionary movement. It's a sort of test for the regime.

Q. Are there any other domains where important changes have been made?

A. The South had practically no infrastructure of social medicine. Doctors dealt mostly with private patients, and the ministers of the pro-American governments paid more attention to their bank accounts than they did to the health of the people. That is why there were many endemic diseases and

frequent epidemics too. Malaria, cholera, plague, tuberculosis and venereal disease were all rife. The struggle against them was undertaken on a vast scale, by massive vaccination campaigns, and by the setting-up in all city neighbourhoods and villages of health stations to treat common ailments, give vaccinations, deliver babies and promote hygiene campaigns. To summarise the progress the South has made over the last five years in various fields:

- defence of security and peace.
- major development of education at every level.
- major development of hygiene and medicine.
- society has progressively become more healthy.

A comparison between our country and others of Southeast Asia brings out the following facts: a smaller GNP than many other countries, but a less unequal distribution of social income, a much higher rate of school attendance, and the numbers of doctors and hospital beds per thousand inhabitants are higher too. And of course this is in a country that has gone through forty years of war and is still threatened with invasion by a great power. Some results, which we could call negative ones, such as not falling into civil war or famine, don't strike the attention, but are no less important or illustrative of the nature of the regime.

That Ho Chi Minh City five years after liberation has been able to take another half-a-million children into its schools and crèches bears witness to the vitality of the revolutionary movement. What other party or government could have obtained these results? There is no political opposition, as I told you, and there are good reasons for this: the majority of the population may grumble about certain aspects of the current state of affairs, but they know what the regime has done and lend it their strong support. They are ready to defend it against any foreign aggression.

Q. Don't the intellectuals have reservations, or even constitute an opposition? Does the old "third force" still exist?

A. The southern intellectuals were educated during the French colonial period and under the Americans. Their sentiments are complex and often contradictory. Most are patriots, happy to see their country free and regaining its health. But when they run up against difficulty after difficulty both in private life and in public activity, many have reservations and a few are even opposed to the regime. The former third force was chiefly composed of intellectuals who were deeply opposed to the American domination and worked against it legally under the old Saigon regime. After liberation most of them have had a vast field of activity opened up for them: in politics, culture, social affairs and science. They have become deputies, members of town administrative committees, university teachers and journalists. The Ho Chi Minh City daily *Tin Sang* is



U.S. troops land in Vietnam in 1965. There were 540,000 of them before the war was over.

published by many intellectuals of the former third force. Some are Catholics, and a group of Catholics also publishes the weekly "Catholics and the Nation."

So the intellectuals have plenty of scope for activity, but in daily life they have two kinds of problems to solve. Firstly, their standard of living has dropped considerably, to the same level as all public servants and professionals. Secondly, they all have a very varied set of ideas, from Marxism to religious thought and various philosophical theories, both Asian and European, which are not always easy to reconcile. But this is an extremely interesting historical experiment. Take the Catholics, for example; I've met many of them who believe that full participation in the building of socialism under the present regime is a basic condition for the flowering of true Christianity. Others see participation in the building of socialism, as a means to ensure a solid position for the Church which will allow it to relate to the profoundly atheist State.

Q. So is there the pluralism that people talk of in the West?

A. Yes and no. Not pluralism of parties as in the West where society is divided into distinct and often warring classes: monopoly capitalists, middle capitalists, working class, etc. There, people are divided as to the nature of the regime they want: some fiercely defending capitalism, others choosing socialism. Here, as I have said, there is a consensus about the nature of the system. The feudal classes have been eliminated and the bourgeoisie has never grown up except as an appendage to colonialism—and neo-colonialism—so there is no longer anyone to stand up and defend capitalism. Capitalism for the Vietnamese has always been closely linked to colonialism.

So no pluralism on the long-term aims: defence of national independence, building of socialism. But along this one road, different social categories and strata: women, young people, followers of various religions, different ethnic groups, trade union members in factories and offices, peasants, all have their own legitimate interests which must be respected. So we have to set up machinery for them to express their aspirations. There is a whole series of mass organizations: trade

unions; women's and youth unions; artists', writers' and medical associations; the churches and religious orders.

Apart from their own activities, each of these sends delegates to the Fatherland Front, at the district, provincial and national levels. Representatives of ethnic groups also take part in the Front's various levels. The Constitution and the major political lines of the country are discussed by the Front, which also chooses a list of candidates to be put forward in the elections for the National Assembly. Candidates stand for election not as members of this or that party or organization, but as candidates of the Fatherland Front. The National Assembly chooses the central government. The local government at each level is elected by the inhabitants of the cities, towns and villages, so a citizen has various opportunities to express his or her opinion:

- within the mass organization (trade union, women's union, youth union, religious body) to which he or she belongs.
- at the elections for the National Assembly.
- at the elections for local government of the province, town and village.

Peasants participate in the discussion at the general meeting of the co-operative and of the production brigade, and take part in the elections of the administrative committee of the co-operative. In factories and offices the workers take part in trade union discussions and can call the management to account directly at each general meeting—which takes place every six months. The management of enterprises must take account of the trade union's opinion and the Party organization's opinion in every important decision. When the enterprise is a large one, the Youth Union's representative has a say, too. There are also the People's Control Committees, elected by the citizens, which were set up in 1976. These have the right to make enquiries into the working of the administration each time they receive complaints from citizens. It can be said that the Vietnamese citizen of today has more opportunities to vote and participate in public affairs than the citizen of any other country. So from the institutional point of view the system is a democratic one.

Q. You said "from the institutional point of view." Does this mean that in reality the system doesn't work very well?

A. The institutional mechanism is important, but only works in the context of the already-existing social and historical mechanisms. The parliamentary democracy of Western Europe has been, one could say, emptied of content with the coming of monopoly capitalism, the multinationals and the mass media. In Vietnam it is not the institutions which hinder the workings of democracy, or as we call it the exercise of the people's right of collective mastery, but the whole social environment. Getting the institutions to run smoothly presupposes deep

changes in this environment. It also means a continual rise in the political and ideological consciousness of the population and the level of competence of public servants.

Roughly speaking, democracy works better in the towns than the countryside, better in the capital than the provinces, better in the North than the South. In the South the population as a whole has only been liberated for five years and a large proportion of our experienced militants were killed by the Americans—90 per cent in some areas. This means, for example, that when an intellectual discusses with a high-ranking official the two may be in perfect agreement about a policy to be followed, but when the intellectual has to deal with lower, less experienced and more narrow-minded officials, he comes up against examples of bureaucracy that are often intolerable. It often happens, too, that neither the local inhabitants nor the responsible officials have understood a line that has been laid down by the higher authorities in some field or other, in which case the unfairly treated citizens cannot benefit from the rights the written law allows them and the officials do not know that they have overstepped their rights.

Q. You have mentioned bureaucracy. Your newspapers including the Party organ Nhan Dan and your top leaders including the Party General Secretary and the Prime Minister have condemned bureaucracy on many occasions, and sometimes very strongly. What significance do these declarations have?

A. In fact this is a very serious defect which hinders the working of our institutions and slows down economic and cultural progress. Authoritarianism, red tape, irresponsibility, delays, conservatism and lack of communication between offices are the main manifestations. Obviously, some officials have become die-hard bureaucrats and have to be replaced as soon as possible. But the real problem is not how to replace bureaucrats with non-bureaucrats, because each official is from one point of view a devoted militant and from the other a bureaucrat. We have to struggle against the tendency to bureaucracy, not against bureaucrats. As the revolution progresses, this evil will gradually be wiped out.

One could say that today bureaucracy is between the hammer and the anvil. The hammer is the will expressed by the leadership to fight it, and the anvil is the people's level of education and political consciousness, which is continually rising. As the general level has gone up, the atmosphere today is very different from that fifteen years ago, say. The debates inside various organizations and in the Party are much more lively and impassioned, I would say, and much richer than before. But it is clear that no society can escape its shadow; the democracy operating in it is in proportion to that society's level of historical development, that's to say economic, cultural and social development. We have many shad-

ows, but the main thing is that we have set in place the institutions and set in play the mechanisms that will allow us to move forward.

Q. You mentioned the level of social and economic development. On which level would you situate present-day Vietnam?

A. Let's look at the economic level first. From this point of view, Vietnam is still an underdeveloped country, lagging behind the developed countries by two industrial revolutions. The first industrial revolution was the one of simple mechanisation which took place in Europe throughout the 19th century and in the early twentieth, and the second industrial revolution is the one that the developed countries have undergone during the last 30 years. In 1954, in newly-liberated North Vietnam, modern industry only accounted for 1.5% of the national economy. From 1955 to 1965, the first bases of national industry were constructed, only to be almost entirely destroyed by the American bombing of 1965. The industry which was created in the South was entirely dependent on foreign companies. The great weakness of our industry is therefore one of the weak points of the Vietnamese economy today. Here are some relevant figures for 1979:

- Food production: 13.7 million tons.
- Steel production: 108,000 tons.
- Coal output: 7.9 million tons.
- Electricity: 4,200 million kilowatt-hours.
- Cement: 1 million tons.
- Cultivated area: 6.7 million hectares for over 50 million inhabitants.

So when you talk about Vietnam, you have to consider it both as a socialist country, with all the possibilities that the establishment of socialist socioeconomic structures allows, and as an underdeveloped country, with all that that implies in terms of difficulties, of inherited problems, and of fetters. Let us take for example the problem of corrupted civil servants. Underdeveloped Vietnam cannot pay high enough salaries to its civil servants and a certain number of them who cannot make ends meet accept bribes from time to time. But socialist Vietnam has no ministers, generals or top executives with fat bank accounts and private villas, who do business with national and international companies, as they do in capitalist countries. Therefore corruption will disappear as the living standard rises, if sanctions are imposed against those who take bribes, and with well-conducted civic education.

Legal sanctions are not the best weapon, as the culprits are too clever to allow themselves to be caught up in the rules and regulations. Firstly it is inside the Party that political education should be undertaken, and political sanctions taken, even when there is insufficient legal evidence to bring someone to trial. Yet another instance of the Party's vanguard role. Corruption will also disappear with the disappearance of corrup-

ters, because as long as there is a stratum of traders and traffickers willing to grease the palms of officials, corruption remains. So transformation of the relations of production is the best weapon.

Q. Is transformation of the relations of production enough?

A. Not at all, because we say that there is a threefold revolution to be carried out: in relations of production, in culture and ideology, and in science and technology. Our Party believes that in our country's case the scientific and technological revolution is the key link. Socialism can't be built with primitive technology, low productivity and a low standard of living. Neither is it built with what has been called "pre-industrial mentality." We are building an industrial and agricultural society with a high technical level, starting from a backward agricultural society, with people and cadres who are used to small-scale craftsmanship and agricultural production. Cadres who had been cultivating a little plot of land or commanding a battalion of partisans woke up to find themselves in charge of several hundred hectares, or an important factory. They had everything to learn and it is easy to see why mistakes were made. In time of war, economic rationality doesn't count for very much. When a bridge must be built, you don't calculate whether it's profitable, because troops and arms have to be brought through at any cost.

In traditional, pre-industrial society, technical know-how was not very important; skills were relatively simple and a leader chiefly needed moral and political authority. This criterion is no longer sufficient. Traditional society was self-sufficient, regions and even villages could cultivate and manufacture everything they needed. There was no problem of co-ordination of local economies, nor, most importantly, of the submission of the local economy to the needs of the national economy. It was not so much decentralisation as autonomous social units linked together very loosely. Little by little, Vietnamese society changed. Not only were socialist structures built but industrial bases were born, new techniques appeared, economy and society became much more complex, and brand-new problems of organization and management have arisen.

We know which general direction to take and that is a great advantage, like navigating with a compass. But a compass is not enough: we need an accurate map to indicate the pitfalls to avoid. We have to draw this map as we go along. We can learn a lot from other socialist countries; this has already spared us much fumbling, but the historical conditions are different from one country to another. We have continually to reassess how far we have come. The successive wars in which we have been involved have hindered our Party and people from concentrating our efforts on this meditation about the concrete problems of economic and social construction.

Q. Would it be true to say that the resolution of the 6th Plenary of the Central Committee (in mid-1979) was a turning point in this respect?

A. Yes, in the sense that the resolution modifies and fills in important gaps in the general line laid down by the IVth Party Congress in 1976; no, in the sense that it is definitely not a radical turnabout and doesn't turn its back on the old line. It tries above all to rectify certain practices inspired by a certain mentality, which is characterized by two basic aspects: utopianism and voluntarism. Utopians want to skip stages with no heed for reality, from there to the belief that human will by itself can overcome all obstacles is only a short step. A short step to the belief that those who don't think as you do are backward or reactionary. And a short step to the economic errors which lead to artificial shortages and avoidable conflicts. The food shortage and the lack of consumer goods, which were caused by the long years of war and the natural disasters, were aggravated by such errors. Added to that was the fact that the 1976—1980 five-year plan was drawn up before the danger of war was clear. So the resolution of the 6th Plenary aims to:

- modify certain plan targets in view of the current situation, building the economy while taking account of the needs of national defence.
- elaborate the basic characteristics of the present stage in order to rectify certain utopian or voluntarist practices.
- struggle against corruption, bureaucracy and other negative phenomena.

Q. What are the resolution's most important points in the economic domain?

A. Firstly, to fight against the tendency which seeks to bring all sectors under State control, irrespective of profitability. The resolution states that the national economy in the present stage is made up of different sectors: State, co-operative, individual, and, in the South, capitalist and mixed (joint State-private). Although the State sector plays the leading role, the contribution of other sectors should not be underestimated, and in particular individual production should not be treated as "condemnable." The main criterion for setting up an enterprise in whatever sector should be profitability: there is no chance that capitalism will rear its head again in the present conditions of Vietnam. Individual and family production do not necessarily lead to capitalism. One should always respect the principle that the form of organization of an enterprise should be determined according to the following three considerations:

- the existence of a minimum material and technical basis.
- competent cadres with the necessary moral authority.
- the understanding and support of the people.

The last point is especially important for

forming agricultural co-operatives. There must be a preliminary stage of thoroughgoing explanation among the masses, of training skilled management, and a minimum of equipment before a co-operative is actually set up. Many cadres have tried to go too fast and the co-operatives they have set up have failed. It has been necessary to put the brakes on, not to slow down the co-operativisation movement but to check the impatience of those who want to skip certain steps.

Q. Is there the same problem in the North where co-operatives have already been set up?

A. Obviously, in the South the idea of co-operatives is a new one, middle peasants are more numerous than they were in the North, trained personnel is lacking, and this impatience has led to negative results which have to be rectified. But the problem is also there in the North; in some cases people have tried to go too fast and set up co-operatives which were too large for the equipment available and the managerial ability of the present cadres. In the North other errors have had to be corrected. During the war years, in order to assure a minimum ration for everybody, particularly families with children in the army, war invalids and the sick, there was an egalitarian distribution of food; everyone received a fixed quantity per month, however much work they had put in. This mode of distribution doesn't stimulate productivity and able-bodied people sometimes refused to work for the co-operative in order to spend time on more lucrative occupations.

The new regulations stipulate that after a portion has been taken aside for the truly needy, the share of each member will be strictly calculated according to work done. There is another amendment to the regulations: certain land left fallow by the co-operative for a few months in the dry season can be taken over in small parcels by families willing to cultivate it. Individual peasants, like co-operatives, having made the required deliveries to the State, are free to sell the surplus either on the free market or to the State. The price is not fixed in advance, but is to be negotiated at the time of sale. These measures will permit the individual labour of the peasant to complement the stock of food and other products on the market. So also will the lifting of certain restrictions with respect to handicrafts, small industry and small trading permit some improvements in the production and distribution of goods.

Q. The expression "to boost production" is often heard these days. Will this set of measures affecting small production be able to push the economy forward in a decisive way?

A. I don't think so. Small production does make an indispensable contribution, but not a decisive one. The decisive factor is the profitability of the large units, that is to say

the State enterprises and co-operatives. Not only do these two sectors lack raw materials and equipment, but they are not yet able to use the equipment and materials they do have to the full. This is due to several factors:

- management which is often too rigid and hinders operations, hinders initiative and slows down decision-making.
- unsuitable work norms, pay scales and bonuses. Political mobilisation is used too often, rather than precise calculation of productivity and work norms.
- Leading cadres often lack the necessary level of technical or managerial training. Some have even degenerated to become abusers of power or minor despots.

So we have to implement a whole series of reforms, giving more autonomy to enterprises by making the regulations more flexible, working out a new system of norms, pay scales and management guidelines. We have to make sure that personnel are given refresher courses and that the obviously incompetent or corrupt ones are replaced. Many prices and taxes have to be revised, accepting the continued existence of the free market for a long time to come. All this has to be done, we mustn't forget, at the same time as great efforts in national defence and while we have to give substantial aid to Laos and Kampuchea (greatly benefitting at the same time from their support and co-operation).

Q. This is a set of measures of varying importance affecting a number of areas of the economy. Isn't it a radical change in economic policy?

A. As I've already said, these reforms are to fill gaps in the general line laid down by the IVth Congress, without being a change of orientation. This general line of building socialism is laid down for a whole historical period, but the historical evolution it represents is marked by different stages, and economic policy has to be adapted to the characteristics of each stage. Although the general line remains the same, the practical ways in which it is applied need to be modified from stage to stage. We are moving from an under-developed economy to one of large-scale socialist production. This period, called a period of transition, stretches over many years, during which the socio-economic structures change at the same time as the level of competence and ways of thinking.

Today our lives are undergoing thorough social change. Over many years, we have first of all transformed the relations of production and then created new material and technical bases. Society today is nothing like the one we knew fifteen years ago. We have to change all our styles of work, management and even thought. A new generation has been born and is being brought up in our schools. Even the relationships between parents and children, relationships within the village have changed. That's why, besides the economic reforms, we have to lead a series of reforms in other fields dur-

ing the 1980's, particularly in education.

Q. *What is the purpose of the educational reform? Isn't your present teaching system already a great success?*

A. It's true that one of the greatest fruits of our revolution has been the establishment of an educational system at all levels, so that every child under 15 may attend school. In general education alone, the number of pupils has risen from 10.3 million at the end of 1975 to 12.8 million in 1979. This is in spite of all our material difficulties. But since society has changed, the system has to be completely reformed. The reform is already being worked out and our education will in future years be composed of the following stages:

- 0 to 3 years—crèches run by the National Committee for Protection of Mother and Child, which has the status of a ministry.
- 3 to 6 years, nursery schools.
- 6 to 15 years, nine years of basic education.
- 15 to 18 years, about 30% of students will go on to secondary schools.
- at 15, the other students will continue in vocational schools or work-and-study schools.

In work-and-study schools, half the day will be devoted to productive work and the other half to studying. After a few years, these schools should become self-financing and require no further financial assistance from the State. This system has already been tried out in all the districts and we think it will enable us to give secondary education to all young people by the end of the 1980's. The specialised services are working with the experimental schools to give the finishing touches to new textbooks and new teaching methods, in order to make teaching more alive and closer to social life. It must be admitted that the teaching methods being used at present are old-fashioned. There is a lot of innovation to be done in this field.

Q. *You have mentioned considerable difficulties and the complexity of the problems to be solved. Do you think that your people and your Party will manage to overcome them?*

A. Certainly. Our advance is uncertain and we have to move in small steps, but the route that has been charted is a good one. Our people are hard-working and aware of their responsibilities. Our Party is experienced and when it makes mistakes it has the courage to repair them with self-criticism. This is another aspect of its great strength. But not everything depends on us. Whether socialism is to be built with ease or with difficulty in our country depends not only on our own efforts, but also on the unfolding of our international relations.

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'Voice of Those Without a Voice'

The Silencing of Radio Noticias del Continente

By Arnold Weissberg

MANAGUA—"The voice of those without a voice"—Radio Noticias del Continente, whose shortwave broadcasts reached from the southern tip of South America across the Rio Grande and into Canada—has fallen silent, victim of the kind of repression that has tried to cut off all independent and progressive journalism in Central America.

"We are on the side of the people, of popular forces and struggles," Radio Noticias news director Ernesto Ramírez Argüero explained to *Intercontinental Press* in a recent interview. "We are an instrument to break the information blockade in Latin America."

Radio Noticias made a special effort to report on news from Argentina and Chile. This aroused the ire of the military dictators in those countries, who set out to destroy the station.

For example, the station went to a great effort to send a reporter to Argentina with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. The reporter, Ramírez said, was nearly killed. But she succeeded in bringing out the story of the new organization of the mothers of the disappeared—the now internationally-known Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Radio Noticias del Continente was born with the Nicaraguan revolution. It first broadcast in June, 1979, giving Latin America and the world the truth about the struggle of the Nicaraguan people against the Somoza dictatorship.

As the Sandinistas advanced, Radio Noticias was on the scene. It reported on the liberation of León, Masaya, and Estelí. Radio Noticias accompanied the members of the Junta of National Reconstruction as they entered León and broadcast the act of taking power there.

On July 19, 1979, the day the Sandinista Revolution triumphed in Nicaragua, Radio Noticias was broadcasting from Managua.

"We are an intermediary between Radio Sandino [the official radio station of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)] and the peoples of Latin America," Ramírez said.

Radio Noticias del Continente was headquartered in San José, Costa Rica, during its twenty months of existence. From there, it covered the military coups in Bolivia, the Ecuadorian elections, the first steps in Panama's reclaiming the Panama Canal, and struggles in Chile and Argentina against the bloody military regimes there.

"We actively reported in defense of human rights," Ramírez explained.

As the revolution in El Salvador emerged,

Radio Noticias del Continente gave a voice to the popular struggles there, carrying broadcasts by Archbishop Oscar Romero and revolutionary leaders.

None of this endeared Radio Noticias del Continente to the militarists and right-wingers that dominate most of Central and South America.

The Argentine military spearheaded a diplomatic offensive to pressure the Costa Rican government to shut down Radio Noticias. The offensive failed, and its perpetrators turned to more direct action.

Radio Noticias was the victim of several violent attacks during 1980 and early 1981, including a napalm attack against the station's transmitters last November. "It's probable that it was a Salvadoran military plane, and that the attack was partly financed by Argentina," Ramírez said.

The ax fell in February of this year. Acting on a supposed bomb threat to the station, Costa Rican security forces occupied the premises for several hours. No station staff was present.

After the security forces left, a powerful bomb was discovered. Meanwhile, the cops had also "discovered" an arms cache at the station.

Officially, Ramírez said, Radio Noticias is temporarily closed, "but we know better. They will use any excuse—legal or illegal—to keep us closed."

Ramírez said the closing of Radio Noticias was part of a move to the right on the part of the Costa Rican government. "They're trying to blame the country's problems on foreigners," he said, "like Guatemalan refugees."

Radio Noticias del Continente has received messages of solidarity from all over the world, Ramírez said, even from Europe and the Pacific, but especially from Latin America. Meanwhile, Radio Noticias has built a "chain of solidarity" with newspapers and radio stations in Latin America and the Caribbean. These outlets carry news that Radio Noticias would have carried if it were broadcasting.

"We urge people to continue to show solidarity so that we can one day reopen," Ramírez concluded. □

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