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Poland **Workers** **Protest** **Press** **Policy**

Libya **Reagan** **Provokes** **Air** **Battle**



U.S. F-14s shot down two Libyan jets.

U.S. Military Maneuvers Threaten Grenada

Reagan's anti-Libya drive

By Fred Murphy

The Reagan administration has sharply escalated its campaign against the Libyan regime headed by Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

On August 19, U.S. Navy jet fighters, in a blatant act of aggression, shot down two Libyan air force planes over the Gulf of Sidra sixty miles off the Libyan coast.

The Gulf of Sidra is claimed by Libya as part of its territorial waters. By scheduling naval maneuvers in and near the Gulf of Sidra, Washington deliberately set out to provoke conflict with the Qaddafi regime.

Although the disputed Libyan claim over the Gulf of Sidra was used as the pretext, the Reagan administration's broader aim was to escalate its destabilization drive against the Qaddafi regime, as well as to intimidate other peoples and governments in the region that stand in the way of U.S. imperialist interests.

Turning victim into criminal

In belligerent statements to the press after the attack, President Reagan sought to turn the victim into the criminal. He accused the Libyans of drawing an "artificial line" in the Gulf of Sidra and declared that his government was "faced with the knowledge that we could not go on recognizing this violation [by Libya] of international waters and that we were going to plan our maneuvers as we would have planned them without this artificial line."

In an August 20 editorial defending Washington's provocation, the *New York Times* affirmed that the U.S. naval maneuvers had not resulted from an "idle decision":

"The aim, clearly deliberate, was to test Colonel Qaddafi, whose radical Libyan regime lays sovereign claim to those waters."

The *Times* editors acknowledged that "the legal argument is cloudy," but, they added, "the Administration's disgust is not. From the outset, President Reagan has put Colonel Qaddafi high on his enemies' list, and with reason."

The Libyan government responded with a sharply worded note of protest, accusing Washington of "international terrorism." Earlier, Libya had denounced the U.S. naval maneuvers, which it said "exposed world peace and security to danger."

A Libyan military spokesman quoted in the August 20 *New York Times* said that for some time the U.S. Navy had been "continuously, intensively and provocatively violating our territorial waters and airspace."

Mass demonstrations protesting the U.S. attack were held in Tripoli, Benghazi, and other Libyan cities.

The attack also sparked anti-U.S. reactions elsewhere in the Arab world. The general secretary of the Arab League, Chedli Klibi of Tunisia, denounced it as "a violation of the

peace and security" of all Arab countries.

Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam told Libya's deputy leader Abdul Salim Jalloud by telephone that "any aggression against Libya is an aggression against Syria" and that Syria was prepared to "carry out whatever [measures] are required by brotherly and nationalist obligations."

The leading Jordanian daily *Al Rai* said, "The American piracy against Libya is a form of international terrorism and a unique form of piracy unknown by the world and previously only carried out by organized criminal gangs."

In Beirut, Yassir Arafat said the Palestine Liberation Organization was ready to send its own troops to Libya if necessary to fight U.S. "aggression." Arafat was speaking at a rally sponsored by the PLO and Lebanese leftist organizations to protest the U.S. attack.

Washington's aggression came as Libyan leader Qaddafi was attending a summit conference with Ethiopian and South Yemeni leaders in Aden, South Yemen. Speaking at a mass rally there on August 19, Qaddafi said that Washington was "persisting in its provocations and terror" and called on Arab countries to "declare a state of mobilization to face imperialist-Zionist and reactionary challenges."

Secret White House plan

The Reagan administration's campaign against Libya began seriously in early May, when all diplomats from that country were ordered out of the United States. Shortly thereafter, the *New York Daily News* reported the existence of a secret White House plan to engineer the overthrow of Qaddafi.

Further details on the secret plan to oust Qaddafi were revealed by *Newsweek* magazine in its August 3 edition.

According to *Newsweek*, the CIA had developed "a large-scale, multiphase and costly scheme to overthrow the Libyan regime. . . .

"The details of the plan were sketchy, but it seemed to be a classic CIA destabilization campaign. One element was a 'disinformation' program designed to embarrass Qaddafi and his government. Another was the creation of a 'counter government' to challenge his claim to national leadership. A third—potentially the most risky—was an escalating paramilitary campaign, probably by disaffected Libyan nationals, to blow up bridges, conduct small-scale guerrilla operations and demonstrate that Qaddafi was opposed by an indigenous political force."

The *Wall Street Journal* reported July 14 that the State Department had been advising U.S. oil companies operating in Libya "to get Americans out—pronto." It was clear, the *Journal* said, that such pleas were "aimed at giving the U.S. a free hand" for actions against the Qaddafi government.

"The companies won't get another warning," the *Journal* quoted a U.S. official as saying. "We're playing confrontation politics, and we want them out, whether there is a coup in the works or not."

Why U.S. rulers hate Qaddafi

Why has Washington launched such a high-powered drive against the ruler of an underdeveloped, semicolonial country with just 3 million people?

Washington claims that Qaddafi is "a patron saint of terrorism," and that, as U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger put it in May, "Libyan embassies . . . are really almost assassination headquarters."

Weinberger was referring to charges that Qaddafi was responsible for the shooting in Colorado last October of the leader of an anti-Qaddafi student group by a former member of the U.S. Special Forces ("Green Berets").

The Libyan government and Colonel Qaddafi have denied such charges. "Israel is terrorizing the Arabs with its nuclear program," Qaddafi said in a recent interview. "The West German people are terrorized because the United States is putting its missiles there. We in Libya are terrorized by the presence of the American fleet in the Mediterranean. This is real terrorism." (*Newsweek*, July 20.)

Qaddafi's supposed terrorism has little to do with the stepped-up attacks on Libya. "International terrorism" is the code-phrase employed by Washington to justify its overall increase in aggression against the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America who are rebelling against oppressive dictatorships or foreign domination. And the charge is also being leveled against those—such as Qaddafi—who have lent aid to some of these struggles and who speak out against U.S. foreign policy.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 8, State Department Africa chief Chester Crocker spelled out the Reagan administration's case against Qaddafi more bluntly. He accused the Libyan government of practicing "a diplomacy of subversion in Africa and the Arab world." Crocker continued:

"It is a diplomacy of unprecedented obstruction to our own interests and objectives—that is, to those of U.S. imperialism. 'Qaddafi has tried in every way he could think of to obstruct our efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. He has sponsored subversion from Africa to the Philippines.' Crocker also repeated the "terrorism" and "assassinations" charges.

Some of Libya's actions that have upset Crocker and his employers are the following:

- At the request of President Goukouni Oueddei, Qaddafi sent Libyan troops to Chad last year to help fight off French- and Egyptian-backed rebels trying to overthrow Goukouni. The Chadian government is based on elements of the Frolinat (Chad National Liberation Front), which has fought French imperialist domination of Chad since the mid-1960s. Goukouni's victory over the French-backed rebels was a blow to imperialist inter-

ests in Africa.

- Shortly after Washington cut off all aid to the revolutionary government in Nicaragua, Libya provided that country with a \$100 million loan.

- Qaddafi is a strong supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to which his government provides material aid. He has opposed the Israeli-Egyptian accords and has asked the Arab world to send volunteers to Lebanon to fight against Israeli-backed Christian rightists there.

- The Libyan government was the first to publicly back Iran after the Iraqi invasion in September 1980.

- Libya maintains friendly relations with Moscow and has received substantial quantities of Soviet and East European military and economic aid. Qaddafi has refused to join in the imperialist propaganda campaign around the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

- Qaddafi has provided aid to the Polisario Front, which is fighting to liberate Western Sahara from Moroccan domination.

- Some of Qaddafi's domestic policies are also not to Washington's liking. Since overthrowing the proimperialist regime of King Idris in 1969, Qaddafi has carried out a number of nationalizations, including some imperialist banks and oil companies. His regime has used some of its oil revenues to improve education, housing, and living standards. "You don't see poverty or hunger here," a Western diplomat in Libya told *Newsweek*. "Basic needs are met to a greater degree than in any other Arab country."

Role of proimperialist regimes

To complement its military provocations and clandestine CIA operations, the Reagan administration has tried to isolate Libya diplomatically and has moved to step up military aid to proimperialist regimes that border the North African country.

President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt and Sudanese dictator Gaafar el-Nimeiry play key roles in this aspect of Washington's plans. Sadat's army fought a brief war against Libya in 1977, and in recent weeks it has again been concentrating troops and building fortifications along its western border with Libya.

In the Sudan, "every recent symptom of instability has been blamed on Libyan-sponsored agents," the *Christian Science Monitor* said July 31. When Sudanese railway workers went on strike recently, Nimeiry blamed Libya.

In Tunisia, which borders Libya on the northwest, the regime of President-for-Life Habib Bourguiba has also been a supporter of Washington's anti-Qaddafi campaign. In January 1980 Bourguiba accused the Qaddafi regime of backing a guerrilla attack on an army barracks and police stations in the city of Gafsa. The attack, for which a group called the Tunisian Resistance Army claimed credit, marked the second anniversary of the 1978 general strike in Tunisia.

In early July, the Pentagon announced plans to sell fifty-four M60A tanks, valued at \$92

million, to Bourguiba's army. U.S. officials said these would be used for defending Tunisia against "the Libyan tank threat."

Skepticism in European capitals

Washington's allies in Western Europe, while equally unhappy with many of the Libyan government's positions and actions, are nonetheless skeptical and nervous about the Reagan administration's policy of provocation.

"The U.S. has been pressuring France, Italy, West Germany and Britain to take a tougher line toward Col. Khadafy," the *Wall Street Journal* noted July 14. "But these countries have extensive commercial relations with Libya and thousands of expatriates working [there]. Several Western diplomats in Tripoli privately express fears that the new U.S. policy may put European export revenues . . . in danger."

Since taking office in May, French President François Mitterrand has moved to improve relations with Libya. Sales of military equipment have been resumed, and the French oil company Elf-Aquitaine has been authorized to restart its operations in Libya. (The suspensions had been ordered last year by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing after Libya provided aid to the government in Chad against French-backed rebels.)

While the organs of ruling-class opinion in the United States itself have been nearly unanimous in their applause for Reagan's "get tough" stance toward Libya, the editors of the *New York Times* did express some concern that American working people might not share this enthusiasm. They advised Reagan that he could not expect to win "full benefit of any doubt—not from a generation that remembers maritime milestones called the Bay of Pigs and the Gulf of Tonkin." □

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FMLN launches widespread attacks

While junta feuds with local capitalists

By Fred Murphy

The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador has dealt a series of sharp blows to the claims of the ruling military-Christian Democratic junta that the country is being "pacified" and that the rebels are being defeated.

Beginning July 19, the FMLN has carried out what its clandestine Radio Venceremos termed an "overall military campaign," striking at military posts and other strategic installations in diverse areas of El Salvador.

The campaign was stepped up during the second week of August with the occupation of Perquín and other smaller towns in northeastern Morazán Province. The rebels overran the local army post in Perquín, taking twenty-four soldiers prisoner and capturing arms and ammunition.

In the course of the rebel campaign, army posts in San Miguel, Ahuachapán, and other cities have also been attacked. San Miguel is the third-largest city in El Salvador, located in the southeastern part of the country; Ahuachapán is the capital of the westernmost province, near the Guatemalan border.

The rebels are also reported to have surrounded three key towns north of San Salvador: Suchitoto, Aguilares, and Cinquera. All are important crossroads on highways that lead into the capital from the northern province of Chalatenango, an FMLN stronghold.

According to August 19 statements by the Salvadoran National Guard itself, the rebels had set up barricades on all roads into Aguilares. The road to Suchitoto from San Salvador was also reported blocked, and telephone lines linking the capital to Cinquera and Suchitoto

were cut.

On August 20 the rebels reported occupying the town of San José Guayabal on the Suchitoto-San Salvador highway. The FMLN said it had destroyed the local headquarters of the right-wing paramilitary group ORDEN and had captured weapons.

The FMLN has also conducted widespread sabotage against El Salvador's electric-power network. As of August 20 the rebels claimed to have toppled forty-five high-voltage towers throughout the country. Losses to industry owing to widespread blackouts were totalling some \$50 million a day.

Highways have been cut and bridges destroyed in several locations, and two trains have been derailed by the rebels.

An August 20 statement by the FMLN General Command said that the military campaign

Green Berets vs. Salvadoran refugees

The August 20 report by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front that Honduran troops had taken up positions in El Salvador served as further confirmation of the growing cooperation between the two military regimes.

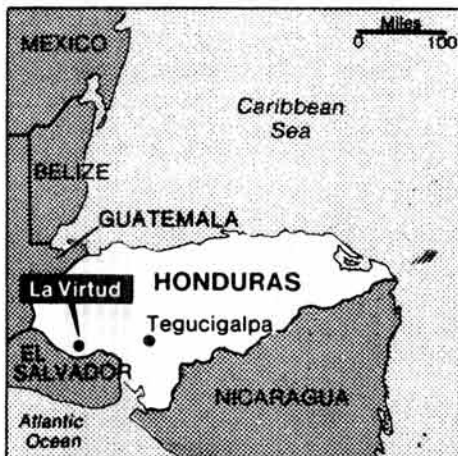
Such cooperation, encouraged by Washington, poses a special threat to the 40,000 or more Salvadorans who have fled across the border into southern Honduras.

This threat has become more acute with the stationing of advisers from the U.S. Special Forces ("Green Berets") at at least one Honduran refugee camp.

The first instance of Salvadoran-Honduran collusion against the FMLN came to light in mid-July. Several hundred Salvadoran troops landed in Honduran territory just north of Chalatenango Province on July 17. From there they mounted a counterinsurgency operation against FMLN positions around the village of Los Filos near the border.

Ten days later, the Honduran regime lodged a pro forma complaint with San Salvador and warned against "similar offensive actions against Honduran sovereignty."

However, *New York Times* correspondent Raymond Bonner reported from Los Filos in a July 20 dispatch that "one Honduran army sergeant in the area said that the Salvadorans landed with permission from his government. Others said that if the



landing was not with the knowledge of the Hondurans, the soldiers would have started shooting, thinking that another war had begun" (a reference to the July 1969 war between El Salvador and Honduras, fought in the same border area).

In early August it became known that Washington had sent twenty-one "military instructors" to Honduras.

Raymond Bonner of the *New York Times* spoke with one of these "instructors"—U.S. Special Forces Captain Michael Sheehan—at the La Virtud, Honduran, refugee camp near the Salvadoran border:

Captain Sheehan was accompanied by two se-

nior enlisted men with extensive experience in Vietnam. All three wore camouflage jungle uniforms and carried M-16 automatic rifles.

They said they were from a Special Forces battalion based in Panama and that they and five other American soldiers from the same unit had been assigned to help the Honduran Army patrol the border. Their primary objective, they said, was to control the Salvadoran refugees streaming in to escape the upheaval in their country. . . .

Captain Sheehan said that the [U.S.] National Security Council had approved the use of Special Forces units in Honduras in support of the military effort against Salvadoran guerrillas. A Special Forces unit would soon be based in La Virtud, he said. [*New York Times*, August 9.]

Captain Sheehan also spoke with a reporter from the Pacifica radio network of the United States. "This border is like a sieve," Sheehan told Pacifica. "The goddamn guerrillas go in and out as they please. This has got to stop." Concerning the refugees, Sheehan declared that "the majority of them are helping the guerrillas. They should all be cordoned off."

Sheehan's ominous statements served to corroborate earlier warnings by Charles-Henry Bazoche, Honduras director of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. In a July 21 letter to the Honduran government, Bazoche complained that Salvadoran refugees were being kept "under constant vigilance and military control. It gives the impression that they are prisoners."

begun July 19 involved "all of the insurgent forces" and that it was aimed at discrediting the claims of the military-Christian Democratic government that its "pacification" efforts of recent months had succeeded. The latter involved a series of army offensives against guerrilla positions in various provinces, none of which achieved its objective.

Army using poison gas

The FMLN said August 20 that its forces had carried out a tactical retreat from Perquín in Morazán Province, the town occupied August 10. Part of the civilian population was evacuated by the rebels to stave off reprisals by the army. The retreat became necessary when the army began bombarding the town with heavy artillery and helicopter gunships.

The FMLN also declared that a unit of the Honduran army had crossed into El Salvador and taken up positions in the town of San Fernando, three miles west of Perquín and three miles east of the Honduras-El Salvador border (see box).

In the fighting in the central part of the country, the FMLN said villages between Aguilares and Suchitoto had been the victims of white-phosphorus bomb attacks by the Salvadoran army. These included El Zapote, El Salitre, Mirandillo, and El Plantanar on the slopes of the Guazapa Volcano. The FMLN had charged on August 3 that another village near Guazapa, Masa del Chaparral, had been attacked with toxic gas and that forty persons, including many small children, had been killed. "Survivors in the area near Guazapa said they felt nauseous, had fever, diarrhea and temporary paralysis during the government action," the Independent Press Agency (AIP) of Costa Rica reported in an August 3 dispatch.

Junta's rift with 'private sector'

The military initiatives of the FMLN came during an extended crisis in relations between the military-Christian Democratic government and El Salvador's capitalists.

The crisis came to light in late June after Economy Minister Guillermo Díaz Salazar resigned and fled to Miami. Díaz had been sharply criticized by top military officers for suggesting that the regime's freeze on wages and prices might be lifted.

Negotiations over Díaz's replacement began between the junta and the organizations of the private sector. In the course of these talks, the Salvadoran Industrialists Association (ASI), the so-called Productive Alliance, and the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP) pressed not only to impose their own choice for the economy post but also to gain other cabinet spots and even oust President Napoleón Duarte and his Christian Democrats from the government.

At one point the ASI accused the Christian Democrats of trying to impose "a socialistic, coercive, and collectivist system" in El Salvador!

In late July the capitalists put forward further demands—denationalization of the banks,

reductions in coffee-export taxes, greater access to state credit, and a one-year moratorium on their debts.

The capitalists' discontent reflected their impatience with the regime's failure to crush the popular struggle, as well as with their own inability to turn a profit under civil-war conditions.

Washington at first offered some hope to the anti-Duarte businessmen. On July 16, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders made a policy speech on El Salvador in which he failed to even mention the Christian Democrats but did note that Salvadorans were "divided . . . over whether to emphasize the restoration of the country's economic health or the extension of the country's social reforms."

Grenada

Reagan preparing an invasion?

U.S. military maneuvers a threat to revolution

By Nelson González

On August 20, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop of Grenada sent an emergency message to United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim warning of U.S. preparations for a possible military invasion of Grenada.

The message presents evidence on the nature of U.S. and NATO military maneuvers in the Caribbean code-named "Ocean Venture '81."

These exercises, which began on August 1 off the coasts of Cuba and Puerto Rico, will last until October. They have been described by officials as the biggest show of U.S. naval strength since World War II. They involve 250 ships, more than 1,000 aircraft, and 120,000 troops, drawn from the NATO countries, Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Part of these exercises, the Grenadian government reports, are maneuvers involving a practice invasion by an amphibious force on the Southeastern tip of Vieques, an island off the coast of Puerto Rico.

According to Bishop, "The country subject to invasion in the maneuver is code named Amber and the Amberdines which clearly refers to Grenada and its sister islands in the Grenadines, namely Carriacou and Petit Martinique.

"An amphibious landing of forces took place on the Southeastern tip of Vieques. There is in fact an area on the Southern tip of Grenada called Amber which is in close proximity to a security zone and the New International Airport."

Moreover, as part of the exercises, the 75th Ranger Battalion, a combat unit specially trained for warfare in such conditions, was flown from Norton Air Force Base in Califor-

nia non-stop to Vieques, covering approximately the same distance needed to attack Grenada.

The purpose of the "practice invasion," according to Bishop, is to "take power from the Amber Government," which is described as unfriendly, "station troops in the island until an election is called," and "install a government favorable to Washington's brand of democracy."

In describing the purpose of the maneuvers, Rear Admiral Robert P. McKenzie, the U.S. naval commander in the Caribbean, emphasized his responsibility to protect Atlantic sea lanes. Washington has recently charged that revolutionary Cuba poses a threat to shipping in the Caribbean because of the recent acquisition of a Soviet frigate. In addition, McKenzie described Nicaragua, Cuba, and Grenada as "practically one country" and referred to the situation as a "political-military problem."

The purpose of the exercises he maintained is to "reinforce in the eyes and the minds of those watching our military commitment around the world—to give an example of one facet of the U.S. capability to respond in the Caribbean basin."

Given the recent military strikes against Libya under cover of similar exercises, it is quite clear that what McKenzie seeks to reinforce is Washington's military capability to strike out at revolutionary governments such as those in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada.

The accelerated campaign of economic sabotage against Grenada, in recent months involving U.S. attempts to block funds for vital airport project, a series of U.S. television broadcasts depicting Grenada as a police state, and other attacks signal that the danger of U.S. intervention in Grenada is very real. □

Prisoners continue hunger strikes

Ten die in protest against British policy

By Will Reissner

Since 1976, nationalist prisoners in the British jails of Northern Ireland have been protesting the removal of the political prisoner status they had been accorded up to that time.

Refusing to accept the British government's characterization of them as criminals, the Irish nationalists have steadfastly refused to wear prison uniforms, remaining naked and wrapping themselves in their blankets.

Because of their refusal to don uniforms, the prisoners have not been allowed any visits and have been denied the usual time off of their sentences.

The British government has adamantly refused to consider any "special status" for the Irish prisoners, despite the fact that they have all been tried in special juryless courts, the infamous Diplock Courts, in which an accused has no right to confront the accuser and in which special rules of evidence are in effect.

After five years of blanket protests in the H-Blocks of the Maze Prison near Belfast, the prisoners—members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)—escalated their protests with the initiation of a hunger strike on March 1, 1981, by IRA member Bobby Sands.

The hunger strike was in support of five simple demands: that the prisoners not be required to wear prison uniforms, that they not be required to do prison work, that they be allowed to associate with other republican prisoners in jail, that they have increased mail and visitation rights, and that they get the same time off their sentences as other prisoners.

The government of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher replied that the prisoners were common criminals, who had no support from the people of either Northern Ireland or the Irish Republic.

While on his hunger strike, Bobby Sands was elected to the British Parliament by the nationalist voters of Fermanagh/South Tyrone on April 10. His victory showed the world that support for the prisoners ran deep in the nationalist population of the British-occupied six counties of Northern Ireland. In fact, Sands received 10,000 more votes in his election than Margaret Thatcher had in her constituency.

The support for the hunger strikers in the formally independent southern twenty-six counties of Ireland was shown by the results of the June 11 general election there as two H-Block prisoners were elected to the Irish Dáil (parliament). One of them, Kieran Doherty, was on a hunger strike at the time of his election. Doherty died on August 2.

Since the death of Bobby Sands on May 5, nine more hunger strikers have died in the

Maze Prison. The latest were Kevin Lynch, who died on August 1; Kieran Doherty, who died the following day; Tom McElwee, who died August 8; and Michael Devine, who died on August 20. Doherty and McElwee were members of the IRA, while Lynch and Devine belonged to the INLA.

Following Sands's death, the British Parliament passed a law preventing other prisoners from running in elections.

Election to fill Sands's seat

On August 20 a special election was held in Fermanagh/South Tyrone to fill the seat left vacant by Sands's death. Because of the new law barring prisoners from running in British elections, the republican movement was represented in the race by Owen Carron, a twenty-eight year old teacher who was Bobby Sands's campaign manager in April.

Running as "the prisoners' candidate," Carron won. "I accept this victory on behalf of the prisoners of war," he said. "I consider that I was elected to put pressure on the British Government to end this strike by granting the prisoners' just demands."

Carron's candidacy received a boost when other political parties that have support in the nationalist population decided not to run their own candidates for the seat.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party, a reformist group with an electoral following among Northern Ireland's Catholics, had initially announced it would run a candidate. But the SDLP organization in Fermanagh/South Tyrone narrowly reversed that decision.

The Irish Independence Party endorsed Carron's campaign.

The death of Dáil member Kieran Doherty on August 2 in the Maze Prison could lead to the fall of the government of Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald.

FitzGerald's coalition government holds power by the slimmest of margins, and can only govern with the support of a mixed bag of six independents. There will be a by-election later this year to elect a replacement for the deceased Doherty. And it is possible that Paddy Agnew, the other prisoner elected to the Dáil, will resign his seat. As a result of those two by-elections, the FitzGerald government could lose its majority and be forced to resign and call a new general election.

FitzGerald has, therefore, been extremely anxious to appear to be pressuring the British government to make concessions to the hunger strikers that could end the protest. But FitzGerald's primary concern is not a victory for the prisoners. His main hope is that the H-Block issue will go away and not complicate his life.

So while FitzGerald steps up his verbal attacks on the British position, he has also been exerting pressure on the families of the prisoners to influence them to end their fasts.

To this end the Irish prime minister has cynically charged that the Provisional IRA ordered the prisoners to stop eating and could order the prisoners to end their fasts, but does not do so because the deaths further its own political ends.

FitzGerald and Thatcher both hope to break the unity of the families of the prisoners. Both politicians were clearly encouraged by the fact that on July 31 the mother and sister of hunger striker Patrick Quinn authorized British prison authorities to take steps to save Quinn's life when he fell into a coma weeks earlier than had been expected.

Quinn sank into his coma on the forty-seventh day of his fast. As soon as family members signed a statement authorizing medical treatment, prison officials moved him to an outside hospital in order to isolate him from his fellow prisoners. On August 15 it was reported that Quinn had decided not to resume his fast.

FitzGerald's charge that the leadership of the Irish Republican Army had ordered the prisoners to fast was answered in a lengthy IRA statement.

The IRA response, signed by P. O'Neill, noted that FitzGerald "is ascribing powers to us which we do not have." O'Neill further pointed out that "when our comrades in the H-Blocks first decided to go on hunger-strike, three years ago, we appealed to them not to, that the street protest movement would break the intransigence of the British.

"They listened to that appeal for eighteen months, but were once again threatening to go on hunger-strike in February 1980. We again appealed to them, and shortly afterwards pointed out that the Cardinal O'Fiaich-Bishop Daly-[British Secretary for Northern Ireland Humphrey] Atkins talks might offer a solution. . . .

"When the hunger-strike announcement was made in February it was a joint statement from [the women prisoners in] Armagh and the [men prisoners in the] H-Blocks, announcing that women too would be on hunger-strike. Without a blaze of publicity we urged all the prisoners not to go on hunger-strike, that Britain would allow them to die.

"We were able to influence the women (not 'order' them off something they were not ordered onto in the first place), but the blanket men, whilst fraternally listening to our advice and respecting our opposition, flatly refused to abandon the hunger-strike."

O'Neill added that "when they undertook

the hunger-strike we then supported them, and without apology to anyone, we continue to support them. Should they decide to end the fast they will continue to have our support."

Strikers maintain fasts

A delegation of leading republicans, including Gerry Adams, who is known to express the views of the outlawed IRA, and Seamus Ruddy of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, which shares the outlook of the outlawed IN-LA, visited the hunger strikers in the H-Block prison hospital on July 29. The delegation met with all the hunger strikers with the exception of Kevin Lynch.

The purpose of the visit was to insure that the fasters knew that the movement outside the prison would support them wholeheartedly if they decided, either individually or as a body, to end their fasts.

Adams and Ruddy also appealed to the hunger strikers not to feel that they must continue out of loyalty to their comrades who had already died.

In order to drive home the point, Adams wrote in the August 8 issue of the republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*, "I painted the darkest and blackest picture possible: between ten and twenty prisoners dead, nationalist Ireland demoralised, and no advance from the British government."

"You could all be dead," Adams told the assembled fasters. "Everyone left in this room when we leave will be dead." The prisoners responded that they were determined to continue their protest. Since the visit, in fact, four have died.

Adams explains that "I persisted in probing them harshly, questioning them all, outlining the Republican attitude to the hunger-strike, explaining that we could go out and announce it had ended or that any one of them had finished it; but the lads, individually and collectively, remained unmoved."

When the delegation met alone with Kieran "Doc" Doherty, who was close to death, Adams again raised the possibility of ending the fast. Pointing out that Doherty and Kevin Lynch could not last much longer, Adams said "you'll both be dead. I can go out now, Doc, and announce that it's over."

Doherty, who spent seven of the last ten years in British prisons, responded: "We haven't got our five demands and that's the only way I'm coming off. Too much suffered for too long, too many good men dead. Thatcher can't break us."

The hunger-striker added: "For too long our people have been broken. The Free Staters, the Church, the SDLP. We won't be broken. We'll get our five demands. If I'm dead . . . well, the others will have them. I don't want to die, but that's up to the Brits."

Uncertain 'middle ground'

Supporters of the prisoners in Ireland have been aware that Thatcher's intransigence on the five demands has had a contradictory effect

on the three major forces within the Catholic population of Ireland that help prop up British rule: the government of the South, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

On the one hand, under the pressure from the mass support for the just demands of the hunger strikers and the mass revulsion against Thatcher's refusal to negotiate with the prisoners, these three forces have called on the British government to make concessions to end the protest.

But all of them fear a real break with the British government. Faced with the British inflexibility, they turn around and pressure the prisoners and their families to give in. What stops them from going too far in that direction is the pressure exerted upon them by the mass movement in support of the H-Block prisoners.

Poland

Workers protest press policy

Printers stage two-day national strike

Some 40,000 Polish printing workers in cities around the country went on strike August 18, shutting down a majority of the official daily newspapers for two days.

The strike, called by the ten-million-member independent union, Solidarity, was held to protest stepped-up slanders of Solidarity in the government-controlled press and the failure of the authorities to honor earlier agreements to give Solidarity radio and television time.

In Warsaw, printing workers occupied the building of *Dom Słowa Polskiego*, the plant that publishes the main party daily, *Trybuna Ludu*. In Krakow, printers occupied a number of plants when members of the party-dominated, "branch" union attempted to put out a paper in defiance of the strike. Occupations also took place in Gdansk, Lodz, Bialystok, Olsztyn, and Wroclaw.

According to Solidarity, a big majority of all printing workers in the country supported the strike. "We have the great center of propaganda in our hands," strike coordinator Eugeniusz Koscianek declared.

In some cases, the authorities tried to break the effectiveness of the strike by printing limited editions of newspapers on other presses. *Trybuna Ludu*, for instance, was printed in a small run at the Defense Ministry printing plant.

In response, Solidarity called on train, truck, and bus operators not to deliver them and vendors not to sell them. As a result, even copies of the scab newspapers were almost impossible to find in cities like Warsaw.

At a news conference at Solidarity's regional headquarters in Warsaw, union leader Se-

An Phoblacht soberly noted in an August 1 editorial, "the middle ground is in danger of further slipping away if those who control it have their way." Given the British hard line, "mounting pressures on the prisoners' relatives and the prisoners themselves from these three sources can therefore be expected as the hunger-strike continues. Capitulation to Britain is a hard habit to lose.

"But all three of these power points will also capitulate to the strong will of the Irish people if the supporters of the prisoners continue to be aware of the problems and face them in a sensitive, disciplined and intelligent way.

"That vital middle ground can be won over to the prisoners' side by pressure from the bottom upwards to forge a unity of Irish support for the prisoners which will finally break the arrogant stone wall of Thatcher's intransigence." □

weryn Jaworski reiterated Solidarity's demands for a half hour of national television time each week, one hour of radio time a week, limited space in regional newspapers, and the right to publish a national daily newspaper (Solidarity already has a weekly paper).

"We will have more protests like this one if they do not guarantee us access to the mass media and do not stop the propaganda campaign against us," Jaworski declared.

Following the end of the strike, Solidarity press spokesperson Janusz Onyszkiewicz repeated this warning. He declared that if scheduled talks between Solidarity and the government on the question of the press produced no results, "we may have to strengthen this action. Maybe the next time it will be three or more days, and maybe we will have to include radio and television.

Although the authorities continued to attack Solidarity during the strike, one television commentary calling it "an irresponsible act of political adventurism," the press was subsequently more restrained.

Zycie Warszawy, the main Warsaw daily, ran an editorial questioning the "appropriateness" of strikes as a means to pressure the government, but also criticized the authorities for not granting Solidarity leader Lech Walesa the twenty minutes of television time he had demanded before the strike was called. □

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Behind the worsening food shortages

Bureaucratic methods, a mismanaged economy

By Ernest Harsch

WARSAW—Shortly after dawn, the lines already begin to form. In front of the meat stores, kiosks, milk shops, and bakeries, people queue up long before opening time. They hope to buy some of the increasingly scarce necessities of daily life.

Sometimes they will have to wait for hours. Sometimes there will be nothing left by the time their turn comes up.

Meat, fats, butter, shampoo, cigarettes, tooth paste, cheese, vodka, matches, citrus products, detergents, all are in short supply, if they are available at all. Even the ration cards are no longer an assurance that meat can be purchased.

In restaurants, just a few of the items listed on the menus are actually available.

In the coal mines of Upper Silesia, miners collapse from exhaustion and have to be car-

This is the first of two companion articles on Poland's economic and social crisis. The second article will deal with the movement for workers' self-management.

ried to the surface; they no longer get the 7,000 calories a day required for their strenuous jobs.

The picture is the same almost everywhere. In the largest cities and smallest towns, the Polish people are now being obliged to shoulder the burden of lengthening food lines and growing scarcities. These come on top of the many other economic and social difficulties that Poles have already had to face for some time: poor medical care, unreliable and crowded public transport, severe housing shortages, deteriorating social services, power blackouts, worsening pollution, a chaotic consumer market.

As a result, hunger, insecurity, and frustration are becoming a part of everyday life here.

Despite the authorities' repeated promises of economic reform, the government has come up with no concrete programs to lead the country out of its economic crisis and to halt the continual deterioration of living standards. To working people, the government and party leadership's pledges of a "socialist renewal" ring hollow.

A privileged few

Not everyone in Poland is experiencing difficulties. There are some who are shielded from the repercussions of the economic crisis—the very people responsible for it, the well-fed and privileged functionaries and bureaucrats who claim to rule Poland in the name of the workers.

Most government and party officials receive salaries many times the wages of industrial workers, or even of skilled technicians.

Beyond that, they enjoy many privileges that are denied to ordinary Poles: special hospitals and medical clinics for party officials and policemen; access to special "yellow curtain" shops that are well-stocked with consumer goods unavailable to the general populace; cars, spacious apartments, and summer homes; all-expense-paid trips abroad.

In the words of an activist of Rural Solidarity, the union of individual farmers, "People here are not paid for the amount of work they do, but for their position. Privileges are not given to those who are talented or who do good work, but to those who oppress others."

The existence of these privileges are common knowledge here, but the bureaucrats who benefit from them often try to camouflage their full scope.

In Warsaw, for example, the luxury apartments of top party officials are not concentrated in one particular area, but are scattered about, sometimes located in ordinary apartment complexes. In Poznan, there is a special residential area for the privileged, but it is several kilometers outside the city, and its access road is guarded by signs warning unwelcome drivers that it is a prohibited area. The homes in it are large and well-furnished. It is where the "red bourgeoisie" lives, as one resident of Poznan explained.

Through their exclusive control of all key economic management positions, these bureaucrats have also been able to take advantage of numerous opportunities to enrich themselves through corruption, embezzlement, and shady deals.

One example of this is Lancuchow, an agricultural cooperative near Lublin. It has had a dozen different directors in as many years. Each drew up a new economic plan for the cooperative, and secured state grants and loans—often on the basis of inflated costs—from which he lined his pockets. After a year or so of mismanaging Lancuchow, he would get transferred to another state farm, wealthier than when he began there. Another corrupt or incompetent director would then get appointed to replace him at Lancuchow, and the cycle would start all over again.

Another particularly blatant example of corruption was the case of Maciej Szczepanski, the former head of the state radio and television. Among his other assets (ten residences, a sheep farm, a pig breeding complex, a slaughterhouse, and a vacation retreat in Greece), he had at his disposal a sleek thirty-eight-meter-

long sailing ship, the *Pogoria*. Officially, it belonged to the television enterprise and was supposed to be used for filming at sea. But in practice it functioned as Szczepanski's private yacht, on which he held parties and went on month-long cruises.

Such corruption—plus the considerable "legal" privileges of the bureaucracy—have aroused widespread anger here. Solidarity, the ten-million-member independent union movement, has termed such practices "extremely immoral," particularly in light of the country's severe economic crisis.

Because of the pressures of the workers movement over the past year, the bureaucracy has been forced to purge its most compromised members. Thousands have been dismissed from their positions or compelled to return their illegally acquired homes and cars.

Former television and radio chief Szczepanski is under investigation for his corrupt practices (his yacht is now docked at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, where it is used for sailing by youth clubs). During the July 14-20 congress of the ruling Polish United Workers Party, former party chief Edward Gierek and a number of his cronies were expelled from the party, stripped of their special honors and pensions, and also made liable for investigation.

The authorities hope that by singling out a few prominent scapegoats they will be able to restore public confidence in the party, or at least divert public anger away from themselves. But while the acquisition of wealth by patently illegal means has been hampered for the time being, the usual privileges of the bureaucracy still exist. As a result, the popular image of the party as an association of careerists, sharks, and swindlers persists.

For example, when former Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz was expelled from the party, slogans appeared on walls in Warsaw reading, "We do not want Jaroszewicz among our ranks." They were signed, "Non-party members."

Decisions from the top

To safeguard its material privileges and dominant social position, the bureaucracy has traditionally monopolized all decision-making powers. From the central planning bodies down to the level of the factory managers, economic decisions have been made outside of any democratic discussion or social control.

Because of this, Poland's economic plans have been drawn up more with an eye toward satisfying the narrow interests of the bureaucracy itself than with fulfilling the needs of society as a whole. They have been stamped by



Residents of Poznan stand in line to buy food.

Ernest Harsch/IP

arbitrariness, voluntarism, and an abysmal lack of proportion. The goals that were set had little to do with reality—or with the final results. Failures were routinely covered up by unbelievable claims of constant progress and advancement—the “propaganda of success.”

Government officials love to point to Poland’s standing as the ninth largest industrial power in the world, a rating based on its gross output of steel, coal, naval vessels, and other industrial products. As the Polish authorities viewed it, the “construction of socialism” was synonymous with the building of ever larger factories and industrial complexes.

But this emphasis on heavy industry has been carried out to the detriment of agriculture, light industry, and social services. The authorities have displayed an utter disregard for the day-to-day needs of working people.

If Poland were to be rated according to the real standard of living of its population, one Pole stated with only a certain amount of exaggeration, it could be classified as a “third world country.”

The government’s agricultural policy has been a particularly glaring example of its skewed priorities. Besides failing to allocate sufficient resources toward improving farm output in general, it has followed a blatantly discriminatory policy toward the small, private farmers, who produce the vast bulk of Poland’s food.

While their farms account for nearly 80 percent of Poland’s cultivated land, they receive only 34 percent of agricultural assistance (fertilizer, seed, tractors, etc.). The rest goes to the large state farms and agricultural cooperatives, which, because of bureaucratic mismanagement, are often less productive than the small, private farms.

Polish farmers have put in orders for 470,000 new tractors, and they lack 600,000 pitchforks and 150,000 scythes.

Because of the government’s policies, actual food production has lagged far behind Poland’s large agricultural potential. Farmers

point to this as one of the primary causes of the current food crisis.

While top party and government officials had little trouble finding building materials for their summer dachas (the construction industry is considered one of the most corrupt in the country), the construction of workers’ housing has been given a low priority.

Some 1.2 million married couples are now on the waiting lists for new apartment of their own. Those who live in the big cities may have to wait up to fifteen years. In the meantime, they must crowd into the already small apartments of their parents.

In addition, some 200,000 Poles are living in extremely critical housing conditions, in some cases even without running water.

Only about 2 percent of the Polish budget is allocated for health care (compared to 6 or 7 percent in most other Eastern European countries). Services at the state medical clinics is slow and of poor quality. Supplies of many essential medicines, especially those that must be imported, are low.

Public transport, while generally inexpensive, is inadequate to meet the demand, and has been allowed to deteriorate considerably in recent years. Many intercity passenger trains are so overcrowded that travellers must stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the aisles for hours on end.

The insufficient allocation of funds for education has resulted in the closing of schools in some of the smaller villages and in a lack of enough books and other school supplies in urban centers. Preschool facilities are short of at least 120,000 places.

The authorities’ contempt for human needs has been paralleled by their complete lack of concern for Poland’s natural environment.

In Szczecin, Gdansk, Krakow, Katowice, and other big industrial centers, factory chimneys bellow out huge clouds of dense black smoke, unchecked by antipollution devices. During the summer tourist season this year, the beaches of Gdansk had to be closed because of

water pollution. In Sopot, just north of Gdansk, it was discovered that the cement used in some apartment buildings contains a toxic substance; the leukemia rate among the inhabitants is much higher than the national average. In Krakow, an aluminum plant that was emitting dangerous chemicals into the air was closed down only after a public outcry was raised.

In some cities, the water is not considered safe to drink. Milk must often be boiled because of the unsanitary conditions in which it is bottled. The particular hormones used to fatten chickens on some of the state farms have been found to retard the growth of young children.

Gierek’s “second Poland”

Many of the severe economic problems facing Poland today were aggravated by the policies followed by the Gierek regime in the early 1970s.

Under Gierek’s slogan of building a “second Poland,”—rapidly doubling the country’s industrial base—enormous investments were made in heavy industry, while agriculture, consumer goods, and social services were neglected more than ever. Between 1971 and 1975, investments in steel, electrical equipment and machinery, and other large industries rose by 25 percent a year. Much of the funding for those projects came from Western banks.

Not only were such large industrial projects out of keeping with Poland’s real social and economic needs at the time, but they were drawn up with little regard for their linkages to the rest of the economy. Investments in energy, for instance, lagged far behind the creation of new industrial plants, leading to serious shortfalls.

One of Gierek’s most ambitious projects was Huta Katowice, which was projected to become the largest steelworks in Europe. It is one of the best examples of the absence of real economic planning in Poland, undertaken more for prestige purposes than to advance Poland’s overall economic development.

Located some ten kilometers outside Katowice, in southern Poland, the original site had no road or rail connections. They had to be built from scratch. The iron ore to produce the steel, and much of the equipment for the steelworks, had to be imported at enormous cost. As originally planned, Huta Katowice would have required more energy than was used in all of southern Poland—something that no one had thought of beforehand. Electricity for the completed sections thus had to be diverted from other industries. The ecological damage of such a large complex was just one of the many other oversights.

As the economy began to stagnate by the second half of the decade—and the foreign debts rose to astronomical proportions—Gierek was forced to abandon his dream in midstream. In 1979, those sections that had been finished were put into operation, at half the originally planned productive capacity and at a cost far beyond the initial projections.

Another part of Gierek's "second Poland" was the expansion of the giant Ursus tractor factory just outside Warsaw. The "second Ursus," as Gierek dubbed it, was supposed to supply Polish farmers with 75,000 new Massey-Ferguson tractors a year by 1979. But by 1980 it was turning out only 1,500. Production for 1981 was expected to be 500.

Moreover, production costs skyrocketed. The cost of imported parts for tractor engines alone rose more than 150 times above initial projections. To complete the expansion of Ursus would require another 22 billion zlotys (50 billion zlotys have already been spent).*

This project was also another example of the authorities' disregard for the needs of small farmers. The production of the popular C-330 tractor, a Polish model, was arbitrarily discontinued, in favor of the Massey-Ferguson, which is more expensive and more difficult to repair. The objections raised by farmers against the Massey-Ferguson were simply brushed aside.

Gierek's enormous industrial projects were undertaken on the assumption that they could soon be brought into operation and their production sold abroad to help pay back the large Western loans that had been taken out to launch them. But not only were many of these projects wasteful and unrealistic to begin with and then further bungled by bureaucratic mismanagement, the final export products that did see the light of day were of such poor quality that they could not adequately compete on the world market.

So, as Gierek pushed ahead with his grandiose schemes, Poland fell increasingly into debt to the Western banks. By the time of Gierek's downfall in 1980, total indebtedness had already climbed to more than \$20 billion.

Declining production

Under the weight of this enormous debt—and the vast economic mismanagement of

*At the official exchange rate, 33 zlotys are equivalent to US\$1.00.



Gierek: His unrealistic industrialization projects threw Poland deeper into crisis.

the country—the Polish economy was thrown into complete disarray.

The lack of enough foreign exchange, and the difficulty of getting further loans, made it impossible to import many of the raw materials, spare parts, and equipment needed to keep industry functioning. In 1979, the government admitted that 58 percent of all enterprises were not producing at their full capacity.

The July 16 issue of *Zycie Warszawy*, the main Warsaw daily, ran an article based on a report issued by the Main Statistical Office, covering Poland's economic performance during the first six months of 1981. It provided a sobering picture:

The first half of this year saw an appreciable decline in the production of most industrial goods compared with the same period last year. Hard coal output was down 21.8% and crude oil processing was down 19.3%. The production of farm machines and tools slumped 16.1%, passenger cars 23.3%, trucks 19.1%, and agricultural tractors 12.4%.

The production decline is causing increasingly widespread shortages on the internal market, is tightening supplies of material and technological facilities to industry, and is further reducing the economy's export possibilities.

In housing construction, 82,100 apartments were constructed, which was 30.3% fewer than in the first half of last year.

In agriculture, despite a general improvement in arable production, the trend in animal production is less favorable. . . . The procurement of animals for slaughter from farmers fell by 15.4% and of eggs by 2.5%, compared with the first half of last year. The conclusion of contracts with farmers for the supply of livestock animals in the July-September period was also down compared to last year; the contracts concluded provide for a 25.8% fall in pig supplies and 24.3% fall in cattle supplies.

The sharp decline in the production of coal,

one of Poland's main export items, has slashed foreign coal sales from 20 million tons in the first six months of 1980 to 8.5 million tons in the same period this year—a further blow to Poland's foreign exchange position.

Power stations' reserves of coal have been reduced to ten days, making periodic power cuts inevitable. Sometimes these blackouts are poorly planned, leading to disastrous results. Near Warsaw, for instance, a power outage in June cut off the air conditioning at a large chicken farm; some 30,000 chickens died.

The July 14 *Gazeta Krakowska*, now one of the most informative official daily newspapers in the country, provided yet another example of how problems in one industry can have drastic repercussions elsewhere. One of its correspondents, Tomasz Ordyk, visited the Ursus tractor factory.

"The yard is occupied by almost a thousand new tractors," he reported. "The view is impressive indeed. But none of these tractors will be seen in the fields this harvest. A half of them are immobilized due to the lack of brake fluid. To produce this fluid, it is necessary to import certain components that have been lacking for some time now, and the factory in Lodz leaves no illusions about the future. Other tractors need wheel bands and they stand there without tires. In Ursus, they call them 'tanks.' A Lublin factory failed to deliver the wheel bands because it suffers from a shortage of steel supplied by the Lenin steelworks [in Krakow]."

It has become obvious to everyone here that drastic measures must be undertaken to pull Poland out of the vortex.

But the response of the authorities has been limited largely to promises and piecemeal measures. They have promised to launch no new industrial projects for the time being and to instead invest more in agriculture and social needs. But the lack of enough resources in general makes the prospect of any immediate improvement seem dim indeed. The authorities have also pledged to "reorganize" the central economic administration—without, however, acknowledging the need to open it up to democratic decision-making by society as a whole.

While the government and party leadership have been forced by the pressure of the workers movement to talk about the need for change and for a "socialist renewal," the bureaucracy remains determined to hang on to its exclusive economic and political prerogatives. Under such conditions, any economic reform, even if it is launched, will stand little chance of long-term success.

Confronted by a deteriorating economic situation and the intransigence of the authorities, the Polish workers have started to take the initiative and chart their own course of economic and social change.

In hundreds of enterprises around the country, workers have taken the first steps toward fighting for workers' control of the factories, known as self-management. This movement, in which Solidarity members are taking a leading role, is levelling a direct challenge against

the entire system of bureaucratic incompetence and mismanagement that has reigned in Poland for decades.

According to Tomasz Moszczak, a leader of

Solidarity at the giant Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, "The government is either unable or unwilling to act on behalf of the people. So the only way out is workers' self-management."

The struggle of Polish farmers

Interview with leader of farmers' union

[The following interview is with Gabriel Janowski, the vice-president of the Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers—Solidarity (popularly known as Rural Solidarity). The interview was conducted in Warsaw on July 17 by Suzanne Haig and Ernest Harsch.]

* * *

Question. How did the farmers come to a decision that an independent union of farmers was needed?

Answer. It was a result of the historical experiences of the last thirty-six years. After World War II, the farmers did not have any independent organization that would defend their rights and represent their interests. There were organizations, but under the control of the state authorities.

So, since 1978, one might say, the movement of farmers began. The farmers started to organize the Farmers Defense Committee, with the help of people from the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights and the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR). But general organizing of farmers into the independent unions began in August 1980.

Q. What were the particular problems that the farmers were facing? Was there a shortage of land, a scarcity of equipment?

A. We have to begin with the policies of the

1970's. When Edward Gierek came to power, he supposedly created the conditions for advancing the development of agriculture, but in most cases these were fake, just propaganda.

In the second half of the 1970s it was quite obvious that the laws and parliamentary acts were against the development of agriculture. They gave privileges to the state farms and were against private farms.

An example is the act concerning pensions for farmers, which was supposed to create equality between farmers and workers. But in fact it was aimed at depriving farmers of their land.

Q. What other forms of discrimination were there against private farms as opposed to state farms?

A. Mostly in terms of the means of production and credits. In most cases these were available for state farms and cooperatives, but not for private farms.

It resulted in decreasing interest in agriculture, because of the shortage of equipment in private agriculture and the low prices paid by the state for crops. Most of the young people moved to the cities in search of better paying work and better conditions. Only the old remained in the villages.

Q. Is it true that on the average the living standards of farmers are lower than workers in the cities?



Private farmers face discrimination from government.

A. It is true. A great number of private farms are deprived of running water or central heating, which is available in cities.

In spite of the idea of equality in education throughout Poland, a lower percentage of country children are able to finish primary schools, and fewer people from the villages are able to attend universities. Schools are poorly equipped compared to those in the towns.

Of course, the people in the villages have a much lower access to medical treatment and hospitals.

Q. What kind of day to day collaboration do you have with the workers' union, Solidarity?

A. First of all these are two different unions. But both have the word "solidarity" in their names. That means there is an ideological relation between them.

Our collaboration is in fact day to day, and it involves the defense of those sections of the working people we represent. These concerns include the question of prices and new laws, to which we state our opinions. We are engaged in everything that concerns working people.

Workers' Solidarity has worked out its own program separately, and we are now working out our program. But some of the points in the programs are the same for both unions and are researched in the research centers of our unions.

Q. How is Rural Solidarity organized? How many members does it have?

A. It is difficult to say, but it is about one and a half million. We are organized according to the administrative regions of the country.

Q. What is your relationship to the agricultural workers?

A. They are in workers' Solidarity. Only individual farmers owning land can become our members.

Q. What is your position toward the collective farms and the cooperatives?

A. We are for the collectivization of agriculture, but only as far as the service for agriculture is concerned—the supplying of raw materials, tools, repairing tractors, etc.

We are against the Russian form of collectivization of agriculture. We are for the groups formed by families, a simple form of cooperatives, but not the Soviet model. There are, more or less, 2,000 collectives in Poland, and they survive only thanks to the support they are given by the state.

Q. What do you mean by Russian model of collective farm?

A. Nearly 25 percent of the land is farmed by state farms, including cooperatives. This is quite a large percent of land. We think that the state farms are needed, but they should be treated equally and they should act according

to the market, not be propped up by state financial support. It is quite possible that some of them would not be able to stand this independence and would fail.

Q. What is your position on the pricing of produce?

A. Our union's statutes and acts state that we should take part in all negotiations with the authorities concerning prices.

Q. Do you support the idea of the union and the government working out a joint central plan?

A. The planning is the government's domain, and we won't do it for the government. But we have formed research centers of experts that will deal with various subjects and

will help us in our negotiations with the government, and help the activities of the union. But we don't want to make the plans for the government.

Q. Why is there such a shortage of food in a country where it seems so much is being produced?

A. It's one of the so-called Polish puzzles. You can see all the fields, where there is plenty growing, yet there is in general a great shortage of food.

We are, however, not starving yet. Because there is nothing in the shops does not mean there is nothing on our tables.

These shortages result from the wrong distribution, wrong storing, and wrong processing. Food takes a long time to get from the

farmer to the consumer, and it is not well stored or processed. Our farming is sometimes less efficient than it should be. Because of bad fodder, the cows give less milk.

Q. Have you received messages of solidarity or aid from farmers organizations in other countries?

A. We know about the support given to Poland and to workers' Solidarity, but we as Solidarity of Individual Farmers have not received such support.

We appreciate the fact that different organizations have given support to Solidarity.

We would appreciate aid, especially with the means of production, herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides.

We would be thankful for such general human-being-to-human-being kind of help. □

'It was time to get rid of oppression'

LUBLIN—Less than fifty miles from the Soviet border, Lublin is in the heart of a predominantly agricultural region. It was here, in 1978, that the first efforts to set up independent farmers' organizations were made.

Roman Socawse, Antoni Barylu, and Zbigniew Kosiorski were three of the founders of the Komitet Samoobrony Chlopskiej (Farmers Defense Committee) in the Lublin region. On July 16, in the regional headquarters of Rural Solidarity in Lublin, we were able to talk to them about their early organizing efforts.

One of the main impetuses to their struggle—on top of all the other discrimination against private farmers—was a law adopted in 1977 that would give pensions to retired farmers only if they sold their land to the government at a very low price. This was seen as another attempt to deprive them of their land. "It was time to get rid of the oppression," Barylu declared.

One of the first committees was organized in the village of Ostrowek, involving about forty farmers. Later, an open-air meeting was called in the forest, near a main road. "We didn't want to hide in any rooms," Kosiorski said. "We wanted to be out in the open, so that everyone could know." About 1,000 people attended that rally.

Soon after they began to organize, the farmers contacted some of the dissident groups, including the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights, headed by Leszek Moczulski, and the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR). Moczulski, who is now the leader of the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) and the most prominent political prisoner in the country, visited them several times. *Robotnik* (The Worker), a newspa-

per put out by the KOR, was widely read by the farmers.

Some of the farmers had learned how to organize during the war, fighting in the underground against the German occupation army. Their bulletins were printed in the same rudimentary way as during the war, on old duplicating machines. They published several regular bulletins, including *Placowka* (Outpost) and *Gospodarz* (The Farm).

Individuals from the dissident groups sometimes acted as couriers, bringing the farmers' bulletins and other materials to villages elsewhere. Soon, similar groups were formed in Rzeszow, Radom, and later Bydgoszcz.

On September 10, 1978, the first step was taken toward setting up an actual farmers' union. In Lisowo, the founders of the Lublin committee helped establish the Provisional Committee for an Independent Trade Union of Farmers. To protect its members from reprisals, the names of only four of its leaders were made public at that time.

The danger of reprisals was real. From the very beginning the secret police were active in trying to stamp out the farmers' organizing efforts.

In one case, the police actually encircled several villages where the farmers were particularly active, to prevent others from visiting them.

The farmers had one old duplicating machine hidden in an abandoned hut. When they learned that the secret police planned to search there, a farmer carried the heavy machine out of the area, even crossing a neck-deep river with the machine held above his head.

"When the police could not find the duplicating machine, they were desperate," Kosiorski recalled. They were actually convinced that it was still there. Then they gathered all the activists into one big hall and told them that the person who would tell them where the machine was hidden would get anything they wanted: the best jobs, money, the best wines and cigarettes. No one talked.

When bribery failed, the secret police resorted to force.

Kosiorski said that the police came to his house at a quarter to five one morning.

"They wanted to take me barefoot to the police headquarters. But since there were only three of them, they could not manage.

"On the next day, eight came with cars and motorcycles from ZOMO, which is connected with the political police. They wanted to put handcuffs on me, but I would not let them.

"Finally, since there were eight of them, they managed. I am sorry they were able to take me."

They took him to a car and beat him so hard around the kidneys that he could not walk for a week.

"The police held me for one day, trying to force me to sign a special paper promising to give up my activities. But I would not sign it."

Often, the farmers would be imprisoned for forty-eight hours, then released as the law requires, only to be rearrested and held for forty-eight hours more, and so on.

But with the massive July-August 1980 workers' strikes and the subsequent formation of Solidarity, the farmer activists were finally vindicated. They won their demand for an independent farmers' union.

—Suzanne Haig and Ernest Harsch

Gandhi moves to ban strikes

New attack on labor movement

By Sharad Jhaveri

JAMNAGAR—Late on the night of July 26, the regime of Indira Gandhi assumed by ordinance drastic and sweeping powers to prohibit strikes in a wide range of "essential" services" and to dismiss, arrest without warrant, and summarily try strikers and organizers of strikes.

Called the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance, 1981, this frontal assault on the trade-union rights of the Indian working class empowers the regime to prohibit strikes in any service over which the Parliament has the power to make laws.

It is operative for six months the first time it is evoked, but could be extended for a further period of six months.

This ordinance has been promulgated just on the eve of the session of the parliament that opens on August 17. In this session, bills replacing this ordinance will be presented and the idea is to make it into a law valid for three years.

Those who violate the new law can be tried summarily and will face fines of 1,000 rupees or imprisonment for six months or both. "Instigators" of strikes will be fined 2,000 rupees or imprisoned for one year or both.

This measure applies to the whole of India, except Jammu and Kashmir.

In certain cases, the regime can ban strikes in the private sector also. In any case, it covers ninety-two industries listed in the scheduled categories in the Industrial Development and Regulations Act, 1951. Major sectors include railways, post and telegraph, telephones, ports and air services, banking, defense, refineries and petroleum products, public conservancy and sanitation, etc. The list can be expanded any time.

Although the measure was attacked by both trade unions and opposition political parties as "draconian" and a "black law," it was approved at a hurriedly-summoned meeting of the Gandhi ministry. But there was no immediate official explanation for this ordinance.

The over-all situation on the labor front hardly justified such a measure. There has been a sharp drop in loss of man-days from 44 million in 1979 to 13 million in 1980. Such significant recent strikes as those of workers in Bangalore and the locomotive railway workers and insurance employees were successfully quelled.

There was no immediate threat even from the National Campaign Committee, a coordinating body of eight central trade unions that had decided on a phased program of agitation in support of certain demands of the working class and to highlight the workers' indignation

over continuing violations of trade-union rights. It was decided to observe November 3 as an all-India protest day and to organize a workers' march to the Parliament in the third week of November.

An editorial in *Indian Express* on July 29, therefore, interpreted the government's measure as a "pre-emptive move totally to disarm the workers."

It is clear that Gandhi is testing out the working class and its leaders. Her regime has already allowed a rise in prices of petroleum

products, fertilizer, and cement. A duty on edible oil imports has also been raised.

Simultaneously with the promulgation of this ordinance, her finance minister went a long way in assuring the capitalists of a further reduction in the rates of taxation, provided the response of the regime's efforts at voluntary compliance was "adequate." The regime has been more than generous to the privileged classes, tax evaders, and profiteers, while threatening bonus and wage freezes against the workers.

It is obvious that in the current conjuncture this direct attack on the working class and its trade-union rights will be at the center of working class politics in India. It requires a sustained massive mobilization of workers to resist such an attack and thwart it.

July 25, 1981

STATEMENT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Halt imperialist intervention in Central America!

[The following resolution was adopted at the May 1981 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The Reagan administration is continuing its counterrevolutionary intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. Today its intervention is concentrated against the heroic people of El Salvador, while it maintains its blockade against socialist Cuba and increases its menacing moves against Nicaragua, Grenada, and Cuba itself. U.S. imperialism is trying in this way to roll back the revolutionary process opened up with the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution, in a region of strategic importance for its objectives in Latin America.

To carry out this reactionary offensive U.S. imperialism is massively increasing its support to the military dictatorships of the region, especially to the bloody Christian Democratic/Military Junta in El Salvador, and is trying by all means possible to prevent international solidarity and aid with the Central American and Caribbean peoples.

The exemplary struggle of the workers and peasants of El Salvador has inspired significant international solidarity, within which sections of the Fourth International play a vanguard role. Now more than ever workers of the whole world must make the cause of the Salvadoran revolution their own, along with the defense of socialist Cuba and the revolutionary processes in Nicaragua and Grenada. They must support

all the peoples of the area.

The International Executive Committee of the Fourth International calls on all organizations of the workers movement, anti-imperialist and democratic organizations, etc., to build an *international anti-interventionist front*, which can protect the peoples of this region, holding back the intervention already being carried out by the Reagan administration, stopping it reaching even more serious levels. This is today the best way of helping in the victory of the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. All sections of the Fourth International will commit themselves to the struggle for this objective with all their forces.

Yankees out of El Salvador!
Stop the aggression against Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada!
End the blockade against Cuba!
Forward to the anti-interventionist front!

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Samad Asari Eskandari, 1961-1981

Trotskyist killed fighting at front

By Ali Irvani

[The following article is from the July 22 issue of *Hemmat*, the weekly paper of the Iranian Workers Unity Party (HVK). The HVK is one of three organizations in Iran affiliated with the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

According to information we have received, comrade Samad Asari Eskandari achieved martyrdom on July 17, 1981, at the Abadan-Mahshahr front in the fight against [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein's invaders. He joins the ranks of martyrs from the army, Revolutionary Guards, the Mobilization, and all fighters for the liberation of enslaved humanity.

Comrade Samad was one of the leaders of the Iranian socialist youth movement and was the youngest member of the Central Committee of the Workers Unity Party.

Martyred Comrade Samad Asari Eskandari was born twenty years ago in a working-class Azerbaijani family. He began his political activity before the glorious February insurrection while he was a student in Tabriz.

After the victory of the February insurrection, Samad became acquainted with the Iranian Trotskyist movement, and started his activity with the Young Socialist Organization. From the very start, he played a central role in developing and broadening the Trotskyist movement and its revolutionary program.

Comrade Samad first met the Iranian Trotskyist movement during his last year in school. Despite the precarious position his studies were in, he was very active among the students.

Comrade Samad was a devout Azerbaijani who believed in the revolution. He was always in the front ranks in advancing the revolution's goals and the anti-imperialist struggle of the Iranian people. He believed that youth could play an essential role in advancing the revolution and the struggle against American imperialism.

Samad was unexhaustable in propagating, agitating, and organizing to advance the revolution, and the ideas he proposed earned him the great respect of his fellow students, friends, and acquaintances. They all considered him to be someone who believed in the revolution and its goals. His high moral caliber made him beloved of his friends, and comrades.

Samad's knowledge of our society and his love of and respect for the dispossessed people and their aspirations—as well as his devotion to socialism as the liberator of the workers and all humanity from exploitation, colonialism,

and capitalist misery—made him a byword.

Comrade Samad always said that since imperialism never stops for one moment attacking and plotting against the Iranian revolution, we must not stop for one moment in our struggle against imperialism, and that if we were to do anything else, it would be a betrayal of the hopes of the toilers of Iran and of the world revolution.

Although comrade Samad was so young, he had a high level of social and political consciousness and knew about the people's needs and how to advance the struggle against imperialism.

He was extraordinarily disciplined and active. His endless energy in organizing and his militant participation in political and social activity made him a taskmaster for his political friends. His spirit to fulfill his responsibilities and his revolutionary optimism in the struggles of the toilers and his party was reflected in all his political activities. He always followed through the most complicated problems to the very end and presented fresh solutions. He never shirked even the most complicated problem.

Comrade Samad was outstanding in action, as well as in theory and propaganda. He believed that the acid test for a real revolutionary was his revolutionary activity and integrity, not beautiful rhetoric. So he always tried to avoid windbags, pointless arguments, and conceited intellectuals.

Comrade Samad always kept a level head and high morale even in the most dangerous conditions, and a loveable and comradely smile was never far from his face. Once, in answer to a friend of his who asked, "What are we going to do if you get martyred?" he answered, with his ever-present smile, "Don't cry for me, be glad and continue in my footsteps." Then he added that it must always be this way.

He was not only a supporter of the highest

aspirations of the youth and the revolution, but was active in all the activities of his party. Comrade Samad, after his continuous and central activities in organizing the youth, joined the Workers Unity Party and continued his revolutionary struggles through this party. He was thoroughly aware of the crucial importance of the current war and the overriding duty of his party to participate in the resistance movement and the struggle against Saddam's invaders.

In his political report to the convention of the Workers Unity Party, which was about the role of the youth and their duties in advancing the war against the Iraqi regime's invasion, he clearly pointed to this issue: "The central revolutionary duty of youth, students or not, is not only to participate actively and militantly in the resistance movement of the Iranian people, but to participate in the front ranks in the war against Saddam's invasion." He didn't separate the aspirations of youth from the struggle against world imperialism. He proved this in word and in deed.

After he got his high-school diploma, Samad immediately went to fulfill his military duty. After finishing his period of military training in Tehran and Tabriz, he was transferred to the front ranks. In his letters to his friends and acquaintances, he always sent good news of advances and victories in the war. He was convinced that the fighters for the revolution would gain final victory. He fought for eighteen days in the southern front against Saddam's army, and he played an effective role in the victories of revolutionary fighters on the Abadan-Mahshahr front. He was martyred there by a bullet in the head.

Comrade Samad Asari Eskandari is an example of a generation of revolutionary and fighting youth who, with their own blood, have defended the life of the revolution against all attacks and plots by imperialism and its agents, and who have advanced it. These are young people who have spared no sacrifice to advance the revolution and the struggle against imperialism. They live only to remove the yoke of exploitation and colonialism from the dispossessed of society. Comrade Samad was this kind of young revolutionary. He thought this way and acted this way.

May the memory of this revolutionary martyr ever be warm. □



Iranian soldiers at front. Samad helped defend revolution against Iraqi invasion.

Behind Begin's election victory

Liberals claim fascism is around the corner

By David Frankel

Why was Prime Minister Menachem Begin's rightist government returned to power in the Israeli elections held on June 30?

When Begin called parliamentary elections in January, following the resignation of Finance Minister Yigal Horovitz, it was widely expected that the Labor Alignment, which had ruled Israel from 1948 to 1977, would be returned to power.

There was good reason for this expectation. Israeli workers were suffering from the highest rate of inflation in the world under the Begin regime. At the same time, unemployment was growing.

Hopes for peace, which had been raised high after Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the signing of the Camp David accords a year and a half later, had been dashed by Begin's belligerent stance toward Syria, his policy of aggression in Lebanon, and continued Zionist colonization in the West Bank. Israel's international isolation had never been greater.

Disillusionment with the Begin government was reflected in polls that predicted a Labor landslide. But within five months this electoral picture had been turned around. What was behind this shift?

Oppression of Sephardic Jews

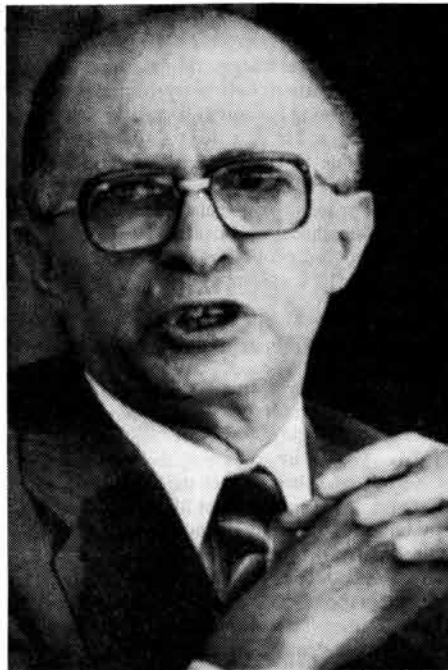
There was no dispute over the facts in the election. Begin was able to hold onto office because he obtained the votes of a decisive majority of Israel's Sephardic Jews—those who come from North Africa and the Middle East, as opposed to those of European origin.

Sephardic Jews, who are the majority of Israel's Jewish population, are also the largest sector of the Israeli working class. They came to Israel in the 1950s, mainly from Morocco, Yemen, and other Arab countries. From the beginning, they suffered from the anti-Arab racism that pervades Israeli society. As *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis put it in a June 28 article:

They were different from the Europeans who created the Zionist movement, and they were treated differently. They were sprayed with DDT, sent off to poor housing in development towns, their children given inferior educations. Their resentment, still burning, is a fundamental political and social fact in Israel now.

The Oriental immigrants are referred to here, by themselves and others, as "blacks." That is not a description of skin color. It is a half-ironic statement of social status.

Class is as important in the conflict as origin. The newer Oriental immigrants are poorer, less educated, with a different accent. And their culture is dis-



MENACHEM BEGIN

tinctly non-European, more Arab in family patterns and food and music.

In an interview with two Israeli revolutionists that appeared in the September 29, 1980, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, it was explained: "In the factories you often find that all the managers, office staff, planners, and organizers are Europeans, while on the shop floor all the workers are Oriental Jews and Arabs."

Labor Party leader Shimon Peres attacked Begin's Sephardic supporters during the closing days of the campaign in racist terms. He accused Begin of "rabble rousing" and "Khomeinism." These charges reflected the deep social hostility that emerged during the campaign, which was universally seen as the most violent and bitter in Israeli history.

Workers moving right?

While generally admitting the second-class status of the Sephardic Jews, the capitalist media interpreted their support to Begin as a vote for his rightist policies. It did not distinguish between the rightward motion of the Zionist parties in Israel and the political evolution of the working class.

"The election . . . pointed up a continuing shift to the right in Israel," said the July 13 *U.S. News & World Report*.

As the July 13 issue of *Time* magazine re-

ported it, "Sephardi Jews, predominantly a working-class constituency . . . rejected the traditional socialism of the Labor Party in favor of the radical right-wing nationalism of the Likud."

Leaders of the Labor Alignment even raised the specter of the workers pushing the country toward fascism. They pointed to a number of physical confrontations at Labor rallies and vandalism against Labor campaign headquarters.

Shlomo Hillel, a Labor candidate and former minister of police, accused those opposed to his party of trying to "pave the way toward fascism in public life."

Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, who has played a prominent role in the annexation of Arab East Jerusalem and the dispossession of Arab homeowners, expressed fear at "the growth of fascism in this country."

New York Times correspondent David Shipler, in a particularly racist article that appeared June 25, spoke of "concern by liberals" about "deeper tendencies in Israeli society, some of whose immigrants from Arab and East European countries have not yet absorbed democratic values."

These liberals found nothing to offend their "democratic values" in the dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland. Indeed, many of them played a leading role in that process. Their charges against the Israeli workers should not be accepted at face value, any more than their claims to represent democracy and socialism.

The Labor Party in Israeli politics

It is easier to see what is really happening in Israeli society if we step back from the latest election and put recent events into a broader framework.

The first thing that must be understood is the role of the Labor Party in Israel. Although the Israeli Labor Party belongs to the Socialist International and tries to project a more dovish image—at least internationally—than Begin's Likud, it remains the main party of the Israeli ruling class.

During the 1920s and 1930s the parties of the Labor Alignment built up and controlled a structure of interlocking institutions that were responsible for carrying out the colonization of Palestine and the organization of the Jewish population there into the Zionist movement. These institutions, such as the Haganah and the Palmach, which later became the Israeli army, served as the backbone of the Israeli state when it was formed in 1948.

Labor held governmental power until its de-

feat by Begin in 1977. But even today most of the officer corps in the military is identified with Labor, as are the highly privileged kibbutzim and the largest economic enterprises.

The Histadrut, which calls itself a labor federation, is also controlled by the Labor Party. Although the Histadrut continues to operate a so-called trade-union department, it is the largest employer in Israel. It owns two of the four largest armament companies in the country, the largest industrial conglomerate, the largest construction concern, and a chain of banks. It also owns the country's main insurance company, which requires membership in the Histadrut for those who want health insurance.

This massive apparatus, controlled from top to bottom by European (Ashkenazi) Jews, was employer to the Sephardic workers, officer to the Sephardic soldiers, and the government responsible for denying decent housing and education to Sephardic families.

Israel's economic crisis

Begin's election victory in May 1977 owed much to the bitter resentment felt by the Sephardic population against the Labor establishment. At the same time, it came amid a broader crisis for Israeli capitalism.

The October 1973 war was a sharp political blow to the Israeli regime, and it put a massive strain on the Israeli economy. Immediately following the 1973 war came the biggest international economic crisis since World War II.

By the time of the 1977 elections, Israeli workers were facing an inflation rate of 40 percent, a stagnating economy, some of the highest taxes in the world, and a government that was riddled with corruption. Workers voted for Begin's Likud bloc in hopes of a change.

However, the only change was for the worse. In the context of the continuing international capitalist crisis, the Israeli ruling class is seeking to implement the same policies of austerity and militarization pursued by the imperialists around the world. There is complete agreement on this basic course between Begin's Likud and Labor.

There has not been agreement, however, from the Israeli working class. Begin's first finance minister, Simcha Ehrlich, sought to hold down wages, cut social expenditures, and reduce food subsidies. Resistance from the workers prevented him from winning the fight on wages and food subsidies, and Ehrlich was forced out of office in October 1979.

Michel Warshawsky of the Revolutionary Communist League, the Israeli section of the Fourth International, described the situation following the resignation of Ehrlich in an article in the July 28, 1980, issue of *Intercontinental Press*:

Without a shadow of a doubt the economic situation is catastrophic. The balance of payments deficit has reached \$4.6 billion, the total government debt (foreign and domestic) is some \$34 billion, of which \$19 billion is foreign debts. In the wake of a "radical" policy of fighting inflation (which last year was 120%), inflation is now running at an annual rate of 140%, with prices rising 10.2% in the month of April alone.

These few figures confirm that the Israeli economy is on the verge of collapse, and they explain why panic reigns in Israeli financial circles. The economic measures taken by the new minister of finance, Yigal Horovitz, had to be radical if they were to refloat the Israeli economy. And they certainly were radical for the working class. Subsidies were eliminated on basic necessities, which caused price rises amounting to an average of 240% over two years on milk and milk products, eggs, chicken, gasoline, transportation, water, and electricity. The cost of bread, which rose 50% in a year, will now rise another 100%.

The public services budgets (health, social security, housing, education) have been reduced an average of 6%, meaning not simply a massive reduction in those services, but also, for the first time since 1967, a decline in the number of public-service jobs. . . .

So in the space of two years the Israeli workers have been simultaneously confronted with unemployment, reduced public services, and an average drop of nearly 10% in purchasing power.

Warshawsky also described the political consequences of this economic offensive.

At this stage the workers have gone beyond simply questioning the economic policy. Now they are questioning the Begin government itself and its overall policy. And we are now seeing the beginning of a qualitatively new phenomenon: the broad masses are conscious that the conditions of life and work are directly linked to the Zionist state's overall policy regarding the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The slogan "Money for the poor neighborhoods, not for the settlements" is no longer just used among the anti-Zionists. Tens of thousands of workers and residents of the shantytowns have also taken up that cry in recent months.

'Down with Begin!'

The pressure from the workers became so strong that the Histadrut decided to organize a mass demonstration against the government's policies on May 1, 1980. "To the surprise of everyone, including the Histadrut bureaucrats," Warshawsky reported, "nearly 150,000 workers mobilized on that day, in spite of a vicious right-wing Zionist campaign arguing that 'May Day is the holiday of the Russians and Arabs, the enemies of Israel.'"

Warshawsky continued: "For the workers who participated, it was a demonstration of strength against the Likud and in defense of their standard of living. In many of the contingents there were spontaneous slogans such as 'Down with Begin!' 'Bread and Jobs,' 'Money for Low-Cost Housing, not for Settlements,' and 'Horovitz, Resign.'"

Additional information on the May Day protest was contained in the September 1980 interview quoted earlier. It explained:

In Peace Now demonstrations there were sometimes as many as 70,000-80,000. But they were very homogeneous—middle-class youth, mainly of European origin.

The May Day demonstration was very different. These were working people, common people, probably the majority of whom were Oriental Jews rather than Europeans. They were young and old, women and men, from all over the country, each with a grievance against the government's austerity program. . . .

Another significant thing was the response to our leaflets and newspaper. The headline on our paper was against Begin's West Bank settlement policy. It wasn't on a narrow economic issue. But these people, most of whom had no previous exposure to radical newspapers, did not react with hostility. We were able to have good discussions. It gave us a real sense of the changes taking place in the country.

Further evidence on the attitude of the workers was provided by Israel Shahak of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights. He told *Intercontinental Press* in a November 1980 interview:

"You can get enormous support if you are against the government. Anything against Begin will go over well. You can also be against the settlers. The settlers are very unpopular on economic grounds. People feel that the money that should be spent on milk for our children, or on housing or education, goes for the settlers." (See *IP*, January 26, 1981, p. 53.)

War drive falls flat

Throughout this period the regime tried to blackmail the working class by counterposing their demands to the needs of the military. Finance Minister Horovitz replied to the demands of teachers by saying whatever they won would have to be taken from the army.

This gave rise to a public debate over the military budget. The teachers continued their struggle, and Defense Minister Ezer Weizman resigned on May 25, 1980, over the freezing of the military budget.

Finally, Horovitz himself resigned on January 11, after the government was forced to accept the recommendation of one of its own committees that it raise teacher salaries, by 30 to 60 percent. Horovitz's resignation compelled Begin to call early elections.

In explaining Begin's electoral victory, which was won by votes from the same workers who had been bitterly opposing the actions of his government for the past three years, capitalist commentators have drawn a picture of a population swept up by chauvinist war fever following the confrontation with Syrian forces in Lebanon in April and May and the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor on June 7.

But Begin's attempt to whip up war fever over Syrian missiles in Lebanon, and again in July with the savage bombing of Beirut, fell flat. Far from a population swept by chauvinism and eager to sacrifice everything in the fight, Begin was confronted by a series of strikes in the midst of the so-called missile crisis. There were strikes in mid-May by teachers, light and power workers, and communication workers.

An article by Yehuda Zur in the May 15 issue of the Israeli newspaper *Al Ha'mishmar* was significantly titled, "Two Worlds in Northern Israel." Zur went to Qiryat Shemona, a town of 15,000 people—mostly Sephardic Jews—near the border with Lebanon. One resident told him:

"They keep telling us that we live on the front line, and that we must not leave the town

because that would be desertion. The least they could do would be to build us shelters. I don't want to mention the unemployment here and the social problems, but at least they could give us minimal physical security."

Zur continued: "Only a few miles separate Qiryat Shemona from Metulah [an older agricultural settlement inhabited by Jews of Polish origin], but the difference is enormous. . . . Metulah has a tennis court, tourist centers, and beautiful houses."

The kibbutzim, which were all founded by the parties of the Labor Alignment, are the symbol of Zionist colonization. They provide the cadre for the elite units of the Israeli army, and are composed almost completely of Ashkenazi Jews.

"Nobody here would think of leaving," one resident of Metulah told Zur. Another declared: "The shelters are in excellent shape. In Metulah the shelters are built before the houses are, the first thought is the shelter. I don't know what they are complaining about in Qiryat Shemona."

Christian Science Monitor correspondent Abraham Rabinovich reported July 30 that on the eve of the election posters were put up in Qiryat Shemona "bitterly denouncing the neighboring kibbutzim. . . . The posters said the kibbutzim exploited Oriental Jews in kibbutz factories, which are the major source of employment in the area."

Begin tries again

After the election, Begin again attempted to provoke a war in Lebanon. There were nine days of heavy artillery exchanges along the northern border, but while Begin was facing toward Lebanon, the Israeli population was

moving in the other direction.

"Along the border region life virtually came to a halt," Rabinovich reported July 28. "Much of the population of Nahariya (35,000) and Qiryat Shemona (15,000) moved out for the duration to family or friends deeper inside the country. Factories, some of them with hundreds of employees, ceased operation."

Along with the international condemnation of the bombing of Beirut, the unwillingness of the Israeli population to sacrifice, its refusal to accept that it had any stake in holding fast in towns such as Qiryat Shemona, forced Begin to back down and agree to a ceasefire.

For the Israeli ruling class, the question of Lebanon means much more than an election ploy. The fact that Begin sought to revive the confrontation there *after* his election victory shows that.

The Israeli capitalists cannot solve their economic crisis within the country's existing borders. They need to expand, to conquer new markets, new sources of raw materials, new reservoirs of cheap labor. That is what they did in 1967 with the seizure of the West Bank, and that is what they seek to do in Lebanon.

This, at bottom, is what is behind the Zionist regime's determination to destroy the Palestinian liberation movement. The resistance of the Palestinians and its impact internationally is the main obstacle to the complete annexation of the West Bank by Israel and to further Zionist inroads in Lebanon.

It was the Labor government that initiated the de facto annexation of southern Lebanon following the 1975-76 civil war. Begin continued it with his invasion of Lebanon in March 1978, and his provocations since then. There is no evidence whatsoever of any basic

differences between Labor and Likud on this issue.

The same is true in regard to the West Bank. During the election campaign Labor emphasized the fact that most of the settlements there had been set up during its rule. Peres insisted, "The width of the country must be from the Jordan River to the sea"—that is, it must include the West Bank.

Nor is there any difference on economic policy, despite Begin's temporary retreat from the unpopular austerity measures that marked all but the last few months of his first term. Peres called for cuts in social programs and cuts in wage increases, just like those attempted by Ehrlich and Horovitz.

What the election showed

Thus, on the fundamental questions of war and peace and of economic policy, the workers correctly saw no difference between Labor and Likud. What they did see was the whole history of the Labor Party and the system of discrimination and class oppression associated with it.

Far from a rejection of "socialism" by fascist-minded elements, or the irrational response of a frustrated ethnic mob, the hatred for the Labor establishment that was expressed in the Israeli election revealed *a deep process of class polarization*.

This process was expressed in a distorted form because the workers have no mass party of their own. But big sections of the working class are beginning to break from passive confidence in the traditional Zionist leadership and are searching for a different solution. That is what has the liberals frightened. □

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The workers fight back

Interview with socialist trade unionist

[The following is an interview with Jonathan Silberman conducted in early August by *Intercontinental Press*.

[Silberman is a supporter of the British weekly *Socialist Challenge* and is active in the Amalgamated Union of Engineer Workers and the Labour Party in the Manchester area.]

* * *

Question. What are the lessons you have drawn from the fightback against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government over the past two years?

Answer. The first and chief lesson that must be drawn from the whole experience of the Thatcher government is that the working class remains undefeated. This is despite the ability of the Tories to rapidly jack up unemployment and despite their ability to make serious cut-backs in government expenditures, their plans to hive off sections of the nationalized industries, their wholesale offensive against the rights of Black people, women workers, and so on. There is a broad movement developing inside the working class against Thatcher's policies.

The high points have been the big, national strikes. There was the strike by steelworkers last year—which was the longest single strike since World War II, a fifteen-week dispute. Then there was the dispute this year—the struggle that erupted very rapidly by the miners against the threatened closure of fifty coal pits.

So, the working class remains strong despite setbacks. They are shaping up for a confrontation between the working class as a whole and the Tory government.

But while there is a developing polarization between the classes, you also have an uneven response by different sectors of workers, depending on tradition, levels of organization, the leadership in a particular industry, or whatever. This has led to a polarization not only between the working class and the ruling class, but also a polarization within the working class and within the organizations of the labor movement. This is the second chief lesson that we must draw from the last two years of the Tory government.

The traditional leadership of the labor movement, a leadership that has remained relatively intact since the post-war period, is now undergoing a huge shake-up.

Basically, the crisis is so deep that despite the fact that the workers' organization and combativity remains intact, in order to provide lasting gains for their partial struggles, workers are forced to look for solutions at the

level of politics.

For example, I work in a small machine shop. We have redundancy, permanent layoffs, there. Every worker understands that if hours were cut, then you would be able to have more people working. Every worker understands this. But it is impossible to pose that as a solution to the immediate problem of redundancies in the factory because the workers' response is that this factory is going bankrupt.

So automatically, workers, in looking for things like the shorter workweek—the thirty-five hour week—are forced to look at the possibility of a future Labour government implementing such a policy.

But you have a problem. And that is the experience with the last Labour administration under James Callaghan and Harold Wilson which actually introduced measures that prepared the way for some of the things Thatcher is doing now. They held down wages with the policy of the "social contract." They made dramatic cuts in social services. And unemployment increased very rapidly.

So there has been a questioning of the whole policy of the leadership of the Labour Party. Thatcher is seen as the source of all evil, but the more advanced workers do not want to replace Thatcher by just another Wilson-Callaghan-type administration. They want to replace Thatcher with an administration that is going to take steps to resolve the crisis in our interests.

As workers move into struggle, Thatcher is faced with two questions. Does she make concessions to the workers in struggle? Or does she remain intransigent?

Of course, if she makes concessions to the workers, that encourages the workers to struggle. But if she remains intransigent then that in itself—if she loses—can further fuel the political crisis.

We have seen that in two events. On the Irish events and the youth rebellions.

The fact is that Thatcher remained intransigent to the hunger strikers and to world opinion, which was opposed to the stand she took. "I am going to score a resounding victory against them," she said.

That just fueled the fire of the British crisis and led to a breakup of the traditional bipartisanship on the question of Ireland and Britain.

Another example would be the youth rebellion. Here Thatcher has remained absolutely intransigent about making any concessions to the unemployed youth. This has fueled fantastic discontent. It led to huge, mass mobilizations of the youth—unprecedented in scale, certainly in recent history.

Thatcher's response was to say, "No more

money, law and order, police repression." All that did was to further fuel the youth rebellions, and it will increase the tendency toward explosions in the future.

There is no way the Thatcher administration can get out of this dynamic toward a confrontation.

Q. The single thing that people around the world know best about the Thatcher government is the incredible increase in unemployment, with the figure now about 3 million unemployed. What has the labor movement been able to do around this?

A. The response of the traditional leadership of the working class has been completely lacking. The reality is that for many, many years now, it has been the official policy of the labor movement to fight for the thirty-five hour week. But it has only been the Post Office Engineering Union that has launched a serious political campaign of industrial action for the thirty-five-hour week. That was under the last Labour administration. They won the concession of the thirty-seven-and-a-half workweek.

In my own union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, there was a great deal of support for the fight for the thirty-five hour week. But the union bureaucrats said the action should be limited to a one-day-per-week strike action. Only after six or seven weeks was that pushed up to two days per week.

At that point where many workers were saying, "Look, we want to have an all-out strike for the thirty-five-hour week," the union leadership made a deal with the bosses which granted a thirty-nine hour week in November 1981. Tied to that was an agreement that there would be no further national negotiations on reduction of hours until 1984.

In Britain at the moment, every week 17 million hours of overtime is worked. If there was an elimination of overtime work, this would lead to some 400,000 jobs as a result.

Pressure from the ranks for a serious fightback against unemployment has led to the Labour Party calling a number of national demonstrations in various regions.

The first demonstration was in Liverpool last November. This was a very, very militant demonstration. It was called first in Liverpool because this is one of the towns where the effects of the Tories' measures have been really dramatic, including a wholesale closure of different branches of industry. Estimates vary from between 60,000 and 100,000 people. This was certainly the largest demonstration to occur outside of London since the war and perhaps for many years before that as well.

The second demonstration was held in Glasgow, Scotland, again called by the Labour Party. This march, in February, attracted some 50,000 to 60,000 people. The third demonstration was in Cardiff, Wales.

And the same day—September 19—as the big march in Washington, D.C., called by the U.S. labor movement, we have another demonstration planned for the Midlands town of Birmingham, which is a big center of the car industry. I think this is going to be a huge demonstration.

These demonstrations encouraged workers to struggle. It has provided a focus where all those who are actually in small struggles around the country can get together and campaign for support for their individual disputes. It acted as a focus for different sections of workers, such as women workers.

There has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of younger workers—and Black workers—on these marches. On the Liverpool march there was a contingent organized by the Labour Party Young Socialists of 10,000 youth fighting against youth unemployment.

Then, of course, there was the march called by the Liverpool Trades Council which got the backing of the regional Trades Union Congress in the northwest, southeast, and the Midlands. This was the March for Jobs from Liverpool to London.

The march included unemployed and employed workers who trekked the 250-mile journey from Liverpool to London, passing through a whole series of industrial centers—Manchester, the Midlands, and so on. This march was greeted with fantastic sympathy from local communities. People came out of their houses to applaud the marchers as they went through.

In each town, receptions were organized for the marchers by the local trade-union movement. One of the biggest of these was in Coventry, where something like 15,000 people

come out into the streets in mid-week to welcome the marchers.

When the marchers would come to a town, they would go around the factories. In Manchester, for example, they had a fantastic response as workers would actually come out of their factories to talk with them.

On the march there were a lot of younger workers. And there was something you don't normally get on labor demonstrations. You had "punks" marching alongside people who had been inside the trade unions for years and years.

One or two days of the march were turned over to marching for women's right to work. People came from various places to join the march on that day to put forth the particular demands of women. Some of the women on the march wore the colors of the suffragists—a sash of the suffragists—to emphasize the importance of this.

When the march reached London—west London—they were billeted by the local Indian Workers Association and given billets in the mosques.

What was crucial above all was the demonstration May 31 that marked the end of the march in London. This demonstration attracted somewhere in the region of 150,000 people.

From my own factory there were two coaches organized by the shop stewards committee. There were special trains organized from around the country. This was the biggest march since the one that took place in 1971 against the Heath government's Industrial Relations legislation.

In the unions there have also been some important local struggles in the fightback against unemployment.

Q. Could you describe some of these struggles?

A. The first one of these took place in a firm in Manchester called Gardeners, which pro-

duces diesel engines. This is the second largest engineering firm in Manchester—2,500 workers. The employers wanted to lay off a quarter of the workforce. The workers voted by about sixty to forty to occupy their factory against this attack.

They put forward a program that there should be no compulsory layoffs. If necessary, they said, the factory should be put on short-time working to save jobs.

Gardeners was a well-known factory in the Manchester labor movement. They had had an occupation in 1973, and they have a very strong factory organization.

In Britain, we have very powerful organizations within the plants called shop stewards committees. Every shop elects a shop steward. These shop stewards form a committee which meets regularly during work hours. These shop stewards committees elect out of their own ranks a convenor.

In most big factories, the convenor works full-time on union business, but remains paid by the management. This individual and these committees are not subject to any discipline by a business agent or anyone like that. They are able to engage in direct negotiations with the employer and can call action. The action they call, however, can only be made official by the union at a district or national level.

So, these organizations are very strong. And in Gardeners they had a very, very good communication between the shop stewards committee and the shop-floor workers. Their shop stewards committee meets every fortnight. Immediately after the shop stewards committee, the stewards will go back to their sections and organize report-back meetings—again during work hours—about the chief decisions of the committee.

This shop stewards committee had not limited itself, over the past period, to simply bread and butter issues in the workplace. For instance, when we had the developments in Brit-



"Pressure from the ranks for a serious fightback against unemployment has led to the Labour Party calling a number of national demonstrations in various regions."



Participants in 250-mile "March for Jobs" from Liverpool to London.

ish politics of the mass campaign against fascism, called the Anti-Nazi League, the Gardeners shop stewards committee went and stood outside their factory gate collecting and campaigning for the Anti-Nazi League. They sold badges for the Anti-Nazi League and distributed leaflets for the Anti-Nazi League to their own workers.

They were really identified with a political response. And all that paid off when it came to the layoff question.

Workers drew quite a lot of strength from the Gardeners experience. Since then, we have had a number of factory occupations against redundancies.

One of the more important was a firm in Scotland—the Vanity Fair corporation, which produces Lee Jeans. This is a firm overwhelmingly of young, women workers.

They moved into occupation against the decision of the Vanity Fair corporation to withdraw their whole British operation and transfer it to Ireland.

This was a very difficult struggle. It was in a section of industry that is not traditionally very well organized—garment. The trade union—the Tailor and Garment Workers—is a weak and right-wing union.

So this was quite indicative that something was taking place, not only amongst workers, but also amongst women workers who were prepared to fight. One of the very interesting things about this occupation is that the women

campaigning under an explicitly feminist slogan. They campaigned for a woman's right to work.

They toured up and down the country saying women had the right to work, too, and that is why you should support our occupation.

Just recently the national union of the Tailor and Garment Workers decided to withdraw the strike pay of these women. But, because of the movement, particularly in Scotland, in support of the women workers they were able to be paid something like thirty or forty pounds per week out of donations from other workers. And this is a firm of about 250 or 300 workers, so you can imagine the financial donations that they got.

Q. Were these donations primarily from other Scottish workers or from throughout Britain?

A. It was from throughout Britain. But, undoubtedly the overwhelming majority came from other Scottish workers. And in fact, there was so much support for them that the Scottish Trades Union Council took up their case and began to launch a solidarity campaign.

There have been a number of these disputes. One of the most interesting is a dispute that is taking place today at a Manchester firm called Laurence Scott. This is a firm of 650 workers. It is owned by Arthur Snipe.

Arthur Snipe and Mining Supplies took over

the Laurence Scott group in October of last year. When he took over he immediately placed the workers on short-time working in Manchester.

What he had in mind was to transfer the work to another plant in the southeast of England and to sell off the Manchester site, which is quite a valuable site.

What he did not bargain for was the attitude of the Manchester workers. They voted narrowly, about fifty-five to forty-five, to occupy their plant.

What was tremendous about this occupation from the beginning was the level of involvement of the strikers in the running of the occupation. The strike leadership estimated that of the 650 workers who voted to occupy at the time of closure, something like 600 were regularly involved in the occupation.

They also sent out teams of strikers all around the country to gain support for their dispute.

The longer this struggle has gone on, it has increasingly involved more and more strikers in active involvement in the occupation. The convenor models himself on the Solidarity workers in Poland. All through the dispute he has worn a "Solidarnosc" badge along with a Laurence Scott badge.

Q. How are these examples made known to other workers?

A. The first and most important thing is that solidarity is not organized by the union officialdom. This is a big problem. They declare the strikes official, in general, but they do not organize solidarity.

The second thing is that there has built up through many, many decades in Britain, a network of these shop stewards committees, in which the most implanted organization is the Communist Party. The Communist Party has in the past organized solidarity for workers in struggle.

But in these recent disputes that I have been talking about, with the possible exception of Lee Jeans, the Communist Party has not organized a solidarity campaign. In fact, it has been left up to the small forces around *Socialist Challenge* and the International Marxist Group, and the British Socialist Workers Party to organize solidarity. That is who really gets behind the thing.

The kind of solidarity activity that takes place is to send teams of workers to go to other workplaces around the country.

The solidarity activity within the Labour Party is at the moment very limited. For instance, on these unemployment demonstrations, those carrying out the occupations are never given a platform. It is significant, however, that all these occupations have received direct messages of support from Tony Benn. He has sent messages to each and every one.

There has also developed a current within the Labour Party around Benn, called the Labour Coordinating Committee. This is an organization of left-wing people within the Labour Party. They have as one of their policies, occupations to fight layoffs. They held a recent conference at which the Laurence Scott workers were given a platform to speak at.

Even there, this is from the activities of socialists, rather than from the activities of the labor leadership.

Q. It is clear that any fightback against the Thatcher government has to involve activities both of the trade unions and on a political level, by the Labour Party. Could you review some of the recent events in the Labour Party and how they are being discussed and being reflected in the trade union movement?

A. The single most important development that has taken place in the Labour Party since the election of the Tory government has been the whole rise of the challenge by the Labour left under the leadership of Tony Benn.

There have been two different things taking place within the Labour Party. The first is increased democracy and accountability. One issue was that MPs should be subject to a reselection conference, once in the life of every Parliament. That is, once you select somebody to stand as your member of Parliament and they stand and get elected, it does not mean they have got the seat for life. They have to re-submit their candidacy to the local party and the party has the right, as a matter of completely normal procedure, to put up alternative candidates.

Q. Before, once you got in, you were in forever?

A. In actual fact, you could be challenged. There was a provision under the rules for a reselection conference. But this was an exceptional case.

This move for the reselection of MPs was by the rank and file of the labor movement—reaching into Parliament, putting their hands in Parliament, saying they wanted some control.

The Labour Party has an interesting structure, which is completely undemocratic. You have a Labour Party conference itself, which is made up of delegates from the local constituency parties and delegates from the trade unions. But then you have the Parliamentary Labour Party which is not under the control at all of the Labour Party conference. In actual fact, it does not implement the decisions of the Labour Party conference.

The second part of this democracy thing was that the ranks wanted to change the way the leader of the Labour Party was elected. In the previous period, the leader and deputy leader were elected by the members of Parliament from amongst their own ranks.

What ended up at the conference that took place in January was the decision to have an electoral college to elect the leader of the Labour Party. This electoral college will be made up of 40 percent of the votes from the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party, and 30 percent of the votes to be cast by the Parliamentary Labour Party and 30 percent by the constituency parties, the local organizations.

This was vigorously fought by the Labour leadership. They did not anticipate that this would happen.

Q. Could you explain the structure of the Labour Party Conference?

A. The Labour Party Conference is made up of 6.5 million members, of which 6 million are affiliated by the trade unions. Some 350,000 represent the constituency organizations. So, it is clear that the unions always win out. The Parliamentary Labour Party has no representation. They are allowed to speak, but have no vote at the Labour Party Conference.

Q. Do the union representatives, by and large, represent a single point of view?

A. The unions vote is cast under what is called a bloc vote. The union delegation, let's say from a union like the Transport and General Workers Union which affiliates a million people to the Labour Party, will meet and consider the proposal, there will be a vote in the delegation (assuming the union has no policy on that question) and then no matter what the proportion of the vote cast in the delegation, the whole of those one million votes will go to whatever is the majority decision in the delegation. This is rather undemocratic and is itself being questioned as the fight for democracy goes deeper.

Q. Aside from the question of increased democracy, what other issues were raised at the conference?

A. There was a series of left wing policies adopted. The last Labour conference voted to fight for the thirty-five hour week, to fight against incomes policy, to fight for renationalization without compensation of all firms that are denationalized by the Tories, to argue for militant action to fight layoffs, for opposition to the Nationality Bill (the racist Tory immigration bill), for abolition of the House of Lords, for withdrawal from the Common Market, and for both unilateral and multilateral disarmament.

It has been a shift, both at the level of the democracy issue and at the level of policies.

These things now combine around a single question inside the Labour Party, which is: having established the right to elect the leaders of the Labour Party with at least a greater participation by the party as a whole, who should be the leader, who best represents the general trends inside the party?

There is a contest now taking place for deputy leader. That contest is between Tony Benn, who has been associated with the whole movement towards increased democracy and with a number of these left wing policies, and Denis Healey, who is associated very much with the policies of the last Labour administration.

A campaign has developed among the ranks of the labor movement which has consolidated around Benn. This led to a situation in which at almost every single major union conference of unions affiliated to the Labour Party—which means the industrial unions—the issue of the Labour leadership has been the chief issue that has been fought out between the left wing and the right wing inside the union.

This campaign was not just limited to the official structures of the union. For instance, we circulated a petition in the Manchester labor movement for support for Tony Benn, which went to the shop stewards organization. It got a fantastic response.

Shop stewards committees actually discussed out the issue. One of the biggest workplaces in Greater Manchester is the Shell complex. The shop stewards committee there overwhelmingly backed Tony Benn as a result of an initiative from socialists there.

Q. It appears that there is a move to the left in the ranks of the union movement, particularly the industrial unions, which lies behind the Benn phenomenon in the Labour Party. What role have the constituency parties played in this? And to what extent is the leftward move in the industrial unions moving the constituency parties to the left as well?

A. In answer to your second question, the constituency parties have, over the last period, been to the left of the unions in terms of vote at conference. For example, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party is elected in different components and Tony Benn wins more votes than anybody else from

the constituency section every single year. He gets approximately 500 constituencies voting for him, out of just over 600. He gets the biggest votes of anybody and has done so for many, many years—ever since 1973.

Secondly, there has been a move into the constituencies. There has been a radicalization which has led to the growth of the constituencies. Eighty thousand individual members have joined the Labour Party over the last year.

Q. What size is the party—the constituency party?

A. Formally, I think it is 650,000. But in actual fact it is around 400,000—individual members. The smallest number of people you can formally have in a constituency is 1,000. But, of course some constituencies only have about 200. So, 80,000 out of 400,000 have just joined in the last year.

Within the industrial unions, what is happening is that the rank and file leadership, who are moving to fight back against Thatcher and for removal of the Thatcher government, are forced, because of the depth of the crisis, to seek political solutions.

The whole development of the Benn thing inside the Labour Party has given them a political focus for their struggle, they have a possible alternative to Thatcher. That is what is happening.

It is those people who are organizing the struggle around Benn inside the industrial unions. So, there is a definite shift to the left amongst the traditional rank-and-file leadership of the working class. I think that is absolutely the case.

This, incidentally, has taken the form not only at the level of ideas in the heads of individuals ("yesterday I thought one thing and today I think something else"). This also takes place in the actual change in personnel of shop stewards and shop stewards organizations.

For instance, in my factory we had three convenors in two months. And the previous convenor was there for eleven years. She retired. Then another one was elected, and he retired within two months. And then they had another one. And that is not exceptional. There is a real process of changing of personnel because the political stakes in the crisis are so big.

With the developments in the Labour Party, these things come together—the development to the left inside the Labour Party and this change. It gives a political focus to it.

They both reinforce one another.

And the more the Labour Party moves to the left, the more people feel they have a political alternative to the Tory government.

Of course, the possibility for building a consistent, class-struggle socialist current within this process is very, very big—bigger than it has ever been.

It means, for instance, that a socialist inside the industrial unions—whose socialist ideas are no longer somehow counterposed to the development of the factory struggle or the struggle against the Thatcher government—is

now very much a part of that process of flux and recomposition among the traditional rank-and-file leadership of the working class.

Q. The press portrays the Labour Party as in shambles. But 80,000 in one year is an increase in size by a third. They portray the Labour Party as getting weaker with blood-letting and in-fighting. But recent facts like the local council elections and the growth in membership seem to point to the party being rejuvenated through this struggle. Does this mean that the working class as a whole is shifting to the left?

A. No, I think it is very important that we qualify that. The reality is that there is a continuing mass base for people like Healey. Simultaneously, we have had the development of the Social Democratic Party.

Why is it that the working class has not as a whole moved behind Benn?

I think the first reason for that is that Benn himself has not come out with a clear program that is capable of uniting the working class in struggle against the Tories.

For instance, if you ask workers in the factories what Benn stands for, they will often come out with a series of caricatures of his positions. They will say that he is a radical, without knowing clearly the series of measures that are identified with the left wing of the Labour Party.

So there is not a clear alternative that is understood by the mass of the working class. It is only its more advanced sections that understand some of these things.

The second thing is that Benn himself has not campaigned for mass action to bring down the Tory government now. He has not publicly campaigned around the need to get the Tories out before 1984, when the general election must be held by.

That is a problem. Because it is opposition to the Tories that is the biggest thing in fueling the whole left-wing developments inside the Labour Party.

Q. The movement against U.S.-controlled NATO missiles has become an important political issue in several Western European countries and a major problem for Reagan's war drive. In the past several years, Britain has seen some truly massive anti-missile demonstrations. What is the current state of the anti-nuclear-missile movement in Britain?

A. On October 24 of this year we will see the biggest demonstration against nuclear weapons. This demonstration is being called by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which is a national coalition committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. This demonstration will almost certainly be backed by the Labour Party and will be a huge demonstration.

All public opinion polls agree that there is a



April 6 antinuclear demonstration in London. "The single most numerous number of resolutions at this year's Labour Party conference are resolutions on disarmament."

majority of people inside Britain who are opposed to nuclear weapons and, therefore, obviously opposed to the policy of Thatcher, which is to accept 162 Cruise missiles in Britain and to re-equip nuclear submarines by taking on Trident as opposed to Polaris missiles.

The overwhelming majority of trade union conferences over the summer have seen debates on the question of nuclear weapons. This general feeling amongst the masses is being reflected by the fact that, as far as I am aware, the major industrial unions have come out with a position of unilateral nuclear disarmament. This will undoubtedly be the policy that is taken by the Labour Party at this year's conference.

The single most numerous number of resolutions at this year's Labour Party conference are resolutions on disarmament.

So it is really developing inside the labor movement and I think we are going to see an increased participation by labor on the October 24 demonstration, something relatively absent from some past demonstrations.

The development of the missiles movement has also reflected something else, which is the youth radicalization that is taking place. In fact, in the main, it has been youth who have dominated the whole campaign for nuclear disarmament.

There have been demonstrations not only of a national character, but also on a local level. There have been carnivals all around the country. There has been a mushrooming of all sorts of activity. This also combines with the popular music culture where you have anti-nuclear-weapons pop groups who play free at concerts.

Q. The new upsurge in Northern Ireland and the heroic hunger strikes of the republican prisoners in the H-Blocks have focused the eyes of the world on the repressive policies of the British government. How has this been viewed by British workers and their organizations? What has been the activity of the Irish solidarity movement in Britain?

A. I think that here we have a very contradictory situation. Around the world Thatcher's policies on Ireland have been criticized. Within the British labor movement, Thatcher's policies directly in relation to the hunger strikers has not met with big hostility.

In general, the feeling among many British workers is that the hunger strikers and political prisoners are terrorists and should not be supported. That is the feeling among the majority of workers in Britain.

But this is only one side of the story. The other side is something that is far more deep-seated and potentially far more explosive. And that is that, whilst not backing the hunger strikers, the majority of workers in Britain feel that the whole hunger strike episode confirms one basic fact: that the British government does not have a solution to the Irish question.

In fact, I think it even goes deeper than that. That there is not the possibility of a British solution to the Irish question.

No matter how intransigent Thatcher is in relation to hunger strikers, all this appears to do is to increase the Irish crisis. And that becomes part of the consciousness of British workers. A recent poll indicated some of the results of that. It was estimated that 67 percent of British workers are opposed to the presence of British troops in Ireland. And that in turn has characterized the type of response that we have seen to the whole hunger strike crisis, which is that we have not seen the explosion of mass demonstrations in Britain.

One of the reasons for this has been the absolutely despicable position taken by the leadership of the Labour Party. Michael Foot immediately went on television to say how he gave full and absolutely unconditional backing to the policies of Thatcher in relationship to the hunger strikes.

You have the despicable Concannon affair when the Labour spokesperson on Ireland, Don Concannon, went all the way to the H-Blocks to inform the hunger strikers that they would get no backing whatsoever from the Labour Party or from the labor leadership. This was when they were on their deathbed.

But, there is big feeling against Thatcher's policies in keeping the troops in Ireland. This combines with the general feeling of the working class to be against the Thatcher government anyway. So it is very difficult to agree with anything the Thatcher government does. This has led to big pressure within the organized workers movement and to the possibility and the breakup of bipartisanship.

Bipartisanship still exists from a formal point of view. That is, that Labour and Tory do not use the Irish question as an issue in elections or as an issue for particular gain.

Just recently there was a debate in the House of Commons about Ireland and on the eve of this debate, Tony Benn announced that he was in favor of British withdrawal from Ireland. He combined this with a proposal that there should be United Nations troops in Ireland.

But this second aspect is not really listened to by workers. What they listen to is the fact that here is a politician who is arguing that Britain should withdraw from Ireland.

Within the Labour Party itself, we have seen something very interesting. The most numerous number of motions, as I explained before, at the Labour Party conference this year is on nuclear disarmament. But the second highest number of motions is on the Irish question. And this is quite unprecedented. In fact, for many years, Ireland would not even come onto the floor of Labour Party conferences. This year it has fifty-three motions from constituency organizations. Forty-three of these are troops-out motions.

This stands in good stead for the future. The fact that there has not been a mass response to the hunger strikers should not lead us to believe that all is well in relation to British imperialism's policy in Ireland inside the British working class.

The tendency is clear. The tendency is for increased opposition to British presence in the

Six Counties and to increasing opposition to any attempt to continue to impose a British solution on the Irish question.

Q. You talked about the consciousness of the workers on this question and about how contradictory it is. On your job, for example, or other socialists' experiences on the job, what is the effect on the consciousness of workers of the almost unanimous outcry of world opinion in solidarity with the hunger strikers. Has this affected their consciousness? Does it break through this terrorism catchword? Also, the explosion of sentiment among the Irish people—how do workers try to reconcile in their heads the rather obvious overwhelming support of the people of Ireland, especially the Catholics of Northern Ireland, for the hunger strikers?

A. I think the answer to your first question about the outcry of world opinion is quite simple. The British workers do not know that world opinion has engaged in such an outcry. It is not printed in the media. It is not put on television. So there is no way they can know it unless they read *Socialist Challenge*.

In fact, the whole media coverage of Ireland is very important. At the beginning of the hunger strike the media coverage of Ireland was quite significant. For the first time, British media broke the wall of silence on Ireland. In general, there is not a lot inside the British papers or on British television about Ireland.

At the beginning of the hunger strike this was different. There is no doubt that one of the things that accounted for this difference was the fact of Bobby Sands's election. As you said, there is no way that you can say that the IRA has no support when this hunger striker stands and gets elected.

I think this has undoubtedly given rise to the idea that there is no British solution. That is, despite the fact that British troops have been in Ireland for the past twelve years, despite all the different initiatives that have taken place, despite the repression, despite the concessions, despite the demagoguery, despite the press silence, despite every single thing they have done, the fact of the matter is that this person who is opposed to the British government still gets elected. There is still mass support from the people.

Q. Is it possible to talk on the job and be identified as a partisan of the Irish struggle and able to get in good discussions?

A. Yes, this has absolutely changed. There are two things worth pointing out here. First is the fact that within the Black community there is support for the Irish struggle, particularly in the West Indian community.

Secondly, among the youth there is a difference. There might not be complete identification with the Irish struggle, but you know that when they go out slinging petrol bombs and other people are slinging petrol bombs and they seem to be slinging petrol bombs against the same people, then you know . . . □

Air controllers stand firm

As Reagan continues drive to crush union

By Stu Singer

The strike by 12,000 air controllers in the United States and Puerto Rico that began August 3 remains solid in face of the biggest anti-union drive by the American ruling class since World War II.

Since the strike began there have been almost no defections from the ranks of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO), a union affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

President Reagan's attack against this union has the aim of totally destroying it and giving a lesson to the entire labor movement. The union-busting example would have international ramifications. The British big business mouthpiece *The Economist* led off its August 15 issue with unstinting praise and admiration for Reagan's brutal stand: "The president has set an example to timid governments around the world on how to deal with small groups of industrially muscular workers who make outrageous demands."

A survey published by the *New York Times* August 16 indicates that the demands of the controllers are not outrageous at all. Air controllers in the United States have the longest workweek and the fewest number of sick days and vacation days per year of any air controllers in the advanced capitalist countries.

Reagan himself had acknowledged the justice of the controllers' demands last October. In a letter to PATCO President Robert Poli dated October 20, Reagan wrote that "too few people working unreasonable hours with obsolete equipment has placed the nation's air travellers in unwarranted danger. In an area so closely related to public safety the Carter administration has failed to act responsibly." Reagan won the backing of the union in his campaign for president.

The Coalition of Flight Attendants bought a full page advertisement in the *New York Times* August 16 and reprinted this letter in an act of solidarity with the air controllers' strike.

The strikers have all been fired. The first steps have been taken to have PATCO decertified as a union. Every weapon of the federal government has been brought into the fight to crush these workers. They are being denied food stamps and unemployment benefits. The government is refusing them extensions on mortgage payments on their homes.

Indictments against strike leaders are being brought by federal grand juries in several localities for the "crime" of going on strike against the government.

In the northwest, the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) issued subpoenas last week for all the newspaper and television film and videotape that was taken of strikers to use in court to identify the strikers. Executing such

an order would have been a major infringement of freedom of the press. The FAA backed down and rescinded the order the next day, seeking to avoid a conflict with the news media, which has played a big role in the propaganda attacks against the strikers.

Air safety is steadily deteriorating as the scab-operated system comes under more strain. Even the big-business press, which has applauded the firings, is cautioning that Reagan should limit flights even more. The scabs are working long hours of compulsory overtime, operating more equipment and handling more flights and bigger geographic areas than flight controllers normally handle.



Steven Wallaert, president of PATCO Local 291 in Norfolk and Newport News, Virginia, being led away to jail in chains.

Many of the scabs were medically and technically incompetent. Controllers who were on medical leave for alcoholism and nervous breakdowns were among those called back. The strikers report it takes from five to ten years to become skilled enough to handle air traffic in the busier control towers and radar centers. The military controllers brought in have no experience in the job.

Air controllers from more than thirty countries met in Amsterdam August 22 and 23 to discuss support for the strikers. They released documents listing thirteen incidents of near misses in American air space, the names of medically unqualified controllers called back to work, and a list of thirty-four air incidents compiled by Canadian controllers. They also released internal documents from the Air Line Pilots Association revealing greater concern among U.S. pilots for air safety than the pilots' group has officially admitted.

The international body repeated its demand that the Reagan administration negotiate with the controllers. They indicated that some sort of actions are planned if no negotiations take place.

British lawyer Richard Weston, an adviser to the group, said: "There is a widespread sentiment that if the Reagan Administration comes out on top, it will be open season for controllers."

Reagan's secretary of transportation, Drew Lewis, responded that he would be willing to meet with representatives of the international group to discuss air safety, but not to negotiate.

There is support for the air controllers from throughout the American labor movement, with union sponsored rallies at airports throughout the country. But the support does not include a call from the AFL-CIO or any of the airport unions to respect the PATCO picket lines.

The employers are retaliating against the strike by forcing airline workers to pay its cost. Thousands have been laid off and almost every company has demanded the remaining airline workers accept pay cuts and speed-up schemes.

The massive layoffs are being used to cover up support to the air controllers from pilots and other workers.

The president of the pilots' union, a Reagan backer, has disputed claims by other pilots that flying is unsafe. But some pilots have walked on picket lines and spoken at rallies for the controllers. Other pilots have told the strikers that they were threatened with being fired for stating publicly that flying is dangerous.

There have been many crashes of small, private planes and a large number of near misses involving commercial flights. When these have been reported, the government blamed them all on pilot error. Many incidents are not reported in the news media until they are leaked by controllers who monitor flight communications by radio or get the word from sympathetic pilots or other airport workers. □