

Fourteen per cent vote for French fascist

In the first round of France's presidential election, on 24 April, the fascist candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen won 14.5% of the vote, while the once-mighty French Communist Party got only 7%. An expelled ex-CP leader, Pierre Juquin, got 2%, and the Trotskyist Arlette Laguiller also got 2%.

From the '40s through to the '70s, the CP consistently got about 20% of the vote. The first stage in its decline came with an apparent triumph, the formation of a Union of the Left with the Socialist Party in 1972. For the CP leaders this opened up the possibility of ministerial positions utterly denied to them since they were ejected from the government in 1947 — and in 1981 the CP duly gained four places in the Socialist-led government. But the great gainer from the Union of the Left has been the Socialist Party. From having 5% of the vote in the presidential election of 1969, it has risen to become France's alternative government.

In April 1981 the CP still got 15% in the first round of the presidential election. The National Front, together with other far-right groups, totalled only 0.35% of the vote in the National Assembly elections of June 1981; Le Pen personally got only 4% in his constituency.

The dramatic rise of the National Front began in 1983. After a couple of years of attempts at reform and at an expansionist economic policy, the Socialist-led government was changing course under pressure of a ballooning foreign debt and high inflation. In June 1982 it announced a first 'austerity plan', in March 1983 a second.

In September 1983 the National Front won 17% of the vote for the town council of Dreux. Elections in France are held in two rounds, with the less successful candidates eliminated for the second round. The NF established a formal alliance with the mainstream right-wing parties for the second round, and won.

In June 1984 the NF far outstripped its success in Dreux by winning 11% across the whole of France in the EEC elections. In 1986's National Assembly elections it fell back slightly to 10%. Since 1986 France has been governed by 'cohabitation' of a Socialist Party president (Mitterrand) and a right-wing government (led by Jacques Chirac); this sort of consensus politics, with continuing high unemployment, has enabled the National Front to remain attractive for many angry, dissatisfied, and bewildered people.

The NF's 14.5% on 24 April is easily the highest vote for a fascist party in

Western Europe since World War 2. The MSI in Italy gets about 7%; an earlier far-right movement in France, the Poujadists, less clearly fascist than the NF, peaked at 11.5% in 1956.

The NF's high score this year is doubly alarming because it has made its true fascist colours very plain. Last autumn Le Pen declared that the Nazis' mass murder of six million Jews was a matter of debate, and anyway "a detail in the history of the Second World War". He has done little to wipe away the taint of Nazism. On 6 April he declared: "The blame for the unleashing and the inexorable development of the Second World War must be shared... There were misdeeds not only on the side of the Germans and their allies".

Le Pen has a long record in fascist politics, going back to the early 1950s. So have many of his associates in the National Front. Not all the 14.5% who voted for Le Pen are convinced fascists, of course. But by now — and especially after Le Pen's wife fell out with him last year and denounced him very publicly — none can be unaware that Le Pen is a fascist. In October last year the NF's support had fallen to 7%; but now it has regained its former strength, and more.

Le Pen's programme, though tailored for electoral respectability, is clear:

- More legislation by referendum rather than by parliament;
- Immediate referendums on re-introduction of the death penalty and a new, more restrictive, nationality law;
- Limit the right to strike in the public sector and abolish the trade unions' legal monopoly over candidates for workplace delegates (shop stewards — at present elected by all workers, union and non-union, from lists put forward by the various unions);
- Separate social security funds for French citizens and for immigrants, and child benefit only for French citizens;
- Reduce state spending and taxes;
- Send immigrants back to their countries of origin.

The campaign against immigrants is the core of Le Pen's platform. Its appeal is the equation "2.5 million unemployed equals 2.5 million immigrants".

The Communist Party's vote has crashed while the National Front's has risen. Some people have argued that the NF's votes have come mainly from disillusioned CPers, and draw conclusions about the supposed closeness of extreme left and extreme right. But it is not true.

An analysis of National Front voters in 1984 showed that only one per cent of them had come over from voting CP in 1981. 54% had voted for one of the mainstream right-wing candidates in the

first round of the 1981 presidential election, 24% for the Socialist candidate, Mitterrand, 2% for the Green candidate, and 19% had abstained or been too young to vote. The National Front's electorate does include a significant number of former supporters of the Left, but they come almost entirely from the ranks of Socialist voters rather than from the more strongly class-conscious CP electorate.

No analysis of the political origins of the 14% who voted for Le Pen on 24 April is yet available. The figures of Le Pen's vote in different social classes, however, confirm the picture of a classically fascist electorate.

31% of shopkeepers and self-employed tradesmen voted National Front, 24% of all self-employed people, and 21% of professionals (lawyers, doctors, and so on). 19% of unemployed people voted National Front.

NF support was lowest among workers in health, education, and other social services, at 6%. Le Pen got an alarmingly high score among other manual workers, at 16%; it seems that the major part of this score came from manual workers who would previously have voted for the mainstream right, since manual workers voted 70% for the left and only 30% for the right. The once-strong Gaullist working-class vote collapsed. Le Pen got more manual worker votes than Chirac and Barre put together.

Between 1984 and 1986 the National Front electorate shrank slightly and became lower-class. Le Pen lost a chunk of his better-off supporters. The figures indicate that between 1986 and 1988 the NF has won back those supporters, and more, among the better-off, while also advancing less markedly in the working class.

Most of the NF's voters, then, are people who might otherwise have voted for the mainstream right-wing parties or maybe, if disillusioned, for the Socialist Party. The change in voting patterns in France seems to be *primarily* a general shift to the right since 1981: CP voters have moved to the Socialist Party or started abstaining, the SP has lost voters to the right while gaining from the CP, and the right wing has lost to the NF.

But the policies and actions of the Left have contributed a lot to the rise of the NF. The fiasco of the CP-SP government's attempt to patch up capitalism after 1981, and the collapse of its promises to cure unemployment, left many people frustrated and willing to look for scapegoats. The CP's combination of complicity in that futile attempt to manage capitalism with continuing adherence to a Stalinist model of socialism has caused terrible demoralisa-

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Photo Ian Swindale

tion among its supporters — who once formed a solid battalion of intense if limited class-consciousness. Recent opinion polls have shown that even the remaining rump of CP voters now have little faith in the USSR or what the CP presents to them as Marxism. Although organised, class-conscious workers have not gone over to the NF, thousands of young people must have been seduced by the NF's racism who could otherwise have been won over to the Left.

The Socialist Party has supported a broad and active campaign against the NF, called SOS-Racisme; while the CP shuns joint campaigning, there is no reason to doubt the dedication and courage with which CP activists, too, fight the racists. Yet anti-racism alone is a feeble weapon against the demagogic appeal of the NF to desperate people; it needs to be coupled with an economic programme, and also with a more solid ideological basis than the CP or SP can provide.

For the National Front's line, "French people first", strikes at a weak underbelly of the politics of the French left parties. Both the CP and the SP are deeply nationalistic. The French national flag and the French national anthem are routinely used by the SP and the CP for their own marches and rallies. Both the SP and the CP support France's 'independent' nuclear arsenal; both support a ban on any further immigration; both reneged on a promise to give immigrants the right to vote after 1981. In

December 1980 a CP mayor led an attack with a bulldozer on a hostel for African immigrant workers in his municipality, complaining that the municipality had 'too many' immigrants and they should be sent to right-wing municipalities instead.

Anti-racism does not go very far unless it is linked to internationalism and socialism: that is the lesson from France.

Martin Thomas

A new militancy?

The recent upsurge in industrial struggle — most obviously in the NHS, the motor industry and in the Channel ferries has given the lie to fashionable ideas about the organised working class being either bought off or permanently cowed by Thatcherism. The new mood of militancy and confidence which has emerged amongst union members is due at least in part to the Tories own overblown claims of economic revival and falling unemployment.

The Ford dispute was a watershed. Although many Ford strikers considered the final settlement a sell-out, it was undoubtedly seen by most workers as a

significant victory — proof that determined industrial action can still deliver the goods.

Socialists of course welcome the new militancy without hesitation. Rank and file struggle at the point of production is the fundamental driving force behind any socialist strategy worthy of the name. But our enthusiasm should not blind us to the very real problems and weaknesses that exist at every level within the unions.

The apparent ease with which the Ford strikers were able to extract major concessions from the employers misled many trades unionists. At Land Rover for instance, the majority of the shop stewards committee were completely unprepared for the aggressive tactics adopted by management. It had been 6 years since the last strike at the Solihull plant and elementary activities like calling mass meetings and sending out delegations to other plants and the docks were neglected.

The ABCs of effective strike organisation are having to be relearnt by a generation of trades unionists, for whom industrial action is a strange new experience.

But after the bosses and their Tory-run state, the biggest problem for all strikers is still the union leaders. The Ford strike was held back throughout by the 'left wing' TGWU leadership, as well as by the 'new realists' of the AEU. In the NHS, NUPE has bent over backwards to limit action to token

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gestures aimed at retaining public goodwill — even to the extent of effectively sabotaging CoHSE's call for a day of action on 14th March.

Sam MacCluskie's desperate efforts to keep the NUS within the law prevented him from putting out the clear call for national strike action that was obviously required, not just to defeat P&O but to ensure the survival of the union itself as an effective force.

As yet the rank and file does not generally have the confidence to by-pass and defy the officials in the way workers quite frequently did in the early to mid 70s. Groups of workers will push to the limit of what has been officially sanctioned, but entirely unofficial initiatives remain exceptional.

And the 'new mood' is not evenly spread across the whole class. In the public sector workers are still in retreat while local authorities — often Labour controlled — slash jobs and undermine conditions with the connivance of the NUPE leadership.

Crucially, there is no effective national organisation for militants in the unions to relate to. This is the direct responsibility of the left. The SWP turned its back on serious industrial work in the late 70s, and wound up its 'national rank and file movement'. The virtual collapse and disintegration of the Communist Party has been paralleled by the decline into insignificance of the once powerful Liaison Committee in Defence of Trade Unions. The Broad Left Organising Committee remains little more than a front for the Militant Tendency, calling the occasional rally but organising no effective intervention on the ground.

But meanwhile the bosses are also becoming more militant. Recent months have seen a series of carefully premeditated management offensives, making full use of the courts. P&O's aggressive tactics at Dover come hard on the heels of union-busting moves at TV-AM and a spate of victimisations of workers involved in solidarity with the NHS.

The anti-union laws, used only sparingly for some time after they were first introduced in 1982, are now brought into play as a matter of course to prevent 'secondary' action. When the NUS balloted its members for a national strike in March, the courts declared even the ballot illegal, and the completed papers lie to this day, uncounted, in vaults of the union's bank! Sam MacCluskie's ducking and diving could not prevent the inevitable showdown with P&O and the courts, but it certainly demoralised and confused the NUS membership.

If we had a union leadership worthy of the name, action up to and including a general strike would now be under discussion at Congress House. But the TUC failed the miners and the print workers; there is no reason to believe that it will respond any more effectively on behalf of seafarers.

Which brings us back to the need for a rank and file movement, of trades unionists willing — where necessary — to bypass the official leaders in action and to challenge them politically.

Jim Denham

After the crash

Wall Street hopes that it has now put last October's Great Crash well behind it. Industrial production in the US is still rising at a rapid six per cent per year; shop's tills are still ringing merrily; the slide in the value of the dollar stopped at the end of 1987, and since then the ups have more or less balanced the downs; share prices have revived a bit; and there is even a new rush of speculative takeovers.

The story is similar in the other big capitalist economies. West Germany's economy is slower than others, but far from slumping. Nigel Lawson could wear a self-satisfied smirk when he presented his Budget. Japan is positively booming, and the Tokyo stock market has recovered all it lost last October.

Yet the capitalists' rejoicing is still nervous and cautious and for good reason. A substantial delay between the stock market crash and an industrial slump was always to be expected. In 1973-4 industrial production did not turn downwards until ten months after the stock market; in 1968-9, the delay was 12 months. The slump of the 1930s gathered momentum only in 1930-31, well after the 1929 stock market crash.

Behind last October's crash lay the basic problem of the US's position in the international capitalist economy, and its relation to the dollar's position in international trade and finance. That basic problem has not been solved at all. The US trade deficit — its excess of imports and exports — has narrowed slightly, but on present trends it will still be well

over \$100 billion a year for the foreseeable future. That is not possible. Japanese, British, Dutch and other foreign capitalists will not and cannot pour investments into the US fast enough to allow the US to spend that much more than it produces.

Present trends show the US economy needing impossible amounts of foreign capital to keep its balance; therefore 'present trends' must change. They can change in either of two ways. The US can go into a recession, with companies investing less and households spending less. That will reduce imports. It is the sort of 'cure' that countries like Mexico and Brazil have gone through because the flow of international bank loans to them stopped and they had to use the dollars they would otherwise have spent on imports on paying interest to the banks.

If the US continues to increase its investment and spending at current rates, then the 'trends' will change another way. Sooner or later there will be a drastic crash in the value of the dollar. International capitalists will get to the point that they dare not hold their wealth in dollars any more, however high US interest rates are. Such a crash in the dollar will bring a recession in the US, but also, quite possibly much worse: it could wreck the entire system of international trade and finance, which is still based on the dollar being the one sort of money that everyone in the world will accept.

The dilemma is made worse by the fact that a lot of people in the US do not want foreign investment anyway. As Japanese, British and Dutch capitalists increase their stake in US industry, they are meeting the same sort of nationalist and populist backlash that English bankers suffered in the US in the 19th century, and Yankee multinationals throughout the world after 1945. A book entitled 'Buying into America' is in the best-seller lists. An opinion poll showed 40% of Americans want a complete ban on any further foreign investment. Among those who want foreign investment limited is Felix Rohatyn, who could become Secretary of the Treasury if the Democrats win the Presidential election in November.

The Democrats' strongest advocate of import controls, Richard Gephardt, is out of the running for the Presidency. But the trade bill now before Congress encodes a danger of future import controls. It would transfer a large part of trade policy from the President to Congress, and thus make it much more vulnerable to demands from hard-hit industries for protection.

The spiralling collapse of world trade which happened in the 1930s could yet be repeated. And, paradoxically, every month that the US economy continues looking relatively upbeat probably increases the chance of disaster. We may yet have Nigel Lawson's smirk wiped off his face.

Colin Foster



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Photo Paul Herrman

Anti-Gay bigots rampage

"The thugs are going berserk" warned the headline of a recent issue of London's *Capital Gay*.

It wasn't a reference to the antics of bigoted Tories in the House of Commons, but an accurate description of the anti-gay attacks that have engulfed the community since Clause 28 was introduced.

As we always feared, Clause 28, which seeks to prevent local authorities and schools from promoting homosexuality as a valid alternative, has provided a justification for 'queer bashing' — an 'open season' on gays.

Recent incidents form a catalogue of violence made more sinister by the mainstream media's failure to report them.

* Several rounds of bullets were fired from a revolver into a well-known, packed, London gay bar. Luckily no-one was killed.

* Men armed with shotguns raided and robbed the Fallen Angel in Islington, forcing terrified customers onto the floor.

* A bomb was discovered in Leeds, planted outside the venue of a 'Stop the Clause' benefit. Had it gone off it would have killed many.

* A community centre in Milton Keynes due to hold a 'Stop the Clause' meeting was fire-bombed and individuals threatened.

* The offices of 'Capital Gay' were fire bombed and destroyed.

* Two gay actors from the Sweatshop Theatre company were attacked following a performance in Croydon.

* A large gang of thugs attacked the queue at Heaven, London's top gay disco, leaving one man bleeding from stab wounds and others badly bruised.

* A gang of over 30 queer-bashers threw bottles and bricks at the entrance of the Vauxhall Tavern. Luckily, the doorman had seen them coming and bolted the customers in.

* Thugs raided a gay pub in Deptford knifing a man in the process.

In almost all of these incidents the thugs abused their victims, calling them 'queer' or 'poofstahs'.

While these physical attacks go unreported the 'legitimate' legal attacks gather pace.

Two teenage boys were charged and found guilty of public order offences — their crime, kissing each other in the street. This is not the first time that the section of the 1986 Public Order Act designed to combat football hooliganism has been used against affectionate gay couples.

More recently a 'Stop the Clause' meeting was banned from public premises in Wolverhampton. The Council did not want to appear to promote homosexuality and risk breaking the new law. The Advice Bureau, Law Centre and Student Union also refused to offer premises in anticipation of the same.

The Government has claimed that it does not intend for homosexuals to be discriminated against or attacked in any way, but that appears to have been the result.

Some Tories, however, are more blatant. Lord Caithness has said that the Clause was aimed at dealing with, "the whole gamut of homosexuality, homosexual acts, homosexual relationships, even the abstract concept... in short every aspect of the way homosexuality manifests itself."

His colleague Nicholas Fairbairn MP has claimed that gay people are suffering from "psycho-pathological disorders"

and that our sexuality is a "psychological perversion".

The Tory leader in Wolverhampton has called for "medical treatment" of homosexuals and Rhodes Boyson MP peddles the old AIDS scare, claiming social acceptance of homosexuality would mean "death in one generation".

In a recent television debate he argued that "If we could wipe out homosexual practices, or if they (gays) withdraw totally from homosexual practices, then it (AIDS) would die out".

The lesbian and gay community has responded to these attacks in a determined way.

Each time we organise a show of strength, the numbers get bigger — 12,000 in London; 20,000 in Manchester in February; and upwards of 35,000 in London in April. The first ever Scottish lesbian and gay mass demonstration is planned for the end of May.

Campaigns have sprung up all over the country, involving many gay and 'straight' people who have never been active in politics before.

Because of the vague wording of Section 28, the real crunch will come when individuals, no doubt backed by right-wing money, take certain local authorities to court for not implementing the section.

Already many Labour Councils have pledged total opposition to the section and are prepared to fight anyone in the courts. Haringey council recently defeated right wing Tory calls for the section to be immediately implemented, with a surprising number of Tory councillors voting against their own right wing. It seems that even some Tories think the Clause is being abused by the rabid homophobes.

In principle many Labour Councils are in favour of non-implementation, but a negative result in the first court case could make them think again.

It is essential that Councils are monitored and pressurised into sticking to non-implementation. Local government workers and teachers who are directly affected by the section should be given full backing by their unions. Last month a Bradford teacher was removed from his position for 'coming out' to his pupils. It was only after members of the local NUT branch threatened strike action that he was hurriedly reinstated.

In the longer term the lesbian and gay movement must try and gain the initiative. Not only should we fight for the repeal and non-implementation of the section, we should also fight for equality before the law. We must call for the formal protection of our basic human rights, essentially to live and love as we please without fear of persecution.

Socialists and trade unionists should not see this as a gay issue which they support but do not involve themselves in. The campaigns are open to heterosexuals as well as gays, and anyway, this is an issue of human rights and thus affects us all.

David Mathews

Solidarnosc revives

In his May Day speech Jaruzelski issued a warning. He said the government would not allow a return to the chaos and anarchy of 1980-1.

On 1 May the police used great brutality in dispersing the independent May Day demonstration. They went further than they have gone before. In Gdansk the police went into a church to try to get some Solidarnosc supporters. They were forced to withdraw by the reaction of the worshippers.

I think the government is unsure how to react. On Saturday 30 April they defused the steelworkers' strike at Stalowa Wola by granting their wage demands. They can try to split up the movement in this way. The problem is that the Nowa Huta steelworkers are not just putting demands for themselves, but demands for all the workers in Poland — an immediate pay rise, and a sliding scale of wages. They cannot defuse that movement by granting local wage rises.

And their economic margin for manoeuvre is very small. They are under pressure from the IMF. And trying to defuse strikes by local concessions can backfire on them. You can defuse one strike that way, but it encourages other workers.

The present strikes are partly the result of concessions which the regime made in early February, after it brought in its price rises (averaging 45%), in relation to a whole number of workers' protests. They allowed increases bigger than those laid down generally.

Today the Nowa Huta workers are demanding 12,000 zlotys compensation for the price rises for all workers — that is, double the amount agreed by the government. But 12,000 zlotys is the amount won in a number of workplaces by protests in early February.

There is a chain-reaction in the working class which is very dangerous for the regime.

These strikes reflect a revival of the influence of Solidarnosc in the factories — but a revival from the rank and file level.

The Solidarnosc leadership did not foresee these strikes at all. And it has been very slow in responding to them. The first to react were other organisations — the pacifist movement Liberty and Peace, the Polish Socialist Party, and the Confederation of Independent Poland — not the Solidarnosc leadership.

Even now, the statements of support for the Nowa Huta workers are personal statements from Lech Walesa, not collective statements from the Solidarnosc leadership, which has said nothing to

date.

The reason for this is clear from an interview with Adam Michnik published recently. Michnik says that the time for big mass movements has not come, that the most important thing that has happened in the Eastern Bloc since the October Revolution is Gorbachev's reforms, and that we must not make things difficult for Gorbachev.

This attitude is very strong in the national leadership of Solidarnosc, and had already provoked many protests inside the union in the months before these strikes.

Zbigniew Kowalewski spoke to Workers' Liberty on 2 May.

Statement of the Nowa Huta strike committee

On 26 April, at 9am, we began a strike at the Lenin steelworks. We demand an increase in the compensation for the price rises [introduced by the Government from 1 February] to 12,000 zlotys for all workers in industry, in health services, and in education, and also for pensioners. [The Government allowed 6,000 zlotys compensation.] We also demand an automatic and permanent sliding scale of wages in line with price rises for the necessities of life.

The economic policy of the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland has brought millions of workers and their families to the brink of poverty. We refuse to tighten our belts under compulsion. Our faith in the reforms promised by the Party is exhausted.

By boycotting the November referendum [on 'economic reform', i.e. price rises], we paid back the authorities in kind. To their distrust of us we responded with distrust of them.

We demand an increase in the basic wage of 50% for all the workers in the works. Through this we want to regain our right to an eight hour working day, which we won a long time ago. We want our wages to guarantee us and our families a decent life and our deserved rest after work.

We will not give up on these demands, for they reflect the will of the workers who elected us as their representatives. Experience has shown once again that the delegates elected by the official steelworkers' union do not represent the interests of the workers as a whole.

Our negotiations with the works management are difficult, but we have high hopes of reaching an agreement. We declare that the attempt by the authorities to intimidate us with the threat of an intervention by the security forces is an expression of the arrogance of the administration...

We thank all those who are supporting us actively with their solidarity action. We thank you, Lech, for the support you sent us at the beginning of our struggle. Be with us, as we are with you, for better or for worse.

Nowa Huta, 27 April 1988, 10pm.

Five months of the uprising

After five months, the uprising by Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza continues, although it is reaching a turning point. Israel's 'incursion' into Lebanon outraged Palestinians and provoked a revival in the uprising. In any case it is still a long way from falling away.

Israeli repression also continues. Over 170 Palestinians have been killed. Demands by far right Jewish settlers for the 'transfer' — that is, deportation — of masses of Palestinians are gaining wider support. Censorship of media coverage of the repression has been increased.

We reprint here an account by Adam Keller of the situation, from 'The Other Israel', which is published by the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Many of those involved in 'the Other Israel' are connected with the broad Progressive List for Peace group in Israel.

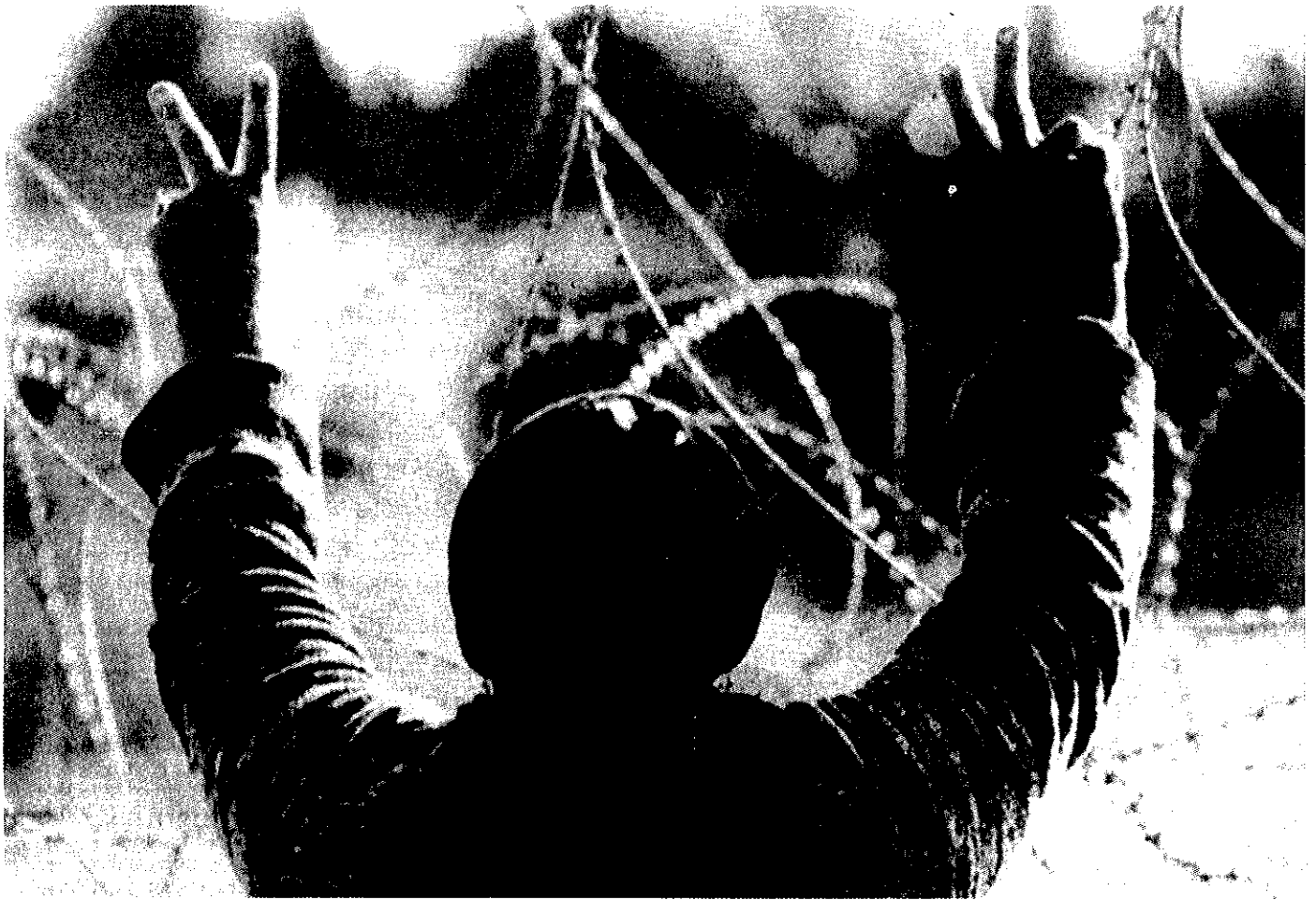
In December 1987, the uprising started almost spontaneously; certainly nobody planned it in advance.

Since the end of January, however, there has arisen a clandestine leadership. All the Palestinian factions which have a following in the occupied territories are represented in it: the supporters of Yasser Arafat and of his more radical rivals George Habash and Naif Hawatmeh, the Communists and the Muslim Fundamentalists. All of these are able to cooperate with each other and with the PLO leadership outside, and to agree upon a joint policy.

This "United National Command of the Uprising" regularly issues proclamations, containing detailed instructions on when and how to demonstrate or strike. So far, 12 such weekly proclamations have been issued, printed on clandestine presses in hundreds of thousands of copies, distributed in all areas of the occupied territories — and obeyed by the entire population. In effect there are now two rival governments striving to control the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Israeli government has at its disposal incomparably more brute strength; the forces now stationed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are several times bigger than those which sufficed, in 1967, to conquer these territories from the Egyptian and Jordanian armies.

For all of that, the State of Israel does not possess enough soldiers and policemen to garrison permanently each and every town, village and refugee camp in the occupied territories; yet in



practice, Israeli control of the territories is being fast reduced to those pieces of ground on which Israeli soldiers physically stand at a given moment — and there, too, they are often challenged by stone-throwing crowds.

The Israeli government lost most of the tentacles through which it was accustomed to reach into, and control, the Palestinian society. The fearsome network of spies and informers, through which the Israeli secret services used to uncover "subversive" groups, is no longer effective. The situation of open collaborators is untenable: two of them were killed; many others publicly renounced the weapons with which the military government had provided them, in order to reintegrate themselves into their communities.

Most Arab policemen in the territories resigned, despite all the efforts of the military government to dissuade them. Following the policemen, tax collectors resigned as well.

Civil disobedience is becoming widespread, in different forms: merchants' strikes, refusal to pay taxes, boycott of Israeli products, stoppage of work in Israel. In retaliation, Defence Minister Rabin announced a series of sweeping measures. The supply of gasoline to Arab stations in the occupied territories was stopped (to the stations owned by settlers, supply was continued); the telephone links between the territories and countries outside Israel were cut; to "trouble making" areas telephone lines were cut altogether, and so was electricity; licences for exports to Jordan are being denied to whole towns,

and permissions to go abroad are severely restricted; the sum of money which Palestinians are allowed to bring in from abroad is also drastically limited.

The government's repressive measures were escalated towards "Land Day", 30 March. For three days, the whole of the occupied territories were sealed up, and their inhabitants forbidden to travel to Israel or to cross the Jordan river bridges into Jordan; the whole of the Gaza Strip was placed under curfew; telephone lines were cut, to prevent the inhabitants from contacting the outside world or coordinating action with each other; the media were kept out, except for journalists "authorised by the army and accompanied by an army press liaison officer".

All of these measures did not prevent the population from again coming out and confronting the army. "Land Day" left four Palestinians dead, 45 wounded — and the Palestinians' spirit unbroken.

Measures still considered by the government include complete closure of the Jordan bridges, and altogether forbidding the workers from the territories to work in Israel. Such measures would, indeed, complete the siege of the Palestinian population; but they would also be felt by many Israeli employers and severely damage the Israeli economy on the whole.

In face of these — actual and projected — measures, the Palestinian society is developing ways of mutual help and solidarity, in order to share out scarce resources. As a matter of fact, the economically underdeveloped condition of the occupied territories makes it

easier for their inhabitants to resist the new measures. Donkeys are still around to replace the cars (paralysed by lack of gasoline); many villages are practically self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs; the clandestine leadership, in its 11th proclamation, called upon town dwellers, too, to raise chickens and rabbits and to plant vegetable gardens.

The Palestinians are setting up alternatives to the government services which no longer function. After the resignation of the policemen, government spokesmen predicted chaos in Palestinian society and the outbreak of unlimited crime; but in practice, neighbourhoods are effectively taking care of themselves through volunteer committees. The Palestinians also try to reopen schools and universities closed by the military government. (In January all educational institutes, from elementary schools up to universities, were closed for an indefinite period).

At the same time, the direct violent confrontations between army and demonstrators continue. Defence Minister Rabin issued new directives, taking away many of the restrictions on the use of firearms — not only by soldiers but also by settlers. The death toll mounts daily, and many are the young Palestinians who will live out their lives as cripples.

With every passing day it becomes more clear that the state of Israel is facing the deepest crisis in its turbulent history.

The Israeli economy has already suffered grave damage from the uprising. The merchants' strike has denied the

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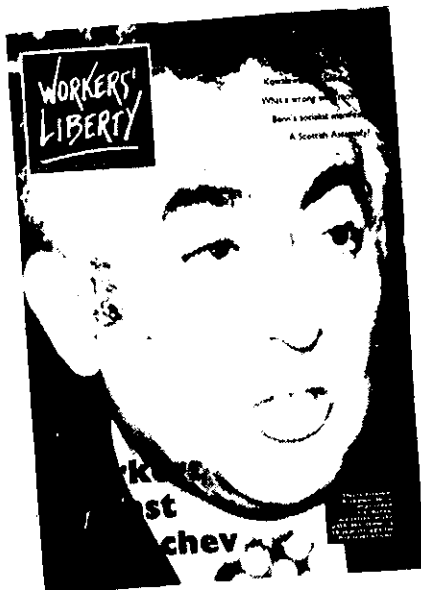
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market to Israeli merchandise; the prolonged absence of Palestinian workers, both through strikes and through the Israeli army's own curfews, has damaged Israeli industries and agriculture; daily reports of violence are driving tourists away from Israel; there are growing reports of an economic slump.

The Israeli political scene has never been so deeply divided, not even at the height of the Lebanon war. The Labor-Likud "Government of National Unity" was designed as a means of papering over the fissures which 1982 has opened in Israeli society; now, these fissures have re-appeared inside the government itself. The Labor Party has adopted the "Shultz Plan", uncritically and without reservation; the "Peace Now" movement followed suit, hoping to see in the Shultz initiative the beginning of a process which would lead Israel out of the occupied territories. For the same reason, the Likud and the extreme right furiously opposed Shultz, though Prime Minister Shamir, in Washington, very diplomatically succeeded in saying "no" without uttering the word explicitly.

The debate on Shultz manifested itself in public exchanges of sharp invective between the partners to what is still called "a Government of National Unity", and in two opposing mass rallies which, on two consecutive days, filled the municipality square of Tel-Aviv.

Yet the Likud-Labor divide — though the most visible to a casual observer — is not the only one, or necessarily the most important. Each of the two big parties is deeply divided within itself: the Labor Party is caught in the contradiction between its pretensions to be "a party of peace" and the daily acts of repression in the occupied territories, inspired and authorised by Labor's Minister Rabin.

The Likud appears more ideologically homogeneous, and the fierce struggle for control between its leaders Shamir, Levy and Sharon seems a mainly personal contest, between various shades of rampant nationalism; yet here, too, deep-rooted social forces are wrestling, and from time to time strange undercurrents and dissensions appear. Public opinion polls predict that, in the general elections scheduled for November — which may take place earlier — both of the big parties will lose voters to more radical parties of the left and the right.

The radicalisation and polarisation are even more strong and apparent among the youth. The Israeli school system, long dominated by the concept of "impartiality" and "non-politicisation" has become the battlefield of parties, movements and ideologies. Education Minister Yitzhak Navon could do little but legitimise this process, over which he has practically no control.

There is an unprecedented proliferation of new peace groups, expressing the moral outrage many previously not involved citizens feel as the Israeli army is thrust into the role of "Goliath" towards the Palestinian "Davids".