

By Franek Michalski

**P**OLAND'S CURRENT ROUND-TABLE NEGOTIATIONS can be looked at in two ways. Either they are a clear victory for the Solidarity movement, the vindication of years of underground struggle for workers' rights, civil liberties and popular political participation, or the round table is a sophisticated means of domesticating opposi-

## POLAND

tion from the same ruling elite that repressed Solidarity by martial law eight years ago.

The negotiations, which began February 6 and are slated to conclude with a formal announcement of accords on April 3, consist of several minor "tables" and three major ones on union pluralism, political pluralism and economic reform. Implementation of particular proposals depends on a comprehensive settlement.

Solidarity has proposed, as a preliminary measure, that the military and internal security budgets be cut 20 percent. The government's chief negotiator, Janusz Reykowski, denounced these demands as "political." But whatever savings may be realized by this method, larger philosophical issues also have to be resolved.

The Solidarity side speaks in two voices on the economy. One set of advisers demands a free market to abolish all controlled pricing, to lower enterprise taxes and to eliminate subsidies. The other, "social democratic," view calls for a more cautious pricing policy, protection against a further drop in the standard of living by indexing wages to inflation and a commitment to retraining and



Lech Walesa (second from left): trading between statesmanship and ridicule.

# Solidarity's new textbook is state and devolution

relocating workers whose plants are closed. The free-marketeers reject these proposals as costly, inflationary and ineffective in pruning industrial deadwood.

The government side, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and foreign creditors, appears to favor the more drastic free-market proposals.

Thus far agreement has been reached on legalization of Solidarity as a nationwide organization. The government had initially insisted on a factory-by-factory accreditation. There has been no mention, however, of in-

termediate structures, such as the regional federative scheme characteristic of 1980 Solidarity.

**Sowing Solidarities:** A Farmers' Solidarity has also been approved without much acrimony. Acceptance of the Independent Students Association (Polish initials, NZS), however, was trickier. The student group was notorious during the past year for pressing radically anti-party, pro-independence demands. Even while the round-table talks were underway, NZS had participated in demonstrations with slogans such as "Commies out," some of which ended in bottle-throwing and arrests.

A truce of sorts has been reached. On March 8, NZS held a huge demonstration in Warsaw commemorating the "March events" of 1968. A year ago the police dispersed the same commemoration with billy clubs; this time they directed traffic out of the way of marchers.

By allowing such events, the Jaruzelski government has eaten much humble pie. From condemning Solidarity as the chief national problem, it has now embraced the union and its advisers as the last best hope of national rescue.

"We are giving up the party's monopoly on power," Prime Minister Mieczyslaw F. Rakowski said on February 13. In 1981, before and after he helped engineer martial law, Rakowski was well known for his refusal to discuss any type of power-sharing. Yet in early January 1989, at a stormy meeting of the party's central committee, he actively supported the notion of political pluralism currently being negotiated at the round table.

The party leadership's push for reform has met resistance from local activists. On January 22 a party organization in the city of Kielce hung a huge banner on its office building that said "Down with the resolutions of the central committee! We don't want a legal Solidarity!" Party activists have been complaining that without the party's continued monopoly, their work in factories will lose all effectiveness.

The table on political pluralism has proposed drastic changes in the judicial, electoral and parliamentary systems. The debate on judicial reform shows how ambiguous the ultimate result may be. Though judges and the court system as a whole have been granted formal autonomy from political influence, particular statutes used to repress

regime opponents have been retained. These include frequently cited laws against "spreading false information harmful to the state."

In early March, in a move headlined—and even, to an extent, fetishized—in the Western media, the two sides announced agreement on legislative elections in June. A senate is to be created as the upper house of parliament, whose deputies will be chosen by competitive elections open to all. The current parliament, or Sejm, will become the new lower house. It will continue to have Soviet bloc-style "voting by slate," but the opposition is guaranteed 35 percent of the seats. A president, elected by both bodies, will have sweeping powers, including the right to veto parliamentary resolutions or to dissolve it altogether.

The proposed system has been described as a French-style "strong presidential" one, though under the circumstances it may more accurately be compared to the new Soviet arrangement. There are differences, of course, but in both there is a move toward a limited electoral pluralism, without de jure political parties and with the key position retained by the head of the Communist Party. In Poland the senate will have veto power over many of the Sejm's decisions, but the president will hold ultimate authority.

No one doubts that Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski will be elected president. Nonetheless, the new parliamentary arrangement offers the possibility of unprecedented popular influence over national policy. But the sheer number of offices available to the opposition—100 seats in the senate and 35 percent of the Sejm, as well as the myriad local administrative bodies—presents a challenge as well as an opportunity.

**Legal or legal again?** The government's promising rhetoric is still only the rhetoric of promises. Solidarity has been offered legal existence, civil liberties and a measure of electoral pluralism in return for its support for austerity measures in the economy. But the mood among workers is angry. Striking women textile workers in Lodz have declared, "The round table won't feed us."

For the bargain struck at the round table to be worthwhile, on the opposition's terms, it must result in an authentic Solidarity. But after eight years underground, after the emigration of many activists and after the influx of a new generation, this question remains: who exactly is Solidarity?

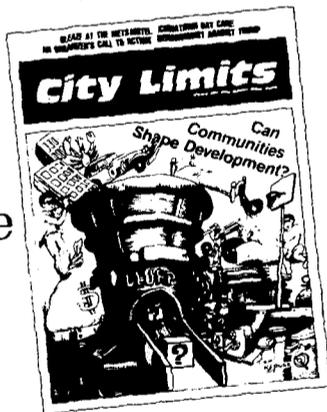
Both sides at the round table talk of "legalizing" the union, not "re-legalizing" it in its 1981 form. The people representing the Solidarity opposition in the current negotiations are members of the recently convened "Citizens' Committee working with the chairman of Solidarity." They are Solidarity members, underground activists and academic experts of unimpeachable opposition credentials.

As a body, they have no direct statutory relationship to the once-legal Solidarity. This has angered the "Working Group," a coalition led by union officials (such as Andrzej Gwiazda from Gdansk and Andrzej Slowik from Lodz) elected at the Solidarity National Congress in 1981. The Working Group demands convocation of the Solidarity National Commission to reconstitute the organization in its original form. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa is a usurper, they charge, manipulating a cult of personality to push through his own political program, which amounts to a sellout of workers' interests and national independence in return for parliamentary

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By Pippa Green

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**W**HEN TREVOR MANUEL WAS FIRST DETAINED by the South African police in the predawn hours on a Cape Town winter morning, his infant son Govan was just six weeks old. He was released on July 7, 1988, under heavy restrictions, two weeks after his son's second birthday. Ten weeks later, on Sept. 21, 1988, at 4:30 a.m., the security police banged on his door and told him to pack a bag. They were detaining him again.

"I felt totally shocked, totally angry," said his wife, Lynne Matthews, then two months pregnant with a second child. "I said to the police: 'You've held my husband for 23 months, and you couldn't find anything to charge him with. And now you just come again with no valid reasons and re-detain him.' They didn't even answer me."

Manuel, 33, a senior paid official of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the country's largest anti-apartheid group, was released last month, this time under even more severe conditions. But were it not for a hunger strike, which spread rapidly throughout the jails of South Africa, Manuel might not have been released for several more months. He is one of a number of detainees freed by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok in the wake of the strike, which put scores of detainees into the hospital.

The hunger strike has been the most successful weapon so far in forcing the government to release or charge political detainees. But after hailing the first releases as a victory, anguished relatives and human rights monitoring groups are now worried by the slow rate at which detainees are being freed, and by the restrictions placed on those formerly held.

On February 16 Vlok agreed to release or charge over a two-week period a "substantial number" of the approximately 900 people held under terms of the country's current state of emergency. His promise came after an unprecedented meeting that day with anti-apartheid churchmen, including Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. Allan Boesak and Rev. Frank Chikane. In turn, the clerics called on the 300 detainees who were on the hunger strike to suspend their fast for two weeks to see whether Vlok would honor his word. Most detainees abandoned the strike, although several, particularly in the Natal province, continued to refuse food. As *In These Times* went to press, 30 Natal detainees were reported to be in a critical condition, while four are still hospitalized in Johannesburg.

There was jubilation when Manuel was released last month along with six other detainees in the Cape Town area. Anti-apartheid activists thought that if the police released Manuel, a high-ranking UDF official, it might open the doors for the other detainees.

**The numbers game:** But by March 2—the end of the two-week period—Vlok had signed only 279 release papers, freeing fewer than half the detainees. There is also a discrepancy between the number of detainees the government has said it released and the number monitoring groups can trace. Only 130 have been released so far. Faried Essack, a Moslem cleric recently told a prayer service in Cape Town. In Johannesburg, 112 detainees have been confirmed released, but 191 have left the Johannesburg Prison, said Audrey Coleman, a representative for the Detainees Aid Center. "We are worried, because we don't know whether they have been re-

# Starving for freedom: detainees' hunger strikes pressure Pretoria

leased or moved to another prison." To clear up these doubts, the church leaders have asked Vlok to publish the names of those released, but so far he has refused. There have also been at least 16 new detentions in the past few weeks, according to Coleman.

Like Manuel, most of those released have been heavily restricted. Manuel cannot leave his house between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.; he has

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to report to a nearby police station twice a day; he cannot leave the magisterial district in which he lives without police permission (he has to apply for permission to visit his mother, who lives in a Cape Town suburb three miles from his home); he cannot take part in politics or attend meetings; and he cannot talk to journalists. "A different kind of jail," is how Roman Catholic Archbishop Stephen Naidoo describes it.

The restrictions indicate that while the government has not embarked on the path to reform and negotiation, it is nevertheless reluctant to risk the deaths of detainees, particularly as the U.S. Congress considers

tougher sanctions against Pretoria. Even one death would "make the world particularly sensitive to the injustices being inflicted by this government," said Dullah Omar, a spokesman for the National Association of Democratic Lawyers and himself a former detainee.

**Love behind glass:** That the hunger strike caught on so rapidly is a measure of the desperation of South African political detainees. Legal efforts to release the detainees have failed, as have public campaigns. Last year the government made it illegal under the emergency regulations for anyone to call for the release of detainees, some of whom have been held without trial for up to 32 months. Like Manuel, many have watched their children grow up through the glass panels of prison visiting rooms. "I took Govan to every visit," says Lynne Matthews. "He would put his hand on the glass panel separating us from Trevor and say, 'Daddy, kiss my hand.' On the other side, I would see Trevor breaking."

For the families of those who have been released, the days are still filled with fear and insecurity. At every sound of a car, at

every unexplained light that shines in the street, Manuel and Matthews look anxiously at each other, hoping it is not the security police who have come to take him from his family again.

## A hunger strike by 300 prisoners has been the most successful weapon so far in forcing the government to release or charge political detainees.

"The detainees have been released as a result of enormous pressure. But the question remains whether this is a change of heart, or whether they will revert back to detention as soon as the pressure is off. Our families might be out of jail now, but for how long?" asks Matthews. □

Pippa Green is a journalist based in Cape Town, South Africa.

## Behind 'Mother of the Nation' Winnie Mandela's fall from grace

Winnie Mandela's plummet from her symbolic role as "mother of the nation" to public outcast has deeply hurt South Africa's anti-apartheid movement. But it has taught activists one important lesson: beware of leaders who cannot be called to account.

The charismatic wife of long-imprisoned African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela has never belonged to the now-restricted United Democratic Front (UDF), the largest anti-apartheid group in the country, nor has she held a formal ANC position. Yet she was seen here and abroad as the symbol of the suppressed liberation movement. Separated from her husband for the past 26 years, detained by police several times and banished for eight years to the barren rural settlement of Brandfort, feisty Winnie Mandela had seemingly earned her worldwide popularity and respect.

Last month that image was abruptly shattered. In an unprecedented move, Archie Gumede and Murphy Morobe, former national spokesmen for the UDF, and Elijah Barayi, president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), publicly condemned Winnie Mandela on behalf of the "mass democratic movement." "We are of the view that Mrs. Mandela has abused the trust and confidence which she has enjoyed over the years," they said in a statement.

Winnie Mandela's fall from grace followed widespread allegations that her bodyguards—known as the Mandela Football Club—were responsible for the murder of Stompie Moeketsie, a 14-year-old political activist. Moeketsie was one of four youths allegedly abducted and killed by club members. The victims had been taking refuge from the police in a church at the time of their abduction.

Moeketsie's death sparked a spiral of violence in Soweto. At least three others have died. A Soweto doctor, Abubaker Asvat, who reportedly knew of the assaults on the youths, was killed, as was a Mandela bodyguard and a 14-year-old girl who was mistakenly gunned down in a reprisal for the bodyguard's death.

The extent of Mandela's involvement in the criminal acts is unclear. The statement from anti-apartheid leaders accused her of "complicity" in the abductions and assault. Eight club members have been charged with Moeketsie's murder, but no charges have yet been brought against Mandela.

Also unclear is the involvement of government agents in Winnie Mandela's downfall. The *Weekly Mail*, South Africa's best-known opposition newspaper, reported that Soweto residents long suspected that the club coach, Jerry Richardson, 41, was a police spy. Richardson is one of those charged with Moeketsie's murder.

What is clear, however, is the depth of the Soweto community's anger and fear at the activities of the club. Last September Mandela's house was burned down by "comrades"—militant township youth—in apparent retaliation for an alleged sexual assault by club members on a woman student leader. It was pressure from Soweto residents that was behind the public condemnation of Mandela, according to one source in the black labor movement. The first reports on the club's involvement in Moeketsie's death were published not in the government-controlled or supporting media, but by the *Weekly Mail*, a newspaper that was suspended by the government last year for its unrelenting anti-apartheid stance.

The formation of the club follows a series of incidents in which Winnie Mandela's political judgment has been questioned by both the internal anti-apartheid movement and the ANC. And before Moeketsie's death, both Oliver Tambo, leader-in-exile of the ANC, and Nelson Mandela sent "urgent communiques" to Winnie Mandela to disband the club, according to Morobe, a former political prisoner and detainee. But the ANC leader's wife, it seemed, was beyond the control of the organizations of which she had become such an important symbol.

After her house was burned last year, a "Mandela Crisis Committee," comprising the country's most influential anti-apartheid leaders, was formed to try to reconcile the conflict around the club. The committee has remained tight-lipped about its efforts, but it clearly failed to mend the rift between the Soweto community and Mandela.

Since her censure, Mandela has avoided commenting on the dispute, reportedly at the behest of her husband. Local anti-apartheid leaders have also refrained from further comment. Morobe and top COSATU leaders met with the ANC in Lusaka to discuss the crisis. There has been some softening, though, in the attitudes of anti-apartheid leaders around the country since the first statement was issued. Some have privately expressed fears that the statement was too extreme. One UDF-linked newspaper, *South*, reported that Nelson Mandela has urged his wife to join progressive organizations and "win the people's trust through hard work." And a senior activist said the anti-apartheid movement would try to "rehabilitate Winnie—bring her back into the fold."

-P.G.