

international press correspondence

INPRECOR

the death of perón



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THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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into the streets for chile On september 11, 1974!

On September 11, 1974, one year will have gone by since the Chilean army seized power in a bloody putsch, massacring thousands of workers, peasants, students, and militants of workers organizations. Since then it has continuously tortured the toiling masses of the country by the most barbaric means: "legal" and extralegal assassinations; arbitrary arrest and torture; frame-up "trials" that cynically trample on any elementary right of defense; massive firings in the factories and state bodies; brutal and unprecedented crushing of the standard of living of the masses.

The crimes committed by the junta have deservedly provoked the indignation of the workers of the entire world. Pinochet and company are hated butchers like the Hitlers, the Mussolinis, the Salazars, the Francos, the Batistas, the Diems, and the Thieus. These murderers of their own people will end by being ground to dust -- the fate of all those who seek to maintain the owning classes in power by drowning all demands and all protest movements of the toiling masses in blood.

But reprobation and indignation at the crimes of the Chilean military junta have little effectiveness so long as they remain passive and purely verbal. This is all the more true in that international big capital, which contributed to the preparation and victorious outcome of the September 11, 1973, putsch, is multiplying its acts of support and encouragement to the Santiago butchers, with the complicity of most of the governments of the world.

That is why the movements of solidarity with the Chilean popular masses that have been organized in many countries and have mobilized hundreds of thousands of people in meetings, demonstrations, and strikes or boycott action play an eminently important role. By keeping alive the consciousness of the broadest masses about the crimes committed against the

Chilean workers, they restrict the maneuvers of capitalists and governments aimed at supporting the junta, and they constitute a real encouragement to the organization of the resistance of the Chilean workers to the dictatorship that is oppressing them.

By organizing simultaneous demonstrations all over the world for September 11, 1974, to protest against the bloody putschists of Santiago and to support the Chilean popular masses the international workers movement would considerably augment the effectiveness of its action against the junta and would greatly encourage the resistance of the Chilean proletariat.

For this reason the Fourth International calls upon all workers', political, and trade-union organizations to organize on the basis of the broadest unity and without any exclusion for powerful street demonstrations against the Chilean military dictatorship on September 11, 1974. It calls on all trade-union organizations and workers to complement these demonstrations with actions to interdict the shipment of military or paramilitary matériel to the Chilean junta and with actions to force the governments of their respective countries, especially those governments whose members claim allegiance to the workers movement, to halt all credits and all financial aid to the assassins of the Chilean people.

Everyone in the streets September 11, 1974, to demand:

- * DOWN WITH THE CHILEAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP!
- * FREE ALL CHILEAN POLITICAL PRISONERS FROM THE JAILS AND EXECUTION BLOCKS!
- * LONG LIVE THE STRUGGLE OF THE CHILEAN TOILING MASSES TO BRING DOWN THEIR OPPRESSORS AND EXPLOITERS!
- * NOT ONE WEAPON, NOT ONE SHIP, NOT ONE PENNY FOR THE ASSASSINS OF THE CHILEAN PEOPLE!
- * LONG LIVE THE CHILEAN SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

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the death of perón...



and peronism?

by S. LOPEZ

The death of General Perón was announced on July 1. Several days of severe illness had prepared public opinion for this inevitable end.

We referred to the possibility of Perón's death in our article "Peronism in Crisis," published in INPRECOR No. 1 (June 6). But we did not let it go to a mere incidental speculation. We pointed out that the bourgeoisie was not prepared for Perón's disappearance from the political scene, a disappearance that was becoming ever more likely given Perón's illness.

After the collapse of the military dictatorship (which had lasted from 1966 to 1973) and the consequent erosion of the armed forces, and after the weaknesses and loss of control that had appeared in the Cámpora government, Perón was seen by the Argentine bourgeoisie as the best possible chance for overcoming the economic crisis and avoiding political chaos. Even though the events of the two past months showed that Perón was meeting difficulties in carrying out his political program -- the May 1 and June 12 events and the breaks with the Social Pact being the highlights of this -- it was quite clear that for the time being the bourgeoisie had no realistic alternative to Perón.

The May 1 demonstration in front of the Casa Rosada (the presidential palace), which the working class was called upon to attend but generally stayed away from, offered an implicit balance-sheet on the first year of the Peronist government. The initial hopes of the people had given way to skepticism, discontent, and a process of break with Peronism by young and militant layers. When Perón began to insult the youth in his speech from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, columns of young people turned their backs and left the Plaza de Mayo -- a largely spontaneous gesture. As they left, they

chanted "The gorillas are all united, we will continue the fight!" Their departure left the plaza half empty.

On June 12 Perón gave a television speech in which he claimed that imperialism and the oligarchy were obstructing his government and threatened to resign. The CGT (Confederación General del Trabajo -- General Confederation of Labor) called a strike and mobilized for a meeting at the Plaza de Mayo to support the general. But this time, in spite of his upping the ante by threatening to resign, Perón attracted no more than half as large a crowd as had attended the May 1 rally. Perón's evocation of the traditional enemies of the Argentine people was not accompanied by any concrete measure or proposal for struggle capable of mobilizing the masses. On the contrary, once again he pleaded for the Social Pact and expressed his support of the trade-union bureaucracy that has been so repudiated by the working class. Some days later, he advanced by half a year the wage increases that had been scheduled to go into effect at the end of the year. This will amount to an 8 percent raise for the second half of 1974, which is nothing but a bit of charity thrown out in the face of wage demands running as high as 60 percent. And in any case, this bit of charity was accompanied by new measures of intimidation; all work stoppages and strikes for wage demands were declared illegal.

The difficulties in provisioning provoked by the landed bourgeoisie and the monopolistic sectors of industry and commerce were not aspects of preparation for a military coup to overthrow Perón, contrary to what Argentine centrists and reformists hastened to proclaim. In the context of the collapse of the Social Pact, which was being challenged by workers struggles, various sectors of the ruling classes were moving to the

offensive in order to exert some pressure in defense of their own particular and group interests. Each sector of the bourgeoisie sought to obtain a growing share of the profits that the critical situation of Argentine capitalism had reduced in a drastic manner on the whole.

But in spite of these skirmishes, in spite of the pressures and tensions among the various factions of the ruling classes, nobody seriously imagined that there could be a better solution for the bourgeoisie as a whole than the presence of Perón at the head of the government. And Perón knew it too. That is why he sought to win a greater room for maneuver in his June 12 speech by basing himself on the sectors that were most devoted to him: the General Economic Confederation (led by Gelbard, Perón's minister of the economy) and the trade-union bureaucracy. But these tensions had incontestably contributed to intensifying the country's political instability.

The leadership crisis of the Argentine bourgeoisie has been aggravated by the disappearance of Perón, the only bourgeois political leader who had a capacity for maneuvering among the dominant sectors and commanded a certain authority among sections of the mass movement. In reality, this crisis of leadership has existed for twenty years. At present, the ruling classes have no real alternative to Peronism for maintaining the capitalist system of exploitation and dependence. The armed forces have not yet politically overcome the effects of the disasters they suffered in the Cordobazo (the insurrectionary general strike in the city of Córdoba in 1969) and the war against the guerrillas. There is no other bourgeois party or movement sufficiently rooted among the masses to be able to deal with a situation in which the measures taken by the bourgeoisie to overcome the structural crisis of Argentine capitalism will inevitably lead to an intensification of social contradictions and an explosive polarization of antagonistic classes.

Perón's disappearance will not simply aggravate the bourgeoisie's political crisis. It will also open a decisive new stage in the crisis of the Peronist movement. In scarcely more than a year Peronism's return to power had already triggered a crisis within the bourgeois nationalist movement, which had not lost its mass base during the first Peronist governments (1945-1955). The conjuncture in which Peronism returned to the government in 1973 exposed the deep contradictions between the aspirations of the Peronist movement's working class and youth rank and file, whose combativity and experience had increased in the struggle against the dictatorship, and the programs of the movement's bourgeois and bureaucratic leadership, the "Argentine power" of the Social Pact.

During each of his governments Perón played a Bonapartist role, swinging back and forth between leading his movement and heading the state. The Bonapartist role of the leader is irreplaceable in movements like Peronism. His disappearance therefore inevitably opens a crisis of succession within the leadership of his own political movement.

Perón and the bourgeoisie were perfectly aware that this would be the case. In his last period, Perón tried to purge his movement of its radicalized left wing and to institutionalize the movement as a political party so that it would be able to survive his death. But he did not succeed in carrying out this task. Peronism was not transformed into a real bourgeois political party with enough homogeneity in objectives, criteria, methods, and so on to be able to act as a real party. Important tensions and contradictions are continuing to assert themselves between sectors of the Peronist movement whose only bases of alliance had been submission to General Perón and the advantages of keeping a grip on a piece of power. The death of Perón means the disappearance of the element of unity and cohesion between sectors struggling for their own, often heterogeneous, interests. And these sectors abound with careerists and profiteers no better than the worst sort of

common criminals. In spite of the opportunism of the majority of the leadership and in spite of the fact that they will continue to claim allegiance to Peronist ideology, the process of the breakaway of young and militant sectors of the Peronist movement will inevitably be accelerated.

The political vacuum with which the bourgeoisie has been dramatically afflicted is illustrated by the accession to the presidency of Isabel Perón, who is entirely submissive to General Perón's closest collaborators. For the moment, this is a means of guaranteeing the continuity of Peronism at the head of the state and ensuring that the present governmental team will continue to function. The armed forces, which remain a decisive factor in power and guarantee the survival of the system when all is said and done, were the first to support the "constitutional road of succession." All the political parties followed suit. But this unanimity of support for Isabel Perón cannot conceal the profound weakening of the projects of the ruling classes that was provoked by the death of Perón. Within a half hour after the announcement of his death, long lines formed in front of the stores in the capital, an expression of the people's uncertainty about the immediate future.

In the space of a little more than a year, Argentina has had five presidents: General Lanusse, Cámpora, Lastiri, General Perón, and Isabel Perón. Far from guaranteeing a new normalization, the replacement of the military dictatorship opened a period of growing instability and of bourgeois political crisis, as the documents preparatory to the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International had predicted.

Perón was undoubtedly one of the most lucid and adept bourgeois leaders of the countries of the so-called Third World, a leader of the cut of a Nehru or a Nasser. But the specific conditions under which his Bonapartist policy was able to be applied with a certain effectiveness in the postwar period had profoundly changed. Returning to power after eighteen years of exclusion from political life, present-day Peronism appears as a caricature of its own past. After less than a year of managing the state, its repressive features, its clash with the aspirations of the masses, and its own internal contradictions had come to the full light of day.

The sickness of the regime is the sickness of a bourgeoisie that since the Cordobazo has seen all its plans challenged by a working class that wants to win new gains and is beginning a struggle to put an end to exploitation and dependence. The contradictions of the system cannot be overcome by the bourgeoisie in the framework of a capitalist system racked by distortion due to its insertion into the world imperialist chain as a dependent sector. These contradictions can be resolved only by the working class seizing power, breaking with imperialism, and initiating a process of permanent revolution.

The repressive features of the regime will probably become intensified after the death of Perón because of the slackening of control over the right-wing sectors, the parallel police gangs, and the trade-union bureaucracy. Under such circumstances, the workers must fight not only for breaking the anti-working-class Social Pact and for defending their own interests, but also for defending their organizations and their democratic rights, which have been manifestly compromised (right to strike, right to form organizations, right to demonstrate, freedom of the press, etc.). But this battle will not be able to be cogently led on the basis of opportunist maneuvers and alliances. We will defend democratic rights not with the bourgeoisie but by forging unity in action of all workers and popular sectors in mobilizations, struggles, and the organization of self-defense.

More than ever, class confrontation is inevitable in Argentina. Its timing and outcome will depend on the progress of workers and popular struggles and on the attitude taken by the workers and popular vanguard, on the progress made in the building of a revolutionary proletarian party. □

UNIDAD POPULAR'S BALANCE-SHEET OF ALLENDE YEARS

by LIVIO MAITAN

Under the regime of fierce repression that has reigned in Chile since the coup of September 11, 1973, the organizations of the working class have run up against major difficulties in working out and distributing general political documents. Last December, representatives of the Unidad Popular in exile, along with the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario -- Movement of the Revolutionary Left), released an appeal against repression in which they declared, among other things, that "a broader, united movement capable of mobilizing the great majority of Chileans is in process of being formed." In February 1974 the same representatives published a document explaining that "the popular parties have succeeded in raising the level of their organization and leadership despite the barbaric measures resorted to by the dictatorship" and projecting formation of a "broad front of struggle," that would include an overture toward sections of the Christian Democracy hostile to Frei. Finally, on May 1, 1974, a document that had been drafted inside the country was released. It drew a balance sheet of the Allende years, analyzed the current situation, and traced out an orientation for the struggle.

Self-criticism in the wrong direction

This document offers five answers to the question, Why did the Chilean working class suffer such a grave defeat:

1. "A process of this character could not have been tolerated by those who had controlled the wealth and power for 150 years."
2. There was no "united political leadership capable of galvanizing the popular forces and allowing them to successfully confront their enemies," and this resulted in an "incapacity to effect a policy of alliances to isolate the principal enemies."
3. Dangerous ultraleftist tendencies were manifested, which "exerted pressure on the Unidad Popular and the government," thus impeding an adequate policy of alliances.
4. "There was a lack of comprehension within the popular movement of the internal situation and the specific features of the Chilean armed forces, which made it difficult for the popular movement to collaborate with the patriotic and constitutionalist sectors of the armed forces."
5. "Some manifestations of right-wing opportunism were also apparent, above all in a weakness in affirming the necessity for making radical changes in the structures of the bourgeois state, in bureaucratic attitudes, in an insufficient degree of workers' participation in the exercise of power, in instances of administrative corruption and insensibility of certain government functionaries to the concrete problems of the masses, in widespread economism among layers of the workers movement, in tolerance of fascist outbreaks, and in insufficient mobilization of the masses to support the measures taken by the popular government."

Apart from expressing recriminations about the perversity of the enemy, the first point develops an imprecise analysis that distorts a total appreciation of reality. Incontestably, there was a minority of the population that organized opposition to the Unidad Popular and finally launched the coup. The exploiting classes always represent minorities, and tiny minorities at that. But the document implies that responsibility for this lies with "the right," that is, with the most reactionary proimperialist and monopolist sectors of the bourgeoisie, which began plotting their conspiracies the day after the presidential election of September 4, 1970.

Now it is true that during the first period of the Allende government decisive layers of the bourgeoisie did not directly oppose the government. It was for that very reason that Allende was able to obtain the necessary majority in parliament. The opposition got together and radicalized later on, when the bourgeoisie began to take account of the fact that the dynamic of social conflict and mass movement could not be controlled by the government and that under such conditions even the limited reforms enacted by the Unidad Popular were creating a situation in which the "normal functioning," if not the very existence, of the capitalist system was being seriously compromised.

As the bourgeoisie began to realize that its project of regaining control of the situation through legal or semilegal means was meeting with failure (in the March 1973 elections, for example), and as it began to see that obstruction and sabotage were not sufficient for attaining its ends and even threatened to provoke more and more vigorous mass responses, it opted for the extreme solution of the golpe. This is a very important point to remember: After a certain point, the entire bourgeoisie rallied to this perspective. Likewise, the leading groups within the armed forces, who had accepted the constitutional framework at first and had collaborated with Allende (even joining his government), decided to resort to open violence.

On the question of the deficiencies of leadership, especially concerning the realization of a policy of alliances, heated polemics have already been waged, both inside and outside Chile. On this score it must first of all be remembered that the Allende government never lacked the active support of the masses. Just before the coup, Santiago was the scene of a very powerful mass mobilization. The critical analysis must have a wholly different axis.

The mobilizations expressed a rather general support for the Unidad Popular, but they did not succeed in imposing clear solutions at crucial junctures. Second -- and this is the essential thing -- the highest points of the mobilization of the masses in struggle were out of phase. The most aggressive peasant struggles took place mostly during the initial period of the Unidad Popular government, while the workers radicalization attained its peak only after the abortive coup of June 29, 1973. This was not so much the result of an "incapacity" of leadership as a consequence of the rejection by the Unidad



peasants seize land ...ultraleftists?

Popular parties of a strategy of revolutionary mobilization for the overthrow of the system through the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus.

As for the problem of alliances, it is illusory to think that layers of small and middle-sized industrialists or layers of the commercial bourgeoisie can be won as allies of the working class in a battle whose dynamic places the very basis of their economic and social existence in danger. The real problem is to take advantage of the full potential of the class struggle of the exploited. And this the Unidad Popular did not do -- nor could it do it, given its theoretical and political premises.

The problem was rather to offer a concrete perspective to petty-bourgeois layers whose interests were not coincident with those of the ruling classes but who found themselves in an impasse, for they were forced to bear the costs of a situation of disequilibrium and prolonged economic crisis. The only possible guarantee that could have been offered these layers was to show real determination, to work for a qualitative leap that would have allowed for reestablishing "normality" on new bases: on the bases of collectivized relations of production and a planned economy. And the Unidad Popular, prisoner of its own schemas, neither wanted nor was able to do that either.

The alleged responsibilities of ultraleftism have constituted a choice argument for the Communist parties ever since the coup. Let us admit that some manifestations of ultraleftism were in fact present. But these were completely marginal and played no important role in the social and political dynamic. But if the epithet ultraleftist is to be applied to the actions of peasants who occupied the land and thus carried out agrarian reform in a consistent way by overstepping the limits of the reform that had hitherto been kept within bounds set by the large landed proprietors and the rural bourgeoisie, and if it is also to be used to describe the factory occupations and expropriations carried out by the workers themselves, then it must be said that it was broad sectors of the masses and vanguard layers of the working class and peasantry that were guilty of this "ultraleftism." And would it not be the height of dogmatic arrogance and political opportunism to condemn the workers and peasants for their "disloyalty" to a preestablished schema when all they were doing was acting according to the logic of their class interests and seeking to exploit the potential of a prerevolutionary situation to weaken their class enemies?

We have already mentioned the evolution in the attitude of the leading groups of the army. We must confess that we do not completely understand what the "popular movement" should have done to demonstrate its "comprehension" of the army -- a comprehension it displayed a lack of, according to the document. Is it that they did not believe strongly enough in the mystifying notion of the "constitutional loyalty" of the military and the army's fidelity to "democratic traditions"? Is it that they did not seek enough collaboration with the military and help the army reach its goals, even during the weeks when the coup was being prepared? Perhaps the soldiers and sailors who denounced the putschist maneuvers of the fascist officers and who were thrown into prison for their trouble under the Allende government were also guilty of this same "lack of comprehension"? For our part, we believe that it was a fatal error to count on the "exceptional" character of the Chilean army and to reject carrying out systematic work among the army's ranks. We believe that it was a fatal error not to be concerned right from the beginning with providing the working class and the peasantry with the only meaningful guarantee against a possible, if not probable, coup; namely, to arm them, to form self-defense teams in the factories and neighborhoods, and to form a militia.

As for the "manifestations of right-wing opportunism," the least that can be said is that the document speaks of them in a rather euphemistic fashion. In fact, the real point is not to denounce the "weaknesses," "insufficiencies," and misapplications of an essentially correct orientation. The nub of the question is that by its very nature and because of its strategic choices, the Unidad Popular did not pose the central problem of the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and the building of qualitatively new structures of proletarian democracy, just as it did not pose the problem of expropriating the bourgeoisie as such by creating organs of workers control and self-management. No doubt, a few particular errors could have been avoided even without a fundamental change of strategy. But in the framework of the basic orientation the outcome could not have been substantially different. Without adequate political and military preparation, the inevitable test of strength could not have been won.(1)

Again collaboration with the Christian Democracy

The document paints the current situation in Chile in somber tones, noting that it is characterized by barbaric repression

and superexploitation of the working class, which is condemned to work for starvation wages and is constantly threatened by unemployment, already affecting a large percentage of the workers. At the same time, it denounces the junta's attempts to favor certain sectors (especially the armed forces) and even to "create a restricted category of privileged workers and bureaucrats." This maneuver could also have a more strictly political aspect: It could involve an opening toward the right-wing of the Christian Democracy, which would be placed in positions of responsibility with the aim of putting the brakes on discontent among bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers.(2) Moreover, all the news during the past few months indicates that the repression has become more selective, striking sectors that are more restricted, but more important from the standpoint of organizing resistance. The Brazilian experience has shown that under certain conditions, operations like this can produce results.

What orientation does the document propose to combat the dictatorship and block its maneuvers?

The line of the "antifascist front" -- already sketched out in earlier documents -- is detailed much more explicitly here. In fact, not only does the document affirm "the necessity for deepening the unity of the democratic, progressive, and revolutionary forces"; it also adds that "the participation of the Christian Democracy in this front is a necessity of ever greater importance." Even among the armed forces, the document declares, "the people will find allies."(3)

The immediate objectives around which "all democrats must march together" in order to transform "the immense majority of the nation's rejection of the junta's acts into mass actions" are synthesized in five points: restoration of the rights of man; reconquest of democratic rights; struggle for the defense of living standards and employment; struggle against the pauperization of small and middle-level farmers, merchants, and industrialists; defense of "national independence." The "ultimate objective" is "the fall of the dictatorship, the destruction of the totalitarian and police state that it has created, and the construction of a new democratic, national, pluralistic, and popular state that will develop all the gains that the country and the people have won, that will liquidate the power of imperialism and the big monopolistic and agrarian bourgeoisie, and that will protect the interests of the great national masses by constructing a new economy that guarantees the independent development of the country." "The struggle for renovated democracy," the document explains, "is the only road that will lead the proletariat and its allies to construct a more advanced and more just society, a socialist society, on the basis of a process that would be supported by the immense majority of the country."

As for the forms of struggle, they must be chosen in consonance with "the necessity of uniting all democratic forces" in a context in which "the possibilities of democratic expression have been progressively limited." "All forms (therefore) take on their full legitimacy." We are left with this vagueness, the only explicit indication offered being a condemnation of "terrorism" and "adventurist actions." Taking account of the fact that for the authors of the document the expressions "terrorism" and "adventurist actions" have a rather sweeping application, it must be concluded that in practice all forms of armed struggle are excluded, at least for an indeterminate period.

The definition of such a perspective shows just how partial and tactical the self-criticism about "manifestations of right-wing opportunism" is. In reality, the authors of the document seem to have drawn no lessons from the tragic experience of

September 11, 1973. Or worse, they have drawn one lesson -- exactly the opposite of the one that is appropriate. Today they are proposing unity with the party that ever since the early 1960s has represented the decisive layers of the Chilean bourgeoisie and that bears the greatest responsibility for the political preparation for the coup. At the same time they confirm the strategic program that was at the root of their past action: an alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie; construction of a "democratic and pluralistic state"; definition of a "democratic and anti-imperialist stage" of the revolution, passage to socialism being relegated to a future and clearly distinct stage. They refuse to admit the elementary truth that the same contradictions that broke out during the Allende period and led to the defeat would break out a second time if the workers movement were to maintain the same orientation based on the same erroneous premises after the overthrow of the dictatorship -- at least if the authors of the document do not press their "rectification" all the way to rejection of any reformist measure susceptible of creating tension and accept the political hegemony of the Christian Democracy. In this case -- a purely theoretical hypothesis -- the course of events could be different, provided the masses do not thwart these nice little calculations. But we do not think that the leaders of the Unidad Popular envisage such a variant.

For a revolutionary orientation

The document released on May 1, 1974, provoked polemics within the Chilean left, wide sections of which have acquired a very lively critical consciousness during the struggles of past years.(4) But the orientation of the document is likely to be accepted inasmuch as it was drawn up by the Unidad Popular and especially by the Communist party -- which commands a network of cadres and militants that are far from solid -- and can count on the endorsement of international forces and can appear as a response to a united demand arising almost spontaneously under such hard conditions of struggle. That is why offering a systematic and consistent critique of these conceptions is a prime task for revolutionary Marxists.

The problem of the correct strategic conception in the struggle against a dictatorship is not a new one in the workers movement. The advocates of the orientation outlined in the Unidad Popular document -- whose objective is the restitution of a "democratic regime" -- have always claimed that to reject their orientation means to accept the idea that the overthrow of the dictatorship automatically means the overthrow of the capitalist system and the institution of a workers state.(5) That, according to them, would be a schematic conception that would prevent the broadening of the antifascist front.

No serious revolutionary Marxist would claim that the overthrow of a dictatorship -- whether military or fascist -- leads automatically to the seizure of power by the working class. (That is a variant that, while it should not be excluded a priori, most often appears improbable, for reasons that we cannot develop here.) But it hardly flows from this that the workers movement should consider establishment of a bourgeois democracy -- even a "renovated" bourgeois democracy -- as its own task, that it should collaborate with the bourgeoisie or "progressive sectors" of it in this undertaking; that, in other words, it should cooperate in solving the crisis of leadership that the fall of the dictatorship represents for the ruling class. Postwar experience in Italy and France is eloquent in this regard. By collaborating in "democratic" reconstruction, the traditional workers parties allowed the bourgeoisie to overcome one of the gravest crises in its history,

to rebuild its mechanisms of accumulation and to reconstruct its political apparatus. Logically, once the crucial stage was surmounted, the reformists were kicked out of the governments they had entered.

The problem for the working class is to wage a struggle against the dictatorship that strikes most strongly against the system as a whole and allows for the establishment of the most favorable relationship of forces for the laboring masses. In the phase that immediately follows the fall of the dictatorship, the problem is not to place the seizure of power on the agenda right away. It is to create and deepen a situation of dual power, and thus to develop revolutionary organs of democratic mobilization and organization of the masses. That means -- to put it another way -- that especially in a country like Chile in which a crucial experience has stimulated a rise in the level of consciousness of broad layers of the working class, the peasantry, and the radicalized petty-bourgeoisie, that the perspective should not be one of a stage of "democratization" or "rationalization" of capitalism, a perspective that necessarily implies collaboration with the ruling class and acceptance of its hegemony for an indefinite period. The perspective must instead be one of prerevolutionary or revolutionary crisis determined in the final analysis by the bourgeoisie's inability to surmount the structural contradictions of its system. Hence the necessity for preparing a positive outcome of this crisis -- something the traditional parties have proven incapable of doing. The conquest of power by the proletariat cannot be placed on the agenda immediately after the overthrow of the dictatorship. But it is contained within the objective tendency of development and must be the strategic objective of that stage, independently of the mediations and tactical measures that may be necessary.

The response to the second question -- the character of the "antifascist front" -- flows from this first premise. There is no doubt that a united policy is a prime necessity that corresponds to the most basic sentiments of the masses crushed by repression and superexploitation. But unity must be realized on a class basis. A united front of workers, peasants, and other exploited layers of the population must be constructed. This front cannot include the bourgeoisie, whose possible opposition to the dictatorship has a strategic objective that is qualitatively different from that of the workers movement. This does not mean that the workers movement should not exploit the political contradictions of the ruling class or that it should regret the fact that sections of the bourgeoisie come to oppose the dictatorship. Nor does it mean that it should reject possible convergence in action. But it does mean that the workers movement should not establish a political alliance or a common front at the cost of watering down its action or of renouncing the strategic perspective of revolutionary struggle. The international workers movement has had many absolutely clear experiences in this regard. But unfortunately, there is no one more deaf than one who does not want to hear!

Finally, in a situation as exists in Chile today, any initiative in struggle against the dictatorship presupposes an extreme sensitivity toward the requirements of the morale and demands of the masses -- even the most basic ones. It requires systematic and patient propaganda work. Any struggle that strikes at the dictatorship and opens breaches, even modest ones, must be supported and stimulated. If the slightest possibility for illegal actions arises, it must be seized upon. We do not directly know the details of the situation that has developed in recent months, and even on the scene it is not easy to have an overall view. Nevertheless, it seems obvious to us that a stage of reorganization, accumulation of forces, and reestablishment of contacts with sectors of the masses is absolutely

necessary. Revolutionaries should not underestimate the tasks of preparation. At the same time, they should not allow the slightest equivocation on a fundamental point. It is not enough to assert that all forms of struggle are legitimate, as the Unidad Popular document does. It must be affirmed that the military dictatorship cannot be overthrown without armed struggle and without the indispensable initiatives of the revolutionary vanguard in this area as well.

The specific forms of the armed struggle at different stages of the struggle and the precise choices that should be made are the objects of very lively discussions. But it is not the purpose of this article to sketch out a response that can only be the result of a collective elaboration of Chilean revolutionaries who have consciously lived through the tragic experiences of the past few years.

Footnotes:

1. If the summary that we are in possession of is accurate (from the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, June 21), a criticism of "manifestations of right-wing opportunism" was recently made by spokesmen for the Soviet bureaucracy (in an article published in the review *Problems of the CPSU*). In this article, Allende is accused notably of not having acted decisively in face of the bodies of the state apparatus that had undertaken obstructive actions, of "not having applied any exceptional measures against the Congress and the judicial bodies." His defeat was allegedly due to "the absence of really revolutionary popular forces." What the magazine seems to ignore is that these "deficiencies" were the logical consequence of a definition of the character of the Chilean revolution and a strategic orientation that the Soviet bureaucracy and the Communist parties under its influence have always defended (under Stalin and after Stalin). But this corresponds to an old tradition. When an orientation that the Soviet leaders have imposed or defended results in a defeat, the bureaucrats take their distance, criticize the practical application, look for scapegoats, and keep quiet about their own responsibilities.
2. Such maneuvers have already been denounced in a document circulated in Santiago by the Communist party in mid-June 1974, a document that explains that the personalities of the Christian Democracy have already obtained important posts.
3. The document also contains a unity overture to left organizations outside the Unidad Popular. In fact, it is clear that the CP and SP have every interest in including the MIR in an "antifascist front" in order to get some left cover.
4. At the time this article is being written we do not yet have information on the conditions under which the document was written and distributed. Some socialist groups in exile have expressed their disagreement with it. The MAPU exiles in Italy have alluded to a series of objections they had made to an earlier draft and affirmed that the MAPU would not sign a document like the one that was published. It must not be forgotten that on the eve of the coup differences within the Unidad Popular had become exacerbated and that things almost came to an open break. Nevertheless, the problem that is posed today is not so much debating particular tactical questions as reopening discussion on the basic orientation. Neither the MAPU nor Altamirano's tendency in the SP has done this in a consistent way.
5. At bottom, the document again takes up the whole series of problems that have dominated the Communist parties for forty years since the rejection of the conceptions of the "third period," which were characterized by an aberrant schematism especially concerning the prediction of the inevitability of the victory of the proletariat after the overthrow of fascism. Trotsky and the Left Opposition polemicized against such conceptions right from the beginning. □

COLLAPSE OF THE 'UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES'

The Bolivian dictator Hugo Banzer Suarez used to be in the habit of giving speeches about the "unity of the armed forces as a bulwark of power." Today, this image of a united armed forces, so extensively propagated both inside and outside the country, has been demolished by the abortive coup that Banzer's officers and comrades in arms organized against him. The military plot laid bare the processes of differentiation and decomposition that are now ripening within the Bolivian officer corps.

It is true that in the past Banzer has been faced with conflicts in the army, but these have generally originated from the top hierarchy, where every now and then some general or other gets it into his head that he has abilities at least as developed as those of Banzer and decides that he has the duty to assume the responsibilities of president of the republic in place of the dictator. Such was the case, successively, with General Iriarte Roque Terán and Colonels Selich Zenteno Anaya, A. de Zamora, and others. One after another, they were all cold-bloodedly eliminated. The successive crises touched off by these high dignitaries had scarcely any effect on the officer corps as a whole, nor did they involve them. The officer corps maintained its unity, which was founded on the extraordinary privileges the officers have enjoyed since the Banzer regime came to power in the coup d'etat of August 21, 1971.

The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR -- Revolutionary Armed Forces), the group formed by officers under the command of Major Rubén Sanchez, which opposed the fascist coup and rallied to the popular resistance, had not been able to extend its influence within the officer corps. In the past, when we spoke of fissures appearing in this pillar of the military dictatorship, we were referring to those situations.

The abortive coup of June 5, 1974

But now, the attempted coup has revealed that these fissures have deepened and, under the pressure of the general situation in Bolivia, have been transformed into a real crisis.

They are seriously undermining the main instrument of power that Banzer commands. This time, it was not a matter of a few ambitious and isolated generals. The attempted coup involved several entire units of the army as well as dozens of officers, among which twenty-five of the most prominent were punished and thrown out of the armed forces.

There are new elements in this crisis. The putschists spoke for a tendency within the army that is trying to take its distance from the dictatorship and wants to win some sympathy among the popular masses. In addition, the many messages and proclamations that came to light after the failure of the coup indicate that the officers are involved in a sharp struggle among political tendencies. For the time being, five conflicting currents can be distinguished.

1. The top military command, headed by Banzer, which exercises real power and governs the country. It is responsible for the whole policy of the regime. Its most vigorous civilian mouthpieces are the FSB (Falange Socialista Boliviana -- Bolivian Socialist Phalange, a far-right organization supported mainly by the large landed proprietors) and the bureaucratic remains of the now fragmented MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario -- Revolutionary Nationalist Movement).

2. The FAR of Major Sanchez, which has won "citizenship rights" in the army thanks to its persistent propaganda and the action of its clandestine teams in the barracks. According to their own documents, the FAR is made up of commandants, officers, subofficers, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers who regard themselves as the heirs to the struggles of the Indians of Tupacumarú and Katori against the Spanish colonizers, the heirs of the guerrillas who fought for independence against the Spanish crown, the heirs of Belzu, the president and caudillo of the last century, and of progressive military men like Busch and Villaroel.

The FAR affirms that its goal is national liberation. It declares itself antifascist and anti-imperialist. It condemns Yankee imperialism as the number-one enemy of the Bolivian people. It defines the revolutionary aims it is fighting for as "changes in the structures that will radically and definitively modify the framework of dependence and neocolonialism." It calls upon its brothers-in-arms in the army to struggle "together with the miners, the factory workers, the teachers, the peasants, the university students, the liberal professors, and all impoverished and exploited sectors of the country with the aim of winning national liberation through common action." The FAR was part of the FRA (Frente Revolucionaria Anti-imperialista -- Revolutionary Anti-imperialist Front) and continues to call for such a front as the "political instrument having the strategic objective of building socialism." The FAR's head-on opposition to the Banzer dictatorship has won it some sympathy among low-ranking officers.

3. The group whose existence was brought to light by the abortive coup d'etat of June 5, 1974. Its leaders were Lieutenant Colonels Lopez, Calvi, Sanchez, and Uzqueda, and Majors Gary, Prado, and Sergio Osinaza. Since the failure of the coup, four colonels, two majors, two captains, six lieutenants, and six corporals have been removed from their posts. A manifesto signed by four of these officers who are now in exile in Brazil defines this putschist group as a "movement of generals" that "corresponds to the revolutionary thought of the university students and the trade-union struggle that is trying to realize the gains and well-being of the workers." They oppose the totalitarian system of Banzer, which they declare to be a repressive regime contrary to the interests of the people and a defender only of the interests of the privileged classes. They condemn the massacre of peasants in Cochabamba. They claim to be in favor of university autonomy, of the right of the COB (Central Obrera Boliviana,



the national trade-union federation, now banned) to function legally, and of the overthrow of Banzer and the return of constitutional liberties.

4. Concurrently with the manifesto of the defeated putschists, there appeared publicly a programmatic document of a "central general staff of the nationalist armed forces" signed by 1,500 commandants, officers, subofficers, and cadets. They accuse Banzer of having transformed himself into an entrepreneur working with the "middle mines" (the privately owned mines, as opposed to the nationalized "big" mines -- INPRECOR) and a sector of the private employers. They affirm that Banzer has placed the officers in the service of imperialism under the pretext of waging an antiguerrilla, antisubversive, and counterrevolutionary war. They call for the creation of a Second Republic based on a mobilization of the masses, a struggle for national sovereignty, and the establishment of a progressive regime embodying "socialist, humanist, and Christian faith." They demand amnesty for political prisoners, the reconstruction of the three branches of the state, economic development toward social ends, and depoliticization of the armed forces.

5. Finally, another group of military men has appeared. This group has published a document condemning Brazil and Yankee imperialism.

Why the division in the army?

It is important to explain what is behind this disintegration of the "unity of the Bolivian armed forces," which the dictatorship had so often proclaimed to be "founded on granite." A whole series of factors have been exerting pressure on the officers. The first thing that must be mentioned is the crisis of the civilian components of the government, the MNR and the FSB, which have exhausted themselves in violent struggles over control of the state apparatus and finances, thus giving rise to gigantic corruption. Next, there is the failure of the government's proposals and projects allegedly designed to bring about economic development and solve the country's chronic economic crisis, which has generated exacerbated inflation, unemployment, and poverty, despite the advantageous conditions created for Bolivian capitalism by the increase in the world market prices of raw materials. This whole economic morass has provoked growing resistance from the masses.

In addition, account must be taken of the geopolitical international pressures on Bolivia and the open intervention of the Brazilian dictatorship and Brazilian capital in the economy, political life, and even decisions of the army in Bolivia.

All these factors have affected the sensibilities of many officers. But the main thing that has been shaking the young officers has been the tenacious resistance of the masses, who, since the peasant rebellion of January 1974 (see INPRECOR No.0) have demonstrated that they can rise up against their exploiters and oppressors.

The officers had accepted Banzer's plans because they believed that these plans would produce economic and social stabilization. But as they are now seeing that this stabilization is an illusion and that the country is becoming more and more unstable, they are beginning to vacillate. They see that their future is in danger, that the Banzer government is falling apart, and that it no longer has much of a future. They have no desire to go down with this government, and they are therefore beginning to take their distance from it.

In less than three years, the military has seen the failure of the Banzer regime and all its schemes. They have seen the country sold to the rich, with 10 million hectares ceded to imperialist oil companies. They have witnessed the denationalization of the mining companies, the ceding of land to French, Japanese, and North American companies. They have seen Brazil's peaceful invasion of the regions of Santa Cruz and Beni. But all this has failed to produce any "economic miracle." On the contrary, the result has been inflation and food shortages. They have seen their military commanders wage the bloodiest repression against the Bolivian masses and seen them participate in plundering, corrupting, and sacking the resources of the nation.

Furthermore, they have felt the struggle of the masses, the miners who will not compromise, the radicalization of the peasants who broke through the farce of the "military-peasant pact," the new rebellion that has arisen among the university students. In short, they have felt the new revolutionary rise of the masses.

This reality is affecting not only the armed forces; it has also been noted by imperialism, which is keeping watch over the situation and taking note of the decomposition of its puppet regime.

In the abortive coup, as in all other crises in the military, the good intentions and sensibilities of some young officers were interlaced with the plans and calculations of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, which are trying to preserve their power in face of the decomposition of the existing military dictatorship. Confronted with the rise of the masses and the failure of Banzer, the uneasiness and hesitation of the young officers had to be canalized toward a simple change in personnel without any other important changes. That was the objective of the ruling classes. It is important to note that the tendencies that appeared simultaneously with the abortive coup are contesting for the support of the masses and are orienting toward the COB and the university students. We can thus expect the launching of an operation designed to "save the armed forces and the regime that they represent." This will be, to put it another way, a preventive operation to replace Banzer but save the regime. Already the hand of imperialism has appeared in such a way as to leave no room for doubt about the origin of certain counsels and advisers. It is not by accident that the two documents produced by military tendencies were written by officers living in the United States. There are also indications that the ex-president of COMIBOL (the nationalized mines company -- INPRECOR) during the Barrientos regime is intervening in the crisis. The putschists also did not conceal their ties with the old reactionary politician Paz Estenssoro.

There was a heterogeneous conglomerate of groups ranged around the attempted coup, groups that were both united and

differentiated in their ambitions. The coup attempt on June 5, 1974, seems to have been prematurely precipitated by the impatience of some of the military officers before all the possible participants could be grouped together. The rehabilitation of Paz Estenssoro that was demanded by the putschists provoked conflicts with the groupings that are lined up in different "fronts." Among these groupings are the MNI of Siles (Movimiento Nacionalista de Izquierda -- Left Nationalist Movement, an old faction of the MNR), the Christian Democratic party, the PRA, and even the Bolivian Communist party, in addition to Paz Estenssoro's MNR.

The working class, the peasantry, and the revolutionary university students differentiated themselves from the putschists with a sure instinct. No sector of the masses mobilized in response to the putschists' appeals. The trade-union organizations and their vanguard continued to work for their revolutionary class objectives. Banzer used the coup attempt as a pretext to orchestrate a new campaign against "extremism" and to denounce preparations for guerrilla warfare. His visits to the military garrisons were aimed at reconstituting his decomposed front by resorting to the fear of "extremism" and guerrillaism. But he failed before and he will fail again. Furthermore, the maneuvers to save the capitalist neocolonial regime through appeals for a "Second Republic" symbolized by the hated former dictator Barrientos will not replace the socialist perspective among the masses, the perspective around which they are united and for which they are preparing themselves. □



COLOMBIA

LÓPEZ MICHELSEN'S 'MANDATE'

by CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ

Five candidates ran in the 1974 presidential elections in Colombia:

- * Alfonso López Michelsen, supported by the Liberal party.
- * Alvaro Gomez Hurtado, supported by the Conservative party.
- * Maria Eugenia Rojas de Moreno, presented by the ANAPO (National Popular Alliance).
- * Hernando Echeverry Mejía, presented by the National Union of the Opposition.
- * Hermes Duarte, supported by the Christian Democracy.

Political context of the electoral struggle

After the fall of the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the bourgeoisie decided to form the so-called National Front, which united the two traditional bourgeois parties, the Liberal party and the Conservative party. This agreement entailed an alternation of the party holding the presi-

dency. Every four years the presidency would automatically change hands between the Conservatives and the Liberals. It also entailed parity in parliamentary seats and public officials. The agreement was to remain in effect for sixteen years.

The two traditional bourgeois parties thus maintained a monopoly of power during the successive governments of Lleras Caramago, Guillermo León Valencia, Carlos Lleras Restrepo, and finally, Misael Pastrana Borrero. Access to parliament was barred to all other political formations or parties. No person not belonging to one of these two parties was allowed to fulfill any bureaucratic function within the state apparatus.

For more than a decade, during the "violencia," these two parties appeared as deadly enemies. During this whole period, the Conservatives held monopoly control of the state apparatus and unleashed a violent repression against "seditious elements," into which category they added the Liberals. But at the end of the battle, the two parties concluded an alliance that eliminated the divergences that had conjuncturally ex-

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isted between them. This alliance was presented as a veritable fortress that would protect the state apparatus and ward off all workers and popular demands.

In the political realm, the National Front was the clearest expression of the monolithic character not only of the Conservative party but also of the Liberal party, in the sense that the most brutal repression was unleashed against any other form of political organization and against any demand of the masses. The Liberal presidents competed with the Conservative ones in repressing the left and trade-union organizations, as well as any other form of mobilization against the government's reactionary policy. The myth of liberalism as a representative of a supposedly "nationalist" sector of the bourgeoisie that "progressive" or even revolutionary forces could ally with proved to be a Stalinist fantasy lacking the slightest foundation in reality. There was one decisive conclusion for the revolutionary process in Colombia: The Colombian revolution will be socialist or there will be no revolution.

During the first years of the National Front the Stalinist Communist party was considerably weakened. Its search for a "nationalist" sector of the bourgeoisie led it to dream of a confrontation between two lines within the bourgeoisie: the "progressive" line of López Michelsen and the "recalcitrant" line of the official leadership of the Liberal party and the entire Conservative party. According to this schema, López Michelsen represented an alternative solution to the official line of the Liberal party, because he defended certain theses that had earned him a reputation as the "enfant terrible" of the bourgeoisie -- an example being the fact that he continued to support the Cuban revolution and called for a "revolution" in Colombia.

In reality, for a certain time the position of López Michelsen could have been considered as expressing a sentiment of opposition to the premises of the National Front (parity, monolithic character of the two parties, etc.) and as articulating certain theses on the state that some "Marxists" might have considered "revolutionary" during the 1960s. But history was to confirm that this opposition to the National Front was not necessarily anti-bourgeois or anticapitalist. On the contrary, it was aimed at finding the most auspicious ground from which to orient the bourgeoisie after the National Front came to an end. It was a matter of preserving bourgeois rule, of confirming its juridical and political superstructure in such a way that a possible democratization of parliamentary representa-

tion could provide all necessary guarantees against the revolution and the mass movement so that the working class and its allies, the peasant and student movements, would continue to have their hands tied.

The National Front was responsible for the most restrictive legislation against the working class and the right to strike. This legislation was strengthened by each successive National Front government, to the point that it is now virtually impossible for the workers to launch a strike without it immediately being declared illegal by the Ministry of Labor. The National Front is responsible for the murder of about a hundred students and high-schoolers, for the massacre of striking workers in Santa Barbara, Barrancabermeja, and the Cauca Valley.

López Michelsen never supported any protest movement against this policy of the Colombian bourgeoisie, despite the support extended to him by the Stalinists for several years. His political program was defined by his conception of the role of the state, which he thought would have to be strengthened beyond the political parties and the professional groupings. It is no accident that at the time that López's Revolutionary Liberal Movement was functioning, both the Stalinists of the Communist party and the official leaders of the Liberal party adopted attitudes toward López Michelsen that were contradictory but nevertheless flowed from the same basic premise: the assumption that a strengthening of the state would lead to a weakening of the bourgeoisie in terms of its professional organizations and its political representation through the parties. Hence the myth of the "progressive" character of López Michelsen -- he was being supported by the CP and vehemently attacked by the official leaders of the government party.

But it took only a few years for both sides to become convinced that the famous formula of strengthening the state would mean exactly the opposite of what they had thought. In face of this evidence, each side switched its position 180 degrees. The bourgeoisie threw its support to López Michelsen; the Stalinist CP began to oppose him. But the CP's opposition was not a frontal opposition.

The Colombian far-left, which arose out of opposition to the class-conciliationist line the CP was following in the 1960s, had manifested its distrust of any sort of alliance with sectors of the national bourgeoisie from the beginning. It set itself the task of waging its struggle against North American imperialism in combination with the struggle against the whole

Colombian bank workers strike for higher wages.



López Michelsen.



"national" bourgeoisie, whatever "progressive" character any of its sectors might have appeared to have at any given moment.

Anticapitalist and antibourgeois opposition were presented as the coordinates of the political practice of the far left, which was concretized by the guerrilla struggle as the expression of revolutionary radicalism and by a permanent antiparlimentary propaganda during this period. The peasant movement and the student movement attained their maturity around the time of the elections exactly on the basis of antiparlimentary and anticapitalist propaganda. The pro-Moscow CP, which was continuing its efforts to get into parliament, ran in the elections as a sector of the Liberal party, which was the only possible way to run legally.

The candidates and their electoral currents

Before the 1974 elections there was a battle within the Liberal party between former president Carlos Lleras Restrepo and Alfonso López Michelsen. Lleras represented the typical tradition of the policy of the National Front, of which he was one of the most representative spokesmen. He presented himself as the advocate of an alliance with the Conservative party; that is, he wanted to be the united candidate of the two parties, despite the fact that the sixteen-year period of single candidacies for the presidency had expired.

López's position was to assert the necessity for the Liberal party to run its own candidate (himself, of course) and to rally a wide gamut of sectors of the bourgeoisie into a campaign of alliance, drawing in many popular layers to support a political figure who had presented himself for years as a "revolutionary." López won this struggle hands down and got the support of the most important sectors of the bourgeoisie, in industry and agriculture as well as among the banks and commercial sectors.

Given the crisis of the political parties, the thesis on the strengthening of the state won support from all sections of the employers. This pill was sweetened for them by the fact that López's political program was not in conflict with any important faction of the bourgeoisie, not even with the interests of the large landed proprietors grouped around Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala, the chief of the Liberal party.

López summed up his program in the formula for a "clear mandate" and a supposed "wages and incomes policy," eclectic formulas that could mean opting for a neocolonial economic development combined with some participationist demagoguery.

The Conservative party, led by the current president, Misael Pastrana Borrero, launched the candidacy of Alvaro Gomez Hurtado under the slogan "a policy in favor of economic development." This was aimed at attracting the industrial sector of the bourgeoisie and the landed proprietors. The "policy in favor of economic development" was nothing but a demagogic formula raised by some sections of the bourgeoisie in order to lull popular layers with the dream of prosperity. Moreover, the Conservatives were not able to take advantage of the "clear mandate" insofar as their campaign, as opposed to López's, was too vague to regroup the various factions of the bourgeoisie around their program.

The Conservative party was tied to the epoch of the violencia in Colombia. For a long time it had tried to present itself to the bourgeoisie as its most intransigent watchdog, borrowing the propaganda slogans of the rightist organizations, like

Tradition, Family, and Propriety (the equivalent of the Chilean Fatherland and Freedom). This wound up isolating it even further from the popular masses and opened a breach for the López campaign, which appeared as an alternative "leftist" solution.

The National Popular Alliance, a political formation that arose out of the Conservative party and drew along some elements of the Liberal party, developed as a pole of attraction for some sectors of the "lumpen" bourgeoisie (large-scale smugglers, drug peddlers, emerald dealers, etc.) and the state apparatus. It had some support among marginal sectors of the population. Ideologically, it can be characterized as a petty-bourgeois party in that its ideology balances between capitalism and socialism, between Catholic professions of faith and defense of freedom of religion, between parliamentarism and threats of civil war. It got its highest score in the 1970 elections, when its candidate got almost as many votes as Pastrana, the official candidate. But later its vacillations resulted in its being cast into a minority position as against the two traditional parties to the point that today it is no more than "the third party." Its presidential candidate, María Eugenia Rojas de Moreno, daughter of the old dictator Rojas Pinilla, got only 350,000 votes.

The National Union of Opposition ran Hernando Echeverry Mejía as its candidate. The National Union of Opposition is a coalition of various factions that left ANAPO and of some independent groups around the pro-Moscow CP and the MOIR. The MOIR represents the Colombian expression of the Maoist movement after the right turn of the Chinese leadership. Hernando Echeverry himself was part of the group that split from ANAPO. He looked for a rapprochement with the Conservative candidate during the electoral campaign. The program of the National Union of Opposition was strictly lukewarm so as not to annoy any sector of the bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeoisie. Although its strategic project was close to that of the Chilean Unidad Popular, the program was diluted to the lowest possible level, with a few pearls being borrowed from the treasure chest of the government reactionaries, like the demand for the opening of diplomatic relations with all the countries of the world.

The National Union of Opposition did not succeed in attracting massive support from working-class voters, although the union bureaucrats grouped around the CSTC (Confederación Sindical Trabajadores Colombianos -- Colombian Trade-Union Federation) which is controlled by the CP, linked up with it. Despite the huge propaganda machine it utilized, the National Union of Opposition got less than 150,000 votes. It is significant that the enormous mass of propaganda distributed by all the parties and political groups aimed at leading the voters to the polls did not prevent a large number of abstentions. (This has been a constant feature of Colombian elections in past years.) Only about 50% of those eligible cast ballots.

Crisis of parliamentarism

Many and varied hypotheses have been put forward about the election of López Michelsen. None have stressed the reformist character that his government could take on, which would be in contradiction to the considerations we described above. It will rather be a government that will continue some of the practices of the National Front with a political program that will not be fundamentally different from the one advanced by previous presidents.

The Colombian economy is in critical straits, as are all neo-colonial economies. But the Colombian bourgeoisie has been able to take advantage of a circumstance that is unusual in the Latin American context: the lack of combativity among the working class during the past decade. On the basis of this laxity, the judicial machine established by the National Front has put the proletariat in an unfavorable situation. It cannot even legally wage a struggle for its most elementary demands, a situation that has led not only to the so-called free trade-unions (the UTC and the CTC, which are affiliated to the ORIT), but also to the CSTC controlled by the Stalinists.

To be sure, the struggles that have continued to be led by the guerrillas, the student movement, and especially a radical sector of the agricultural proletariat organized in independent unions all demonstrate the great potential of struggle inherent in the current situation of the working class and the radicalized sectors.

The bourgeoisie is afraid that its prospects for broadening its markets will fail. It knows that the crisis that threatens the economy could increase unemployment in a massive way and could simultaneously provoke a dizzying price increase with

the possibility of a radical rise in workers struggles. For this reason, it prefers to take its chances with a pseudoreformist government that will appease struggles for demands, but will throw all the weight of its policy behind boosting the profits of the large factories in which the major part of national and foreign capital is invested.

The strengthening of the state that López Michelsen has proposed serves to build a base among the petty-bourgeoisie, which has illusions in the arbitrating role that the state can play in conciliating the interests of capital and labor and in utilizing forms of intervention into certain branches of the infrastructure in which small foreign companies are interested. The López regime is an alternative solution for the bourgeoisie aimed at increasing the cohesion among various sectors of foreign and national capital and at obtaining "popular" support from layers of the middle classes that have been heavily affected by the measures taken by the previous regimes and by the constant increases in the prices of basic necessities.

The task of revolutionaries is to elaborate a policy of united front of the far-left organizations and the armed movements that will allow for the development of broad mass mobilizations against the policy of the bourgeoisie.

AUTO

auto industry: a worldwide crisis



by ERNEST MANDEL

The automobile industry in the capitalist countries is now going through a real crisis of overproduction. It is not simply a recession, but a classical crisis. Both the degree and the duration of the decline in sales and production testify to this.

The breadth of the crisis...

During the first quarter of 1974, the figures for registration of new automobiles fell by the following percentages in comparison with the first quarter of 1973:

8% in France
18% in Sweden

22% in Italy
22% in Britain (a 26% decline for the first semester)
22.9% in Switzerland
31% in Japan
31% in West Germany

The result was a considerable decline in production despite a rapid accumulation of stocks. Profits dropped even more sharply. And significant reductions in employment are inevitable.

In France production of automobiles (excluding trucks) declined by 2.7% during the first quarter of 1974; in the United States it fell 28%, in Britain 26%, and in West Germany 18.3%. If production increased slightly in Italy, it is only

because this country was the only one to experience a decline in automobile production during the first quarter of 1973 as compared with the preceding year.

The fall in profits was sensational. Again for the first quarter of 1974, the decreases were: 85% for General Motors, 66% for Ford, 98% for Chrysler, 58% for American Motors, 40% for Nissan, and 83% for Toyota. For the six months ending March 31, 1974, British Leyland suffered a loss (before taxes) of £16.5 million as against a profit of £22.8 million during the corresponding period of the previous year. Fiat also suffered a deficit. As for Citroën, this trust was a hair's breadth from bankruptcy.

The level of employment has been seriously affected in the United States. During the first week of April 1974 some 79,000 of the 728,000 members of the United Automobile Workers were definitively laid off, while another 72,000 were working only part time; that is, the unemployment rate was more than 20 percent. (Two-thirds of those laid off were General Motors workers.)

In Europe the layoffs have been less sweeping. But there were several waves of significant partial unemployment: a three-day workweek at Fiat in Italy at the beginning of the year, 62,000 Volkswagen workers in West Germany put on part-time unemployment in the spring. Above all, a total freeze was placed on hiring and pressure was put on older workers to retire prematurely and on other workers to quit voluntarily. And there were other ways of avoiding outright layoffs but reducing the volume of employment nevertheless.

The firms whose profitability has been most gravely affected by the crisis are now preparing a new attack on employment levels. Clearly, the most serious case is that of British Leyland. On June 21, 1974, this firm announced an "economizing" program that involves a massive reduction in employment, especially in the Austin-Morris division, which produces cheap automobiles for mass consumption.

... And its causes

The bourgeois press and the public relations specialists of the automobile industry have tried to present the current crisis of the industry as a fleeting accident provoked by the "oil crisis." There are many reasons for this attempt. First of all, the employers hope to halt the decline in sales -- or at least that section of the sales decline that is attributed to "psychological reasons" -- by auto-suggestion. (In the same way Nixon hopes to stop the recession by asserting that it doesn't exist.) Also, the importance of the automobile industry in the whole capitalist economy of the imperialist countries (and in a few semicolonial countries like Brazil and Argentina) is such that a prolonged depression in this sector would change the whole outlook for investments and the global growth rate of imperialist industry. Furthermore, a prolonged depression in the automobile industry would demonstrate the mystifying character of one of the basic axioms of contemporary bourgeois ideology, and more especially political economy: that today's "economic science" can not only assure capitalist industry of a "total demand" sufficient to avoid crises of overproduction, but can also assure each important branch of industry a "specific demand" that can guard it against significant declines in production.

But the claim that the automobile crisis results exclusively from the oil crisis does not stand up under a careful examination of the facts. The reality is completely different.

The auto crisis is developing under the impetus of three major factors: the economic recession in most of the imperialist countries; the economic effects of the increase in the price of oil; the end of the long phase of accelerated growth in the market for automobiles in Western Europe and Japan (and in several other countries as well). Thus, the "oil crisis" is but one element among others that are causing the auto crisis. Even if it were to be granted that the oil crisis triggered the auto crisis, it is scarcely enough to relegate the other, more profound, causes to the background.

Moreover, the erroneous analysis of many bourgeois observers gives rise to an erroneous outlook. They were anticipating a rapid upturn in automobile sales after the end of the oil shortage (or the fear of a shortage) and after the successive increases in the price of gasoline leveled off. But there has been no upturn since the month of March 1974, when the oil shortage ended and the price of gasoline stabilized, although at a considerably higher level than before.

Effects of the 'oil crisis'

What are the real effects of the "oil crisis" on the auto crisis? The effects are exerted primarily on the costs of using a private car and on the category of privately-owned autos.

First the oil shortage and then the considerable increase in gasoline prices manifestly discouraged purchases (or use, and therefore replacement) of automobiles for a whole series of buyers that may or may not be termed "marginal," depending on what meaning is invested in this vague term. The more modest categories of automobile users (semi-skilled workers, low-paid white-collar workers, civil servants, craftsmen, small peasants, and small, nonprosperous merchants) tended to think more than they did in the past about whether they could afford to go someplace by car or whether they had to stoop to mass transit.

Both for transportation to and from work and for leisure trips (weekends, parties, and so on), there was a significant increase in the use of railroads, buses, subways, and other means of transit, whereas in past decades the private car was the number one means of transit in such cases. Statistics on 1974 vacations are not yet available. But it is certain that here also utilization of private cars has been on the decline, at least in Western Europe and Japan.

Further, the gasoline price increases and the legal reductions in speed limits have undercut most of the attractive power of "middle-sized" or "big" cars as opposed to compacts and "economy" cars, except for reasons of ostentation or desire for luxury. Consequently, with the exception of a few specialized brands, sales of middle-sized and big cars are going through a more than proportional decline, while things are going somewhat better for small cars. On the U.S. market, sales of small cars are declining only modestly, while those of the big gas-eaters hitherto preferred by American customers, have literally collapsed (going from 660,000 in March 1973 to 350,000 in March 1974!). Since the beginning of 1974, sales of small cars have for the first time surpassed sales of big cars in absolute figures.

In consequence, there has been a gradual reconversion of the four American auto trusts toward production of small cars. American Motors, the least important of the four, had in fact carried out this reconversion even before the current crisis broke out. The three other trusts have set in motion an investment program staggered over several years.

Nevertheless, these programs are less ambitious than had been expected. Ford reduced its outlay for this program during the current year from \$1,100 million to \$1,000 million. Chrysler, harder hit by the profitability crisis, reduced its program from \$350 million to \$265 million. Only General Motors, which was the last company to enter the small-car field, will invest more in this field this year than it did last year: \$1,300 million as opposed to \$1,200 million.

The reticence corresponds both to the fall in profits (and therefore in the companies' own resources for investment) and to the increase in the price of credit and the uncertainty weighing on the future of the automobile industry and therefore on its outlets. So it can be seen just how much the direct effects of the "oil crisis" on the auto industry are in reality combined with conjunctural and structural factors that are determining the evolution of the demand for private cars in the imperialist countries.

Effects of the economic recession

The automobile industry, like all industrial branches that produce durable consumer goods, is more vulnerable to even moderate conjunctural fluctuations than other branches of industry producing consumer goods. Obviously, the household of a factory worker or a white-collar worker can make quicker and broader reductions in its budget under "automobile" than under "food" or "clothing," not to mention "rent" and related services like heat, electricity, gas, water, and so on. It can therefore be expected that during each economic recession there will be a decline in automobile sales that will be greater than the general reduction in production, real income, and employment. If the auto slump in countries like the United States, Japan, West Germany, and Britain has extended beyond the "oil crisis," it is obviously because of the effects of the recession (whether real or anticipated soon). Countries that have not yet been hit by the recession, like Australia and Brazil, are not yet experiencing the auto slump, although the "oil crisis" affects them as much as it does any other countries. The measures taken to restrict credit in order to "slow down" inflation (nobody talks about "stopping" it any more!) have contributed to reducing automobile sales in that these measures have made credit for consumption more expensive, or have even quantitatively reduced it. The effects of these measures on the demand for automobiles have been especially disastrous in Britain.

The absence of a causal link with the "oil crisis" also appears in the fact that there have been analogous decreases in sales of a series of other durable consumer goods and services whose purchase declines more than proportionally in cases of recession. Here are two typical examples:

* The decline in the sales of both color and black-and-white television sets in Britain (from 4.1 million sets in 1973 to 2.5 or 3 million sets anticipated for 1974).

* The fall in vacation trips abroad by West German citizens, a decline estimated at 30-35% for 1974 as compared with 1973. This will have disastrous effects for the Spanish hotel industry and will most likely have similar effects in Italy and Yugoslavia.

The duration of the recession is obviously not predictable. It is thus difficult to formulate predictions about the possibility of a short-term change in the automobile market. What is certain is that the economic situation is worsening in Western Europe, especially in West Germany and France, where

the recession is tending to define itself more clearly, as well as in the United States and Japan. For the moment, the conjuncture seems to be stagnant. It will probably be necessary to wait until September or October to see whether the generalized recession will last through the autumn, or even into the winter of 1974-75, or whether a slight upturn in the United States and Japan will counterbalance the recession in Western Europe during the second half of 1974, thus limiting the intensity of the recession.

Long-term weakening of expansion

Nevertheless, the conjunctural evolution, like the effects of the "oil crisis," must be placed in a broader framework, namely the long-term development of the automobile industry. In this regard, few experts contest the fact that the rapid expansion of the auto industry during the 1950s and 1960s -- one of the main stimulants of the accelerated growth of the economies of the imperialist countries during this period -- is coming to an end.

The phenomenon of the saturated market, which has already made its appearance in the United States, is coming more and more to the fore in capitalist Europe and Japan. This is clearly revealed by the decline in the annual growth rates in the automobile sector. Here are the figures for the six countries that originally constituted the Common Market (West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg):

PERCENTAGE INCREASES IN AUTOMOBILE SALES (including trucks)

1955	16.6
1956	17.6
1957	16.4
1958	15.4
1959	14.8
1960	15.1
1961	14.6
1962	15.9
1963	16.4
1964	13.9
1965	12.3
1966	10.9
1967	9.0
1968	8.2
1969	8.1
1970	7.2
1971	6.6
1972	5.3 (estimated)
1973	4.2 (estimated)

From the standpoint of outlets, the saturation of the markets is explained by the fact that given the present structure of incomes, practically all households that want to buy a car and are able to do so (either on credit or on time) without disastrously eating into the parts of their incomes set aside for articles of basic necessity already own a car. Under such conditions, current production serves an almost exclusively replacement function. It tends less and less to increase the general sales of automobiles.

This situation could be turned around if there were a considerable increase in the incomes of the lowest-paid layers of the laboring population or if the prices of autos were very sharply reduced. The second possibility is totally excluded in the near future. Just the opposite, nearly all trusts have

responded to the decline in sales and profits by increasing the unit sales price of their cars. Only a real technological revolution in the industry, reducing the cost of production on the order of 30 or 50 percent, could lead one or another trust to institute such a price decrease in order to radically increase its share of the market.

As for the real incomes of households, inflation and recession tend to reduce them or hold them stagnant, not to increase them. After the economic upturn that will follow the current recession, inflation will continue to be exacerbated. The increase in the real income of workers households will therefore be quite modest, if it occurs at all, which is not at all certain. Under these conditions, a new rapid expansion in automobile sales is very improbable in capitalist Europe and Japan. Nor is it likely to occur in the United States, where in the past decade high auto sales have bolstered the tendency to want to acquire a second car. It is only countries like Australia and Canada that could experience a more rapid expansion for another few years, until motorization attains a saturation point comparable to that reached in the United States or Western Europe.

As for semicolonial countries like Mexico and Brazil, which have in their turn been drawn into the wave of motorization, the income structure is such that purchase of a private automobile is in practice limited to the middle classes and a very tiny layer of the labor aristocracy. The saturation point is thus reached much sooner in these countries than in the imperialist countries.

The bureaucratized workers states have in their turn launched a program of accelerated motorization. But these countries scarcely form a significant additional market for the automobile industry in the imperialist countries. In practice, their governments prevent imports of private cars, except in minimal proportions. If they construct or extend their own automobile industry in collaboration with the capitalist trusts, it is above all the sector that produces machines for automobile construction and not the auto industry itself that will win new outlets.

To the saturation of the market for reasons relating to buying power must be added phenomena of market saturation for physical reasons. In the past twenty years neither construction of roads nor expansion of traffic and parking facilities in the cities of the imperialist countries has kept pace with automobile sales and production of private cars and trucks. The result has been growing traffic difficulties and a rapid decline in the "utility" of the private car. To drive around in a private car during the rush hours in cities like New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo has become almost impossible. Routes leading out of the great cities are becoming more and more congested during weekend hours when the weather is good and even during the annual vacation stampede. From this standpoint a modification in transportation demand is going on that is tending to boost the demand for railroads and mass transit at the expense of private automobiles, independent of the conjunctural effects of the "oil crisis" or the current recession.

International competition

The crisis in the automobile industry has accentuated international competition. As sales in the internal markets of most of the big imperialist countries have diminished, the "national" trusts of each of these countries have sought to increase their exports to take up the slack. It is too soon to draw a full balance sheet of this intensified competition, but

up to now the following tendencies seem to be taking shape:

* On the internal U.S. market, imports of European and Japanese autos have declined almost in the same proportion as total sales of autos. Foreign competitors have thus not succeeded in increasing their share of the North American market, particularly because of the massive production of American small cars and the revaluation of the Deutschmark. The Ford Pinto has become a better bargain than the Volkswagen in the United States.

* In a general way, the West German auto industry, which is the biggest exporter in the world industry, seems to be hardest hit (especially in terms of the increases in the price of its exports). Exports of West German autos for the period January to April 1974 were 7.6 percent lower than for the corresponding period in 1973. Nevertheless, the share of exports in current production has increased from 58.2% to 65.3%, since sales on the internal market have fallen more sharply than exports.

* Japan is just on the heels of West Germany as an auto-exporting country. This year it may overtake West Germany. In 1973 West Germany exported 2.35 million cars and trucks, as against 2.1 million for Japan, 1.6 million for France, 1.15 million for Canada, 750,000 for Britain, and 705,000 for Italy. In 1974 German exports are declining, while Japanese exports rose 20% during the first quarter.

* The French and Italian industry realized modest export gains at the beginning of 1974, due mainly to the effects of the devaluation of their currencies relative to those of a series of other European capitalist countries and the U.S. dollar. But it is not certain that the French and Italian firms will be able to preserve these gains if the recession deepens in most of the countries where it has begun already.

Reduced production and profits combined with intensified competition is threatening the very existence of the least profitable firms. Up to now, it is mainly BMW, Citroën, Chrysler (including its French subsidiary, Simca), and British Leyland that seem threatened. Chrysler, which had a close brush with bankruptcy during the previous recession in the United States, is nearly running at a loss and is finding increasing difficulties in obtaining credit. Citroën was saved from disaster only through its merger with Peugeot. The fate of BMW and of Toyota, the financially weakest Japanese auto trust, will most likely be decided by mergers on a national scale.

But the situation of British Leyland is the most dramatic, reflecting in a striking manner the general decline of British imperialism in the international capitalist economy. British Leyland is itself a product of a merger of all the British automobile firms that were still in business. If it has to merge to save itself now, the merger will have to be with a foreign company. In that case it would in fact be absorbed by one of its foreign competitors. Since British imperialism cannot tolerate such a possibility, it is more likely that the state will come to the aid of British Leyland by granting it massive subsidies, by taking over a minority share of the stock, or by partially nationalizing it while leaving a minority of the stock in private hands.

The duration and amplitude of the recession will determine whether other automobile trusts will also be unable to keep their heads above water and whether additional concentration, including international concentration, will take place.



Diego Rivera's 'Portrait of Detroit'

Technology and private property

The fact that the famous Club of Rome, which popularized the Meadows Report on the "limits of growth," was in large part a product of the automobile trusts (especially Fiat and Volkswagen), takes on a symbolic significance in these circumstances. Clearly, it is not fortuitous that some capitalists discovered the ecological misdeeds of the growth of "their" sector just at the time that this growth was coming to an end.

No one would deny that the misdeeds are real. Poisoning of the air in the big cities by automobile emissions, the large number of road accidents, and the enormous waste that results from traffic jams in the cities are but a part of the negative balance that humanity has had to pay for the so-called automobile civilization.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to guard against the easy and mechanical reaction of condemning the automobile as such and of predicting its early disappearance. Such a reaction would be equally as insensitive as that of the arrogant optimism of spokesmen for the auto industry like the head of General Motors, who predicted a new "unprecedented automobile boom" for the second half of the 1970s.

The two reactions are similar in that they merely extrapolate the present tendencies of development and ignore possible -- or let us say inevitable -- sharp and qualitative changes. As a means of daily transportation, the individual automobile is manifestly irrational. The persistence of this irrationality is in the first place a result of private property. It is clear that the same number of persons could be transported every day by half, a third, or a fourth as many individual autos, if not by a tenth or a twentieth as many buses or minibuses, if a rational system of road transport were organized. The gains in time, costs, physical and mental health, and pollution

rates could be considerable. Furthermore, it is by no means demonstrated that the users of such a system would in any way suffer reductions in comfort or convenience. It is perfectly possible to conceive of a very flexible system of buses, minibuses, and taxis transporting the same number of people under maximum conditions of comfort who today use private cars for their daily transport.

Urbanists and experts on transport planning are nearly unanimous in recommending this solution. If it is not applied on a grand scale -- let alone universally -- in the richest countries, it is not because it would cost too much or because consumers would reject it. It is because under the capitalist system powerful interests within the bourgeoisie are opposed to such a conversion. Moreover, the whole logic of bourgeois society always favors new solutions based on private property and on the sale of commodities rather than on those axised on the satisfaction of needs and public services, even if the latter are more rational and less costly from the standpoint of society as a whole and of the great majority of individuals.

As a means of transportation driven by the internal combustion engine, the automobile is certainly not the most successful technological solution for short- and middle-range transit. Nor was it the only possible solution. If the automobile became generalized over more than half a century, it was not because of any "technological constraints," but because of the choices made by capitalist groups at given moments on the basis of their particular interests, their respective weight, and the degree of control they had over the market and over scientific knowledge (which is to say sometimes because of their ignorance).

Other forms of autos are conceivable driven by other forms of energy, above all electrical cars, which would radically reduce the damage the internal combustion engine does to the environment. A positive result of the "oil crisis" has been powerful stimulation of research into, experimentation with, and probably production of electrical cars. It is only a matter of time until mass production of such a car begins on a vast scale and it becomes competitive with the automobile powered by the internal combustion engine, even under the capitalist system.

Capitalism is condemned to death. Production for profit has no future. As for the automobile, its role is far from ended, even if it will never again regain the deified position that big capital tries to give it in past decades. It will maintain a choice position in the transportation system under socialism, in view of its greater flexibility as compared to rail transport. It will conserve that role thanks to a social, technological, and cultural revolution that will make its use rational, freeing it from the chains of private property and profit. □

HOW THE RAIL STRIKE WAS BROKEN

by UPALI COORAY

The Indian national rail strike, which began on May 8, was officially called off by the Action Committee of the National Co-ordinating Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle (NCCRS) on May 28. The railway workers suffered a severe defeat in a long and bitter struggle that was broken through outright military terror and the inability of the workers leadership to respond. "In a little over two weeks," wrote the May 18 Bombay Economic and Political Weekly, published before the end of the strike, "more than 20,000 persons have been arrested, most of them under DIR and MISA. (Defence of India Rules and Maintenance of Internal Security Act, emergency regulations providing for detention without trial -- INPRECOR.) Railway workers have been thrown into jail simply for not reporting for work. Others have been arrested for no more than attending meetings in support of the strike. More active support for the strike has, of course, become a grave crime. The police and the paramilitary forces like the Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police have been systematically terrorising the railway workers. Houses of workers have been raided in the dead of night by armed policemen and workers have been offered, at gun-point, the choice between returning to work immediately or being arrested on the spot. Large numbers of workers have been thus forced to go into hiding, which has turned the wrath of the government against their families, especially those living in railway colonies."

The railway colonies -- concentrations where rail workers and their families live -- were transformed, according to three members of the Indian parliament, into "spectacle(s) of a deserted town in war-time." Throughout the country, water and electricity supplies to the colonies were turned off; families of striking workers were evicted from their homes. The May 17 Hindustan Times reported from New Delhi that the "railway authorities have passed eviction notices on 353 staff quarters in various colonies. The families have been given 12 hours to vacate the quarters or face eviction by the police. . . . Neighbours of the evicted families said police did not even allow them time to take out their belongings. . . . The evicted families have shifted to unknown places, as the neighbours and others in the colonies were terrified to provide them temporary shelter in their quarters."

After visiting the Tughlakabad railway colony, the three members of parliament reported that "the entire male population of the colony is in self-imposed exile, following attempts by the police to hunt out railway employees and take them to places of work at the point of the bayonet."

One of the leaders to be taken into custody during the arrests was our comrade G. J. Nair, convenor of the Bombay NCCRS.

The NCCRS was a coalition of unions including the All India Railmen's Federation led by the Socialist party, the AITUC led by the Communist party of India, and the CITJ led by the Communist party of India (Marxist). It was formed around six

demands relating to the grievances of the 1,700,000 national railway workers. The most important of these demands were that wages of railway workers be brought into line with other government and public workers and that a bonus payment of one month's wages be granted, again in accordance with the practice for other public workers such as those of the Life Insurance Corporation and Air India.

But the exact details of the railway workers' demands are less important than the fact that the railway workers -- like all other workers -- have been suffering from galloping inflation. Their real wages have declined and their standard of living has steadily deteriorated. And their working conditions are appalling. For example, they are paid no overtime until they have worked at least 116 hours in a two-week period. So it is not surprising that the vast majority of the population supported the cause of the railway workers. A survey conducted by Bombay University students and reported in the May 22 Times of India revealed that more than 70 percent of the population supported the rail strike. Police brutality and the high-handed action of the government in arresting railway leaders were condemned. But despite this broad mass support, the railway workers were defeated. Was this inevitable? And what lessons should be drawn from the defeat?

It is clear that the militancy of the workers, the support and sympathy of the masses, and the strategic importance of the railroads to the national economy provided unusually favorable conditions for a victorious struggle. So the strike was by no means doomed to defeat in advance. With a decisive leadership and adequate preparation the workers could have beaten the Indian government. The fact is that the workers were defeated because of their vacillating, weak, politically opportunistic, and divided leadership.

From the very beginning the Congress party government of Indira Gandhi made it clear that it was not prepared to make any concessions to the railworkers. The Indian ruling class had decided to take on the rail workers and decisively defeat them. A victory for the strikers would have signalled a new stage in the class struggle, which had been relatively quiescent since the government "pacified" the West Bengal strike. Other sections of the working class would have been encouraged to struggle to improve their living conditions had the railway workers won. The "socialist" Indira Gandhi quickly demonstrated that her regime was well aware of the stakes involved. On May 2, even before the strike started, 300 leaders of the railway unions, including some members of the NCCRS, were arrested while negotiations were going on between union officials and the government! So even before the strike was launched a large number of central and local leaders of the union were in jail, detained under the various security regulations. This should have tipped the workers leaders off to the fact that the ruling class had opted for a head-on confrontation and that the only way the workers



Striking Indian railway workers rally in New Delhi.

could have halted the capitalist offensive was by meeting the challenge through mobilizing and organizing the entire working class and its allies. But the leaders of the CPI and the CPI(M) failed to grasp this reality or deliberately chose to ignore it.

The scenario began when the negotiations between the railway union leaders and the officials of the Railway Ministry broke down and the NCCRS leadership decided to give notice that it was calling an indefinite general strike in fourteen days, beginning May 8. But the decision was made without adequate preparation of the rank-and-file rail workers, not to speak of other layers of the class. George Fernandes and other Socialist party leaders engaged in some bravado and rhetoric, but they took no political or material steps to prepare for a prolonged strike. This would have required the broadest participation of railway workers in running the strike, setting up struggle committees representing all layers of the class, taking adequate steps to counter police violence and harassment, and preparing a leadership that could have carried on the struggle even under conditions of illegality. None of this was done.

Nevertheless, the response of the masses of workers to the strike call was nearly total. The government lie machine claimed over radio and television that the railroads were functioning "normally," but even the bourgeois press had to admit that the strike had brought the rail system, and with it a good part of the whole economy, to a standstill.⁽¹⁾ Other workers spontaneously walked off their jobs in solidarity with the rail workers. By the third day of the strike, sentiment for a general strike was mounting.

Meanwhile, Fernandes and other leaders of the action committee who had been arrested were pleading from jail for a negotiated settlement.⁽²⁾ They were still hoping that Gandhi would act "decently" and make some concessions. The leaders of the CPI and the CPI(M) were no better; they merely sent their parliamentarians to plead with Gandhi.⁽³⁾ After the government had made its stand unequivocally clear, and after three days of struggle, Niren Ghosh of the CPI(M) was asking the government not to adopt an "unrelenting posture" and was assuring it that the strike was "purely and simply

economic."⁽⁴⁾ The leaders of the CPI and CPI(M) talked about a general strike to support the railway workers; but it was just words. If the CPI, for example, had been serious about its general strike rhetoric, it could have placed the resources and administration of the province of Kerala at the disposal of the strikers. Achuta Menon, a member of the CPI, is chief minister in Kerala.

In reality, the CPI was embarrassed by the strike and was energetically seeking means to disassociate itself from it. When the Congress government declined to get the CPI off the hook by offering a few concessions, the CPI leadership gradually began to back out. On May 15 they expressed the view that it would be better if the strike were called off.

The efforts of the leaders of the CPI(M) to find a "peace formula" fared little better. By May 20 the strike was already on its last legs. The opportunistic policies of the CPI and the CPI(M) had led the strike to defeat. It is not difficult to see why the CPI could not mass its forces behind the railway workers. It remains a prisoner of its strategic orientation, which considers Gandhi's Congress government as a force that has opted for a "non-capitalist road of development" or even for "socialism." The CPI leaders believe that the "anti-imperialist" and "antimonopolist" Congress party should be supported and that a coalition should be concluded with it. The CPI has given a stamp of approval to Gandhi's clever "socialist" demagoguery. To this day the CPI has made no self-criticism of this strategic line, nor has it made any change in it. When SP leader Madhu Himaye called on the CPI to withdraw from coalition governments in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, where it rules in partnership with the Congress party, CPI leader Dange answered that the SP was engaging in a provocation.⁽⁵⁾ But what about the CPI(M)? It claims to be a "revolutionary" party. Why could it not mobilize its forces? Was it that the CPI(M) put the sectarian interests of its own trade-union federation ahead of those of the railway workers because the dominant force in the railway struggle was the Socialist party? Or was it the parliamentary cretinism of the CPI(M) that made it incapable of preparing even its own forces for an extraparliamentary struggle?

It also bears mentioning that the rail strike exposed the bankruptcy of the various Maoist currents that peddled their dogmatic schemas about the struggle developing "from the country to the town." No revolutionary Marxist would ignore the importance of the agricultural workers, rural poor, and poor peasantry in most of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. And no serious revolutionary Marxist would insist that the struggle must always necessarily begin in the cities. But to completely abandon activity among the urban workers and their organizations to the reformists is just as impermissible. But this is exactly what the "Naxalites" did, and the result is that the majority of the urban workers remain in the clutches of the reformists.

The international revolutionary movement must defend the victims of repression of the rail strike. But that defense must be combined with an attempt to build the nucleus of a revolutionary party that can challenge the reformist leaderships that led the workers to defeat.

Footnotes:

1. See Bombay Free Press, May 9, 1974 and Times of India, May 9, 1974, "Strike in City Total."
2. Times of India May 9, 1974, "Fernandes Ready for Talks Even in Jail."
3. Economic Times, May 11, 1974, "Elders Anxious to End Rail Strike."
4. Ibid.
5. Indian Express, May 25, 1974.

the glass strike: an exemplary action

by DENIS HORMAN

The strike of plate-glass workers, which began May 8 and involved more than 4,000 workers in the window-glass, large mirror, and hand mirror industries in the regions of Charleroi and Houdeng (in the Center), was joined May 13 by the glass workers of Mol and Zeebrugge in Flanders (the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium), thus drawing the workers of the entire window-glass industry into struggle. The strike was ended in Charleroi and Zeebrugge on May 27 after a referendum in which 63.7 percent of the workers of Charleroi and the Center voted to go back to work. This strike was one of the most important to take place in Belgium during the past ten years, even though the press, radio, and television -- and even the traditional workers organizations -- did not give the strike the attention it deserved. It was the first time that a strike of such dimensions had taken place in the glass industry -- a regional strike in the three subsectors of the glass industry and a national strike in the window-glass sector drawing more than 6,000 workers into struggle.

There were two additional central aspects to this battle that will have important consequences for the battles to come:

* By imposing immediate and unconditional reintegration of a militant union at Multiplane (a small company in the Charleroi region that is a subsidiary of Glaverbel), the Charleroi glass workers showed that it was possible to block the plans of multinational trusts, in this case Glaverbel-Mécaniver (a subsidiary of the French BSN group) when they attempt to attack trade-union freedoms.

* The Charleroi glass workers created strike committees in each factory and federated these committees into a regional strike committee, the first time this had been done since the miners strike of 1932. These methods of struggle, which the European workers have been utilizing for some years now, were the basis for the two victories won by the glass workers: reintegration of the militant union and important concessions by the employers to the program of demands advanced by the strikers.

Preparing the way

The May 1974 strike -- accompanied in the Charleroi region by the formation of the strike committees in nearly all factories, the occupation of about half the plants, and the election of a regional strike committee -- was not the result of

accident or of the spontaneity of the masses of workers, although it is true that this spontaneity was surprising in its scope and combativity. This exemplary action, which has generated more and more interest among the workers vanguard, was principally the fruit of slow and persistent work undertaken for nearly a dozen years by a hard core of vanguard trade-unionists at Glaverbel and especially at Glaverbel-Gilly near Charleroi. At the beginning, these vanguard militants were grouped around the bulletin "La Nouvelle Défense" (The New Defense), which was sold regularly in several glass factories and developed a program of fighting trade-unionism by advancing clear and effective slogans dealing with all the problems confronting the glass workers.

The May 1974 strike was the result of this patient work carried out by the comrades of La Nouvelle Défense, work that was based around the following axes:

* Trade-union democracy. In struggle after struggle the vanguard workers at Glaverbel-Gilly showed the masses of workers how the bureaucracy was in practice slowing down and sabotaging the struggles, and especially how positive things could be accomplished against this sabotage. Thus, the vanguard was able to gradually win the masses to its ideas, to get across little by little the practice of trade-union democracy through the regular assemblies in the factories and through establishing a new trade-union delegation in January 1972 outside the normal period of union elections (which are scheduled to take place only once every four years!). There was a tendency debate within the factory, which allowed for turning around the day-to-day situation in the plant. The same sort of work was later carried out in a nearly identical manner in Roux, another Glaverbel factory in the Charleroi area.

* Workers control over the arbitrary acts of the employers. Because it counterposes the interests of the workers to the imperatives of profitability, workers control cannot be won through documents but only through direct and organized action. It must be imposed in concrete struggles beginning from the immediate concerns of the workers. Its application will be effective only insofar as the workers are directly involved and organized inside the factory in the first place. The militants of La Nouvelle Défense and the workers of Glaverbel-Gilly well understood this dynamic of workers control. They put it into practice especially in defense of employment by showing that this fight inevitably raised the question of workers control: verification of the company's accounts not only



on the basis of figures, but also on the basis of investigation of the work place (for example, La Nouvelle Défense drew up a concrete work plan to control production and stocks), control of the work pace (for example, a slow down at Glaverbel-Gilly to counter the employers' attempts to "rationalize" the personnel), control of overtime hours, over hiring and firing, etc. By learning in practice how to challenge the power of the employers the glass workers tested their capacity to take charge of their own interests themselves.

* Freedom of trade-union action as against integration into the system. Threats of layoffs were accentuated when the BSN trust took over Glaverbel. In March 1971 the glass workers of the Charleroi and Basse-Sambre (Moustier) regions organized a response to this threat by forming the Coordinating Committee of Glass Workers to Defend Employment. In October 1972 the Charleroi glass workers rejected a proposal from the trade-union leadership to create an organ of "concert" for the glass industry. Likewise, the workers of Glaverbel-Gilly systematically opposed all limitations on the right to strike or on trade-union freedoms. They went on strike without clearing it with the union leadership, held general assemblies in the plants whenever it was necessary, fought against layoffs, etc.

* The February 1973 Glaverbel-Gilly strike: a dress rehearsal. During this strike, which lasted for one week and was accompanied by a factory occupation and the election of a strike committee, the workers continued production; but they reduced the work pace and fabricated non-standard and therefore unsaleable glass. This demonstrated something that would be decisive in future strikes in the glass industry: The classical forms of employer blackmail (lockout, creating unemployment for months) could be eliminated if the factory was occupied and the action was organized with maximum effectiveness through the formation of a strike committee.

* Extension of La Nouvelle Défense. As early as 1970, and more especially after the two most important struggles (the establishment of the new union delegation in January 1972 and the February 1973 strike), the Nouvelle Défense militants understood the danger of their becoming isolated and the con-

sequent possibility of the employers' taking action against the most combative militants, whose identities were known. In addition, the trade-union apparatus, increasingly on its guard and on the defensive, would not fail to take advantage of the relative fragility of the local "breakthrough" to slow it down or even to crush it. So the new union delegation and the Nouvelle Défense nucleus immediately started working to broaden the base of the regroupment of militant trade-unionists, both by extending circulation of the bulletin and by setting up additional Nouvelle Défense groups. The exemplary character of the May 1974 strike is in large part explainable by this preparatory work.

* Immediate preparation of the strike had to be a supplementary precondition for success. All the glass worker delegates of the Charleroi region met on several occasions to prepare the fight and to adopt the principle of strike committees and their federation into a regional committee. For the first time in the glass industry, a common national meeting was held of delegates from the FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail Belgique -- General Federation of Belgian Labor, the Social Democratic trade-union federation) and the CSC (Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens -- Confederation of Christian Trade Unions). At this meeting, held in Brussels, there was discussion of the organization of a national strike (occupations, strike committees, protection of the machinery, coordination of the struggle). During this meeting André Henry, a leading delegate from Glaverbel-Gilly and a member of the Central Committee of the Ligue Révolutionnaire des Travailleurs (Revolutionary Workers League, Belgian section of the Fourth International) presented the experiences of the gains of the February 1973 strike at Gilly. It was mainly on the basis of these gains that the regional strike, and later the national strike, was able to be rapidly organized and strengthened.

Alignment of forces

Although the May 1974 national strike united the glass workers of Charleroi, the Center, and Flanders in the same struggle, the development of the strike was nevertheless uneven, reflecting the still uneven consciousness and combativity of the workers of the various regions. It was in the Charleroi

area that the strike went through a remarkable development under the initiative of a few key factories.

The strike saw the emergence of new forms of struggle. The vanguard trade-union in the Charleroi glass industry took up the forms of struggle appropriate to combating capitalist concentration and mergers, the multinational corporations that impose their implacable will on governments and union leaderships, and the Glaverbel-Mécaniver multinational corporation that is attacking trade-union freedoms. The "heart" of the strike, of its effectiveness and unity, was the constitution of strike committees in eleven striking glass works in Charleroi (committees elected democratically on the basis of three or four workers per sector) and the election of the regional strike committee of four representatives from each local committee. Daily coordination between the regional committee and the local committees, combined with daily general assemblies in the plants, allowed the workers to participate in the struggle to the fullest extent possible. They felt themselves responsible for the strike, taking up the best traditions of the workers movement. This undeniable fact can be illustrated by two essential activities of the strike:

* Organization, strengthening, and extension of the struggle. The daily meetings of the regional and local committees, combined with the general assemblies, allowed the workers to distribute an information leaflet in the name of the regional committee, to send delegations of strikers to other regions, to organize a regional demonstration, to strengthen the strike pickets in the weaker areas, and to set up a commission for financial support to the Multiplane strikers. The most important decisions marking turns in the strike (rejection of the first proposal by the employers on reintegration of the militant union, a reintegration that would have been limited to a two-week period before the plant moved to another location, continuation of the strike after a referendum held on May 15) were made in general assemblies of all the factory strike committees. It is absolutely clear that it was the democratic organization of the struggle that gave it its power and strength.

* Occupation of seven glass works under the leadership and permanent control of the strike committees. The organization of the occupation established real dual power in the factories. Workers power confronted the power of the employers. As was stressed in a special issue of *La Nouvelle Défense* published on the strike: "the factory functions because of our arms and our head. . . . Very good. So during the strike we are the masters and we will make the decisions on the basis of our own interests!" The occupation -- along with the permanent control of management and organization of labor and production and the protection of the machinery, was the most effective answer to the employers' blackmail.

At the end of the second week of the strike, the management of Glaverbel-Mécaniver resorted to its favorite weapon: the threat of layoffs, of shutting down the ovens, of sabotaging the machinery by refusing to supply the plant with raw materials and energy. (The threat was made in a letter sent to all factory councils.) But because of the occupations under the leadership of the strike committees, the response of the workers was not long in coming. At Glaverbel-Gilly the strike committee quickly took over control of reserves. It discovered hidden stocks of fuel oil and found that the tanks were well stocked. There would be no problem for two weeks.

The employers tried other tricks as well. For example, they took advantage of the temporary absence of some delegates and strike-committee members to pressure a group of workers

in the limestone glass section. For about a half hour, these workers started to produce glass to standard (that is, saleable) dimensions. When the strike committee was apprised of this situation, it informed the strikers and decided to simply wreck that part of production, which was going on in violation of the rules set down by the general assembly of strikers. (Last year at Glaverbel-Gilly the strikers in the "lime-glass" sections of three factories decided to produce off-standard glass in order to prevent the employers from directly selling the glass during or after the strike, thus obliging management to hire workers to rework the glass.)

The glass workers of Charleroi have just offered a limited but illuminating lesson and example to all those petty-bourgeois spirits who envisage self-management only under the control of technocrats, to all the upstanding reformists who conceive of socialism as being "achievable" only from the springboard of ministerial portfolios: Socialism is prepared in struggle. The road to socialist self-management goes through democratic organization of strikes, elected and recallable strike committees, and the limited but exemplary experiences of workers control over the management and organization of labor.

These new methods of struggle of the glass workers, and especially those of the Charleroi region, are at the root of the two victories won by the strikers and the two lessons that the strike offers to the entire working class.

A victory for trade-union freedom of action

The immediate and unconditional reintegration of the militant union at Multiplane was the first big victory for the glass workers of Charleroi and the Center.

At a time when the employers and the multinational corporations are trying to saddle the trade-union movement with a lead weight, at a time when the trade-union leadership is gladly donning the straitjacket of integration into the system, the glass workers showed the way to fight for the freedom of action of the workers movement. As far back as October 1972 the Charleroi glass workers were asking the national trade-union leaders to account for their move to create an "organ of concert" in the glass industry. In their spontaneous strike of February 1973, the Glaverbel-Gilly workers won freedom of action for their union delegation in the framework of the existing union statutes on local practices.

In the regional and national assemblies held to prepare for the new national convention the Charleroi workers had demanded the reduction of the strike-notice period and the revision of the contracts after six months, in case of a big increase in the cost of living.

The May 1974 strike forced the employers to reveal their true face. In a letter sent to all factory councils, the Glaverbel management accused the union leaders of not having lived up to their promises in the period leading up to the strike. The management even contested the holding of a strike vote. Then the entire bourgeoisie fell into line. *L'Echo de la Bourse*, the employers' newspaper, put its finger on the heart of the matter: "It has been said many times that the trade unions have outlived their usefulness; while their action is called for when it is a matter of defending the human interest of the workers, they go too far when they get carried away by the ultimatic views of their extremist wings; when that happens (and not only in Belgium), it will become impossible to invest. . . . But once again, the economy has nothing in common with these thin-skinned reactions of the union leaders, overtaken

as they are by forces that are not representative of the population." Or, in other words: Preservation of a system in crisis is totally incompatible with trade-union freedom of action. The weight of this background to the strike, coming after the firing of militants and union delegates at Cockerill, Caterpillar, and elsewhere, makes the importance and scope of this first victory -- the unconditional reintegration of the Multiplane militants -- even more significant for the glass industry and for the whole workers movement.

The glass workers strike broke out at first on a regional basis in solidarity with the Multiplane strikers for the reintegration of the militant trade union. But it raised the question of a new contract in the glass industry on a national scale. It is obvious that the workers' success in the first round -- the reintegration of the Multiplane militants -- redoubled their confidence in their own forces and strengthened their struggle for their other demands.

The workers were demanding an 8 franc per hour increase for everyone (about US\$0.20). After having offered 3.25 francs when the struggle began, the employers finally gave up 5.75 francs beginning May 1 and 2 francs more beginning September 1. The strikers had demanded 10 franc raises for the lowest-paid workers; they won nearly 12 francs (wages will rise from 88.43 francs an hour to 100 francs an hour beginning May 1). Glaverbel also granted year-end bonuses of 19,500 francs instead of the 14,000 francs under the old contract. Further, after ten years' seniority and having reached the age of 62 years for men and 57 years for women, the glass workers will be entitled to premature retirement at their own request. To be sure, there were negative aspects, too. The forty-hour workweek was won only beginning January 1, 1975. The demand to reconsider the contract after six months in the event of a big rise in the cost of living -- one of the key ways to wage the struggle against high prices -- was not won in black and white, but the workers will not abandon this demand in the autumn. (The duration of the contract was reduced from fourteen to twelve months.)

The examples set by the Glaverbel strike have already been taken up by other workers. The workers of Amplex (a subsidiary of an American trust) confiscated a stock of cassettes and magnetic tapes in order to impose their demands. The workers of "Grès de Bouffioulx" (in the Charleroi area) went on strike, occupied the factory, elected a strike committee, and took over production and sales of their own products in order to oppose the shutting down of the plant, Glaverbel, Amplex, Bouffioulx. That is the only road to follow during an autumn that promises to be a hot one.

The workers organizations and the strike

After thirteen years of virtually uninterrupted governmental participation, the Belgian Social Democracy is now undergoing a "stint in opposition," which some people want to be as short as possible. Several years ago the Belgian Socialist party moved from "dissident reformism" to "managed" reformism. But its various acrobatics and its increasingly reduced maneuvering room in the context of the deepening of the crisis of the capitalist system and the new rise of workers struggles have driven it further and further from the working class and even from the FGFB, the Socialist union federation, which is increasingly taking its distance from the SP. But independently of the will of the SP leaders, the party's passage into opposition -- even into parliamentarist and reformist opposition --

opens possibilities for a new dynamic within the traditional organizations (like the Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien -- Christian Workers Movement -- the SP, the FGFB, and CSC). The union bureaucracy had to demonstrate the greatest flexibility in face of the extraordinary pressure from the rank and file and especially the structuring and coordination of the glass workers vanguard. To be sure, it tried to bolster its weight in the strike at decisive turning points. But under the threat of becoming totally discredited among a very broad layer of workers, it tried to latch on to the movement and even tried to come out with some "leftist" language to worm its way into the regional strike committee. There was no point in trying to go directly against a powerful rank-and-file upsurge and thus risk compromising its position.

The Belgian SP showed its solidarity with the strike through its factory cells, which awakened from a long period of lethargy and were uneasy about the impact of the revolutionary Marxists in the glass industry.

The Communist party, which has significant weight in some trade-union delegations, especially in the Charleroi area, but which is very small compared to the Social Democracy, held obstinately to its goal of rapprochement with the SP. Its strategy of the "great assembling of progressives" led it to tailend the Socialist party, which was making concession after concession in order to slow down the mobilization and deflect the struggle from the factories and the streets into elections and parliament. The Communist party did not support the glass workers strike. It saluted "the remarkable victory of the glass workers, a victory won by their combativity, cohesion, spirit and discipline, and the farsightedness and responsibility of their union representatives." But the CP added that "the attempts at division and the antiunion attacks of the ultraleftists" had no effect on the workers.

And the CP scarcely mentioned the new forms of struggle -- the strike committees in the glass works, the regional strike committee. It is not by accident or from forgetfulness that the CP refrained from putting the accent on the fact that the workers took charge of their own struggle themselves by utilizing methods that are in the best traditions of the international workers movement and that are necessarily rooted in the struggle for socialism. Even Cité, the daily of the Christian Workers Movement, wrote on May 10 that "the strike of the glass workers in the Pays Noir, the reasons for it, and the tactics in action mark a stage toward the workers' taking power."

The Maoist group UCMLB (Union des Communistes Marxist-Léninistes de Belgique -- Union of Marxist-Leninist Communists of Belgium) did not intervene in the glass workers strike in Charleroi. It simply drew its "own lessons" in its newspaper, *Unité Rouge*. Nevertheless, its sectarian and triumphalist attitude was confirmed by its actions at Caterpillar, which was also on strike during May, and its intervention at Glaverbel-Gilly, which was aimed at explaining that the AMADA, a Mao-Stalinist group in Flanders, "was leading" the strike at Glaverbel-Mol (a factory that had rejected the last referendum and was continuing the strike). UCMLB leads, the masses follow, and all the other workers organizations are deemed "traitorous" and "reformist." In fact, through its sectarian practice, this group, which is otherwise quite combative, demonstrates the same attitude toward the workers as do the bureaucrats and reformists.

The task of revolutionary worker militants is not only to build a revolutionary organization. It is also to assist a broad layer of workers who are sincerely anticapitalist but who do not yet desire to join an organization or even to organize themselves.

It is exactly this task that the militants of La Nouvelle Défense at Glaverbel and especially the worker militants of the Ligue Révolutionnaire des Travailleurs have been carrying out for several years. As André Henry pointed out in an interview on the "balance sheet of the strike": "The LRT had developed a broad propaganda campaign in favor of elected strike committees and occupations. It appeared to the workers as the organization that was fighting for these forms of struggle and for workers democracy. All the action of the LRT, unlike that of the other organizations, tended to strengthen active union democracy against the bureaucracy. . . . Organizations like AMADA and Unité Rouge have not understood the political impact that an elected strike committee can have first of all by creating dual power within a factory; nor have they understood that the practice of workers control can impose a new relationship of forces on the employers by

the workers taking charge of protecting the machinery, reducing the work pace, starting up off-standard production, and so on." (La Gauche, organ of the LRT, June 14.)

The primary objective of the LRT was to contribute the maximum to the success of the strike. Our political concern was to make the vanguard layers grasp the links between the forms of struggle, the maturation of the movement, and the line advanced by the LRT through its militants that were engaged in the struggle. And we contributed in various ways: meetings on the eve of the strike, May 1 demonstration with the Multiplane workers, putting out the bulletin Glaverbel Rouge and factory bulletins in other regions, giving a lot of coverage to the strike in our press, including interviews with the main delegates from Glaverbel-Gilly and Roux, as well as Multiplane, among others. □



DENMARK

REFORMISTS STRANGLE STRIKE WAVE

by MOGENS PEDERSEN

Between May 8 and May 20 an important section of the Danish working class responded to the bourgeois parties' continued attacks on the workers by going on strike and demonstrating. The immediate issue that triggered the strikes was the introduction of new indirect taxes on consumer goods and plans for extensive cutbacks in spending for education and social security. The strikes and demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of workers point to the deepening social crisis and the weakening of the effectiveness of parliamentary rule as a bourgeois instrument for attacking the workers. The outbreak of the strikes also represents part of an international tendency in the developed capitalist countries toward a structural crisis of capitalism forcing the bourgeoisie to move to increasingly tough attacks on the working class: inflationary assaults on real wages, incomes policy, unemployment, antistrike legislation, and so on. The strikes marked the end of the special Danish "Social Democratic way of life" and the beginning of Denmark's entry into the European tendency toward the workers taking direct action to defend themselves through local strikes, factory occupations, political general strikes, etc.

Parliamentary rule

The Social Democratic party is traditionally a government party in Denmark. In the beginning of the 1970s, because of the still-limited activity of the Danish working class, the Social Democratic party tried to continue as the leading administrator of the capitalist system in spite of the narrowing economic margin for maneuver. The Social Democratic party

was an important force in pushing Denmark into the Common Market in 1972, and it followed up this success by initiating attacks on the living standard of the working class. The party's strategic plan for improving the position of Danish capitalism was -- and remains -- so-called Economic Democracy. The essential content of this plan is to solve the resource problems of the employers (financial needs, need for cheap labor force, etc., especially for the big export industries) through direct subsidies from central funds, the trade-union leadership being granted a certain influence on the distribution of these funds. The funds themselves are to be created through virtual forced savings for the working class, which was to be compensated by a degree of "co-ownership" and "co-management." But the Social Democratic Economic Democracy plan did not receive a very warm response from the workers, who began demanding less abstract concessions in the form of hard cash. Nor was it well received by the employers.

The generally growing discontent among the voters, including the working class, found its first sharp expression in the parliamentary elections of December 4, 1973. These elections resulted in a shift to the right on the parliamentary level, one of the reasons being that sections of the workers discontented with Social Democratic management of capitalism and the swollen Social Democratic state apparatus as well as with rising prices and taxes voted for the Progress party led by Glistrup (a populist-type party based on demagogic promises of putting an end to "bureaucracy and income taxes").

The elections resulted in the formation of a government led by the Left party, a bourgeois-liberal party of peasant origin



having only 22 members in parliament. (Eleven parties are represented in the 179-member parliament.) At the same time, economic problems were worsening. Real wages are being undermined by violent price increases on the order of 15-20 percent a year, the "normal" inflation rate being intensified by the "oil crisis."

The government began to maneuver. In February it introduced forced savings for the workers and direct subsidies for the employers, the Social Democratic party collaborating in the project. It is now preparing further reductions in the periodic wage regulation (an already insufficient "automatic" adjustment of wages linked to price rises). Unemployment is increasing in the construction industry. The next element in the bourgeois attack was to be increased duties on certain consumer goods and cutbacks in government spending. The parties in parliament were conducting round-the-clock negotiations aimed at establishing a majority to carry out these plans.

But even before it became clear that the government proposals were going to be implemented, sections of the working class spontaneously went on strike and began to demonstrate, rejecting the parliamentary spectacle. It is worth noting that the strike movement started in factories dominated by the Social Democracy. The shipyards in Lindø and Odense, where the trade unions are controlled by the Social Democratic party, were the scene of the first actions on May 9. The massive strike wave broke on May 13 -- still before there had been any clarification in parliament. It was not only the traditional conflict centers like the Copenhagen shipyards and breweries that were hit by strikes. The movement spread to include groups that have generally not participated in direct action: thousands of white-collar workers, civil servants, etc. The strikes also were extended geographically, the actions nearly reaching the level of general strikes in some provincial cities. In Copenhagen, where hundreds of thousands were on strike, the movement reached high points with the demonstrations in front of the parliament building on May 13 (60,000-80,000 participants) and on May 16.

Militancy-- and parliamentary illusions

The extensive mobilization escaped the control of the Social Democratic party and the Landsorganisationen (LO -- the central trade-union federation). The pressure forced the Social Democrats to decline to take part in the governmental agreement, which resulted in the establishment of a right-wing majority in parliament. The workers mobilization demonstrated the beginning of disintegration of confidence in the bourgeois parliamentary system and an increase in the understanding of the necessity of independent struggle to achieve results. The fundamental distrust of the working class in the government was demonstrated. The political strikes raised the question, In whose interest shall the government rule, the bourgeoisie's or the proletariat's? The strike actions clearly showed the workers' determination not to pay for the crisis of capitalism. But the mobilization did not answer the question of how that desire is to be secured in reality.

The strikes and demonstrations rejected in practice the usual form of class collaboration in which the Social Democratic party cooperates with the bourgeois parties in trying to administer the capitalist state. But at the same time, decades of passivity and reformist domination of the working class made themselves felt in various ways: the organizational weakness of the strike in individual factories, the lack of organized political discussion, the dominating role of slogans giving the struggle a parliamentary orientation, like Glistrup out of parliament! New elections! Resignation of the prime minister! and, occasionally, Knud to power! (Knud Jespersen is the chairman of the DKP, the Danish Communist party.) This indicated possibilities for the DKP to direct the struggle into parliamentary channels or to stop the struggle entirely. These possibilities were fully utilized.

Specific events and various statements illustrated the function of the parliamentary orientation. Apart from the parliamentary activity of the Social Democratic party itself, Thomas Nielsen, the chairman of LO and a Social Democrat, claimed that the

strikes were only the reflection of "Communist hysteria." Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF -- Socialist Peoples party, a left-wing Social Democratic party) called for a political general strike. But the SF has no trade-union apparatus for organizing a general strike, and for this reason (among others) the SF concentrated its activity in the parliamentary field. In practice, not all the SF's trade-union leaders supported the call for a general strike -- Holger Foss, chairman of the Copenhagen trade-union branch of the brewery workers being an example.

The determining factor in the strike leadership was therefore the DKP and the Formandsinitiativet (Initiative of Chairmen, a CP-dominated confederation of some twenty chairmen of Copenhagen trade-union branches). The strikes had generally broken out spontaneously, but because no alternative leadership was developed through the struggle, only the DKP and the Formandsinitiativet remained as centralizing factors. This "leading" function began with the mass demonstration in Copenhagen on May 13. Speeches were made by Knud Jespersen and by a DKP trade-union chairman, as well as by some SF members. The government was condemned, the Social Democratic party was called upon not to make any agreements with the government, and new elections were called for; but there was no suggestion as to how the workers should continue the struggle.

On May 16, after a parliamentary agreement had been reached, a new demonstration was held in front of the parliament building. Sentiment among the workers for a general strike was mounting. But still no general strategy was presented by the "leaders." None of the speakers at the rally -- most of whom were members of the DKP -- had anything to say about how to develop the struggle, and they said nothing at all about a general strike. Jan Andersen, a leader of the DKP and chairman of the rally, decided that too many resolutions from factories had been received to read them aloud. He thus avoided mentioning the important words: general strike. That afternoon a meeting was arranged by the Formandsinitiativet gathering the Copenhagentillidsmænd (shop stewards). If this meeting had called for a general strike, it would have been a reality. The strike movement would have received renewed strength and more workers would have been drawn into the movement, not only in Copenhagen but throughout the country as well.

But the DKP wanted no general strike. So the meeting followed the usual scenario. Jørgen Jensen, chairman of a local Copenhagen branch of the Metalworkers Federation and a leading member of the DKP, opened the meeting by speaking about the unjust taxes bill proposed by the government, explaining that the workers would demand compensation from the employers. The struggle was to be continued in the individual factories around the demand for a raise of 2 kroner an hour (about US\$0.45). After being interrupted several times by shouts for a general strike, Jensen declared that the "situation" was not ripe for such a move and that it was necessary to wait for new elections. Many shop stewards spoke, saying that their fellow workers were awaiting initiatives for a general strike. Even the leading shop steward at the Burmeister and Wain motor factory, who is a member of the DKP, had to read a resolution from the B and W workers calling for a general strike. The brewery workers, the dockers, the dustmen, and others also raised the call for a general strike. Jensen closed the meeting "summing up" the discussion by repeating what he had said in his opening speech: The workers must demand raises of 2 kroner an hour. In spite of vigorous protest, that was the last word. Although strikes continued for some days thereafter, a demobilization began. The government had survived the crisis.

'Through parliament'

The tactics followed by the DKP in the strike movement were a logical consequence of the DKP's "antimonopoly strategy." The "antimonopoly strategy" aims not at workers power but at "advanced democracy," which is to be achieved through parliament. The DKP's intent is to win a parliamentary majority through an alliance with the Social Democratic party (and perhaps with the SF as well), based on a minimum common program calling for the extension of "democracy." To achieve this "labor" majority the DKP finds it necessary to put pressure on the Social Democrats to abandon their policy of directly administering the capitalist system. Part of this pressure is to be brought to bear by winning leading positions in the trade-union hierarchy, an activity in which the DKP has made some progress. Another means of bringing pressure on the Social Democracy is sending an endless stream of delegations from students, factories, trade unions, and so on to the Social Democratic parliamentary group.

That elections and parliamentary activity constitute the sole perspective for the DKP is amply demonstrated in the interview Jørgen Jensen gave to the May 27 issue of the bourgeois newspaper Børsen. Answering a question as to whether striking and demonstrating is unjustified when a majority in parliament supports the government, Jensen said, "If by a majority you mean what people would vote for, then we do not have a majority today. There is no doubt about that. We know it quite well. That's why we trade-union leaders were not willing to support a general strike." If there is a bourgeois majority in parliament, the working class should not organize a general strike to defend its interests! For the DKP, the only possible path to improvements for the working class is through parliament.

Demobilization--but not demoralization

The first upsurge of the struggle was derailed. The mobilization was stopped. But no real demoralization has set in. This is important, for more effective demonstrations will be necessary in the period ahead. A certain instability will persist in parliament. The main problem will be legislation concerning housing (a preliminary agreement, encompassing the Social Democratic party, has been reached) and taxes (financial cutbacks, raising the tax on consumption to 20 percent). It is uncertain whether the government will be able to establish a firm majority on these questions. The government is using the "threat" of new elections to force its proposals through. It is not unlikely that there will be new elections in the autumn, before the end of the contract negotiations between the employers and the LO.

This does not mean that the new elections will produce a "labor majority" of the Social Democratic party, the DKP, and the SF. Since there is no alternative for workers who are dissatisfied with the Social Democracy, the DKP will probably increase its number of seats. But the working class parties will probably fall short of 50 percent. And the Social Democratic party is continuing its orientation toward collaborating with the bourgeois center parties in a war against the DKP in the trade-union movement.

But regardless of the parliamentary developments, the working class will face vital problems that will give rise to new confrontations:

1. The wage question. In spite of the general discontent of the working class with the derailing of the May mobiliza-

tions into "ordinary" wage struggles, there will be more fights on the wage front, partly for wage demands to compensate for the effects of the bourgeois agreements on living standards, partly because central negotiations for new contracts will be intensified in the autumn.

2. Unemployment. In the construction industry the unemployment rate may be as high as 20 or 30 percent. Other sectors will most likely be hit by increases in unemployment too.

3. Arbejdsretten (the Industrial Relations Court). The bosses have threatened that 40,000-70,000 workers will be fined for "illegally" going on strike between May 9 and May 20. If they try to make good on that threat, the workers will surely respond with another massive strike wave. The general strike will be on the agenda again.

But whatever the exact course of developments, it is necessary to sum up the lessons of the May strikes and examine the alternative line that was put forward during the strikes by the revolutionary Marxists.

Line of the RSF

The development of the strikes showed two main weaknesses. First, the lack of effective rank-and-file organization in the individual factories during the strikes. Major discussions among workers were held only in a few cases. No committees were elected to coordinate the actions. No alternative to the disorganization and bureaucratic leadership was created. Second, parliamentary illusions were a contributing factor in preventing the emergence of a centralized line for struggle. Furthermore, the lack of rank-and-file organizing helped the maneuver around the demand for 2 kroner an hour and impeded the development of widespread political discontent and a clear understanding of the perspectives of the struggle.

The Revolutionære Socialister Forbund (RSF -- Revolutionary Socialist League, Danish section of the Fourth International) put forward an alternative line to the reformist-bureaucratic orientation. The RSF's line corresponded both to the objective needs of the working class and to the subjective consciousness of the more advanced layers of the working class, a line corresponding to the need for a continued struggle on a clearer political basis after the period of demobilization following the strikes.

The RSF explained that limited "pressure" on the Social Democratic party has at best only a short-term effect on its parliamentary alliance with the right-wing parties and that only the total force of the working class backed up by a general strike would be able to break the governmental agreement and bring down the government. The main theme of our propaganda and agitation after the spontaneous outbreak of protest strikes was the organization of a political general strike. At the same time, we explained that it would have to be an effective, democratically organized general strike built up through rank-and-file organizing committees in the individual factories. It would have to be organized through the holding of meetings in the factories with the active participation of all the workers in the discussions and decisions. At the meetings, action committees to organize the struggle according to the decisions of the general assemblies would be elected and contacts would be made among the various factories to extend and coordinate the struggle. That would be the condition for securing sufficient unity and striking power in the struggle.

Such an effectively organized general strike would have been able to sweep away the bourgeois agreement and government. This would have signified the refusal of the working class as a whole to submit to the bourgeoisie's attack or to assume any responsibility for the profit-making schemes of the capitalists. It would have signified the gathering of the organized power of the working class and would have thereby improved conditions for breaking down parliamentary illusions.

A victorious general strike would have decisively shifted the relationship of forces in favor of the working class and -- in contrast to two or three days of broad but unorganized strikes -- would have put the working class in a qualitatively better position for the confrontations to come.

A third element of the RSF propaganda and agitation has been to stress that the struggle should not be seen solely as a fight against a particular bourgeois agreement, but should be followed up in all the factories by struggles for demands around wages and working conditions and against layoffs. We have explained that the struggle must be seen as part of the building of the organized strength of the working class in order to reject any form of incomes policy and all attacks from the employers and the government.

After the initial demobilization, a series of tasks confront the workers and the revolutionary Marxists. Local struggles must be prepared. Effective rank-and-file organizing bodies must be set up in these struggles, including elected action committees in the conflicts over single issues. The struggle to defend real wages must be made more effective in this way. While it is true that the demand for a 2 kroner per hour increase was put forward as a way of diverting the struggle, we must also fight on the level of wages. Larger wage demands must be raised. But other demands must be raised as well. The piece-work system, which is a means of dividing the workers in the plants and speeding up the work pace, must be opposed. Increased wages must not be accompanied by speedup. Therefore, we say: general wage increases for all workers combined with the fight for organized workers control over the wage systems and the present organization of the work place in order to effectively be able to reject all divisive wage systems, speedups, and dangerous or unsanitary working conditions. Through democratic rank-and-file organizing we must be able to take up the struggle for control of the account books and prices in order to attack the "right" of the employers to control production and in order to prepare the struggle for a sliding scale of wages to compensate fully for the inflation that is undermining real wages. Through organizing for such a struggle we will be able to prepare the negotiations for new contracts in the autumn and during the first months of 1975, to reject all incomes policies and to fight against a weakening of the threshold agreement on the initiative of the Dyrtdskommisjonen (High Price Commission, a body organized to "prepare" negotiations for new contracts).

Confronted with the threat of rising unemployment, we must build solidarity between workers who are immediately threatened by layoffs and those who are not. In this way we will be able to create the conditions for a struggle against the falling rate of employment based on the main demands: No layoffs, No overtime work, Reduction of the work pace, Reduced workweek for all workers with no reduction in pay. (This last demand has been taken up by the building workers inside the Danish Union of Unskilled and Semiskilled Workers.)

Against the threats to persecute workers in the Industrial Relations Court we must struggle to develop solidarity among

all the workers: No worker must be sentenced by the court! Boycott the court! Refuse to pay the fines! If the bosses try to collect the fines by withholding wages, we must strike once again.

This is the way to prepare an active working-class response to the coming attacks of the bourgeoisie. It is through the development of these struggles that the purely parliamentary orientation of the labor movement can be broken down in practice. □

FRANCE

THE WORKERS MOVEMENT AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



by PIERRE FRANK

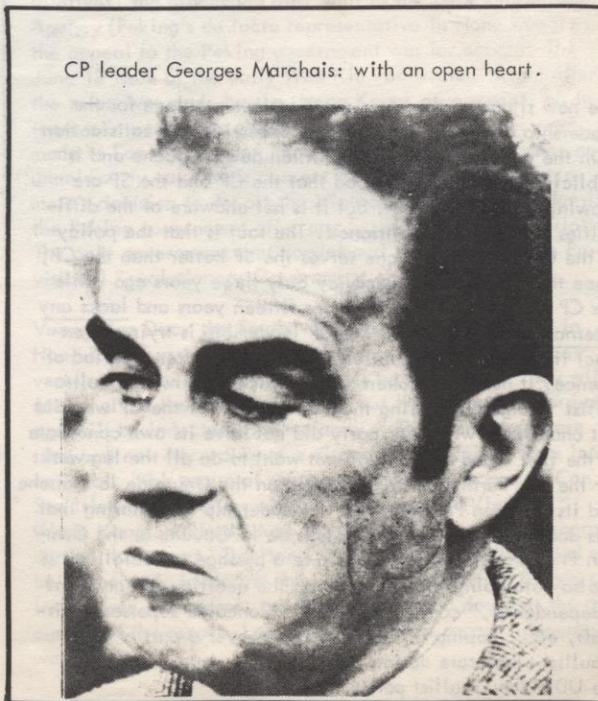
Our readers are familiar with the problems with which French capitalism is faced after the results of the May 19 presidential election (revolutionary rise of the masses, collapse of Gaullism, lack of solid bourgeois political structures). But the relative success of the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left, the bloc of the Communist and Socialist parties supported by the "left radical" grouping) in the election has also posed new problems within the French workers movement, and more particularly within the French Communist party. These problems had already asserted themselves after the March 1973 legislative elections, but now they are taking an ever clearer form. First, let us recall that when François Mitterrand took over leadership of the Socialist party he had to overcome the bankruptcy that had resulted from the policy the Guy Mollet leadership had been following since the end of the second world war, a bankruptcy that was reflected in the 5 percent of the vote received by SP candidate Gaston Deferre in the presidential elections of 1969. Mitterrand claimed that by orienting the policy of the SP toward seeking an alliance with the CP he was beginning to "rebalance" the French workers movement, that is, to reduce the disproportion between the two workers parties. To those who reproached him with having sat down to dinner with the devil while not possessing a very big spoon, he replied that he would make his party a valuable interlocutor within the Union de la Gauche.

Mitterrand has effectively attained this initial goal of "rebalancing" the French workers movement. He has done even more than that. The form his campaign took and the way it was waged devolved essentially to the benefit of the Socialist party. To be sure, the CP also made gains: its leaders were recognized as "potential ministers." But potential ministers are not yet ministers. In practice, the CP served mainly as a "point of support" for the Mitterrand candidacy and not as a motive force leading the campaign. For many years (and still in the March 1973 legislative elections) the CP had been winning more votes than the SP. Formally, the 13 million votes cast for the Union de la Gauche in the presidential campaign cannot be broken down, but all the polls indicate that the CP did not get much more than its usual 5 million or 5 and a half million votes, which means that the SP now ap-

pears to have an electoral potential superior to that of the CP.

Moreover, while the CP is marking time or growing only slightly in the present situation, the SP is recruiting massively and is experiencing a sensational comeback -- to such an extent that it is no longer certain that the CP will be able to describe itself as the "first workers party." To be sure, the CP is still much more strongly implanted in the great battalions of the working class (metalworkers, railroad workers, construction workers, dockers, miners, etc.), and the support of many members of the CFTD (Confédération Française

CP leader Georges Marchais: with an open heart.



Démocratique du Travail -- French Democratic Confederation of Labor) for the SP will not be able to significantly modify this situation. But just the same we are in a new situation, one in which the SP is no longer simply a party of elected officials. For the first time in a very long while it is recruiting workers.

And there is another change. In the past, the SP always stood politically to the right of the CP, with the CP making gains on its right at the expense of the SP (an example being what happened in the teachers union). The CP began to experience difficulties on its left only after May '68. But now the SP is gaining not only on the right -- that is, among people who formerly voted for the bourgeois parties -- but is also making gains to the left of the CP, recruiting members of the PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifié -- United Socialist party, a centrist formation), the CFDT, and among the broad periphery that for the past several years has been (and still is) sympathetic to the far left.

Thus, for the first time, the CP finds itself boxed in by the SP so to speak both on its right and on its left. So the current situation is not only new from a numerical standpoint, but also in the sense that the CP no longer has the initiative over the SP in all spheres the way it used to. Let us also mention -- even though this is not an element that really counts on the level of the masses -- that for some time the CP has been experiencing friction with the Kremlin; the Kremlin has been using the CP to avert a shift in French foreign policy, but it does not intend to aid the CP in coming to power along with an SP whose hardly pro-Soviet Europeanism the Kremlin still fears.

The new situation therefore poses serious problems for the leadership of the French CP. It is advertising its satisfaction with the general results of the Union de la Gauche and is publicly saying that it is good that the CP and the SP are growing at the same time; but it is not unaware of the difficulties we have just mentioned. The fact is that the policy of the Union de la Gauche serves the SP better than the CP, since the SP adopted this policy only three years ago while the CP has been calling for it for fifteen years and lacks any alternative policy. Also, the CP leadership is trying to extract itself from this situation. First of all, after a period of silence, it has again taken up its attacks against the "ultra-leftist" danger, directing them at members of the CP who did not understand why their party did not have its own candidate in the first round and who do not want to do all the leg work for the SP. Further, while insisting on the Union de la Gauche and its Common Program, the CP leadership is declaring that this does not imply that the Union de la Gauche or the Common Program necessarily constitute a passage to socialism; it is also outbidding the Gaullists on the question of "national independence," construction of the Concorde supersonic aircraft, etc., hoping in this way to win over a part of the Gaullist electorate during the inevitable decomposition of the UDR (the Gaullist party).

The CP leadership is clearly seeking to attenuate as much as possible the effect of the conference that the SP leaders are also preparing for September with a view to "assembling" all the socialists who supported the Mitterrand candidacy, that is, apart from the SP, the leadership of a section of the PSU, the members of the CFDT, and various other groupings. The SP leadership is seeking to use its electoral success to strengthen and consolidate the positions of its party. (In less than three months we will see how much it will succeed in this.) The leadership of the CP also wants to divert the attention of its own membership from the problems that the new situation can create for them, so it is hurrying to direct their thoughts and actions around themes that it puts forward itself. But such measures -- a policy that is more rightist in its form -- will not be able to elicit a real response, nor will it be a real solution to the problems raised by the revolutionary rise and the new relationship of forces in the workers movement.

But the CP leadership will not get very far with this shift to the right -- which is not a real change in policy. In the immediate future, the CP leadership wants to give the impression that it is "renewing" the party, and to do this it has resorted to organizational gimmicks. First there is the so-called "with an open heart" campaign, which utilizes modern advertising methods. Everyone is invited to participate in meetings of cells, sections, or federal committees every week or two. Instead of going to the neighborhood movie house, go to the neighborhood cell meeting! The other, more important, measure is the convocation of a special CP congress in September. Why is this congress, which will not even have the formal "preparation" of previous congresses because it will be held right after vacations, being held?

Let us sum up this new situation, which has so far only been sketched out and which will assert itself in more detail in coming months. For decades, the French workers movement has had two reformist parties, the SP more to the right, the CP more to the left. During the 1936 upsurge, the SP held numerical superiority, but since then the CP has experienced a stronger dynamic of development than the SP. The CP had the numerical advantage during the 1945-47 upsurge, and after that it continued to grow, while the SP began to decline. The far left scarcely existed during these two upsurges. In the upsurge that began in May 1968, the formation of the Union de la Gauche (the vehicle developed by the two reformist parties to canalize and block the upsurge) has led to the initiative and advantage little by little sliding toward the SP. But in this upsurge there is a far left, a substantial number of revolutionary Marxists. This is also a new situation for revolutionary Marxists in the French workers movement. Their general orientation is determined by the tasks posed by this upsurge, which is affecting all Western Europe. They will have to apply this orientation under the new conditions of the structure of the workers movement: an SP that will be able to assemble a part of the centrist current born of this upsurge, a CP that is facing difficulties on both its right and its left that it has never before experienced. In the immediate future the revolutionary Marxists will show the greatest possible number of militants who might be fooled by the SP "assembling" operation how fraudulent the operation really is. This immediate task in regard to relatively restricted layers is located within the context of the general struggle to give a revolutionary leadership to a workers movement in recomposition.

118 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES DEPORTED TO SAIGON

by S.S. WU

The war in Vietnam is not merely civil war between the reactionary Saigon regime and the liberation forces, the NLF and the DRV. Nor is it solely a struggle between American imperialism and the Vietnamese revolution. It is also a war of suppression of the Vietnamese people by the Saigon government. This is fully demonstrated by the tragedy inflicted on 118 Vietnamese refugees during the past two weeks.

It began on June 2, when the British colonial government of Hong Kong arrested 119 Vietnamese refugees of Chinese origin at Lamma Island Channel on charges of having entered Hong Kong illegally. Among the refugees were 92 young men of draft age; the rest were women and children. They had risked their lives to escape the war, paying sums amounting to US\$1,300 each to a smuggling ring. After their arrests, they were held by the colonial government, which took an elusive stand unresponsive to the demands of friends and relatives of the refugees that they be allowed to settle in Hong Kong. It was later revealed that the fate of the refugees had already been decided by a secret deal between the colonial government and the Saigon regime. Meanwhile, Amnesty International of London and its Hong Kong branch, unaware of the secret deal and under the impression that the situation was not wholly lost, initiated negotiations with the Swedish, Dutch, French, Australian, and Macao governments, seeking to wrest the refugees from the cruelty of war and the repressive apparatus of the Saigon regime. For a while, developments seemed promising. The governor of Hong Kong, who was then in London, agreed to discuss with Amnesty International. But to no avail, for by that time the colonial government had already decided to deport the refugees. The governor's agreement to negotiate was nothing but a farce.

The climax came on the night of June 16. In the middle of the night two planes sent by Saigon landed at Kaitak airport. It was obviously an attempt to get rid of the refugees quickly and quietly, before any mass protest could develop.

But the plan had been leaked to friends and relatives of the refugees through an anonymous phone call (probably from a sympathizer in the police). Hundreds of supporters rushed to the airport. Some hoped to see their relatives one last time. Others intended to free the refugees from the colonial government, for they knew that their lives would be in danger once they were returned to Saigon. The refugees' supporters were barred from seeing the refugees. They then raised a thirty-foot banner that read, "We protest against the inhuman liqui-

dation of the Vietnamese refugees by the Hong Kong government!" Scuffles between the demonstrators and the police and riot police broke out. The police attacked the crowd with clubs; some cops took out their revolvers. A number of the protesters were injured.

The protesters then broke out onto the runway. They smashed two windows of the plane. Heavily armed police intervened, arresting twenty-two protesters and eleven reporters. All entrances to the airport were shut down and guarded by police armed with automatic rifles. It was under such conditions that 118 of the refugees were flown back to Saigon on the morning of June 17. One person, who was a Hong Kong citizen by birth, was allowed to remain.

The next morning the refugees' relatives, along with members of the Daily Fighting Group (a revolutionary Marxist group), and the Federation of Hong Kong students protested at the consulate of South Vietnam. At the initiative of the refugees' relatives, the procession also went to the New China News Agency (Peking's de facto representative in Hong Kong). But the appeal to the Peking government was for naught. The June 18 issue of the daily Wah Kiu Pao wrote, "Right after the arrest was made by the (Hong Kong) government, an intensive investigation was conducted and approaches were made to London, Saigon, and Peking. All parties concerned unanimously gave their consent to the Hong Kong government's decision to deport the Vietnamese refugees." Nor did the Peking government offer any protest after the deportation. The only government that condemned the move was the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Vuong Hoa Duc, the South Vietnamese consul-general in Hong Kong, promised that the refugees would "not be severely punished, the penalties will be very light. They will not be given the death sentence. But the young men of draft age will be inducted into the army." These promises were soon broken. According to a dispatch from United Press International, "this group of refugees is now imprisoned at Con Son Island, sixty miles off the coast of South Vietnam." (Hong Kong Standard, June 26.) The Saigon consul-general denied this report. The Hong Kong government pretended to be concerned, imploring the British ambassador in Saigon to investigate the matter, but it also expressed doubt at the accuracy of the report. Later, however, the report's accuracy was confirmed.

Solidarity with the PST!

Terror against combative workers and revolutionary militants in Argentina has been steadily on the rise for months. Bombing and machine-gun attacks have been carried out against the headquarters of workers political organizations and even against the headquarters of trade unions led by class-struggle tendencies. Militants have been kidnapped, beaten, and tortured by commandos. Cases of militants being murdered have been many.

Some of these crimes have been committed by members of parallel police organizations that include in their ranks torturers who are well known for their acts during the military dictatorship. Others have been the work of far-right terrorist groups working in collaboration with the Peronist trade-union bureaucracy. But in both sorts of cases, these crimes could not have been committed were it not for the obvious complicity of the bourgeois state apparatus and government.

They correspond to the efforts of Argentine and imperialist big capital to prevent growing sectors of the working class from escaping the control of the Peronist bureaucratic apparatus, from rejecting the practices of class collaboration, and from taking to a resolutely anticapitalist road. Because of the strength of the Argentine working class and workers movement, that would represent a mortal threat to the survival of capitalism in the country.

These terrorist attacks have fallen with ever increasing severity on the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST -- Socialist Workers party), a sympathizing section of the Fourth International in Argentina. From May 1973 to May 1974 this party has suffered some twenty attacks of this sort. In May

1974 comrade Carlos Pedroni, a member of the PST and a leader of the commercial employees in the city of Mar del Plata, was gravely wounded. In the northern part of greater Buenos Aires comrades Inosencio "Indio" Fernández, a leader of the metalworkers; Oscar Dalmacio Mesa, a workers leader in a shipyard; Mario Sida, a textile worker; and Antonio Moses, a metalworker -- all of them members of the PST -- were wantonly assassinated.

The Fourth International fully shares the indignant grief of the PST and the families and workmates of the murdered militants. It extends to the comrades of the PST and to the whole Argentine workers and revolutionary vanguard its fraternal solidarity in the struggle they are now waging against capitalist repression and far-right terror. It calls on all sections and sympathizing groups of the Fourth International to launch vigorous campaigns to lead the whole workers movement in their countries to defend the PST and the other Argentine organizations hit by the antiworker repression and terror.

The Fourth International calls on all Argentine workers organizations -- irrespective of their programmatic, strategic, or tactical divergences -- to form a united class front for the common defense of the workers movement and of all its militants against far-right terror. It calls on them to count only on their own forces in the fight for this goal and to form workers self-defense groups based on broad mass mobilizations -- the only way to break the far-right's terrorist offensive and to beat back the fascist threat.

July 3, 1974