

international press correspondence

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what next?

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TOWARD DECISIVE CONFRONTATIONS

The events of the spring and summer of this year have raised the level of class struggle in southern Europe to new heights of intensity. The collapse of the Salazarist dictatorship in Portugal and the military junta in Greece has opened new possibilities of class confrontation at the easternmost and westernmost extremities of southern Europe. In our editorial on the Portuguese and Greek events ("After Portugal and Greece: A Hot Autumn in Mediterranean Europe," INPRECOR, No. 5-6, August 3, 1974), we referred to the possibility of a "chain reaction" sweeping across southern Europe. Spain, ruled by a dictatorship already suffering from advanced senility and the victim of two severe blows in the fall of its companion right-wing dictatorships, was mentioned as a likely area for an early explosion. In the last issue of INPRECOR (No. 7, September 6), we published a dossier on the Spanish situation produced by the comrades of the LCR-ETA (VI), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International on the territory of the Spanish state.

The fourth major component of crisis-racked southern Europe is Italy, where a new rise of workers struggles against the bourgeoisie's attempts to force the workers to bear the costs of economic ruin is creating yet another potentially explosive situation. In this issue of INPRECOR we are publishing three articles on the Italian situation produced by the comrades of the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR -- Revolutionary Communist Groups), Italian section of the Fourth International. They were published in the September 3 issue of the GCR's fortnightly newspaper, *Bandiera Rossa*. The first is a perspectives resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the GCR during the summer. The second, the lead editorial of *Bandiera Rossa*, deals with the possibility of the bourgeoisie adding the CP to the government. The third is an outline of the Italian economic crisis.

To set the context for this dossier, certain elements of information must be recalled. The most recent congress of the Christian Democracy (CD), the dominant party of the Italian bourgeoisie since the fall of fascism, was held in the spring of 1973. At that congress, the many tendencies within the CD agreed to vote for a common resolution and elected Amintore Fanfani as secretary general. (He had already held that post during the 1950s.) But the defeat suffered by the CD in the May 12 referendum on the divorce law (see INPRECOR, Nos. 0 and 1) was a heavy blow to the Fanfani leadership and reopened polemics within the CD, ending the 1973 accords.

For its part, the Italian Communist party, largest CP

in the capitalist world, launched a campaign for the "Historic Compromise" just after the coup in Chile. The Historic Compromise envisions collaboration among Communists, Socialists, and Catholics; in practice it means a bloc between the CP and the CD, with the participation of the Socialist party. The groups of the far left, more and more sliding down the incline of centrism, have taken increasingly equivocal positions on the CP's drive for the Historic Compromise. *Lotta Continua* has gone the furthest of all the groups. It considers collaboration between the CP and the CD as an inevitable stage in Italian political development and believes that the CP, if it entered the government, would be obliged to express -- even if in a deformed manner -- the "workers program" generated by the masses. *Avanguardia Operaia* has explicitly pronounced itself in favor of the CP's struggle for reforms.

The "trade-union left" in this situation is represented above all by the leaders of the metalworkers union, the *Federazione dei Lavoratori della Metallurgia* (FLM -- Federation of Metallurgical Workers). Some of the members of this leadership, among them Trentin, a member of the CP, can be characterized as right centrists. Others, members of the *PdUP-Manifesto* (*Partito di Unità Proletaria* -- Party of Proletarian Unity -- *il Manifesto*, an organization based around the daily paper of the same name), two groups that are in process of fusing, are further to the left; but on the essential matters they do not differ from the right centrists. The centrist groups often fall into line behind the positions of these trade-union currents. They have even gone so far as to hail as a great victory the winning of a very partial and limited minimum wage guarantee at Alfa Romeo, to support the line of the trade unions (including the central bureaucracy) on the necessity of increasing investment in the South of the country, and to consider as an important victory a modest agreement granting certain workers the possibility of studying (the "150 hours").

The economic decrees referred to in the articles below were adopted by the government at the beginning of July and were confirmed by the parliament in mid-August. They involve a whole series of fiscal measures having the effects of reducing the buying power of the workers and increasing prices very sharply (the price of gasoline for example). According to some calculations, workers whose monthly wages range between 180,000 and 200,000 lire (about US\$275-300) will suffer losses equivalent to 25,000-30,000 lire a month. In the parliament, the CP deputies made only minor amendments to the decrees. The decrees on education

were adopted last spring and call for the establishment of so-called representative structures in which the students are underrepresented.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in the past several weeks the trade unions have decided to begin a

struggle for a demand that they had earlier denounced as demagogic and maximalist: equal wage increases for all -- at the level of the categories getting the biggest raises and tied to a sliding scale.

INPRECOR

FOR A GENERAL ANTICAPITALIST MOBILIZATION!



1.

1. At their national conference last November, revolutionary Marxists sketched out the tendencies of development of the Italian situation in the following terms:

"The perspective on which we must base our orientation remains that the social and political crisis that opened in 1968 will go on and, in a general way, will intensify. The tendency will be toward an ever more direct and unmediated clash between the two antagonistic classes over very basic alternatives: a new rise of profits or a dynamic of rising wages; an incomes policy or an affirmation of the right of the working class to struggle in every possible way to defend its own interests and to satisfy its own needs; restoration or maintenance of the employers' 'authority' in the plants or development of workers democracy; intensification of the rate of exploitation or reduction of the work week with workers control over the work pace, employment, etc."

In the framework of this general tendency it was explained that there was a "prospect of a certain prolongation of the present governmental formula, which neither the trade unions nor the CP itself has any interest in challenging. Nevertheless,

at the same time, the prospect is for a prolongation of a situation in which no reformist action of any great scope will be carried out and, consequently, for a prolongation of a situation in which none of the most explosive contradictions of these past years will be attenuated, not even the 'peripheral' ones that the original center-left government theoretically wanted to eliminate."

The events of the past ten months have demonstrated the correctness of that analysis. The situation remains characterized by deep-going tensions, heightened conflicts, and persistent instability. The bourgeoisie has been unable to take a single step toward overcoming its total political crisis, while on various occasions broad sectors of the masses have confirmed that they retain a high potential of combativity.

2.

2. In various respects, the situation for the bourgeoisie today is even more serious than it was in 1969. Economically, because after having emerged with great difficulty and in any case only partially from the most serious recession of the post-

war period, the bourgeoisie now sees its economic mechanisms threatened by an inflation that is tending to become uncontrollable; it is threatened by a new approaching recession, and is suffering heavily from the effects of the international financial crisis and the oil crisis. Politically, because the state apparatus has in a broad sense been weakened by multiple centrifugal tendencies, is blocked more than in the past from carrying out even its elementary functions, and has suffered an unprecedented loss in credibility, for the ruling party is ever less capable of asserting its hegemony, having failed in its attempt to relaunch the Fanfani leadership and finding itself once again in the grip of internal difficulties. Ideologically, because the fundamental mystifications that had bolstered the "democratic reconstruction" and the "economic miracle" have lost all credibility and have had their fraudulent character exposed even in the press organs that express the interests of the ruling classes.

3.

3. The understanding of the depth of the crisis of the ruling class should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that the bourgeoisie now finds it necessary to act decisively and to deliver hard blows at the working class.

Contrary to what many had supposed in the past and to what some continue to maintain, the economic crisis was not at all artificially stimulated through political manipulation, but is rather the result of structural contradictions that, because of a convergence of conjunctural factors, are coming to assume vast dimensions in the present phase and are dealing devastating blows to the "normal" functioning of the system both nationally and internationally. Consequently, the crisis will be able to be overcome or circumvented only through drastic measures of restructuration that will inevitably strike not only the working class but also at wide layers of the middle classes and even at the weakest sectors of the ruling class itself.

Secondly, we must not lose sight of the fact that the reconstruction operation and the redistribution of income is favored by the very mechanisms of the situation in that no effective general action of the exploited classes is being counterposed to the "automatic" economic processes that feed inflation and strike heavily at employment levels. And here is the essential heart of the present period: possible partial successes of the working class have only a defensive and on the whole ephemeral value; they are rapidly placed in question after they are achieved. The restructuration and redistribution operations can be countered only on the scale of a comprehensive struggle based on central political initiatives. This explains why the working class, despite the virtually uninterrupted development of struggle during the past two years, has suffered a reduction in its income and has lost part of the territory it had gained in the first phase of its big ascent. It also explains why the bourgeoisie, despite its intrinsic weakness and its grave crisis of political leadership, was able through the decrees of early July to resort to measures of unprecedented breadth in the current phase of capitalism both inside and outside Italy, thus inflicting a defeat on the working class.

4.

4. The working class should have responded in an immediate and militant way on a comprehensive political scale to the attack of the bourgeoisie, the culminating point of which was reached with the decrees of early July. But the reformist political and trade-union organizations once again revealed their

inability to defend the vital interests of the working class and the other exploited layers, avoiding a general political confrontation and instead seeking a compromise that was ever more difficult to obtain, even from their own point of view. They postponed the dates of the decisive struggle, seeking to bring pressure on the government and the employers through limited mobilizations (regional strikes, sectoral actions, the July 24 actions, and so on). The major organizations of the non-traditional left acted in the framework of the orientation they had drawn up during the autumn of 1972, when they renounced presenting a real alternative to the bureaucratic leaderships on the field of the great battles around the contracts. In practice they accepted or supported the actions of the trade-union bureaucrats in that they did not put forward substantially different comprehensive platforms to those of the bureaucrats, instead limiting themselves to making criticisms about the methods of struggle. They thus contributed to mystifying the bureaucracy's conception of the general strike, associated themselves uncritically with the hailing of certain alleged successes (like the "guaranteed income" at Alfa Romeo, the investments in the South, the "150 hours"), and often lined up behind the so-called trade-union left or behind some of its most noted representatives. All this made very difficult the tasks of the workers vanguard in the factories, who have been the advocates of meaningful actions of struggle during the past two years. It likewise constituted a very serious obstacle to the intervention of the revolutionary Marxists.

But despite all that, despite all the ground that has been lost, real possibilities of recovery and relaunching of struggle still remain. In reality, in coming months the broad masses will have ways of verifying in the concrete the consequences of the government decrees and the consequences of the soaring inflation, and they will therefore move to respond.

Moreover, the situation could deteriorate even further, provoking not only an additional reduction in the incomes of the workers, but also and simultaneously an unprecedented contradiction in employment levels.

It is true that a drastic economic situation could have negative consequences for the working class in the sense that it could create differentiation between the layers that command the greatest trade-union power and the more defenseless layers and between the employed workers and the unemployed, with all the consequences for the combativity and unity of the class or important sectors of it that we have seen in the past. Nevertheless, very recent events demonstrate that the masses retain a very high level of potential combativity, and in the present European and Italian context, the possibility of resignation to defeat, of acceptance of the blows of the employers and the government without hard and repeated struggle, seems remote.

Certain striking incidents that occurred during the demonstrations for regional strikes between July 9 and July 12 confirm that a substantial vanguard continues to be actively present and that broad sectors of the masses have a critical attitude toward the opportunist choices that have been made by the trade-union leaderships.

5.

5. We have never denied the importance that sectoral struggles -- or even struggles simply factory or workshop-based -- can have under certain conditions. In a situation in which the employers will move toward restructuration and layoffs -- as they necessarily will, in various forms and at different rhythms -- openings for partial struggles will objectively appear, especially given the absence up to now of initiatives toward gen-

eralized struggles.

Revolutionary militants will have to commit themselves on this field also, while trying in any case to put forward objectives that tie in with our more general orientation (distribution of available work among all, with no reduction in pay; workers control over the work pace and the employment rolls; rejection of any form of intensification of exploitation, etc.) and that point up the precarious character of every partial or sectoral solution.

But having said that, we must decisively reaffirm that today we must place ourselves essentially on the field of struggles and objectives of a general character. The bourgeoisie has already struck hard blows and in fact has already imposed political-economic decisions that weigh heavily on the working class. If the trade unions want and are able to continue to impose the orientation that they have set down in these past months, if the masses are not mobilized powerfully, a defeat will be inevitable: the income of the workers will suffer a new and drastic decline and the level of employment will drop seriously.

What is needed is a reversal of the present tendency. This can be carried out only through a massive response to the measures of the government and the employers immediately after the summer vacations. The workers mobilizations will have to culminate in a general strike, and this general strike must be conceived not simply as a demonstrative act or as a means of pressure, but as a test of strength between the classes. Thus, it will have to be a general strike not limited in duration at the outset (in this sense, there is no substantial difference among the four-, eight-, and twenty-four-hour general strike), but must be prolonged until the essential objectives are won.

6.

6. The platform of struggle for the period that has now opened up must be based around the following points:

- abrogation of the law-decrees of early July.
- against inflation, for an integral sliding scale of wages that compensates fully and immediately for all price increases and that is applied under workers control at all levels (from control of the prices of the costs of production to the verification of retail prices). The increases accruing under the sliding scale must be calculated on the basis of a base wage of 250,000 lire a month. So long as the present wage system remains in force, the equalization of wages at the level of the highest categories must be demanded even in partial struggles.
- against layoffs, for a sliding scale of hours; that is, divide the available work among all, with no reduction in personnel and no cuts in wages. No layoffs! No overtime! No speed-up! Workers control over the work pace and the employment rolls!
- for the defense of layers of the workers in weak unions in order to avoid the spread of deep differentiations in the working class; for a minimum wage cutting across all categories, not less than 200,000 lire a month and linked to the sliding scale.
- end taxes on wages.

7.

7. If the working class achieves success in the fight for such objectives, it would create the conditions for moving from an objectively defensive position to an offensive one. Within this perspective, transitional demands retain their full validity and

must not be limited to the level of propaganda.

The essence of the transitional demands -- that is, demands able to stimulate an anticapitalist dynamic -- is present in the demand for the sliding scale insofar as it is conceived as integrally linked to workers control at various levels. The crisis that emerged in the autumn of 1973, especially the energy crisis and the shortage of certain consumer goods, provided the stimulus for extending our approach to other areas. The slogan of nationalization without compensation and under workers control of the oil trusts, the big food monopolies, and the large-scale distribution network was put forward then. It should be taken up again, and so should the demand for the abolition of secret banking and for the opening of the companies' account books. These slogans should help in transforming into antagonistic class terms conflicts that the bourgeoisie tries to present as exceptional and that the reformists falsely claim can be overcome through a rationalization of the system.

Finally, workers control must be demanded -- in the form of control over the work pace and employment rolls -- in a struggle against capitalist restructuration, which is aimed at intensification of the rate of exploitation and elimination of jobs.

8.

8. A general battle aiming at central economic and political decisions will create the conditions for posing the problem of the political leadership of the country, the problem of the government. It is significant that discussions on this question have been going on among the non-traditional far-left and that layers of workers have become sensitive to this problem.

Revolutionary Marxists hold fast to their rejection of any solution that involves governmental collaboration between the workers organizations and the parties of the bourgeoisie. On this basis they reject the perspective of the so-called Historic Compromise as well as any other tactical or conjunctural version of this perspective. They reject any position favoring any sort of CP participation in the responsibilities of government. Such participation would in no way express a "workers program," and would certainly provoke divisions among the masses, thus facilitating restabilization or, at the very least, would make a comprehensive mobilization of the working class in response to the class enemy's measures and decisions much more difficult.

The solution that must be fought for is a government that excludes all representatives, whether direct or indirect, of capitalist interests and that defends the interests of the proletariat and the other exploited layers.

It must be a workers government whose anticapitalist social content is immediately asserted. It cannot be conceived of as an expression of the existing parliamentary institutions or the relationship of forces within them. It will have to be the expression of the self-development and maturation of a broad movement around general political objectives and will have to be based in the first place on organs of proletarian democracy that emerge or are reinvigorated in the struggle. The political components of this government -- the parties and organizations that will be part of it -- cannot be predicted in advance. In this sense, the perspective of a workers government has to be advanced, for the moment, mainly on the field of propaganda, as an outlet that corresponds to the requirements of this period of the crisis of the system but whose realization in the immediate future is blocked by the absence of the subjective conditions necessary for its fulfillment.

9.

9. The GCR considers its main priority to be intervention in the workers struggles that are on the agenda for this autumn. The GCR will fight for the orientations that were worked out at its workers conference, held in Turin at the beginning of July, and explained once again in this resolution.

We will continue to be present in the trade unions, and especially in the delegates councils, the most important field of intervention. We will fight for a revitalization of the delegates councils, which must play a more dynamic role and must constantly be renewed in a democratic manner. Insofar as we succeed in winning a consensus within the vanguard around our proposals and methods of struggle and organization, we will create the preconditions for the formation of a class-struggle tendency in the unions, which will oppose the bureaucratic leaderships and their conceptions and organizational practices.

For our specific intervention we will launch workers collectives (or red mole collectives), which will be organizations composed of worker militants and sympathizers of the Fourth International, as well as people who agree with the orientation of our organization. These collectives will point out not only the directions necessary for the struggles in which the workers of a given factory or category are engaged, but will also advance the comprehensive political positions of the revolutionaries. Our experiences since the national conference -- particularly in Turin and Taranto -- indicate that encouraging results can be achieved, provided systematic action is developed, conjunctural vacillations are avoided, and the entire organization is committed to the actions. In the present situation, construction of workers collectives is more than ever a priority task.

10.

10. In the coming year, the student movement will be conditioned, probably more so than during last year, by the development of the general political situation and the general battles of the working class. The search for connections and convergence with the workers movement remains a fundamental requirement. The coming fight in the schools and universities against the normalization attempts represented by the government decrees can achieve success essentially in relation to the positive development of the general political battle. The objectives and forms of struggle of the revolutionary Marxists in the schools and campuses will be elaborated in a separate document. But it can be said here that revolutionary Marxists will reaffirm their rejection of any form of participation through

government appointment and to the functioning of the bodies called for by the government decrees. The most massive and intransigent response must be given to the government's attempt to put an end to a whole phase of politicization and radicalization of the students by choking off the anticapitalist dynamic of their struggle.

11.

11. The greater success the workers are able to achieve in the coming struggles, the more unfavorable conditions will become for any fascist or protofascist initiatives. Thus, a correct orientation in these struggles is a precondition for effectively conducting the battle against fascism itself.

As for more specific orientations, revolutionary Marxists express their opposition to any conceptions of democratic antifascism or resistance that postulate unity between the workers parties and the bourgeois parties or groups. At the same time, we reject the re-raising by the major groups of the non-traditional left of certain themes and terminology used by the Communist party during the 1950s, the clearest expression of which is their call to make the request to outlaw the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano -- Italian Social Movement, the largest neo-fascist organization) the axis of the antifascist mobilization. Such an orientation is illusory and dangerous: illusory because it can create illusions that legal measures taken by the ruling class can resolve the problem; dangerous because it erects an obstacle to the understanding of the central problem, which is that the battle against fascism can be won only through direct action and the mobilization of the working class. For this reason, revolutionary Marxists will continue to base their antifascist campaign around the two axes of the workers united front and workers and students self-defense.

12.

12. The GCR will continue to make its contribution to anti-imperialist mobilizations and to active internationalist solidarity. We will support any initiative that can ensure united mass mobilizations -- in opposition to any sectarian utilization of anti-imperialist issues by particular groups or blocs -- and, at the same time, we will push for the necessary theoretical and political confrontation. We must begin now to prepare for actions in September around the first anniversary of the Chilean coup.



THE COMING AUTUMN STORMS



The criminal attack of August 4* and

the economic crisis have once again raised the problem of the political leadership of the country. It is true that the latest edition of the center-left government managed to carry out its plan to get the fiscal decrees approved and that the accommodating parliament confirmed that for the moment no one wants to take the initiative in overturning them. But the decisive layers of the ruling class are aware of the risks involved in going into an extremely difficult economic and political period that could provoke explosive tensions equipped only with an intrinsically weak and largely discredited government that has survived more than anything else because of fear of the vacuum that would be created by its fall. Hence the anxious search for a way out; hence also the reappearance of public polemics about what governmental formula can allow for overcoming the crisis of leadership that opened up some years ago.

We have never underestimated the fact that for about two years now the working class has objectively been thrown onto the defensive, above all because of the development of inflation. And we are aware that the re-emergence of terrorist acts and reactionary plots can work in the same sense. In the absence of decisive initiatives of struggle in the coming weeks and months, it cannot be excluded that a serious recession accompanied by the spread of unemployment could provoke phenomena of discouragement and confusion. Nevertheless, all the indications of the past year -- from the struggles around the contracts in the big factories to the divorce referendum and the mass mobilizations after the Brescia massacre -- confirm that the mass movement is not at all in retreat and that, on the level of the masses, it is the Christian Democracy and the far right that have lost ground. Under these conditions, only marginal fringes can project overcoming the crisis through an authoritarian or dictatorial solution.

For this reason the question of a radical political turn is posed today above all in terms of the possible inclusion of the Communist party in the government bloc. The inclusion of the CP

*The bombing of the Italicus train by fascists of the Ordine Nero (Black Order).

in the government would change the fundamental political context that has existed for the past several years and could lend a certain credibility to the government, which would be in position to widen its maneuvering room. In any case, such is the hope of those in the bourgeois camp who are more or less openly advocating this move.

In the past several months, certain conditions for realization of the Historic Compromise (or some variant of it) have effectively ripened. The inclination of some sectors of the bourgeoisie to accept it has undoubtedly increased. The Communist party offered new proof of its "respectability" by the attitude it took toward the government's fiscal decrees. It refused to obstruct the decrees, although this would have inevitably blocked their application and probably would have led to the government's resignation. On the other side, the events in Portugal, where the CP is now in the government, and Greece, where the two CPs have converged in a favorable attitude toward the heirs of the colonels, have likewise contributed to easing the old resistance and have allowed for overcoming some traditional fears. This is the reality that lies behind the polemics that have gone on this summer; it would be a mistake to regard these polemics as a mere diversionary fig leaf.

But despite all that, it remains improbable that the turn to the Historic Compromise will be made in the near future. When the bourgeoisie decides that it has reached the end of its rope, it will most likely make up its mind to definitively crush the sectoral resistance and routinist reflexes of the political apparatus, the clique in power, and their electoral agents. But the problem is to determine when the end of the rope has been reached. The conviction that so far continues to prevail is that the margins for maneuver have not yet been exhausted and that it is still possible to obtain indirect aid from the CP without adding it to the government or to the parliamentary majority. This calculation is not without foundation, for the CP itself seems for the moment to be more inclined to function on that level than to take direct responsibility for the government, which could cause it serious difficulties with the masses without providing any concrete compensation.

On the other hand, the internal crisis of the Christian Democracy serves to raise obstacles or to postpone the operation. The arguments for rejecting the Historic Compromise advanced by the leaders of this party both during the July meeting of its National Council and during the August press debates seemed to center not so much on the old and obviously worn out traditional objections, but rather on the notion that it is too risky for such a daring operation to be carried out by a divided party that is suffering many difficulties with the social forces that have supported it up to now.

Finally, the proposals for an agreement between the CP and the CD continue to offer little in the way of concrete openings, for they have not gone beyond discussion of generalities and have therefore not produced a government program corresponding to the requirements of the present situation. These propos-

als will hold out the real possibility for an agreement and will begin to present the immediate conditions for such a turn only when they begin to make some progress on this ground.

Although it is conscious of the dangers involved, for the moment the bourgeoisie can only continue to live from day to day, seizing on any existing solution and fearing the worst. And all those who favor the status quo out of fear of being

swept away completely or seriously damaged by a grave jolt are able to carry the day. But will the terms of the situation remain the same if the gathering clouds of summer give way to violent autumn storms?

No definitive response can yet be given to this question. But it is certain that many things will change. ■

EDILI.
CONTRO
L'AUMENTO DEL
COSTO
DELLA VITA



AN ECONOMY ON THE BRINK OF RUIN

by ETTORE SALVINI

Currency reserves are down to almost nothing; the balance of payments deficit continues to grow; demand for consumer goods has been reduced even before the first effects of the thievery organized by the state economic decrees have been felt; industrial production is beginning to slow down, particularly in certain sectors; small companies are closing down. Thousands of workers are being laid off or are on technical unemployment while awaiting layoff.

These are the initial signs of the economic crisis, an extremely grave crisis that could lead Italy to total collapse in the near future.

We have previously stressed the fragility of the miniboom of 1973, which was both stimulated and undermined by inflation. We have pointed out that it was in contradiction to the evolution of the world capitalist economy, which was moving toward general crises. The energy crisis accelerated these processes, both in Italy and throughout the world.

Today the beginnings of the Italian crisis are intermixed with a crisis that has already struck the most important capitalist countries to a greater or lesser extent. The Philco corporation has placed its workers on technical unemployment because it can no longer export its products. Fiat exports are going better than those of Volkswagen or General Motors, but, unlike in the past, the foreign market is unable to substitute for internal demand during lean periods.

As always, of course, the capitalists are using the crisis for their own ends. In two ways. On the one hand they are trying to make the workers bear all the costs of the crisis. It is the

workers who are supposed to stop going on vacation and stop eating meat (that is, the ones who took vacations and occasionally ate meat; it is well known that this does not include all workers, even during "good years"). In the meantime, the employers continue to sail their yachts back and forth between the Costa Smeralda and the Côte d'Azur, eating caviar and drinking champagne. On the other hand, the employers are using the crisis to eliminate the gains made during past years by the workers' struggles in the factories. We have seen the bourgeois press scream for the reduction of absenteeism in the major factories -- at the very moment that it was announcing that tens of thousands of workers had been put on technical unemployment. The employers see a good sign in the easing off of a phenomenon of passive protest like absenteeism. It is a sign that the workers, intimidated by the crisis and the bourgeoisie's use of it, are "pulling in their horns" and turning docile, as they were in the good old days. The employers hope that the workers will manifest this docility in face of the plans for restructuration that are being prepared, plans that will mean layoffs and unemployment for a part of the working class and speed-up and overtime for the rest, the "lucky ones" who manage to stay in the factories.

The crisis is being used by the employers, but this is not simply a maneuver on their part. Rather it is an objective phenomenon, a characteristic of capitalist society that will be with us for as long as that society lasts.

Thus, the problem is to begin with the workers' need not to bear the costs of the crisis, to make the employers pay instead, and then to arrive at a general workers counteroffensive capable of bringing down the capitalist system, the eternal generator of crisis.

How the crisis will develop

The credit squeeze has not yet born all its poisonous fruit. Its full effects will be felt only in coming months, in September and October, especially when the banks have to force the companies to pay back outstanding credit at the anticipated interest rate of 8 percent. (This happens beginning September 30.)

This will cause the closing and bankruptcy of a whole series of small- and medium-sized firms and will create various difficulties even for some of the big firms. But that is not all! Already it is being said that the credit squeeze is not tight enough yet, for the whole Christian Democratic apparatus of bureaucrats and hangers-on, which is financed by the state treasury, has continued to spend and expand during this whole period. It is thus clear that the determination of the CD (and let's not forget the other government parties, including the SP) to stop at nothing in preserving the armchairs lined with thousands of millions of lire that are presently occupied by their members in the various state institutions will inevitably intensify the credit squeeze. And this will eventually lead to attacks on employment in the factories. It is easy to predict that to the extent that the government is obliged by the joint pressure of the industrial bourgeoisie and the reformists to "cut wasteful spending" and thus to reduce public expenditures a bit, the ones who are going to suffer will not be the presidents of the useless state agencies or the employers that hang around the public through picking up scraps. The ones to suffer will be the employees of the various state and public institutions.

Inflation goes on

The prices of all consumer goods have taken a new and formidable leap forward in recent days. The government measures of the past few months -- from the credit squeeze to the decrees that were supposed to slow down inflation -- have stimulated the price increases. We now have recession and inflation simultaneously, which combine to bear down on the working class and force it to accept sharp reductions of consumption and thereby of its standard of living.

The prices set by private and state companies are increasing in a very touching race, all in the name of "management efficiency." What hypocrisy! The Italian bourgeoisie -- both private and state -- one of the most inefficient in the world, is fighting for efficiency. It is becoming ever more clear that for the employers, efficiency is simply a synonym for attacks on the workers' living standards.

The international context

The internal inflationary pressure, exacerbated by the parasitism that characterizes not only the state apparatus but the whole capitalist structure as well, continues to stimulate increases in imports and thereby the balance of payments deficit. This will end by drying up the already scarce currency reserves. Already today, what remains of currency reserves (apart from gold, which is not negotiable anyway) is earmarked for paying off foreign loans to Italy. Italy pays 500,000 million lire a year in interest for these loans. Moreover, a part of these loans are supposed to be paid back during the next few months.

Our patriotic bourgeoisie has resumed exporting capital. In recent days the lire has begun to depreciate rapidly again. But the more the value of the lire declines, the more expensive imports become, the more exchange reserves are dimin-

ished, and thus, the more we are dependent on the "generosity" of the other capitalist countries in granting loans.

The "generosity" of West Germany and the United States depends -- apart from political considerations -- on these countries' interest in preserving an important market for their commodities and their capital. But to be a good investment, the Italian market must function perfectly from the capitalist point of view: There should be no strikes; the power of the trade unions should be curbed and the power of the delegates councils eliminated; the work pace should be faster and the real wages should be lowered (even more).

The international bourgeoisie considers the Italian bourgeoisie inefficient not only and not so much because of its unusually parasitic characteristics as because it has been unable to control the working class. The international bourgeoisie will thus lend a hand to the Italian bourgeoisie not only and not so much by granting loans as by linking these loans to political conditions. The meaning of these conditions, no matter how they are formulated, will be the imposition of a line of attack on the working class. All this accentuates authoritarian tendencies.

Which way out?

The spokesmen of the bourgeoisie affirm that the crisis is a product of fate, provoked by a "cruel and cynical destiny." If the crisis is a product of fate, they try to convince us, there is nothing to do but to "roll up our sleeves" and "equally share" the inevitable sacrifices, hoping it will pass as soon as possible. In reality, we know very well that the real meaning of this is to throw all the weight of the crisis onto the backs of the workers.

The traditional workers parties and trade unions (along with the centrist groups), however, tend to stress the maneuvers of the state and the employers as the causes of the crisis. Supposedly, this is intended to demonstrate that the crisis can be avoided and thus to convince the workers that struggle is possible and that struggle pays off. If that were the case, the scientific inexactitude would at least have a noble political goal.

In fact, however, it is easy to see that this is not the way things really are. The reformists (and the centrist tail-enders) say that the crisis "is not a product of fate, rather it is a deliberate decision of economic policy." They say this because they want to convince the workers that it is possible to change the government's economic policy while remaining in the framework of the capitalist system, that it is possible to make a "turn," even a "profound" turn, while nevertheless leaving the employers at their posts, that it is therefore possible to have capitalism without crises. We believe that this is not only a mistaken analysis, but also that it is an analysis that leads to political conclusions that are wrong and even suicidal.

This is not because government maneuvers and employer speculation do not exist, but rather because these maneuvers and speculation are possible only on the basis of the objective laws of capitalism, which in any event, regardless of economic policies, will lead to recessions. The struggle against the "bad" capitalist who engages in maneuvers and speculation presupposes belief in the "good" capitalist, who is content with a "fair profit" (as it was explained once by L. Longo, former general secretary of the Italian CP), a capitalist who keeps his income down, does not restructure his company, and does not speculate. But this "good" capitalist does not exist, nor

has he ever existed. The only good capitalist is a dead capitalist.

An effective struggle aimed at making the employers pay for the crisis must begin from the premise that to eliminate crises the capitalist system must be brought down. In a situation as grave as ours, even a simple struggle to defend wages and employment cannot bear fruit if it is not accompanied by a general attack on the capitalist structures. This struggle, whether defensive or offensive depending on the moment, must therefore be centered around the objective of workers control at all levels as the objective that unifies the sliding scale of hours and wages. The companies that are in difficulty must not simply be handed over to one of the big state combines to get enough aid to maintain some jobs; they must be expropriated without compensation and under workers control.

The goods of the speculators must be confiscated and placed

under workers control. To achieve this, secret banking must be eliminated immediately and the companies' account books must be opened.

Only a program of struggle that goes in this direction will be able to avoid useless and frustrating experiences like the struggle for investments in the South. Who today remembers any longer the "great victory" won on paper a few months ago (which cost the workers thousands of hours in strikes) -- the "victory" of the "definite pledge" of the big private and public companies to invest in the Mezzogiorno? What are all these pledges worth in face of the unemployment that is now bearing down?

For the workers, the only thing that can pay off is a general struggle for the defense of their jobs and standard of living and for workers control at all levels. ■

GREECE

TROTSKYIST APPEAL TO TRADE UNIONISTS

The following manifesto, released by the Vanguard Organizing Committee, was published in the August 10 issue of Ergatike Pale (Workers Struggle), the newspaper of the Greek Trotskyists. During the years of the military dictatorship, Ergatike Pale appeared as a mimeographed monthly produced clandestinely. After the fall of the junta, it began coming out as a printed, four-page weekly. We have taken the English text from the September 9 issue of Intercontinental Press, a Trotskyist weekly news magazine published in New York. The translation from the Greek is by Intercontinental Press.



Comrades:

After nearly eight years of ruthless persecution of all trade-union activity in our country, when every attempt to represent the workers' interests was suppressed with bullets, prison, exile, and torture, today as a result of our patient struggle and the struggle of all the oppressed strata of society a breach is opening up. In order to fulfill our responsibilities, which are to defend, advance, and consolidate the interests of our class, we must systematically exploit this opportunity. To do this, we must form trade-union groups that really defend our interests.

The first step toward this is to form a Vanguard Organizing Committee in every category, in every city, and in every branch of industry. These groups must serve as provisional leaderships that can impel and direct the struggle to drive out the opportunists appointed by the junta, the labor skates who for years collected big salaries for their betrayals and whose sole mission was to send congratulatory telegrams to the murderers of our fellow workers. These committees will launch a campaign to sign up all the workers in every category. They will set up leading bodies in a democratic way as quickly as

possible, taking every step necessary to assure that they really represent the will and the choice of the workers in that category and give expression to their demands.

We must not lose sight of the current crisis and we must not rely on promises. We must be on our guard and organize this vigilance systematically. Only the working class itself has the capacity and the genuine will to defend and consolidate the interests of the workers. It is certain that attempts will be made to replace the junta's designates through the appointment of new opportunistic labor skates of the Markos breed. Likewise, the pre-1967 hacks who brought such misery to the working class are bound to try to take the places of the junta's appointees. The workers of the country must resist such attempts in a determined and organized way.

In no case can appointed leaders be tolerated at any level of the trade-union structure. In the base units, the leaders must be elected democratically by the workers. And leaders at higher levels, including the highest, must be chosen by such elected representatives of the workers. Moreover, all elected leaders must be subject to recall by the ranks at any time.

We appeal urgently to all veteran trade-union activists to take the lead quickly in this movement to form Vanguard Organizing Committees, drawing around them all our young brothers who have proved themselves under fire in these last eight years but who have no experience in legal trade-union work.

Taking into consideration the general picture of the situation in which our class finds itself and the technological advances that have occurred, the central demands for each category should be the following:

--Immediate democratic election of leading bodies, which

are to be run by the workers themselves without any interference from tutors of the breed sponsored by the junta or by Markos.

- A five-day workweek.
- A seven-hour workday.
- An immediate 50 percent raise in wages and salaries to cover part of the buying power of the pay we have lost in the past seven full years, and continual readjustments to bring wages up to the European level.
- Equal pay for men and women.
- A temporary reduction of working hours without any cut in pay in order to spread the work to absorb the unemployed in every category. Public works to eliminate unemployment.
- The banning of overtime and the enactment of legislation carrying stiff penalties for employers who force workers to work overtime.
- Unemployment compensation at full pay.

- One month paid vacation for all blue- and white-collar workers regardless of their years of service.
- All insurance premiums to be paid by the employers.
- Administration by the workers themselves of all social insurance funds.
- Nurseries and special care for working mothers.
- Four hours work and four hours study for working youth between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.
- Abolition of labor by minors under the age of fourteen and full social coverage for the guardianship and education of such minors.
- Equal conditions and equal rights for all foreign workers including complete freedom to organize economically and politically.
- Abolition of all antilabor laws.
- Absolutely no state interference in the unions.

EVERYONE JOIN IN THE STRUGGLE! ■

ETHIOPIA



the fall of the "king of kings"

by A. DURET

More than 200,000 people in the provinces of Wollo and Tigré have died of starvation during the famine that has ravaged Ethiopia. Nevertheless, according to the director of ecclesiastical affairs of the personal office of Haile Selassie, the most important thing is that "the people need spiritual nourishment." Undoubtedly, that was the main reason for the cabinet-ordered disappearance of a document that had been produced by the ministry of agriculture in November 1972 warning about the food shortage that could be expected in 1973. The "Christian wisdom" of the regime of the "king of kings" likewise accounts for the hoarding of food reserves in Addis Ababa -- hoarding that was so crudely obvious that UNESCO and the FAO, as accustomed as they are to malfeasance, requested the opening of an inquiry into the misappropriation of these food stocks. Thus, the profound corruption of the aristocracy

and the government apparatus was exposed for all to see. Denunciation of corruption was to become one of the preferred themes of the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee in justifying the arrest of the main lords of the regime and also in preparing the elimination of the Negus (emperor). With the deposing of Haile Selassie on September 12 -- six months after the strike of the bank employees, bus drivers, and taxi drivers and the mutiny of the troops in Asmara, Eritrea -- the crisis that broke out in February 1974 in one of the main bastions of reaction in Africa has reached the end of its first phase.

The background

Although it is the site of the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity and the UN's Economic Commission for Africa

Ethiopia had not played a very prominent role on the international political scene. This reticence allowed for the concealing of the striking underdevelopment of this country of 24 million people, a country whose per capita annual income is \$80 (as compared to \$110 in India, for example), whose illiteracy rate is 90 percent, and where there are 4,000 hotel beds for tourists but only 9,000 hospital beds for the population. There are only 350,000-400,000 wage earners, of whom 150,000 are employed in the private sector.

Eighty percent of all workers are involved in subsistence agriculture. In 1969 agriculture accounted for 76 percent of the gross national product.

Of the cultivable land, 90 percent is owned by the emperor, the feudal lords, and the church, a roughly equal share controlled by each. (The Economist, February 21, 1974.) Only about 10 percent of the available land is farmed, despite the fact that experts estimate that the unused land could feed at least 100 million people. These figures express the reality of the Ethiopian agrarian structure.

Two modes of production coexist. One is feudal and, from the standpoint of the labor force it employs and the contribution it makes to the national production, it is dominant. The other is capitalist. In the sector whose production system is feudal, ground rent, whose form varies in different provinces, is still generally paid in kind. The peasants, serfs and sharecroppers, are relieved of 50 percent of their harvest in the form of rent in kind. This is officially recognized in the Civil Code (Articles 2989-91). But the real rent exceeds that figure, for the feudal lords exploit the peasants in other forms as well: special taxes for renewing the right of tenancy, ecclesiastical tax (the tithe!), various services that must be rendered the lord (construction of his graineries, house, etc.). In this context, any improvement in the level of agricultural production is virtually impossible. Because of the 50 percent rent, the peasant would get the benefit of only half of any increase in productivity generated by new investment. And the low level of technology, not to mention the natural conditions, obviously makes any substantial improvement in productivity through increased investment extremely improbable. In addition, the sharecroppers and serfs find themselves in a state of permanent social insecurity. They are not certain of being able to obtain renewals of their "right" to "exploit" the land that is granted them by the lord. They do not know what the farming tax will be in the coming year. This super-dependency, in addition to the official and private repressive forces, is one of the instruments of domination assuring the "docility" of the peasantry. Those are some of the factors, in addition to the social and cultural role of the church and the concentration of landed property, that explain the extreme agricultural underdevelopment of the empire of the Negus.

The major part of the land is controlled by the landed aristocracy (which is the ruling class economically and politically), the church notables, and the imperial family. The biggest landlords are for the most part absentee landlords. They have penetrated a good part of the administrative apparatus. Superimposed over this layer of large landed proprietors is an intermediary layer of local landlords commanding political-administrative powers -- which vary from province to province -- who are in direct contact with the masses of peasants. The church plays an important role in the system of rule. It is not only one of the three great categories of landed proprietors, it also serves as the communication channel between the state and the masses of peasants. Composed of a clergy that runs to more than 200,000 priests, deacons, and cantors whose obscurantism cannot be exaggerated, the church has participated actively for decades in the campaign to maintain illiteracy.

The peasant-serfs have risen up against this exploitation on several occasions: in 1948 in Ogadem, in 1958 in Wollo, in 1960 in the province of Sisamo, and in 1973 in Werehimo and Guder. On each occasion, the repressive forces intervened with bloody savagery, massacring peasants by the hundreds. Today, however, the structure has begun to shake more violently than ever, and the slogan "land to those who till it" cannot fail to spread more and more among the exploited masses of the Ethiopian countryside.

The imperialist presence

A second feature of Ethiopia is the extremely close ties between the feudal structure and imperialism.

Superimposed over the traditional economy there is a manufacturing and industrial sector controlled by imperialism -- essentially U.S., British, Dutch, and Japanese imperialism. The agro-industrial sector is under the domination of Dutch capital, specifically the famous Dutch-HVA firm, a company formed initially with capital withdrawn from Indonesia after its independence. The sugar sector is 40 percent controlled by a single British company, Mitchell Cotts, which also invests in cotton. The textile industry, which employs 34 percent of all industrial workers and alone accounts for 26 percent of all fixed capital, is controlled by Japanese and American capital. Mobil and Gulf Oil have gotten their hands on the oil deposits off the coast in the Red Sea. The concessions granted imperialist capital by the 1963 Decree on Investments are fabulous. For the first five years of their activities, foreign companies are exempt from all taxes. More than 80 percent of the industrial sector is in the hands of imperialist capital. The parasitism of the feudal structures and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie is expressed in the fact that their investments are made essentially in real estate, especially since 1963, when the location of the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa provided a definitely favorable terrain for real estate speculation and the construction of villas!

But imperialism also takes Ethiopia's strategic position into account. Eritrea borders the Red Sea and, along with Djibuti (which is under French administration), controls passage through the Bab el-Mandib, which is the access to the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Ethiopia is located midway between the explosive Arab East and southern Africa. Ethiopia is not only the seat of the OAU, which is of interest to various imperialist powers, but also offers a location for various military bases, among them Kagnev, which before the development of the satellite telecommunications system played a decisive role in the region as a communications and listening center. "The United States injects money into Haile Selassie's Ethiopia . . . in order to maintain its influence in the Red Sea," wrote the June 19, 1970, U.S. News and World Report.

There is no doubt that American imperialism was initially involved in the governmental crisis that opened last February. After having foiled two attempted coups in 1960 and 1964, Washington began to take account of the difficulties posed by the succession of the Negus. The crisis had been deepening since 1966. The American intelligence services were prepared to take a line other than support to Haile Selassie. But American imperialism definitely did not foresee the dynamic that would be unleashed in February 1974. That dynamic was the product of the convergence of a series of factors: The crisis in the army, stimulated by the struggle of the Eritrean fighters, aroused the emergence of a movement that rapidly went beyond the stage of material demands. The famine not only exposed the rottenness of the regime, but also led to revolts in

the countryside. Concurrently, the workers movement was for the first time launching a mobilization of some scope, and it was being supported by the student movement. This mobilization not only influenced the process of differentiation in the army, it also made the situation much less controllable for the Makonnen government, which was set up at the opening of the crisis. Finally, the church was affected by the crisis. During the month of March, a movement of revolt against the hierarchy and for salary increases developed among the low-ranking clergy. Many of the priests are simply serfs of the top hierarchy. The entire Ethiopian social structure was shaken; decomposition of the imposing state apparatus began to speed up. All these movements converged toward challenging the autocracy well before the confrontation between the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee and the representatives of the old regime gave the signal for a popular mobilization of great breadth.

The crisis in the army

There are about 45,000 officers, non-coms, and enlisted men in the armed forces. To this must be added 32,000 men in the police force, 12,000 men in the territorial army, which specializes in repression of the peasant masses, and an antiguerilla force of 5,000. The police are equipped by West Germany. The Israelis are in charge of training the paratroops and intelligence agents. Even though the Ethiopian government was compelled by pressure from various African states to break diplomatic relations with Israel in July 1973, the "Israeli advisers" continue their "training instructions" unabated. But the most important part of the armed forces is trained by Americans, and many officers were students in U.S. military schools. Nevertheless, this repressive force, which was charged with the job of maintaining the power of the emperor and the Amhara aristocracy*, was not able to resist the blows dealt it by the Eritrean liberation forces and was experiencing growing internal tensions.

The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1960 by militants who had been members of the traditional political parties. The Eritrean Liberation Army, under the command of Ahmed Idris Awate, conducted its first ambush in 1961. The development of the armed struggle was rapid, to the point that the emperor had to send some 6,000 troops to "his" province.

Eritrea, inhabited by 3 million ethnically and religiously diverse people, was attached to Ethiopia in 1952 after a UN General Assembly vote recommended federation of the two countries. This vote was conducted under the pressure of American imperialism, which maintained privileged ties with Haile Selassie. The Eritrean government was dissolved in 1960 and in 1962 the "king of kings" made Eritrea a simple province of the empire. Armed resistance began very quickly. Eritrea became a real brush fire spreading through Ethiopian feudal tinder. The "classical" measures of antiguerrilla war were utilized by the regime: displacement of population, napalm bombing, destruction of villages. More than 150,000 Eritrean refugees try to survive in the neighboring Sudanese desert. But all this was unable to destroy the resistance.

*The Amhara are the dominant ethnic minority of 3 million. One of their chiefs, Menelik, imposed a real colonial administration over the non-Amhara peoples during the nineteenth century.

At the end of the 1960s there was an internal crisis in the ELF that led to a certain process of political clarification. The crisis had been revealed both in the Front's difficulties in winning a base among the Christian population of the central plain -- difficulties linked in part to the clearly religious outlook affirmed by some of the Muslim leaders of the ELF -- and by the Front's internal strife provoked by its strict hierarchical structure and the limitations of its social demands. In January 1970 three wings arose within the movement: the ELF general command, led by Telda Bairu; the ELF-Popular Liberation Forces (the left wing); and the ELF-Eritrean Liberation Forces (a minority, a good part of whose members later rejoined the Popular Forces).

This division in the liberation movement came at the moment when a broad offensive had been launched against the independence movement. The Negus had to recognize the reality of the liberation war, and a "state of emergency" was declared. In 1972, there was a recomposition of the liberation movement. The majority of forces regrouped in the Popular Liberation Forces. This was to stimulate a new phase in the liberation struggle, both in the military sense and in the sense of the reforms being carried out in the liberated zones.

Thus, in December 1973 and at the beginning of 1974 the Ethiopian army suffered important reverses. Two brigades of the Imperial Guard that had been ordered to conduct a search-and-destroy operation in January 1974 suffered serious defeats. In the north of the country at the beginning of February there was a three-day battle between the emperor's troops and the Popular Liberation Forces.

It was then that the mutiny of the troops in Asmara, Eritrea's largest city, took place. The banks, airport, and strategic points of the city were occupied. The mutineers -- soldiers and non-coms -- demanded an increase in pay. The navy joined the rebellion. The Ethiopian fleet admiral was seized by the rebels. General Asefa, sent by Addis Ababa, was taken hostage by the troops in Asmara. On February 27 air-force troops and paratroopers took control of the city of Debre Zeit, a little more than 30 miles from the capital.

Faced with the extension of the crisis, the government of Aklil Abte Wold, which had been in power since 1961, had to resign. Within the army the first elements began to take shape of what until the beginning of September would be a de facto second regime: the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee. Although the emperor had systematically played on the divisions in the army, allowing each corps a great degree of autonomy, the crisis quickly spread to all sectors and even infected the Imperial Guard. This does not mean that the heterogeneous features of the army were eliminated, but the change in the relationship of forces is important. The movement that arose out of "the February events" was based in part on the officers and non-coms who had come out of the ranks and in part on officers who appeared as the bearers of a program able to dam up the potential mass movement. These officers, among them General Andom, could well be the elements American imperialism considered best able to control a movement whose outbreak could no longer be prevented.

Worker and peasant struggles

While for the time being the peasantry and the workers have not entered into massive mobilization, the various sectoral movements, the March 7 general strike, and the limited explosions of peasant revolts, as well as the demonstrations of the student movement -- which has stood at the head of the

opposition movement for some years -- determined the framework within which the crisis in the army developed and the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee emerged.

The workers of the Wonji sugar refinery (a subsidiary of the Dutch-HVA trust) marked the entry of the working class into the struggle in January 1974. Their strike, based around demands relating to wages and working conditions, lasted for two months. At the beginning of February the employees of the Ethiopian Bank of Commerce and the Bank of Addis Ababa



went on strike. They were soon followed by the airport ground workers, who were demanding job security. Finally, on February 11 the teachers went on strike against the proposed education reform. The student movement supported these struggles. The repression was ferocious, but the educational reform was postponed indefinitely and wage increases were promised "on the condition that the teachers go back to work." That was a first victory. On February 25, even though the government promised to freeze prices and increase wages, the air-traffic controllers went on strike, just as the transport strike was ending. The crisis in the army was added to these mobilizations, even though the army continued to play its repressive role.

On March 1 the new government of Endalkatchew Makonnen, former Ethiopian representative to the UN, who appeared as the direct representative of American interests, had to deal with a new mobilization. The students relaunched the battle, with cries of "People's government, yes, Endalkatchew no!" Makonnen declared a curfew, but that did not prevent the revolt from spreading. On March 4, to Makonnen's great surprise, the CELU, Ethiopian trade-union federation, threatened to call a general strike. (It is well known that since the liquidation of the trade-union leaders in 1960, the federation, led by Beyene Solomon, has been controlled by Washington through the offices of the AFL-CIO. Moreover, many union leaders had received training in the Israeli Histadrut.) This threat of a general strike reflected the changes in the relationship of forces between the working class and the trade-union leaderships, changes due in large part to the entry into the working class of youth who had been expelled from school. On March 7 a general strike broke out, generally effective in the construction industry and among the bus drivers, railroad workers, and airport workers.

Some of the workers disobeyed the orders of the CELU and joined the students in demonstrations. The strike eventually petered out. Nevertheless, it showed for the first time that many sectors of the working class were capable of responding

to the government and illustrated the government-linked union leaders' loss of control over the ranks. The struggle movements continued. They raised issues of wages, as well as the right to strike and trade-union independence. After strikes by the postal workers, the dockers, the truckers, and the bus drivers, the government issued an absolute ban on strikes and demonstrations. The student and worker response was immediate. On April 27 the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee therefore announced its decision to arrest all the "high functionaries" of the regime who had been accused of corruption.

The divisions within the ruling class remain acute. Makonnen is one of the administrative cadres and members of the "intelligentsia" who emerged from the landed aristocracy. This sector commands significant financial assets and wants to participate in developing a "modern" sector of the Ethiopian economy. This government may manifest some opposition to the feudalists who felt more at ease with the emperor or Prince Kassa, but it is obvious that it cannot carry out any real reform program, however modest.

Since June the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee has been asserting its strength very clearly through military occupations of the airport, the radio stations, and the ministries. Prince Kassa, along with many other personalities of the regime, was arrested. Mini-coups were carried out one after the other. On July 4 the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee, more openly expressing its reformist program, presented four demands to the emperor:

- amnesty for all "patriots" imprisoned before February 1974;
- amnesty for political exiles;
- rapid application of a revised constitution;
- the Coordinating Committee should work with the government to assure the carrying out of various projects.

On July 22 the armed forces put the fourth demand into effect. They through out Makonnen and replaced him with Lidj Michael Imru. He also comes from the landed nobility. But he achieved a certain popularity in the 1950s by distributing some of his land to the peasants. Nevertheless, the governmental change was much more characterized by the forceful entry of the officers into the government that was formed on August 3. Sixteen imperial palaces were nationalized during August. But above all, the governmental pillars of the imperial regime were suppressed: the Crown Council, the Imperial Military Council, the Imperial Tribunal, the Ministry of the "Imperial House," a body tied directly to the emperor. Aman Andom, minister of defense and chief of the general staff, emerged as the strong man of the situation. On September 12 the emperor left his palace -- by Volkswagen.

Throughout the crisis the obvious line of the officers was to avoid any direct confrontation with the regime, for that could have been the spark that could have touched off the entry onto the scene on a large scale of the working class and the mass movement.

Various elements of the Ethiopian situation came to the fore during the phase of crisis that lasted from February to September. Nevertheless, the key element, the peasantry, did not really assert itself. The ability or inability of the reformist leadership to calmly begin the process of modernization, for which it will need some social base, will depend in large part on the attitude of the peasantry. For imperialism, which wants at all costs to avoid the destructuration of the country, this is the most crucial thing. Its success is linked to many factors, among the most important of which are the struggle of the Eritrean fighters, the internal contradictions within the army, and the capacity of the workers and students for mobilization. But the "peasant" question and the question of the capacity of the Ethiopian vanguard to respond to the project of "modernization with calm" both remain to be answered. ■



1937

Work has to

by ANDY

Only six months ago the capitalist press in the United States was still hailing the "remarkable restraint" of the trade unions. "Labor, the Sleeping Giant: Settlements Are Moderate, But Prices and Profits Are Almost Embarrassing" was a typical headline.

Now typical headlines read: "U.S. Swept by Labor Strife" and "Labor: Strike, Strike, Strike."

In mid-July government mediators announced that they were trying to settle 588 strikes, the highest total for a single week since they began keeping count fifteen years ago. The Labor Department reported that there were 1,130 strikes, involving 796,000 workers and costing 7.9 million workdays, during the whole month of July. Thus, strike activity had more than doubled since July 1973, when strikes involved 320,000 workers and cost less than 3 million workdays.

The rapid upswing of strikes since government wage-controls were allowed to expire April 30 is an indication of the pent-up anger of American workers and their determination to defend themselves against the ravages of inflation. Consumer prices in the United States are rising at an annual rate of about 12 percent, according to government figures.

Construction workers, who had been placed under wage controls before the rest of the working class, have been in the forefront of efforts to catch up with inflation. An estimated 20 percent of all current strikes are in the construction industry.

Other industries and individual firms where "labor peace" had reigned for years are being shaken up. At the beginning of June, 110,000 members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers -- mostly Black and Puerto Rican women -- staged their first nationwide strike in fifty-three years. The Pennsylvania Power and Light Company experienced its first strike in fifty-four years when 5,000 linemen, clerks, and plant workers

walked out to back up their demand for a cost-of-living escalator provision.

Government workers have stood out prominently in this upsurge of trade-union militancy. Strikes by city employees virtually shut down San Francisco in March and Baltimore in July. Government workers, who now number more than 14 million, are one of the fastest growing sectors of the work force. In contrast to the stagnant or even declining proportion of union members in private industry, organization of public workers is increasing quickly. A high percentage of the members of these unions are Blacks and women, who generally occupy the lowest-paid jobs.

Groups of white-collar employees who previously tended to view themselves as "professionals" rather than workers have organized and struck for better wages and working conditions. In some cases they have taken over and transformed "professional associations" that had previously served as company unions. Forty thousand nurses in Northern California struck for three weeks in June, greater control over working conditions being one of their central demands. A walkout by office and editorial workers at Harper & Row was the first strike in the book-publishing industry since the 1940s.

Fall of real wages

The current upswing in strike activity is the direct result of the previous two and a half years of government "wage-price controls," which were imposed by Nixon on August 15, 1971. While prices and profits soared to record-breaking heights, the controls succeeded in their real aim of whittling down wage increases. For union members the average increase fell from 8.1 percent in 1971 to 6.4 percent in 1972 to 5.2 percent in 1973.

Workers Pin Stir



1974

ROSE

The intervention of the capitalist government accomplished what individual capitalists could not: holding the wage increases of the U.S. working class below those Washington's imperialist rivals have been forced to grant. The August 31 New York Times approvingly cited "a marked narrowing of the wage differentials of manufacturing workers in the United States and other large industrial countries" as one reason for the strong competitiveness of U.S. exports.

The wage limits have meant a sharp drop in real wages since worldwide inflation exploded last year. Although the current round of strikes has raised wage increases somewhat, they still lag well behind the rate of inflation. According to government statistics, the real wages of the average U.S. worker in July 1974 were 5.3 percent lower than a year before. Real wages today are no higher than they were in 1965, and are dropping.

This slashing of real wages was made possible by the complete capitulation of the trade-union leadership to government controls. The union bureaucrats failed to explain that the capitalist government cannot and will not control prices. Bound hand and foot to the capitalist political parties, the bureaucrats cooperated to the bitter end, sitting on the committees whose purpose was to hold down wages. A short walkout by New York City hospital workers last November was the only officially sanctioned strike to challenge the wage controls, and it was defeated for lack of support from other unions.

Opposition to inflation erupted in other forms. A nationwide meat boycott in April 1973 involved millions of people. In September 1973 Black community organizations in Chicago took the initiative in organizing a demonstration of 8,000 people against inflation, unemployment, and unfair taxes. But because of the default of the union bureaucracy, such actions were limited and sporadic.

When the wage controls were first imposed, most workers were

willing to go along, believing that the government would really limit prices. Anger and disillusionment grew as bitter experience proved otherwise. A danger signal for the bourgeoisie was the eight-week strike organized by young rank-and-file carpenters in Northern California last winter -- without official union approval -- against a government board's decision to cut back a wage increase in their contract.

Direct wage controls have certain liabilities for the ruling class. They tend to expose the antilabor role of the government and raise the danger of wage disputes escalating into head-on confrontations between the unions and the capitalist state. Taking a calculated risk that they would be able to restrain wages without direct controls, the rulers allowed them to lapse last spring.

But without the excuse of government controls, union bureaucrats found it much more difficult to restrain demands that the unions take action for higher wages. One indication of the pressure on the bureaucrats is the government report that rank-and-file unionists are now turning down 12.3 percent of all negotiated settlements, compared to 9.6 percent a year ago.

As a result of the experience of wage controls, workers today are less inclined to rely on the government rather than their own strength to protect their standard of living. In a recent Harris poll, 60 percent of those surveyed thought the government's economic policies "are doing more harm than good," up from 23 percent in September 1971.

The latest Gallup poll found that the largest proportion of people surveyed -- 44 percent -- thought the federal government was chiefly to blame for inflation. Sixty-eight percent expected the economic situation to worsen in the next six months, while fully 46 percent agreed that "the U.S. economy is heading toward a depression, such as the nation experienced in the 1930s."

Disillusionment with and distrust of the government are all the greater in that they are not limited solely to economic questions. The Vietnam war, the "energy crisis," and Watergate opened the eyes of millions to the capitalist government's corruption and criminality. When the government is seen as conspiring with corporate profiteers, workers are unlikely to respond with enthusiasm to exhortations to sacrifice for the "national interest." This is the beginning of the development among the workers of a class-conscious attitude toward the capitalist state.

Confusion about government "wage-price controls" is still widespread, however. The latest Gallup poll also found that those surveyed favored -- by a 50 percent to 39 percent majority -- the reimposition of "wage and price" controls. The illusion that there can be "fair" controls is deliberately fostered by the union officials, who still promise to cooperate with controls so long as they are "evenhanded."

Escalator clauses & the sliding scale of wages

Nevertheless, growing recognition of another method -- the only effective method -- of protecting wages against inflation can be seen in the rising popularity of escalator clauses. This demand is gaining nearly universal acceptance among American workers and has been the central dispute in many strikes. For example, bus drivers struck in Washington, D.C., last May and are still on strike in Oakland, California, against city attempts to cut back or eliminate escalators they had previously won. This autumn the United Mine Workers are demanding the first escalator clause in the industry's history, while railroad workers unions are seeking to win escalators they had lost in the late 1950s.

Labor Department figures on wage increases prove that workers who have escalator provisions end up with significantly higher increases than those who do not, but that in no case do the increases fully match inflation.

The importance of the demand for a sliding scale of wages is that it completely rejects the notion that workers bear any responsibility for inflation and asserts their right to complete protection against rising prices. As opposed to any "price control" schemes, it embodies the idea that workers can only rely on their own strength and their own organizations to provide this protection.

No escalator clause fully provides a sliding scale of wages. The employers constantly seek to impose limits on the maximum raise, to make wage adjustments less frequent, and to set formulas that guarantee only part of the official rate of inflation. Equally important, all escalators are tied to the government's price index. The struggle for a genuine sliding scale of wages entails rejecting the rigged government figures. The unions themselves should establish committees to determine the real rate of price increases, and then insist on whatever wage increases are needed to immediately and fully compensate for the price increases.

The dynamic of struggling for such a demand points toward the workers themselves determining the state of the economy and beginning to control industry in their own interests.

The sliding scale of wages should be presented together with the sliding scale of hours as the answer to chronic unemployment. Unlike the escalator clause, this demand has hardly been taken up at all by the trade unions in the United States.

As unemployment rises, however, (and Ford's policies are deliberately aimed at driving up unemployment), this slogan will meet with greater receptivity.

Limitations of the strikes

While the current round of strikes shows a heightened trade-union militancy among American workers, it has definite limitations. Most of the strikes have been small, local, and settled relatively quickly. The garment workers strike has been the only industry-wide action.

Neither the top union bureaucrats nor the corporations want a national confrontation, and so far they have been able to avoid one. Settlements providing very poor wage increases were reached without strikes in such key industries as auto, steel, communications, and longshore (on the East Coast). The leadership of the United Steelworkers has concluded an "Experimental Negotiating Agreement" with the steel trust that amounts to a six-year no-strike pledge. This is being hailed by the capitalists and the executive council of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, the national trade-union federation) as the model for collective bargaining in the future.

Major unresolved talks still lie ahead, though. Negotiations have begun in the aerospace industry; a national coal strike, which could be the biggest labor battle this year, is widely predicted for November; and the contracts covering 600,000 railroad workers expire at the end of the year.

The mounting economic crisis has had a certain impact -- though limited -- on the union bureaucracy. George Meany, octogenarian president of the AFL-CIO, recently acknowledged reality long enough to note, "We are in a recession now, and there is every indication that we are going into a depression."

The most important shake-up in the top union leaderships has been in the United Mine Workers. In a federally-ordered election held at the end of 1972, the corrupt old machine of Tony Boyle was ousted by a reform slate headed by Arnold Miller and based on rank-and-file movements for greater democracy, mine safety, and better health care.

The Miller leadership is inexperienced and by no means a class-struggle leadership, but its closeness to the rank-and-file has meant important gains for miners. It has reestablished the right to vote on contracts, opened the pages of the union newspaper to the membership, and begun to launch an organizing drive in mines that had gone non-union. This drive just took a big step forward with the victory of a bitterly-fought thirteen-month strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, which was seen as a test case by the union and companies alike.

Changing class consciousness

No improvement in the economic situation is in sight. Ford's declared policies, behind which the U.S. ruling class is united, call for "austerity," deeper recession, and more cutbacks in government spending for social services. At the same time, no relief from inflation can be expected. The outlook for consumer prices is foreshadowed by the wholesale price index, which rose 3.7 percent in July alone. A new upsurge in food prices is going on, with farm prices rising 3 percent between July 15 and August 15.

The attack on the living standards of the working class also includes rising unemployment, speed-up, pollution, shortages,

WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING



46 percent agreed that the "U.S. economy is heading toward a depression..."

and a decline in social services -- from health care to transportation to education. The real value of food stamps, welfare, social security, and pensions is dropping. These all combine to foster a mood of insecurity and uncertainty.

If the union leadership's response to the attacks on wages has been hopelessly inadequate, its response to broader social questions has been even worse. In all these areas the conservatism of the union bureaucracy stands in growing contradiction to the attitudes that are spreading among the working class, especially among young workers. One significant confirmation of this was a survey by pollster Daniel Yankelovich, who found that the radical attitudes toward business, patriotism, law, the police, religion, politics, sexual freedom, work, and authority that were typical of college students in the late 1960s are now accepted by young workers.

Yankelovich found that young people have developed what he calls a "Bill of New Rights." These include: "To be able to send children to college whether or not they can afford to do so. To participate in decisions that affect their work. To enjoy a secure retirement. To have access to the best medical care whether they can afford it or not." In other words, these "new rights" are free education through the college level; workers control of production; social care for the aged; and socialized medicine.

The most radical attitudes were found among Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican youth, among whom "the prevailing view is that this is a sick society (55 percent) and not democratic (76 percent)." These youth feel this is a society of "rampant racism."

All aspects of the economic crisis hit hardest at workers of the oppressed nationalities and women workers. Illusions about gradual progress toward full equality are crumbling as the oppression of these groups is exacerbated. While the official unemployment rate for white workers was 4.8 percent in July, it was 9.4 percent for Blacks and 35.3 percent for Black teenagers. In 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the typical Black family had an income only 58 percent of the income of the typical white family; the typical full-time woman worker earned only 57 percent as much as her male counterpart. These gaps are widening.

One of the most significant national developments in the American labor movement has been the formation and growth of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Founded at a conference last March attended by 3,200 women trade-unionists, CLUW's stated goal is to organize women within the trade-union movement to fight for the special needs of women, including equal pay and an end to job discrimination, full employment, organizing the unorganized, child-care legislation, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and democracy and a greater role for women inside the unions. CLUW is being organized in most major cities and is attracting growing numbers of rank-and-file women unionists.

CLUW reflects the increased militancy of women workers, who have played the dominant role in strikes of nurses, teachers, stewardesses, garment workers, and often public employees. It is a manifestation of the extension of the radicalization of women, which began among student youth, to the working class. It is a development inside the unions that has the potential to play a major role in transforming them into instruments of class struggle.

FOR A LABOR PARTY!

The current upswing in strike activity, while it has won real gains for some workers, has not yet gone beyond the established methods espoused by the trade-union bureaucrats: strikes of one union against one employer, conducted only on the level of economic demands.

The greatest limitation of the current struggles is their lack of a political expression. The unions are hamstrung in dealing with government attacks because of the policy of supporting the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties. This was especially clear in the union officialdom's utter inability to fight against the wage controls.

While there is widespread recognition that today's economic crisis requires political answers, the union bureaucracy tries to channel the sentiment for political action into support for the capitalist parties, especially the Democratic party. Their "answer" to the crisis has been to "elect a veto-proof Congress"

in 1974, that is, a Congress with a larger Democratic majority. This was based on the demagogic claim that Nixon alone was responsible for the attacks on workers -- when, in fact, all government antilabor policy is endorsed by overwhelming bipartisan votes in Congress. Now the top AFL-CIO bureaucrats are spreading the equally bankrupt notion that Ford may improve matters; and they are openly enthusiastic about Rockefeller as vice-president.

The United States is virtually unique in the imperialist world in that there is no mass working-class political party -- even one of a reformist variety. Regardless of the level of militancy they attain in the economic sphere, the American workers vote overwhelmingly for bourgeois political parties. The American bourgeoisie takes full advantage of this anomaly, endowing

itself with a much greater margin for maneuver than that possessed by its counterparts in Western Europe, for example. At the same time, the lack of a mass working-class party imposes additional restraints on the development of class consciousness among the proletariat, thus lending the trade-union bureaucracy greater maneuvering room as well.

To meet the many-sided assault on workers' standard of living, independent political action by the unions will be required. An independent labor party is needed to help coordinate and centralize workers' struggles and to fight for labor's interests on crucial political questions of war and peace, racial oppression, the oppression of women, taxes, wage controls, unemployment, and social services. Such a break with capitalist politics is the next crucial step forward for U.S. labor. ■

BANGLADESH

HAS BANGLADESH A FUTURE?

by IBNE AZAD

Nearly four years ago, on the night of November 12-13, 1970, an unprecedented cyclone and tidal wave ravaged the coastal districts of what was then East Pakistan. About one million lives were lost in that catastrophe. The Pakistani military regime made very little effort to save the lives of the cyclone-devastated people. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the present prime minister of Bangladesh, was then the leader of the opposition party in East Pakistan. He stated before a press conference on November 26, 1970:

"We have lived with floods and cyclones since Independence (1947 when the British left India). Today, after twenty-three years of shared nationhood, we are without even plans for flood control. . . . We are confirmed today in our conviction that if we are to save the people of Bangladesh we must attain full regional autonomy. . . . We must have plenary powers to manage our economy. It is only when we can wrest away from the ruling coterie and attain full regional autonomy . . . that we can expect to solve our urgent problems, be they those of economic development, flood control, or those of reconstructing the villages and rehabilitating the people ravaged by the cyclone."

Floods and cyclones are two major natural disasters that hit Bangladesh almost every year. Effective control of floods had been one of the pledges made by Rehman during the fight against the Pakistani military regime. On January 3, 1971, speaking before a gathering of nearly 2 million people in Dacca, Rehman promised, "Whenever the question of flood control was raised in the past, the plea of non-availability of funds was given. I shall show how money can be arranged for flood control." (Morning News, Dacca, January 4, 1971.)

Rehman has been prime minister of Bangladesh for more than two and a half years now. When he became prime minister, he promised the people a Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal). But instead, Rehman and his henchmen in the ruling Awami League have converted Bangladesh into a graveyard. Limitless corruption, misadministration, and inefficiency reign supreme. Bangladesh is ruined. Its economy had collapsed long before the recent flood struck Bangladesh. Rehman has not fared any better than the Pakistani butchers. On the contrary, the toiling

masses were in some ways better off during those days than at present. Now, few shout about "Joi Bangla" (Glory to Bengal). The most common question is: "Has Bangladesh a future?"

The June flood

Floods struck Bangladesh this year in the month of June. Water level in the different rivers was rising steadily and the situation was aggravated by the heavy rain fall. By the beginning of August the country was in the grip of the worst flood in 150 years. Two-thirds of the country's 55,000 square miles were under flood water. Nearly 30 million people were affected; 3,000 were killed; 3,500 miles of road were destroyed. As of this writing it is not possible to accurately estimate the real extent of the damage. The Bangladesh government has put it on the order of \$500 million. The sufferings of the people are indescribable.

Rehman has done very little to fight against the floods. Nor has his government done anything to protect people from the cyclones. In the current year's budget only 3 million takas (US\$1=7 takas approximately) has been allocated, whereas the minimum requirement according to the Flood Control Ministry was 6.5 million takas (Holiday, Dacca, August 4, 1974). The first five-year plan has completely omitted the problem of flood control and has only touched upon flood protection. In the same issue of Holiday N.M. Harun wrote, "Experts hold that there are two approaches to the problem of flood control and flood protection: a) effective flood control is possible on basin-wide planning and multi-national efforts; and b) labour-intensive projects within a comprehensive plan can be undertaken even with the existing resources of the country to protect vast areas from floods."

"The present administration is yet to consider the first approach. And, for the second approach, earnestness has not been shown."

Despite the unprecedented havoc created by the flood, the international response has been far from big. As soon as the flood water started to engulf vast parts of the country, Rehman arranged for the heads of different diplomatic missions to be

flown by helicopter over the flood-devastated countryside. The government appealed to the United Nations and other international agencies for help. But the international response was pathetic.

In the past, both during the cyclone of 1970 and during the first year after the liberation of Bangladesh, the government was provided with large assistance from abroad. In the first year of independence, the United Nations Relief Operation-Dacca provided more than £500 million. Yet at the time of this writing, very little has been offered to the government of Bangladesh. The U.S. government has donated only \$4 million. The United Nations Disasters Relief office in Dacca has donated only \$20,000. The World Food Program in Rome has announced an offer of \$2.5 million. These sums are far less than the \$500 million estimated as needed by the Bangladesh government. Commenting on this, Michael Hornsby wrote: "This parsimony undoubtedly reflects in part the disillusionment of international agencies and other aid donors at the way in which massive injections of relief funds over the past three years have been dissipated and embezzled by corrupt Bangladesh officials" (The Times, London, August 14, 1974).

A correspondent of the Bangladesh weekly Deshbangla reported that most of the foreign missions in Bangladesh were aware of how the Bangladesh government had misused and squandered a good part of the foreign aid. The foreign offices in Bangladesh believed that about 50 percent of this aid found its way to India, 30 percent was misappropriated by the distributors, who were and still are solely the members of the ruling Awami League, and only 20 percent actually had reached the needy and the poor of Bangladesh (Deshbangla, Dacca, August 8, 1974).

After the November 1970 cyclone, Rehman accused the Pakistani military regime of criminal negligence because of its failure to launch an intensive relief and rescue operation. But how is the relief operation being carried out under the rule of the Awami League? According to a report by Ian Ward in the August 15 London Daily Telegraph there were only six helicopters in service. He narrates how the relief operation is being carried out: "I flew here today aboard a Russian-made helicopter with the Russian crew to experience at first hand some of the hopeless confusion which has engulfed trying to bring relief to the stricken areas.

"The flight was timed for 8 a.m. sharp. The Russian crew were

standing by their craft on Dacca airport at 6 a.m. ready to load the trucks of packaged bread parked nearby along with a four ton consignment of drugs. But with no government official in attendance nothing stirred. At 8:15 a.m. the Dacca airport relief coordination officer strolled into his quarters. The telephone on his desk was out of order. Piles of receipts, documents, files and scraps of official notes lay under a paper-weight awaiting his signature -- testaments to the extraordinary bureaucracy and red tape that throttles every Government move here. When loading finally began the Russian crewmen requested destinations. The officials, who by this time outnumbered the loaders by two to one, were uncertain. Then the Russians sought cargo weights, but none had been taken. The officials did their sums and decided that the total cargo to be lifted was eight and a half tons. Later I made a boat trip to three flooded villages where families were living on rafts made of matted water hyacinth secured to the roofs of their waterlogged mud and thatched dwellings. Fishing families huddled in open boats which also floated beside their inundated homes. Not one of the families had been visited by relief teams, nor had they received aid in any form."

In this time of national crisis Rehman should have taken up a united program to deal with such a calamity. Instead, he has played politics with flood. He is using his police force to obstruct the relief work carried out by the opposition parties. The message is clear. He and his henchmen want to divide among themselves all the aid that might flow into the country!

A dying economy

Long before the recent flood, the economy of the country had reached a point of collapse. Foreign reserves had dried up. Consequently, the import of essential commodities is being held up, and foreign importers are refusing to entertain Bangladesh letters of credit. The 1973-74 deficit in foreign trade has amounted to 44.5 million takas (Deshbangla, August 8, 1974). By the end of last June the foreign reserves of Bangladesh reached almost a zero level. Bangladesh sought a major loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to a report published in the London Observer, the IMF had granted only £16 million, whereas Bangladesh needed a sum of £300 million for the import of essential materials for the second half of the current year.

Now the flood has come, and this has put additional pressure



on the already dying economy of Bangladesh. During the last two to three months Mujib has been sending his emissaries to various world capitals to procure some help. The foreign minister approached oil-rich countries like Iran, Bahrain, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi. The finance minister was sent to Washington. Two members of the Bangladesh planning commission were sent to Hungary, West Germany, Jordan, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Britain. A minister who is known to be very much Islamic-minded was sent to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq. The industries minister was sent to Moscow. Even before his departure, the Kremlin bureaucrats made it known that they had no intention of lifting Bangladesh out of the present crisis by offering aid in the form of hard currencies. It is believed that the Soviet aid would be based on a barter system to be repaid by industrial goods from an industry set up with the Soviet aid.

The economic situation is so bad that the Bangladesh planning commission has given up the idea of carrying out the country's first five-year plan. Instead there will be a developmental program on a year to year basis. Even the Rehman administration finds it extremely hard to service the foreign debts. On September 1, 1973, Mr. Hamidullah, governor of the Bangladesh Bank, pointed out that three factors had contributed to the collapse of the Bangladesh economy: the flight of capital, heavy smuggling to India, and production failure in mills and factories.

But who is paying for the economic collapse? The hardship of the toiling masses is indescribable. How are the people maintaining their lives when the per capita income is less than \$200 a year and when rice is being sold at 50 cents a pound and an ordinary men's shirt costs at least \$20-25? Death by starvation is very frequent. During the period of Rehman's rule prices have increased at least 500-600 percent. The toiling masses have been bled white. In the last four months alone, the price of rice has at least doubled. The price of cloth has gone up at least tenfold since the liberation of Bangladesh. The inefficiency of the Rehman administration is such that due simply to the lack of a signature from the Planning Commission a large project for cotton cultivation could not be put into effect. (Dainik Bangla, Dacca, July 4, 1974).

Corruption, blackmarketeering, hoarding, bribery, and all other antisocial activities are going unchecked these days. A section of the ruling Awami League has accumulated considerable wealth. It is popularly believed in Bangladesh that Rehman himself has accumulated enough wealth to become one of the ten richest persons in the country. Who comprises the new rich class of Bangladesh? Just to give one example, Rehman's own nephew, Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni (popularly known as Sheikh Moni), has become one of the richest men of the country. He has been openly criticized even by many Awami League members and is well known for his corrupt practices. His maternal uncle undoubtedly offers full protection and immunity. Last year even Rehman's son was caught red-handed in antisocial activities.

Economics of smuggling

The grim food crisis that prevailed in Bangladesh even before the recent flood was absolutely man-made. According to the official government estimate, the shortage was on the order of 1.8 million tons (Holiday, April 7, 1974). On the other hand, in 1973 the country registered a bumper crop. According to an estimate by a Commonwealth organization, Bangladesh produced 12.5 million tons of rice, which should have been sufficient for a population of 75 million. Why then should there be any scarcity of rice? The answer is simple. Rice is being smuggled across the border to India, where there is a

chronic shortage of rice and other agricultural products.

The item most affected by smuggling is jute, which used to make up 85 percent of Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings. Today the jute industry is facing a virtual collapse. Before 1971, India was deficit in raw jute to an extent of 500,000 bales a year. The Indian jute industry was steadily declining. In 1964-65 Indian jute production was 1,222,600 tons; by 1969-70 it had dropped to 953,000 tons (Far Eastern Economic Review, January 21, 1974). During the same period, Indian jute exports dropped from 843,600 tons to 466,700 tons. One can compare the decline of the Indian jute industry with the growth of the jute industry of what was then East Pakistan. In 1947, the jute industry in East Pakistan was almost nonexistent. By 1971, however, 77 jute mills had been established. In 1964-65, the jute mills of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) produced 280,112 tons; by 1969-70 the figure had risen to 587,500 tons. During the same period exports rose from 218,629 tons to 496,300 tons.

In recent years, however, the picture has changed dramatically. It was recently disclosed in an Indian daily that India had accumulated one million bales of jute through smuggling and had set a goal of 500,000 bales of raw jute as an export target. (The Hindustan Standard, March 16, 1974). Since jute was procured from Bangladesh by the Indian jute industrialists through smuggling, the 62 jute mills in West Bengal, India, are not only working at full capacity, but even on double shifts. On the other hand, the 77 jute mills in Bangladesh are facing an acute crisis in production; many of them will be closed soon because of shortages of raw jute and imported material such as lubricants, spare parts, etc. The closure of jute mills would definitely throw thousands of workers out of work. At the same time, the foreign exchange earnings of the Bangladesh government through jute and jute products has dropped sharply -- from 3.5 thousand million takas in 1969-70 to 2.6 thousand million takas in 1973-74.

The economics behind the smuggling are very simple. Officially, one Indian rupee is equivalent to one Bangladesh taka. But according to the unofficial exchange rate, one Indian rupee commands at least two Bangladesh takas. The price of one maund (82 pounds) of jute is 60 takas in Bangladesh, and the price is the same in India. By smuggling one maund of jute, a smuggler gets 60 Indian rupees, which can be converted into 120 Bangladesh takas. The 120 takas can be brought back to Bangladesh or a piece of cloth for 120 takas can be brought back and sold in Bangladesh for 150 takas. Because of this very simple economics not only jute but also rice, vegetables, and milk are smuggled out of Bangladesh, giving rise to a man-made food crisis.

Opposition meets repression

Since independence Rehman has promised on several occasions to use the armed forces to "stamp out corruption, hoarding, smuggling, and other antisocial activities." All these promises have turned out to be absolutely hollow. The reason is that very few persons in Bangladesh except the members of the ruling Awami League have access to licenses and permits to carry out both external and internal trade. The members of the Awami League have virtually monopolized all gainful offices, business, commerce, and industries. This meant that Mujib would have to use armed force against his own party men. Instead, he has used the army to suppress the opposition.

On February 5, 1974, the government issued a special powers act according to which the regime is entitled to resort to mea-

asures such as preventive detention without trial, censorship of newspapers, proscription of objectionable publications, and prohibition of objectionable associations and organizations. Rehman has made full use of this "special powers act" to gag the voice of the people. It is worth while to recollect what he had pledged in the past. On October 28, 1970, in a broadcast to the people of Pakistan he said, "A real living democracy must be established, in which all the fundamental freedom shall be constitutionally guaranteed. Our manifesto outlines a framework for the healthy growth of political parties, trade unions, and local self-government. We do pledge to restore complete freedom of the press and academic freedom and to eradicate corruption which has grown like cancer in our society." (Dawn, Karachi, October 29, 1970.) Events of the past few years have clearly demonstrated how empty Rehman's promises were.

Since the liberation of Bangladesh several leftist papers have been forcibly closed down. Freedom of the press has been greatly curtailed. The editor of the most popular daily of Bangladesh, Ganakantha (People's Voice), a newspaper of the opposition Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD -- National Socialist party), has been put under arrest under the special powers act. Most of the daily newspapers are government controlled, as during Pakistani rule they belonged to the Pakistani government, people from what was then West Pakistan, or pro-Pakistani Bengalis.

Rehman has found a unique way of curtailing freedom of the press. The government has started to ration newsprint to the newspapers whose policies are not in conformity with those of the government. While most of the dailies are government-run, there are many weeklies that are opposed to the Rehman regime. In 1973-74 all the weekly newspapers were allocated 200 tons of newsprint. This quota has now been slashed to only 15 tons. This has forced several weeklies to reduce their circulations. And the price of newsprint has gone up by 250 percent during the last eight months, dealing a heavy blow to the survival of the small newspapers.

Awami League: the new rich

On February 15, 1971, at the Bengali Academy in Dacca Sheikh Mujib declared: "We firmly believe in a socialist economy and a society free from exploitation. We will not stay in power unless we can translate the hopes of the people that have been reposed in us . . ." (The Pakistan Observer, Dacca, February 16, 1971). A few days later he again repeated his

promise: "Without a socialist pattern of economy, 70 million people cannot live in an area of 55,000 square miles." (Dawn, Karachi, March 1, 1971.)

Such were the promises of Sheikh Mujib before the people.

After the liberation of Bangladesh, banks, insurance companies, and big industries were nationalized and the government put a ceiling on investment in private sectors. The Awami League had no other alternative but to resort to such measures, since the Bengali bourgeoisie was very weak and was not at all capable of starting its activities by itself. It is worth noting that no foreign capital was affected by the Awami League nationalization program. On July 4, 1974, the national economic council of Bangladesh decided to lift restrictions on private investment, raising the upper limit from 2.5 million takas to 30 million takas. Restrictions on foreign investments have also been lifted, making Bangladesh suitable for direct neocolonial exploitation.

During its two years of outright monopoly in corruption, the Awami League has been able to create a new rich class (although not a very strong one) whose members have acquired their property primarily through illegal means. By lifting the ceiling on private investments, the government has made provisions for this sector to invest its capital accumulated from the black market.

From the very beginning Rehman's nationalization program was a big hoax. Badruddin Umar, a Bangladesh political scientist, put it in this way: "In Bangladesh there was nothing revolutionary in the various measures that the government has been following in respect to industry, agriculture, commerce, and every other sphere of national life. Their nationalization was not at all an attack on capital; it was not at all meant to be an attack on capital. It was a mechanism and an arrangement for the smooth transference of private property from some hands to other hands, from the hands of those not in the Awami League to those of the Awami League or closely connected with them. That is the reason why no one really took any interest in promoting the nationalized industries and other concerns. On the other hand, they all saw to it that the nationalized industries were used in various ways for the accumulation of property in private hands; production in the nationalized sector did not pick up, and through a gross mismanagement of such industries the entire idea of nationalization, and with it of socialism, are totally discredited in the eyes of the people." (Holiday, July 7, 1974.)

maoists launch slander campaign against trotskyists

by S. S. WU

For the first time in many years, the Hong Kong Maoists have launched a vicious and slanderous press campaign against Trotskyism. The frenzied campaign, based on deliberate distortion and fabrication of historical fact, is clearly aimed at counteracting the growth of the revolutionary Marxist movement, which has recently emerged as a political threat to the Maoists.

The malicious campaign is a reflection of the political inability of the Maoists to defend the Chinese bureaucracy and its pseudorevolutionary policies toward the British colony of Hong Kong. This in turn accounts for the Maoists' inability to contain the militancy that is now on the rise among the toiling masses. The Maoists are genuinely worried about the growing Marxist orientation of Hong Kong radicals who have completely escaped Maoist control.

The main target:



Trotsky

Leon Trotsky has once again been selected as the main target. A fusillade of frame-up charges, clearly contradicted by historical facts, is levelled against him -- not only in order to discredit him as one of the greatest revolutionaries of this century, but in order as well to label him a counterrevolutionary.

In the Maoist journal Hong Kong Workers it is said that "Trotsky was the top leader of opportunism in the Soviet Union, was a renegade, a spy, a traitor, a murderer plotting to assassinate Lenin and other leaders of the Soviet Communist party. He was the common enemy of the people of the Soviet Union as well as of the revolutionary people in the world." But the Hong Kong Maoists have a problem, which is to explain how such a "counterrevolutionary" could have emerged in the top leader-

ship of the Bolshevik party next to Lenin and could have played such an extremely important role in the October Revolution. (This role was clearly described in John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, which was published in China in a Chinese translation in 1957.) A futile attempt to dispose of this problem appeared in an article entitled "The Founder of Trotskyism -- Trotsky." Here is the story:

"Trotsky (1879-1940) and his followers were an opportunist tendency which first showed its 'ultra-left' mask in the Russian revolutionary movement. From 1903 onwards, they sided with the Mensheviks in opposition to Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. After they sneaked into the Party on the eve of the October Revolution, they did not discontinue their anti-Party, anti-Leninist activities for a single day. In the end, while ending up in collusion with various counter-revolutionaries of all sorts and frantically opposing the Soviet regime, they completely degenerated into a counter-revolutionary bandit gang."

Borrowing from the bankrupt Stalinist school of falsification, the Maoists rewrite the history of Trotsky's prominent contribution to the Russian revolution. They ignore the wavering and elusive attitude displayed by Stalin before and during the insurrection. They likewise ignore the crucial role played by the military-revolutionary committee, which Trotsky headed. Trotsky is accused of "having revealed to the enemy the date for the insurrection that had been decided in the meeting of the Petrograd Soviet on the eve of the October Revolution." Thus, according to the lie presented by the Hong Kong Maoists, "the party was compelled to organize the insurrection ahead of the scheduled day."

Another unfounded fabrication is concocted in the case of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, which ended Russian participation in the first world imperialist war. The story is that "Trotsky and all reactionaries organized a hysterical campaign to oppose the signing of the peace treaty and destroyed the peace negotiations. The German army was thus incited to invade and attack the Soviet regime, and this drove the success that had been achieved by the proletariat and peasantry to the brink of failure." The same article goes on to say that "it was later discovered that Trotsky had already organized a plot against the Soviet government, frantically trying to sabotage the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, to arrest and murder Lenin, Stalin, and the others, and then to establish an opportunist government." For good measure, the Maoists add -- again contrary to fact and all historical documents -- that Trotsky "conspiringly encouraged German imperialism to step up its military offensive against the Soviet Union."

The Maoists portray Trotsky as having been responsible for all counterrevolutionary acts committed against the Soviet regime and as having established contact with all other "counterrevolutionaries" operating in Soviet territory. So it is hardly surprising to read that "in the summer of 1918 the bloc comprising Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev wounded Lenin in an attempt to assassinate him. In July 1918 Trotsky and Bukharin incited the 'left' SRs (Social Revolutionaries -- INPRECOR) to stage

a rebellion in Moscow that bombarded the Kremlin." Not only that: "In 1918, when more than ten imperialist countries militarily intervened against the Soviet Union and cooperated with the landlords and the bourgeoisie in staging an armed insurrection, Trotsky vainly attempted to strangle the young Soviet regime. The Bolshevik Party mobilized the peasantry and the proletariat and carried out a brave war in defense of the country, while Trotsky, having usurped the post of chairman of the military-revolutionary committee, only conducted activities of assassination. He attempted to execute many communist cadres at the front in order to help the enemy. This was only avoided by the opposition of the Central Committee and the protest of the military servicemen. During the war he gave suicidal orders, which resulted in the failure of some campaigns. With these "accounts" the Maoists attempt to show that the creation of the Red Army and the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War had nothing at all to do with Trotsky, who had nevertheless somehow managed to "usurp" the posts of organizer of the insurrection and creator and commander of the Red Army throughout the Civil War.

The short-lived difference between Trotsky and Lenin on the question of the trade unions is fully exploited by the Maoist falsifiers. Trotsky is accused of "opposing" the party's policy of "convincing the working masses through discussion and favoring imposing military means on the trade unions, that is, using compulsory and coercive administrative methods and tightening the screws in a vain attempt to provoke the non-party workers into opposing the Party."

At the same time, Trotsky is said to have "opposed the NEP, demanded enormous concessions to foreign and indigenous capitalists, proposed to apply the principle of rent or to absorb private investment in order to transfer the backbone of the economy into the hands of private capital. He proposed to build up industry by exploiting the poor peasantry, futilely aiming at sabotaging the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry."

"In the Autumn of 1923," the Maoist story continues, "while Lenin was sick, Trotsky thought the time had come for the destruction of the Party and the toppling of its leadership. Hence, he united with all anti-Leninist elements inside the Party and distributed the so-called Declaration of the 46 Oppositionists, with the aims of opposing the Party, the Party's leading apparatus, and the Party's policies." Following from this, the heroic struggles of the Left Opposition in resisting the Stalinist counterrevolution are distorted beyond all recognition.

Trotsky, we are told, "set up factional groupings here and there, collected Party dues among his companions, distributed his reactionary political program, established an underground printshop, organized an anti-Soviet-Government demonstration and parade, and fanatically opposed Leninism and the dictatorship of the proletariat." Trotsky predicted that "the Soviet regime was doomed to failure." Trotsky's *The Lessons of October* is presented as evidence that he "thoroughly vilified the Party and its leader, Lenin, hoping in vain to replace Leninism with Trotskyism."

The rest of Trotsky's political life is merely copied from the works of any Stalinist historian. Once again, the vicious legend is repeated that "Trotsky had already surrendered his services to the spying institution of the fascists, and was thus a spy of the fascists, a running-dog." The reimposition of capitalist slavery system in the Soviet Union was his ultimate goal. Kirov was murdered with his complicity.

Trotskyism under fire

The movement of Trotskyism, which has increasingly proved its revolutionary authority in the mass struggle throughout the world, is attacked by the Hong Kong Maoists with the same system of lies and slanders that they use against Trotsky himself. This is done in an article entitled "What Is Trotskyism," published in the Hong Kong Workers of August 1, 1974.

The article introduces Trotskyism as "a tool of imperialism and the bourgeoisie, the most malicious enemy of the toiling masses. It raises the banner of Marxist-Leninism while opposing it. It upholds the flag of revolution while sabotaging it." Three prominent characteristics allegedly distinguishing Trotskyism from Leninism are then "elaborated":

1. Trotskyism is accused of "opposing Leninism on the theories of proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship." Two arguments are formulated to back up this accusation. The theory of permanent revolution "negates the peasantry as a revolutionary force and opposes the worker-peasant alliance." More subtly, the article argues that "under the objective conditions of the proletarian dictatorship, he (Trotsky) maintained that the vanguard of the proletariat was bound to be in antagonistic conflict with the broad peasant masses." In addition to that, the author obsequiously defends the "theory" of "socialism in one country." He distorts the theory of permanent revolution to the extent that it "practically negates Lenin's theory of proletarian revolution and eliminates the proletarian revolution."

The second argument is that Trotskyism is "against proletarian dictatorship." The reason is that Trotsky "slanderingly claimed that the state power of the proletarian dictatorship was in the hands of the bureaucrats, that the regime had become degenerate, and that this degeneration had not yet altered the institution of nationalized property. He thus slanderously described the state of the proletarian dictatorship as a degenerated workers state." In order to justify the Chinese CP's defense of Stalinism, the Hong Kong Maoists are obliged, in the absence of any political or theoretical arguments, to simply assert that Trotskyism is "anti-Marxism."

2. The second accusation is that Trotskyism "splits up the unity of the Party and wrecks the organization of the Party." Trotsky is accused of having "organized factional groupings inside the Party," leading to "the weakening of the Party's fighting strength." Moreover, "under the cover of antibureaucratism inside the Party, (Trotskyism) opposed the Party's apparatus and weakened the Party's leadership." It also "fawned on the youth and the students, saying that the students' response to the Party's bureaucratism was most sensitive." This was against "the organizational orientation of the Party, which is a class line based on the proletarian elements." Finally, Trotsky "dis-trusted the leaders of Bolshevism, did his utmost to damage the reputations of the leaders, and undermined their authority and prestige."

3. The third trait of Trotskyism is derived from Trotsky's "conspiracy and counterrevolutionary activities." Here the Hong Kong Maoists simply parrot all the vicious frame-up charges made against Trotsky and the Trotskyists by the Stalinists. Naturally, the Fourth International also comes in for attacks. The Hong Kong Maoists unashamedly say that "the Fourth International, (which) encompasses a group of renegades from the proletariat, has become an international spying and bandit organization in opposition to the proletarian revolution."

After claiming that the Fourth International is nothing but a "counterrevolutionary spying organization at the service of imperialism," the Hong Kong Maoists go on to assert that "in

essence, the Trotskyists are secret agents sent by imperialism into the camp of the revolutionaries." In an article of more than 20,000 words, the Maoists, perhaps aware of the absurdity of their "ideological" attacks, devote only a few lines to the present Trotskyist movement. A sample: "In the 1968 French Revolution, those with the banners of the 'Fédération des étudiants révolutionnaires,' 'Parti communiste internationaliste,' 'Organisation communiste internationaliste,' and the 'Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire' were groups organized by Trotskyists. These organizations always opposed the revolutionary organization of Marxist-Leninism. They even raised the slogan of 'world socialism.' Frequently, they put out over-radical, empty talks so as to eliminate the revolution in reality."

"Anti-Chinese, anti-communist, and anti-revolutionary"

Having "exposed" the "counterrevolutionary nature" of Trotsky and Trotskyism, the Maoists feel prepared to open fire on the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong.

Their opening salvo was an article entitled "The Trotskyists are a handful of anti-Chinese, anti-communist, and anti-revolutionary elements." It begins: "The Hong Kong Trotskyists disguise themselves as Marxists and revolutionists. They call themselves 'new-leftists,' while in fact they are a handful of anti-Chinese, anti-communist, and anti-revolutionary elements. They are actually ultra-rightists. Only a glimpse of how they vilify and attack our great leader Chairman Mao and of how they vilify and attack our great socialist Motherland enables us to recognize their ugly counterrevolutionary face." The main charges can be summarized as:

1. The Hong Kong Trotskyists are accused of viciously attacking the proletarian dictatorship in China. This attack is based on an article published in the October Review, a Trotskyist monthly. The Maoists quote an excerpt from an October Review article criticizing the policies of the Peking leadership: "'Proletarian Dictatorship' is in fact dictatorship imposed on the proletariat, 'socialism' is in fact an insult to socialism." What is interesting here is that the Maoists are completely incapable of defending the Chinese bureaucracy with concrete political arguments. They can only resort to a quotation from Mao's writing.
2. The Hong Kong Trotskyists are also accused of "attacking the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Anti-Lin, Anti-Confucius Campaign in China." The Trotskyists "direct the (oppositional) spearhead at the Party's leadership, vainly hoping that we will grant 'democracy' and 'freedom' to those counterrevolutionaries so as to make it possible for them to overthrow the proletarian dictatorship by utilizing a movement to restore capitalism." Again this is "illustrated" by a quotation from Chairman Mao: "Our great leader Chairman Mao teaches us: 'The Chinese Communist Party is the nucleus of leadership of all the Chinese people. Without such a nucleus, socialism can never win.' He also says: 'Without the leadership of the CCP, no revolution can ever succeed.' In each revolutionary movement, we must strengthen the leadership and strive for victory. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Anti-Lin, Anti-Confucius Movement are designed to further consolidate and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat."

3. Not surprisingly, the October Review's attack on Mao's foreign policy elicits another charge from the Maoists. Not a

word is said about the 1965 counterrevolution in Indonesia, the Ceylonese JVP, or Bangladesh. Instead, the Maoists simply boast that "people all over the world know that China firmly supports the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed people and nationalities, that China firmly opposes imperialism, neo-colonialism, and hegemonism." According to them, the "real" intention of the Hong Kong Trotskyists is to "transform China into a colony of Soviet Social Imperialism."

The criticisms made by the Trotskyists about China's passive attitude toward the revolution in Taiwan and Peking's economic policy in Hong Kong are likewise answered by the Maoists with falsification and slander instead of political arguments.

Maoism in crisis

The new Maoist attack on Trotskyism in Hong Kong is a sign of weakness rather than strength. The absence of a Maoist Communist party in the British colony is not accidental. It reflects, more than anything else, the unwillingness of the Maoists there -- and more significantly, the unwillingness of the Peking government -- to wage a resolute revolutionary struggle against British colonial rule and the bourgeoisie in Hong Kong.

The political orientation of the Maoists in the workers struggle and the youth radicalization is thoroughly defined by class collaborationism. Their temporary ultra left zig-zag in 1967, which resulted in massive workers strikes and riots, was only an episodic outbreak occasioned by the Great Cultural Revolution, which had thrown them into confusion. More revealingly, the episode was ended by a compromise between the British colonialists and the Peking government.

During the 1950s and 1960s, which were marked by relative economic stability, the Maoists could easily conceal their opportunist policy in the mass movement. They concentrated their efforts in organizing the trade unions. They simply neglected the youth. This gave the liberal intellectuals an opportunity to influence the youth and students, which in turn resulted in retarding the youth radicalization (which began in 1969).

But in the wake of the spontaneous workers explosions triggered during the past two years by the deteriorating economy and the declining living standards, the opportunistic nature of the Maoists' policy has been greatly exposed. The Maoists are trying

Hong Kong supermarket. Inflation is major issue.



to cope with the changing objective situation by resorting to the maneuver of containment. They deliberately ignored those struggles that broke out in sectors not under Maoist control. The objective effect of the Maoists' passivity has been the isolation of these spontaneous struggles, which frequently has helped to defeat them. On the other hand, the Maoists cannot apply the same tactics to the struggles organized by the workers -- among them many members of the Maoist-dominated trade unions. In this case the Maoists only push the workers to negotiate with the bosses as soon as possible and to stop the struggle when their demands are only partially won. In this way the Maoists try to limit the workers struggles to purely economic demands. More than ever, the colonial government appreciates the Maoists' cooperative attitude. As we reported in INPRECOR No.1 (June 6, 1974), "the document issued by the Twentieth Congress of the Hong Kong Federation of Workers Unions makes no mention of the current economic crisis or its far-reaching effects on the working class. Instead it claims that China's developing trade relations with other countries will help to improve the workers situation in Hong Kong."

In the case of the youth radicalization, which developed completely outside the Maoist framework, the Maoists practice a less sophisticated reactionary line. Aware of their inability to win over all the vanguard organizations in the youth movement, the Maoists are forming a close alliance with the student bureaucrats. In the name of "studying socialist China" and "studying our society," the Maoists oppose any radical youth movement. Their logic is clearly this: to study colonial society means to avoid struggling against it.

Not surprisingly, the Maoists are facing a grave political cri-

sis. To contain a strike can sometimes be effective, but in the long run to contain the discontent of the growing numbers of unemployed is bound to be abortive. Already last July a group of militants in the universities openly broke with the official Maoist line. They organized the "Progressive Youth Club," and the first leaflet they distributed was a critique of the Maoist orientation in the student movement.

It is in this situation that the revolutionary Marxist movement, led by the group around the Daily Combating Bulletin, stands as a powerful threat to the Maoists in Hong Kong. This explains why they are waging such a hysterical campaign against Trotskyism.

Since the May 5 anti-inflation rally organized by the Trotskyists (See INPRECOR No.1), which was attended by 5,000 people, Trotskyism has increasingly emerged as an effective revolutionary alternative. The Workers Commission organized and led by the Daily Combating Bulletin group is attracting worker militants through its intervention into workers strikes and through its organ, The Workers Movement. On July 16 and 22, the Daily group successfully helped organize demonstrations in solidarity with the Korean mass struggle. This has sharpened the conflict between the followers of the Maoists and the anti-Maoists on the campuses.

The battle between Maoism and Trotskyism has only just begun. It is not unreasonably optimistic to predict that the Maoists, whose only weapon is slander, will ultimately lose the battle. Nor is it unreasonably optimistic to predict that with its revolutionary orientation and practice the revolutionary Marxist movement is bound to grow rapidly. ■

news



of the workers movement and the fourth international

JAPAN

first conference of asian revolutionary youth

The '74 Asian Youth Conference was held in Tokyo July 24-26. It was called by three Japanese organizations: the Youth Congress for the Release of the Soh Brothers (an organization of solidarity with political prisoners in South Korea), the Women's News editorial committee, and the Vietnam-Indochina Solidarity Committee. The conference was a response to the growing need to coordinate the movements of struggle against Japanese imperialism, movements which, like their target, are spreading throughout East Asia.

In effect, two factors are coming together today: a deep economic and social crisis in Japan on the one hand, and the emergence of open and massive resistance to Japanese imperialism's economic and political penetration of Southeast and East Asia on the other hand. A structural crisis of Japanese

capitalism has been produced by the exhaustion of the internal resources that had allowed for the accelerated growth of the postwar period and by the social effects of this growth. (See INPRECOR, No.7, interview with Y. Sakai.) The rise of regional struggles against Japanese imperialism is a side effect of the failure of the U.S. military escalation against the Indochinese revolution and of the consequent reorientation of American strategy in Asia.

The peoples of Asia feel, even if in a confused way, that this reorientation of Washington's policy is proof of its essential weakness. This is all the more true in that the network of dictatorial regimes through which American imperialism has assured its domination of this region of the world has been knocked off balance. The prolonged resistance of the Vietnamese, Lao-



Rally of more than 1,000 militants concludes '74 Asian Youth Conference.

tian, and Cambodian peoples will permit a bridge to be built between the second wave of the Asian revolution -- which was marked by the birth of North Korea, the Peoples Republic of China, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, but also by defeats in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the establishment of the dictatorships in South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand -- and the current new rise of class struggle.

Washington does not feel capable of fulfilling the role of cop all by itself under these conditions. That is why it is calling for peaceful coexistence and has agreed to pay a price for its reintegration of China into world political society. That is also why it is asking Tokyo to play a larger counterrevolutionary role in the region. But by doing this, Washington and Tokyo are creating new ferment for mobilizations and centralization of anti-imperialist struggles.

Japanese imperialism is now the greatest investor -- or at least one of the greatest investors -- in the countries of East and Southeast Asia. It is one of the main supporters of the local dictatorships. The peoples of Asia have not forgotten Tokyo's military invasions of the 1940s. Japanese imperialism has thus become a primary target of the current struggles. Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka had some unhappy experiences with this during his January 1974 trip through Southeast Asia. He was met by demonstrations in Bangkok (Thailand), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), and Djakarta (Indonesia), the Djakarta demonstration quickly turning into a riot.

It is in this context, marked by a deep convergence of objectives of struggle, that coordination of the anticapitalist struggles in Japan and the anti-imperialist struggles throughout Asia has become a priority for revolutionary Marxist militants. The importance of the first Asian Youth Conference must be seen in that same context.

The uneven state of sectarian degeneration of a significant part of the Japanese far left prevented the participation of many national political organizations in the conference. Nevertheless, militants representing a remarkable range of movements of struggle currently going on in Japan actively participated in the conference in various ways. A leader of the Sarizuka Peasants Association greeted the conference and called for preparing the coming struggles against the opening of the new Tokyo International Airport. (See INPRECOR, No.7, interview with Y. Sakai.) Korean militants (from the community of one million permanent immigrants in Japan) and active members of the mass organizations against the Park dictatorship made decisive contributions to the debates and discussions. Militants of the Buraku liberation movement explained the battle of the Japanese "lower castes," the "untouchables" of Japan, who are still subjected to severe discrimination.

Some radical trade-union movements participated in the conference too -- the Roken, a regional class-struggle tendency in Sendai, a city north of Tokyo, and the third trade union of the Mitsubishi shipyards in Nagasaki. In addition, there were militants of the antiwar movement, antimilitarist groups, committees against pollution, and so on.

Also participating in the work sessions and the meetings that followed were representatives of two revolutionary organizations of Hong Kong, an Indian militant from the South Asia Marxist Review, a leader of the Malayan student movement (who, unfortunately, arrived just at the end of the official conference), and observers from France and the United States.

The first result of the conference -- achieved thanks to many study sessions, general assemblies, and workshops -- will be to better prepare Japanese militants for the struggle against their own imperialism and to support the other Asian move-

ments. Examples: the affirmation of solidarity with the strikes in the textile industry in Bangkok, an industry that is owned 80 percent by Japanese capitalists and 20 percent by Taiwanese; the analysis of the superexploitation of the female work force and the export of the most polluting industries to South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia; the denunciation of the organization on a mass scale of a very special sort of "tourism" arranged from Japan and designed to enable customers of the big Japanese travel agencies to sample the joys of prostitution throughout Asia. At the end of the conference a meeting was organized in Tokyo attended by more than 1,200 people. There were later about half a dozen meetings in the provinces.

But the work of the conference was mainly centered on preparing international campaigns for the release of political prisoners in Asia. This is to begin with the defense of militants threatened by death or life imprisonment by the bloody South Korean dictatorship, people like the poet Kim Chi Ha, bishop Chi Hak Sun, and the members of the National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students. At the end of the conference an international delegation, protected by many defense squads, was sent to the South Korean embassy to demand the immediate release of political prisoners. Two days of action, September 18 and 19, were also planned to continue this campaign. Obviously, the problem of South Korea is not an isolated one. The conference intends to organize solidarity with all political prisoners throughout the region during the coming year: the prisoners of Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia and the Philip-

pines, and India and Sri Lanka, not to mention the 200,000 prisoners being tortured in Thieu's jails in South Vietnam. Toward this end the conference decided to set up an Information Center in Tokyo, which will centralize the work, distribute an English-language bulletin, and give maximum information to help in the waging of campaigns in Japan, throughout Asia, and, if possible, in other areas of the world.

Special mention was made of the continuation of the struggle of the three peoples of Indochina and of the necessity of continuing action until their final victory.

But the objectives of this Asian Youth Conference were not limited to the organization of solidarity movements, as was the case for another conference that had been held earlier by the old militants of Beheiren, the Japanese left pacifist movement. Obviously, the solidarity movements are important. But they must provide an initial framework for unity of action of the movements of struggle and the revolutionary currents of various orientations that are now active in Japan and in the region. The framework of unity in action must also be a framework of political confrontation and clarification of perspectives. Coming developments in the Asian revolution will require a growing capacity for understanding, coordination, and centralization on the part of militants of the region. This must be tested in practice beginning right now in order to lay the basis for a real united front of anti-imperialist Asian youth. A second conference has been scheduled for next summer to act on this perspective. ■

revolutionary-marxist journal in polish

The first issue of *Na Lewo* (To the Left), a revolutionary Marxist review in the Polish language, has appeared. (Copies can be obtained from Société Internationale d'Édition, Département d'Europe Orientale, 10 Impasse Guéménée, 75004, Paris, France.) The name of the bulletin is a reference to the revolutionary current in Polish communism during the 1930s, a current that was linked to the International Left Opposition. Its best known representatives were Isaac Deutscher and A. Stawar.

The bulletin hopes to contribute to the rehabilitation of Marxism as a theory and guide to practice in the eyes of the Polish people. "Marxism" has been falsely identified in the so-called socialist countries with the ideology of the bureaucrats in power. The bulletin must therefore explain the abyss that separates the method of Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Trotsky from the caricature of Marxism that the bureaucracy uses to justify its domination.

The news that will be provided on the revolutionary left in

the West and the antibureaucratic opposition in the countries of the East can aid in breaking down the feelings of isolation and powerlessness of the dissenting movements in these countries.

The bulletin is open to all those who agree with its orientation and also to those who, while disagreeing with us, understand the importance of creating a field of free discussion on the basis of an opposition of the antibureaucratic left. The principle that will guide the polemics that may appear in the bulletin will be: March separately, strike together.

The first issue of *Na Lewo* includes the following articles:

- The situation of women in Poland
- Is ideological science possible?
- The Lisbon Spring
- The presidential elections in France
- Vladimir Bukovsky: Declaration of an oppositionist
- Ernest Mandel: On the "Gulag Archipelago" ■



ITALY

workers conference of the gcr

About 150 worker militants and sympathizers of the Italian Trotskyist organization attended a workers conference held at the beginning of July in Turin by the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (Revolutionary Communist Groups), Italian section of the Fourth International.

About half the workers present (eighteen cities were represented in all) were industrial workers from factories including Fiat, Lancia, Face Standard, Honeywell, Kelvinator, Imperial, Italsider, Italcantieri, Pignone, Petrochimicade Marghera, Idra, Mamoli, Michelin, Alfasud, and Kodak.

About 70% of the participants were members of the GCR; 30% were sympathizers. Delegations from the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist Front) of France, the Ligue Marxiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Marxist League) of Switzerland, and the International Marxist Group of Great Britain also participated in the work of the conference.

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the political framework in which the autumn struggles will develop and to determine clear perspectives for the intervention in these struggles by revolutionary Marxist workers.

In addition to holding debates and discussions in the general assembly, the conference organized workshops on the two major problems confronting workers in the present situation: inflation and unemployment.

The analyses and perspectives elaborated at the conference are generally explained in the GCR political resolution published in this issue of INPRECOR.

Despite the still limited strength of the Italian revolutionary Marxist organization, this conference testified to the significant progress the GCR has made during the past year in developing a base in the factories and allowed for better preparing revolutionary Marxist workers to intervene in the confrontations that are on the agenda for this autumn. ■

IRELAND

revolutionary militants arrested

Four members of the Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG), Irish supporters of the Fourth International, one RMG sympathizer, and one member of People's Democracy were tried in Belfast August 20 on trumped-up charges of "riotous behavior." The six militants had acted as stewards at an August 11 march to protest internment. The arrests -- and the prosecution's attempts to turn the cases into political show trials -- were part of British attempts to intimidate organizers of mass protests in the North of Ireland against the continuing internment of political militants. In fact, the arrests were preceded by a number of provocations during the march itself.

The march was the most successful anti-internment activity of the month, larger than either the demonstration called by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (supported by the Official Sinn Fein and the Communist party of Ireland) or the one called by the Provisional Sinn Fein. Some 2,000 people took part. The demonstration marched from Andersonstown and forced the British army to close down the main auto route out of Belfast when participants tried to pass through back gardens and onto the motor route in an attempt to proceed to the Long Kesh concentration camp.

August 11. More than 2,000 march against internment.



The marchers walked on for several miles despite regular stoning by Loyalist elements posted on overlooking hillsides, elements that were largely ignored by the strong British army presence. The march was finally halted by a roadblock set up by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and backed up by troops in riot gear.

After a meeting in which speakers from the RMG stressed the need for unity in fighting repression, the march turned back. But as it reached Andersonstown, the British army launched a series of provocations.

The side road from the auto route to the estate was blocked by a line of troops in full riot gear. Rubber bullets were fired and a small-scale clash resulted, during which army squads seized two stewards who were attempting to restore order.

The main body of the march was forced to climb a fence and re-form in a neighboring street. But at the head of the road it was again confronted by soldiers of the Black Watch, a notoriously brutal Scottish regiment of the British army. The army at first allowed the march to pass, then stopped it again, then lined the roadside and observed marchers as they were allowed to pass.

One hour after the march dispersed, four RMG members were arrested by a mobile patrol of the Black Watch and taken in two armored cars to the British army's Fort Monagh in Andersonstown, where they were held and questioned for five hours

before being handed over to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and taken into custody.

The following day, one RMG member appeared in court and was sentenced, solely on the basis of testimony given by a member of the Black Watch, to six months in prison. The sentence was suspended "reluctantly" by the magistrate. The five other militants remained in custody.

During bail applications the prosecuting barrister attempted to introduce the "political implications" of the case, charging that the defendants were all linked by their "Marxist and Leninist views." He said they were not stewards but rather the organizers of the march. One RMG member, an Englishman, was singled out as a "foreign agitator."

In the magistrate's court later on, however, the evidence given by several British soldiers was so transparently fraudulent that the cases against two of the militants were dismissed; charges against a third were dropped, while two others were given two-month sentences suspended, again on the basis of testimony from British soldiers.

The incidents underlined the need for unity among the anti-imperialist groups in defense of militants and of the whole anti-unionist population. The tempo of repression will undoubtedly increase with the developing accommodation to the Loyalists. It can be expected to become generalized against the whole anti-unionist working class. Joint action by the anti-imperialist groups is the only effective answer. ■



Black Watch troops on Andersonstown Road August 11.



PAIGC Natl Support

guinea-bissau independent!

We salute the accession to independence of the state of Guinea-Bissau, formalized by the agreement signed in Algiers on August 26 by the Portuguese government and the African party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC). We likewise salute the courageous eighteen-year struggle led by the PAIGC and waged by the people of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands.

The situation opened up in Portugal since the end of April was the product of the rise of struggles throughout Europe and in Portugal as well as the consequence of the armed struggle led by the PAIGC, the MPLA, and FRELIMO. Undermined by the colonial war, the fascist Salazarist regime was finally brought down, thus confirming the prediction made ten years ago by the late Amílcar Cabral, foully murdered in January 1973: "While the fall of fascism ... may not lead to the end of Portuguese colonialism, we are sure that the liquidation of Portuguese colonialism will bring with it the destruction of fascism in Portugal."

To be sure, the new Portuguese government, closely watched over by imperialism, is still not prepared to settle the problem of Angola and Mozambique, as these countries are located in that part of Africa where the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa are now feeling the initial blows of the oppressed African masses, both within their own borders and on their frontiers. The unity of the African peoples in struggle and the indispensable support of the international workers movement will more than ever be necessary in foiling all the maneuvers of imperialism, which will seek despite everything to maintain the status quo by resorting to forcible or neocolonialist solutions.

Slowly but surely the rise of the African masses in struggle will move forward. This first victory, won arms in hand (not granted peacefully as during the 1960s in some African countries), is the reflection of this tendency for the African peoples to burst onto the political scene to determine their own future against imperialism and its faithful subjects, the neocolonial regimes.

At a time when the Spínola government is trying to whip the Portuguese workers into line (by limiting their right to strike, for example), no one can ignore the fact that the struggle of the peoples of the colonies is integrally linked to the struggle of the Portuguese proletariat and that in face of all the maneuvers of the Portuguese regime aimed at rejecting immediate and unconditional independence for Angola, Mozambique, and the Cape Verde Islands, the victory of the workers remains the surest guarantee of liberation from the colonial yoke.

Revolutionary Marxists, especially the comrades of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, Portuguese section of the Fourth International, are conscious of this and are working for the total destruction of colonialism and for the socialist revolution in Portugal today.

**LONG LIVE INDEPENDENT GUINEA-BISSAU!
FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL INDEPENDENCE
OF MOZAMBIQUE, ANGOLA, AND THE CAPE VERDE
ISLANDS!
FULL SUPPORT TO THE PAIGC, MPLA, AND FRELIMO!
DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM AND NEOCOLONIAL
SOLUTIONS!
LONG LIVE THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!**