

imprecor

international press correspondence

spain 1975

THE POWDERKEG

fortnightly N° 19, Feb. 13, 1975

US\$.50, £ .20, FB25

CONTENTS

SPAIN:	The Powderkeg	3
MEXICO:	The Decline of Mexican Bonapartism — by Alfonso Ríos	6
	The GCI Congress	13
ARAB EAST:	The Evolution of the PLO	16
	1. Comments on "The Turn of the PLO" — by S. Jaber	16
	2. A Response — by J. Rothschild	18
	3. The Resistance: Degeneration and Perspectives	19
MALAYA:	An Appeal for Solidarity	25
ZAMBIA:	Ten Years of Independence — by John Blair	28
SRI LANKA:	Ruling Coalition Shaken	31

INPRECOR 12/14 rue de la Buanderie - Brussels 1000 Belgium
INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE
Fortnightly information organ of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International
published in English, French, Spanish, and German.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of INPRECOR.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (25 issues) - US\$10; Can\$10; £4; ¥3,000
AIR MAIL TO U.S. & CANADA: \$16.00. TO JAPAN: ¥5,000. TO AUSTRALIA &
NEW ZEALAND: US\$18. SPECIAL SIX-ISSUE AIR MAIL INTRODUCTORY SUB -
\$3.50 U.S. & Canada; \$4.50 Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.
TO SUBSCRIBE: TO PAY BY PERSONAL CHECK OR INT'L BANK MONEY ORDER:
Send name and address to INPRECOR with check made to the order of GISELA SCHOLTZ.
TO PAY BY INT'L POSTAL ORDER: Send name and address to INPRECOR. Send postal
order to GISELA SCHOLTZ, 127 rue Josse Impens, Brussels 3, Acct.No. CCP000-1085001-56.

the powderkeg

We are publishing below the editorial of the February 1, 1975, issue of *Combate*, central organ of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/Euzkadi ta Askatasuna-VI (LCR/ETA-VI — Revolutionary Communist League/Basque Nation and Freedom-Sixth Congress), sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Spain.



Since the general strike in Euzkadi (the Basque country) last December 11, the workers movement throughout the territory of the Spanish state has entered a decisive stage in its struggle against the dictatorship and its employers. Since that time, preparation of a general strike has become both the objective of all the struggles shaking the peninsula and the sole solution capable of advancing the whole movement toward the conquest of its just demands. Naturally, the dictatorship and the employers, conscious of the growing confidence of the working class in its own forces, are preparing to confront the offensive of current struggles through the only means they command: intensification of repression, occupation of factories, massive layoffs. The dictatorship is trying in this way to divide the movement, to exhaust it in partial struggles, and thus to make it bear the costs of the economic crisis by compelling it to negotiate within the framework set by the "legality" of the decrepit regime.

What is shaping up, then, is a test of strength between the basic classes of Spanish society. The heroic general strike of Navarra constitutes the best demonstration of the will of the working class to confront this test of strength through its own methods: self-organization independent of any sort of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, conquest of the streets against police occupation, deepening among many militants of the consciousness of the necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship. While the Navarra general strike in solidarity with the miners of Potasas and with the 1,500 laid-off workers represents the clearest example of the whole proletariat's will to combat, it is by no means an isolated example. The general strike in Tolosa and the struggles of the workers of several factories in Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa also mark the progress of

the workers movement in Euzkadi since December 11.

But this time Euzkadi is not alone. In Barcelona the new attacks of the employers and the government against the workers of the SEAT automobile factories were not immediately answered with sufficient workers solidarity to prevent the occupation of the factory by the police and to force the reintegration of all the laid-off workers and the release of all those imprisoned. Nevertheless, the struggles of Hispano, Cumbre, Lavis, and Saenger, the solidarity work stoppages in various factories, branches, and regions, the assemblies in the popular suburbs, the urban demonstrations, and the support extended to the workers by the students and other sectors of the population all show very clearly that workers combativity is still on the rise and that the task of the hour is the organization of the general strike.

The list of workers struggles is long: in Zaragoza the January 11 general strike by the metalworkers; in Galicia the struggle of the workers at Astano and the solidarity with Pillado and his comrades, who are facing trial on charges of belonging to the strike committee that organized the March 1972 struggle at Ferrol; in Asturias the struggle of the workers of Duro-Felguera, Astilleros, and other factories; in Madrid the struggle of the workers of Citesa-ITT; in Lérida, Tarragona, Sevilla, Valencia, Cádiz, Valladolid. . . . And in all these struggles there were protests against inflation and unemployment, through methods that involved greater numbers of workers each time: self-organization against the vertical "trade union"; organization (still very spontaneous) of pickets to do propaganda work and to protect demonstrations and oppose police occupation of the factories, suburbs, and cities.

In all these respects, the necessity of going further is becoming ever more pressing in order to prevent the working class from giving ground in face of the attacks of the employers and the dictatorship. On January 20 the sinister and bloody Civil Guard added an entry to the already long list of crimes committed by the murderous dictatorship during the past few years: On the very day that the University of Madrid was holding assemblies to commemorate



the police murder in 1969 of Enrique Ruano, on the very day that a student of Valladolid that the police had tried to murder in December 1973 was brought to trial, another worker, Victor Manuel Elexpe, fell under the bullets of the Civil Guard as he was distributing leaflets in solidarity with the general strike of Pamplona.

The working class will not forget this new crime!

The general strike is possible

Nevertheless, the unification of the present battles and their extension to the entire Spanish state is not a task that can be left to the simple spontaneity of the mass movement. That is why since last September the LCR/ETA-VI has been stressing the necessity of preparing the general strike, beginning with the unity in action of all the workers organizations, especially the Workers Commissions, and endowing them with objectives common to the whole working class and all the oppressed. The struggles that are developing today favor the work of these commissions, and especially of the Workers Commissions. In this sense we support the coordination initiatives of the Central Strike Committee recently formed in Pamplona with the Workers Commissions of Catalonia, and we believe that the immediate task must be to extend the agreement to all the Workers Commissions in order to call the general strike throughout the Spanish state.

Nevertheless, the responsibility of the entire workers vanguard is enormous at the present moment. In face of the intensification of the attacks of the dic-

tatorship and the employers, we must clearly define the objectives, forms of struggle, and organization required so that the workers movement may deal serious blows to its enemies.

The Assemblies Against the High Cost of Living convoked for a one-week period, and the promise of a general strike at the beginning of February made by the National Workers Commission of Catalonia, do not satisfy the requirements of the necessary workers and people's offensive. That is why in face of the attempts to limit the objectives of the working class to a simple struggle (carried out through petitions) against the high cost of living, and in face of those who intend to prevent self-organization of the movement in order to subordinate it to the framework set down by the Junta Democrática, revolutionaries must counterpose objectives and methods that the mass movement itself is in process of raising to the order of the day.

What are the objectives that the workers vanguard must popularize at the present time? No doubt, they are neither those that are limited to simple economic demands, nor demands in favor of democratic rights that do not at the same time imply the total liquidation of the dictatorship and challenge the rule of the big capitalists. As the Workers Commissions of Navarra clearly affirmed in their call for the January 15 general strike: "We address ourselves to the enemy clearly, to the rich people whose loot has been made from our money, our land, and our factories, and who are today dependent on and supporting a government of hardened fascist dictatorship, whose left hand is extended in greeting while its right hand grasps the revolver to drown in blood the people's thirst for liberty and happiness."

«the general strike must open the road to a... frontal attack of the working class»

The demands that are most clearly felt by the people today — reintegration of all laid-off workers and the release of all prisoners, democratic and trade-union rights, general wage increases tied to a sliding scale — cannot be divorced from those demands that are now beginning to be taken up by broad sectors in struggle, demands like the dissolution of the repressive corps and the special tribunals, the punishment of those responsible for Francoist crimes, the nationalization under workers control of factories that are in crisis.

To move toward defining unifying platforms that unite the demands of the various popular sectors (workers, students, small merchants, peasants) is a weapon of primary importance in the battle against the dictatorship and big capital, whose basic cohesion against the working class has been increasingly solidified by the present struggles.

How to struggle, how to organize the offensive of the whole working class for the conquest of its demands? The Navarra general strike has offered the most advanced example of workers and people's solidarity through the strike, the assemblies, the strike committees, the formation of a general strike committee in which all the sectors in struggle are represented; these forms of organization have been revealed as those best able to support the fight, demonstrating that the general strike is the affair of all the workers. That is the road that all the localities and regions of the country must take, for it allows everyone to participate in the organization of the struggle, the demonstrations, and the solidarity, and in case of partial defeats it permits the movement to avert the demoralization of militants who

have been the last to enter into the struggle. The fight for a victorious general strike against the dictatorship and the employers must not make us forget that we must immediately ameliorate the weaknesses of the movement, which, in the final analysis, constitute the essential strength of the decrepit regime. Without advancing toward the centralization and coordination of struggles on the scale of the entire Spanish state, without making progress on the road to action that is independent of any collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and without self-defense against the forces of repression, the mass movement can fall victim to the worst illusions sown by reformism and thus can suffer severely from the assaults of the dictatorial repression.

The general strike must open the road to the preparation of a frontal attack of the working class that must culminate in the revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship and the open crisis of the bourgeois regime.

In this process, all revolutionaries, all organizations that are struggling for the creation of a proletarian united front must play a leading role in preventing this battle from being diverted or channeled toward the simple installation of a caricature of bourgeois democracy.

Now is the time.

The Workers Commissions must take the lead in the general strike!

THE DECLINE OF MEXICAN BONAPARTISM

by ALFONSO RIOS

The political situation in Mexico in 1975 will be marked by the battle over who will succeed President Luis Echeverría. The Mexican political system is not a totalitarian one, but it does have antidemocratic features that approach those of a totalitarian dictatorship. The "democratic-parliamentary" facade with its "four-sided" game of political parties conceals the reality of the one-party rule exercised by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI — Institutional Revolutionary party), which, in addition to being an apparatus for controlling the laboring masses, acts as an electoral agency for the government both in the Congress and in official political life. Functioning as the sole effective force cementing national policy, the PRI contains within itself the divisions that crop up within the ruling sector, within the class in power. The struggle of the various groups within the PRI government that aspire to presidential succession begins during the fifth year of each presidential term (which lasts six years). The attitude of the groups in power looks quite natural when it is remembered that the candidate of the PRI is always the next president. (This has been true since 1920.) So the successor to Echeverría will be designated in reality in 1975, nearly two years before December 1976, when the actual succession takes place.

In the present case, the peculiarities of this political mechanism — the product of the more than fifty-year-long history of the rule of Mexican Bonapartism — coincides with the intensification of the world economic recession and its effects on the ever deepening political crisis of imperialist society. Thus, the weakening and decline of the Mexican Bonapartist system, which has been apparent for fifteen years and attained a critical point at the end of the 1960s, totally merged in 1974 with the

imperialist political crisis. In a paradoxical manner, however, this conjunction permitted a certain renovation of the eroded political structure, as the regime made use of its most cherished populist themes to take advantage of a propitious opportunity to strengthen itself internationally.

In fact, one of the main characteristics of Mexican Bonapartism from its origins to the periods of its greatest triumphs has been its "anti-imperialism." This political position that has been adopted by the Mexican government is only the reflection of the objective situation it has found itself in since 1920; it serves as a factor that helps the government to balance between the imperialist forces and their most powerful local bourgeois allies on the one hand and the Mexican proletariat of the cities and countryside on the other hand.

Consequences of the decline of U.S. hegemony

In 1974 Echeverría's program of the "democratic opening" appeared to pick up some strength after having experienced some difficulties and come under attack from the most conservative capitalist forces (the provincial groups, except for those in Monterrey).

Of the three principal countries of Latin America, Mexico is the one that has felt most deeply the penetration and aggressiveness of Yankee imperialism. If the Bonapartist Mexican government has been sensitive to any popular pressure throughout its history, it has been anti-imperialist pressure. During the 1950s and 1960s the government largely ignored its duties in this area. At that time, even

such traditionally proimperialist governments as those of Argentina and Brazil were taking some distance from Yankee imperialism. When he became president, Echeverría tried to make up for lost time. Acting as it always has since 1920, the government took advantage in a short-sighted and opportunistic way of the crisis of North American hegemony on the continent, which was already visible in 1971 and 1972. But the present "anti-imperialist" stage does not correspond simply to the pressure of workers struggles and to the attempts of the nascent bourgeoisie to make use of those struggles, as was the case in the past. It is also linked to the policy of expanding the markets for the products of the Mexican industrial bourgeoisie, which, along with its Brazilian and Argentine counterparts, has emerged during the past few decades as a secondary regional power. (This has led certain Latin American Marxists to speak rather rapidly of "subimperialism.") From this standpoint, it can be seen that Echeverría's turn (the "democratic opening") was a deliberate attempt to link the government program to the Mexican bourgeoisie by promising the bourgeoisie substantial profits, which would result from the future realignment of Latin American economic forces on a continental scale. What was involved was depriving imperialism of a part of the surplus-value it was extracting, or at least negotiating a more favorable agreement with imperialism. The "sphere of influence" that Mexico would contest with the United States would be Central America and the Caribbean. Forming an alliance with countries like Venezuela is thus a primary necessity for Mexico. Last year Echeverría took a trip to try to realize these objectives. He stopped in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and Jamaica. He tried to set his policy in motion concretely by seeking support for a "Charter of Economic Rights and Duties" his government had presented to the United Nations and by promoting "multinational Latin American" projects.

These efforts succeeded in winning overwhelming approval for the Charter at the end of 1974 — by 120 nations of the UN General Assembly. Nevertheless, this diplomatic victory was not translated into substantial economic gains in practice, as could have been expected in light of the significant abstention on or open opposition to this Charter by the imperialist countries, the United States in the first place. In practice, Echeverría's efforts to build multinational companies with Latin American "brother countries" have not received much response from the strongest bourgeoisies that could have accepted the offers. In fact, the Argentine and Brazilian bourgeoisies have their own interests and spheres of influence; they have absolutely no desire to share these with the Mexican bourgeoisie. Moreover, the emergence of Venezuela as a financial power (a result of the \$10,000 million this country received for

the sale of oil in 1974) erected a new obstacle on Echeverría's "Latin American" road. Contrary to Echeverría's insinuations, Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez has not accepted Mexican entry into the Andes Pact. In Pérez's view, Venezuelan petrodollars will dominate this Pact, and his country projects becoming the fourth "subimperialist" center on the continent.

Only Jamaica responded favorably to Echeverría's call. Three multinational companies have been set up on the island; they have an initial capital of about \$500 million (Mexican and Jamaican) and will be involved in processing locally produced aluminum.

But be that as it may, even the limited results of Echeverría's maneuvers still represent competition for imperialism. This competition has not been concretized (far from it) in a "body of permanent economic cooperation and consultation complementing already existing bodies and having functions and spheres of operation that really and effectively respond to common needs and aspirations." It was this sort of Latin American Common Market that Echeverría had presented, particularly to the Venezuelan president, who accepted it with pleasure (although only in order to carry it out concretely through the Andes Pact). But the atmosphere is not favorable to imperialist designs. That is why Echeverría's maneuvers, even though they have not yet succeeded, have provoked a hard and aggressive response from the Ford-Kissinger government.

Limits of bourgeois anti-imperialism

The imperialist attack is based on concrete and indisputable facts, such as the financial and industrial ties of dependence, even tighter today than during the 1960s, linking the Mexican economy to the Yankee economy. Clearly, the attack is motivated by the discovery of oil deposits in Chiapas and Tabasco in southeast Mexico. This discovery, made at the end of last year, shook the official world, for it coincided with the "oil crisis." Both imperialism and the Mexican government, for different reasons, tried to hide the real facts about the discovery. Each party sought to profit according to its own interests. Some petroleum organizations in New York spoke of deposits "just as rich as those of the Persian Gulf." Echeverría, on the other hand, declared that such statements were nothing but formulas aimed at driving down the price of oil, which the Mexican government did not want and which he himself would oppose.

According to PEMEX, the state oil-prospecting monopoly, the discovery of the Chiapas and Tabasco deposits made possible both self-sufficiency

in crude oil (that is, the end of some imports that have been necessary up to now) and an increase in exports. There would also be an effect on the balance of payments. While the astronomical foreign debt (a \$2,500 million balance of payments deficit in 1974 and a debt of more than \$15,000 million for the same year) would not be eliminated, the striking deterioration of the national treasury could be eased somewhat.

Those of the political groups in power most inclined to consistently follow the course initiated by Echeverría, in particular Horacio Flores de la Peña, the secretary of the nationalized sector on which PEMEX depends, began to advocate Mexican entry into the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and even began to take initiatives in this direction. But Echeverría publicly declared that Mexico would not enter OPEC. During Echeverría's meeting with Ford, which took place in Kissinger's presence, Flores de la Peña openly spoke of the advantages Mexico would derive from membership in OPEC. It seems that this political position was too extreme, and a short while later Flores de la Peña found himself obliged to give up his ministerial post "under strong pressure," according to his own statement. Flores de la Peña's resignation (in December 1974) emphatically indicated the limits beyond which Echeverría was unprepared to go in his opposition to the government of the United States; it also revealed the real limits of the bourgeois anti-imperialism of the Mexican government.

As for American imperialism, it is obvious that it is interested in averting any possible union of the Latin American bourgeoisies. In a situation in which the ruling Arab groups have shown how it is possible to take advantage of interimperialist contradictions, the possibility of a Latin American entente is not a utopia — although this does not in any way mean that this possibility can be realized in the short term. What is certain is that this possibility is now playing a role in the policies of both sides, imperialist and Latin American. The aggressiveness of Carlos Andrés Pérez is rather annoying to Washington, which sees him as the principal representative of the policy of OPEC on the Latin American continent (Ecuador being a simple pawn of Venezuela). It is also obvious that Kissinger would not have been very happy to see the aggressive position of Venezuela strengthened by explicit and objective support from Echeverría. The front opened up by the Pérez government would be strengthened qualitatively if it were joined by the three most important countries of Latin America.

These limits to Echeverría's anti-imperialism, limits beyond which the Venezuelan government has gone in practice, are linked to the different financial

situations of the two governments. Venezuela received more petrodollars in 1974 than any other country in the world except Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is the major foreign supplier for the Yankee market. The Carlos Andrés Pérez government commands an enormous fund of petrodollars with which it can maneuver, and the problems of Venezuela, while they should not be underestimated, affect a population of only 15 million. Mexico, on the other hand, with its 55 million inhabitants and its broader geographical problems, is tied to international credit agencies, particularly North American agencies, by the golden chain of the third-largest national debt in the entire capitalist world, after Brazil and India.

The incontestable limits within which Echeverría's present policy functions are responsible for the oscillations and zigzags he has carried out during his international maneuvers. The government's opposition to imperialism appeared at the time of the adoption by the U.S. Congress of the new Foreign Trade Bill. And the limits of this opposition also appeared. Unlike the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, the Echeverría government expressed with great caution its opposition to this bill, which attacks the most elementary commercial interests of the bourgeois sectors producing raw materials on the continent. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Rabaza went to Washington to "negotiate" and "speak frankly" with Kissinger. That is, by entering into the North American game aimed at dividing the strongest Latin American countries, the Echeverría government hopes to become the "mediator" between the most extreme parties. As the liberal press stressed, this position is in contradiction with the one the Mexican government expressed when it signed the "Charter of Economic Rights and Duties," many of whose articles are openly violated by the new trade bill adopted by the U.S. Congress. Instead of reacting strongly and immediately to the U.S. trade bill, the Echeverría government was the first to take a position demonstrating that it considered the "Charter" nothing but a scrap of paper, even though the government had claimed to be committed to the "Charter" by honor and policy.

The letter Echeverría sent to Carlos Andrés Pérez in no way eliminated Secretary Rabaza's ambiguity. In fact, it even intensified that ambiguity and revealed the dilemmas faced by the Mexican bourgeoisie and its state.

Clearly, Echeverría wants to enter into special arrangements with the Venezuelan government, but he does not want to lose his old "special relations" with the United States. That is the reason why Echeverría has not decided to boycott the meeting of Latin American ministers with Kissinger, which is supposed to take place in Buenos Aires. At the same

time, he reiterated to Pérez his total agreement with the "defense of Latin American interests." But still, in practice he did not agree to Pérez's boycott. Thus, by wanting to have his cake and eat it too, Echeverría lost a clear opportunity to become the "standard-bearer of Latin America." The Venezuelan government went considerably further, and even the Organization of American States (OAS) responded to the demands of Caracas.

The 1975 change

In 1975 the project of the "democratic opening" is entering a much more complex and difficult stage. There have been attempts to consolidate the "opening" during the past four years. But today, although it is nearing the attainment of its goal, the main interest is to prolong the political orientation through the next presidential vote. The debate within the highest levels of the government and the bourgeoisie is unfolding precisely around these questions: Should the policy of competing with imperialism be continued or not? Is the Mexican bourgeoisie ready to go further in its political confrontation with the Ford-Kissinger team? And, above all, a response must be given to this key question: What will be the reaction of the Mexican people, whatever path is chosen? In fact, unlike the other countries of Latin America (Venezuela in particular), Mexico will not experience an original wave of anti-imperialist populism of a bourgeois and petty-bourgeois character, and if Echeverría succeeds in putting across his bourgeois-reformist orientation during the next presidential vote, the dangers of the masses going beyond the government's limits are more real than in any other country of Latin America today. To understand the basic reason for the deep erosion of the Mexican populist project it is necessary to recall a number of essential points.

The presidential succession that will be organized this year takes place after the country has gone through a period of deep transformation of class relations, a transformation that began in 1968. In addition, the dangerous economic situation of the international capitalist system is aggravating the complex economic conditions in the country.

The choice facing the bourgeoisie in 1975 is not an easy one, although there are many weighty reasons to suggest that the balance will be tipped in the direction of continuing the government's "opening" style rather than toward a Díaz Ordaz type solution, that is, a government whose penchant for the bourgeoisie is such that it forgets the elementary compromises that the Bonapartist government has made over the years. To be sure, surprises are possible. That is just what happened with Echeverría, who six

years ago was considered a faithful follower of his chief, Díaz Ordaz, but later turned out to be the promoter of the present "democratic opening." But as has been seen during the reign of this "democratic opening" government and during the reign of other Latin American governments similar to Echeverría's, in particular the Argentine government, there is always significant maneuvering room for reformist groups, especially in the absence of opposition from the proletariat.

What we are seeing in Mexico today is a well-planned and not at all clumsily executed government strategy that treats the daily mechanisms of political repression of revolutionaries and communists as though they were "provocations" (on whose part, nobody knows). The recent case of the murder of an old communist militant in the cellar of the police station in Mexico City provides a significant illustration of this. Professor Hilario Medina, who had been active in the Mexican Communist party for more than thirty years, was found dead, apparently "hanged" in his cell after several days of "interrogation" by the Mexican police. He had been arrested under the pretext of having entered into relations with Guatemalan emigrés. But democratic public opinion is alerted by this type of "suicide," which occurs rather frequently in the regime's political prisons. According to all indications, Professor Medina died after being subjected to torture. This was an open slap in the face to the "reformist" Echeverría regime. What attitude did the government take?



First, it authorized the broadest possible denunciation by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sectors close to the régime and under its control of such acts. Then it announced an "inquiry" into the "suicide." Next, the president named a personal representative to the commission of inquiry, a deputy of the PRI. Finally, some of the policemen involved in the case were arrested and accused of having stolen jewels from houses they had occupied during arrests that were made at the same time as the arrest of Professor Medina.

This type of selective and arbitrary repression obtains better results for the government than an open anticommunist repression would. Unfortunately, the CP itself fell into the trap set by the government, which is not surprising considering that this party has been preparing a right turn for a year now. Other leftist groups also accepted the argument that the murder had been a police "provocation."

The reality is that an inquiry could be made and all possible changes could be made among the police of the Federal District if the president even lifted his little finger. It is not logical to think that there are agents provocateurs secretly opposed to Echeverría's policy lurking among the Mexican police, especially when it is kept in mind that the victim in this case was a communist. After all, an inquiry was also promised after June 10, 1971; but today, more than three years later, the government is still absolutely unable to produce the slightest results, and nobody knows where the "hawks" are.*

What is even more serious is that the Mexican left around the CP does not have the slightest experience that would enable it to grasp the acts of this Bonapartist government, which is capable of the greatest zigzags. On the contrary, the Mexican left under Stalinist influence has traditionally been the interpreter for the "progressive" sectors of the Mexican government and bourgeoisie. It is thus symptomatic of the change in CP policy — which was extremely "antireformist" in 1971 and 1972 — to see manifestos appear in the CP press today speaking of the "provocation" of which Medina was the victim. Everything indicates that it is not possible to absolve the government of responsibility for this crime, just as it was not possible in the case of the murders of June 10, 1971, or in the case of the October 2, 1968, massacre just before the Olympic games in Mexico City. This is true in spite of the "anti-imperialist"

* On June 10, 1971, a massacre was committed during a demonstration of 10,000 students in Mexico City. Dozens were killed. The attackers were "hawks," a repressive paramilitary gang linked to the police. Echeverría promised an "inquiry," of which nothing was ever heard again.

and "positive" measures that the government has taken.

The CP and the traditional Mexican left have been especially impressed by the way in which the Echeverría government reacted to the military coup in Chile in September 1973. The Echeverría government acquired some international prestige through the attitude it took in accepting many refugees, through its breaking of diplomatic relations with the Pinochet government, and through its policy of clearly differentiating itself from the most reactionary governments. This prestige is about to be further increased by the Commission of Inquiry into the Crimes of the Chilean Junta, which is scheduled to meet soon in Mexico City. This meeting was inspired by the Soviet Union and the Mexican CP, which are under heavy pressure to declare their agreement with a policy that most satisfies the groups of jurists and diplomats that compose the Commission, which is a kind of Soviet version of the Bertrand Russell Tribunal.

The sniping and shifting among the groups in power has not yet gone beyond the limits of the Mexican Bonapartist system. All the candidates for presidential succession place themselves under the sign of the Bonapartist system. None of them has a qualitatively different program. The various "precandidates" so far are: Moya Palencia, secretary of the government and the most logical successor to Echeverría in view of the political apparatus that supports him; López Portillo, secretary of finance, who is closely linked to the president; Cervantes del Rio, presidential secretary and, as such, the one most closely linked formally to the high court; and Muñoz Ledo, secretary of labor, a key post for controlling the vertical trade unions.

Each candidate, and especially Moya Palencia, is identified with given sectors of capitalist interest. But today they are all responding more or less firmly to the program of the "opening," Moya Palencia being the one most oriented toward a position of changing this policy; that is, he is the one most closely tied to the most conservative and powerful bourgeois sectors.

Within the sniping and shifting, the maneuvers of the various candidates are carefully planned and put into practice. For example, the recent case of the resignation of Flores de la Peña, which was considered a real triumph for the pro-Moya Palencia sectors, cannot be isolated from the overall context. If that mistake is made, it would not be realized that the populist policy received a new impetus with the elevation of the Department of Agricultural Affairs, one of the key bastions of the "opening" policy identified with López Portillo and Cervantes del Rio, to the rank of a state secretariat.

Account must also be taken of the various factors that determine the policy of the government, which is far from having pronounced itself clearly for any of the candidates for succession.

General trajectory of Mexican Bonapartism

The new situation that is emerging on the Mexican political scene is the source of a series of new problems for the bourgeoisie and its government. On this point it is necessary to briefly sum up the main political facts that have marked the political scene since 1968. During that year political events took place in Mexico City that substantially transformed the social panorama of the country. The government was shaken by a crisis, and the whole society was indelibly marked by the massive, democratic, and independent character of the mass mobilizations in the capital. The national bourgeoisie was haunted by the specter of a French May 1968 occurring on Mexican soil. The Díaz Ordaz government, after attempting several forms of partial repression, unleashed a wave of repressive violence and opted for a bloody confrontation with the movement. On October 2, 1968, in Tlatelolco square, a volley of bullets put an end to an important phenomenon of Mexican political life, a phenomenon that can be called the emergence, consolidation, and apogee of Mexican Bonapartism. The succeeding stage of crisis and erosion of the Bonapartist regime opened over the bodies of more than 500 people.

The 'democratic opening'

In spite of the fantastic blow represented by the Tlatelolco massacre, the period opened in 1968 has not been ended. The year 1969 was a difficult one; 1970 opened with a very significant event. Dozens of political prisoners in Lecumberri jail were attacked and were on the point of being deliberately massacred during a "mutiny" of common prisoners prepared by the authorities in order to break the hunger strike of the political prisoners. This polarized the general tension existing in the student movement and among several other sectors of the population; it was the expression of deep changes going on. In spite of the repression of October 1968, the government was convinced that it could not give up its populist and demagogic methods. The objective of Díaz Ordaz's successor was to revitalize the regime.

Luís Echeverría began his campaign with this leit motiv: A solution must be found to the problems of the country; all Mexicans must be united once again; the government must revitalize itself. He thus initiated the "democratic opening."

The first year of the Echeverría government was directly determined by the crisis inherited from the Díaz Ordaz years. The new massacre of June 10, 1971, hit the student movement. But this time it was carried out a lot more "intelligently." The Echeverría government used methods that were much more clever, modern, and liberal than the Díaz Ordaz government had used in the Tlatelolco massacre. The government washed its hands of all responsibility, and it was easy to fool broad sectors about the real character of the "hawk" band, which was in fact obviously linked to official circles. These criminal bands, armed with machine guns and other weapons and protected by the police, had launched a mortal blow against the demonstration on that day.

The Echeverría regime made use of the confusion provoked by the combination of its liberal course and its repressive actions. Echeverría politically liquidated a number of politicians who were too closely identified with Díaz Ordaz. He issued a call for a big demonstration to support the regime, and, most surprisingly, instead of tightening the repressive vise, he reeled in the police apparatuses. No students or leftists were arrested, and Echeverría even promised from the presidential balcony to initiate an inquiry into the massacre. June 10, 1971, a key date for the government, showed that Echeverría's style would be different from that of Díaz Ordaz. In practice, the merciless fist would still strike revolutionary opponents of the regime. The repression would also be maintained, but it would be more measured, more effective, and more selective, relying on unofficial paramilitary apparatuses actually linked to government circles, the "hawks" being an example. Unlike Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría encouraged a reanimation of political life in bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles, especially reformist ones, in order to regain the social support that had been lost in 1968 and that at the time seemed to have been lost irrevocably. Echeverría began to insist that the "Mexican Revolution is not only a living concept, but also a reality that has experienced periods of acceleration and periods of slow-down. . . . but is in process of continual revision and permanent renovation." Echeverría has not changed his verbiage; he still insists, as he did on November 19, 1974, that "in Mexico we have a revolution that is still half incomplete, that has much to correct, that has committed many mistakes and hesitations, that has left behind many tired persons who believed that the revolution was already finished because they had obtained important positions."

For both objective and subjective reasons, Echeverría has been unable to bring off a new version of the course toward "national unity." The objective reasons lie in the fact that the economic and

social problems are far from resolved; on the contrary, they are worsening. The subjective reasons relate to a more and more critical and perceptive spirit in regard to the real nature of the Bonapartist "social contract" that has begun to develop among the population. This distrust of the government has not yet been expressed in a revolutionary form among broad layers of the population. But it is being expressed in a more conscious form than ever among vanguard sectors. And even among the broadest sectors, a malaise continues to be felt; only a catalyst is needed to allow it to become conscious.

Responsibility of the revolutionary left

The Mexican political conjuncture is approaching one of its critical points. The year 1975 will be very important. The economy will feel the effects of the generalized recession. According to a statement of the secretary of finance, the central goal of the 1975 budget is "to prevent the onset of recession and to slow down inflation," a goal that is not at all modest. If some formula capable of realizing that goal is discovered in Mexico, we can be sure that the other capitalist countries will want to know about it!

Mexican imports will not be able to expand in a world that is feeling the first jolts of a trade war among the countries that constitute the main markets for Mexican products. Whether the growth in the gross national product reaches 7 percent in 1975 (which is not easy to foresee) or whether the growth remains at the level it has reached during the past few years, the country's trade deficit will still be the largest in its history.

The foreign markets for Mexican textiles have been closed; the same is true for the markets for minerals. And even the advantage that meant so much for the development that occurred during the 1950s is disappearing rapidly: the country's capacity for absorbing foreign capital. (It is disappearing not so much for internal reasons as because of international liquidity problems.) If to all this is added the present policy of Echeverría, it can be seen that even imperialist capital will seek more secure markets, like those of Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, etc.

Conscious of the dangers, the government is reacting, examining the maneuvering room it commands and considering the solutions it could resort to. It is clear what criterion determined the government's elaboration of its 1975 budget: increase public expenditures within the limits required so that they do not become a burden on the economy but on the contrary function as a classical anticyclical factor. In order to provide more resources for the state, the government is proposing the adoption of a "fiscal

reform" that all the specialists consider to be a simple "adjustment," that is, a minimal fiscal alteration and not a real transformation of the system now in force.

Thus, in spite of the "adjustment," which will above all affect the "middle class" consumers since it will influence the consumption of gasoline, the government will still have to resort to international agencies to request a loan of \$6,000 million, an astronomical figure that will further increase the country's debt. This loan will be necessary to finance public expenses for 1975, which have been raised by nearly 40 percent compared with 1974 in order to play an antirecessionary role. The most lucid bourgeois economists themselves have stressed the inconsistent character of such a policy.

But Echeverría is perfectly aware of the problems with which his government is confronted. Significantly, he declared last December 21: "What is important now is that during the year about to begin, which will be a year of generalized crisis, we unite as Mexicans, as one people, around the essential tasks. And this must also be understood by the advocates of a consumer society and by those who oppose social solidarity in the sphere of the economy because they see the effects of the recession and the unemployment in the capitalist countries that they take as models." A bourgeois leader could not have spoken better!

But Echeverría also announced a program of "national unity." And the part of the left that wants to hear this is preparing to respond to his appeals. The traditional left tied to the CP, to Lombardoism, and to Cardenism is preparing a turn that will lead it toward being co-opted into Echeverría's program of "national unity." From this standpoint, the alternative that he is projecting must not be considered as a simple conjunctural maneuver. If the Bonapartist apparatus wants to survive, it must deepen the course initiated by Echeverría. The most lucid representatives of the present administration know this: Echeverría saved the apparatus from disaster. Gómez Villanueva, the recently named secretary of agrarian reform, stated not long ago: "If Echeverría had not opened the way, Mexico would have entered into a stage of very hard violence, and the peace we have enjoyed for so long would have been broken." Once again, the high financiers have a much clearer idea of the character of the state than many "Marxists" do.

In fact, Bonapartism is a "hard regime"; but in order to survive in Mexico it needs the support of layers of the population that back it up in its confrontation with imperialism. That is what gives Mexican Bonapartism the special character that Trotsky described in his writings on the country. Neverthe-

less, the contradiction of this regime is appearing more and more clearly. The contradiction lies in the fact that despite its undeniable bourgeois character, this regime has had to politically expropriate the bourgeoisie in order to carry out its tasks. After fifty years of taking the measures necessary to help the bourgeoisie withstand the blows of the revolution of 1910, after providing the bourgeoisie with the infrastructure it needed to be able to carry out its accumulation of capital, and after engendering within the bourgeoisie entire layers that have penetrated the most privileged sectors of the population, the Bonapartist regime now seems to have reached the end of its road. The bourgeoisie that developed and strengthened itself under Bonapartist protection now wants to get rid of this regime and replace it with a different regime. But the bourgeoisie is not "ungrateful" toward the regime. What is happening is that in a certain sense the bourgeoisie never considered this regime as its own; and today it is stronger and more conscious and wants to directly take up the reins of power itself.

Thus, the Echeverria regime has been attacked by the most reactionary and most powerful sectors of the bourgeoisie, those sectors most closely tied to American imperialism. But while the bourgeoisie is repudiating the present regime, which no longer responds at all to a situation in which capital has been strengthened (and in which the working class is generally stronger too), it cannot replace it except with an even "worse" dictatorship. In fact, there is no precedent in the historical and political traditions of the country that allows one to think that the democratic bourgeoisie is going to flourish at a time when it is in decline in all the advanced capitalist countries. But a military dictatorship is not necessary in Mexico at the present time, for it would only exacerbate the existing contradictions and it could not emerge independently of the regime itself. Thus, the bourgeoisie has to pay the price for its belated birth and its pronounced political weakness. One of the prices it has to pay is that the army itself has traditionally been one of the pillars of the Bonapartist regime and, in fact, was one of the principal sources of political personnel for it (Obregón, Calles, etc.). Thus, in spite of everything, the bourgeoisie has to continue to develop its plans within the framework of the existing regime if it does not want to provoke a succession of political crises that go beyond the acceptable limits of security.

Echeverria's alternative has no foundation. He hopes to produce a new version of the Cardenas annals. But as Engels said, historic re-editions are caricatures. Conditions do not exist in Mexico for forging a great populist movement based on the peasantry or for continuing to confine the working class within the framework of the trade-union bureaucracy.

The importance of the collaboration of the left in carrying out the solution of the "democratic opening" is reflected in Echeverria's constant efforts to appear as a "third worldist" leader. He has obtained some results with this. Today, thanks to his attitude on the question of Chile, he is the natural ally of the liberal forces that see his "antifascism" as a solution for their own problems and desire to be taken into consideration in the program presented by the president. The responsibility of the revolutionary left in Mexico is thus very great. An ultra-left course in the present circumstances would be fatal, as is shown by the tragic examples of the urban groups that have resorted to "direct action." The hundreds of imprisoned militants are proof of the failure of their line and of the superficial character of Echeverria's "democratic" position. Under other circumstances, the death of Lucio Cabañas during a clash with the army also showed the limits of an armed confrontation with the state, even though such a confrontation is justified. In the south of the state of Guerrero, the peasantry, both historically and socially, has no great alternative other than guerrilla struggle. But the death of Genaro Vásquez in 1972 and of Lucio Cabañas last year dealt very hard blows to the spontanéist conception of an armed confrontation with the state limited to a particular region without the slightest links with other regions and without a strategy of implantation of an organization on a national scale. All the heroism of these revolutionary peasants, the inheritors of Zapata, threatens to be nothing but a labor of Sisyphus if their revolutionary efforts are not politically and organizationally supported by the working class in the cities.



the gci congress

The recent congress of the Grupo Comunista Internacionalista (Internationalist Communist Group), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Mexico, issued a call for the unity of revolutionary forces to oppose the frontist alternative that the bourgeoisie is now preparing. Without sectarianism, it proposed a line of class struggle to the trade-union tendencies that have emerged independently of the bureaucracy. It stressed the necessity of the Mexican revolutionary movement going beyond narrow nationalist limits in order to unite in the building of an international revolutionary Marxist organization, the only alternative that will guarantee the future triumph of the proletariat.

The first national congress of the Grupo Comunista Internacionalista (GCI — Internationalist Commu-

nist Group), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Mexico, was held in mid-December 1974. The delegates met for four days to discuss the points on the agenda of the congress: the problems of building the revolutionary Marxist party in Mexico; the tactic to be followed in maintaining the unity of the Fourth International in Mexico (that is, the problems and perspectives of the fusion with the Liga Socialista [Socialist League], another sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Mexico); and the problems and tasks of revolutionary Marxists in the workers movement, which is now beginning to reawaken.

Two tendencies emerged during the pre-congress discussion and presented documents and resolutions on all the points of discussion at the congress. During the democratic debate that preceded the congress seven internal bulletins containing more than fifteen discussion documents were published. The discussion went on for six months, which permitted the delegates to come to the congress with the greatest possible clarity on the issues under debate, on the real differences and the points of genuine agreement. Tendency 1 obtained a majority of 60 percent of the votes. The new central committee reflects as nearly as possible the votes received by the tendencies at the congress. Thus the CGI, a young organization, has shown both the old Stalinist left and the new militants skeptical about Leninist norms the concrete possibility of organizing a tendency debate (sometimes a very hard one), the possibility of coming to a congress with clearly defined positions and of determining a majority on the basis of the democratic discussion and the final decisions, and, finally, of continuing to function in a centralized way within the same organization. This practical demonstration of what Leninist democratic centralism can be is not the smallest gain made for the whole of the Mexican left by the comrades of the GCI in their congress. This practical demonstration of Leninist functioning, which the GCI learned within the Fourth International, already has some weight within the present debate on the left: For the first time in the new Mexican left (that is, for the first time in thirty years) it has been demonstrated that a tendency debate, freely waged in a democratic fashion, need not lead to a split but on the contrary can result in a strengthening and maturation of the nucleus of the revolutionary Marxist party, represented by the GCI.

Since its formation in 1968 the GCI has marked a qualitative change in the history of Mexican Trotskyism. Unlike the Trotskyists of the early 1960s, the GCI has succeeded in establishing ties with the natural and spontaneous vanguard without which it is not possible to build the party. Without the slightest triumphalism we can say that the congress of last December was the clearest proof of this social

and national rooting that the GCI has succeeded in effecting during the six years of its existence, of the strengthening and irreversible consolidation of Trotskyism in Mexico. This success was demonstrated concretely by the many areas from which delegates came: Baja California, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Chihuahua, Monterrey, Colima, Morelos, Puebla, Sonora, the state of Mexico, and the Federal District (Mexico City).

The GCI had not managed to hold such a large and representative meeting since its first general conference of May 1971. This is true even taking account of the international congress held at the beginning of 1974 in preparation for the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International. The organization of this first national congress of December 1974 was an urgent matter. After three and a half years of important experience of "accumulating cadres," of strengthening the program theoretically, and of injecting revolutionary Marxist ideology into the vanguard born at the end of the 1960s, the GCI could and had to draw a balance sheet. Its propaganda work and the participation by its cadres in various struggles, especially student struggles, permitted preparation for the congress to begin in 1973. But the holding of the congress was postponed by various factors, among them the present situation in the Fourth International, within which two main tendencies are debating what strategy and tactics should be applied in practice. In Mexico this situation led to a split from the GCI, a split that led to the formation of the Liga Socialista. The first congress of the GCI had to approach this problem seriously.

After a very thorough discussion on this point, the congress adopted the following resolution:

"The congress accepts the fusion process with the Liga Socialista on the basis of the development of common work between the two organizations. Likewise, it accepts the election of a commission of the GCI that, along with a commission of the LS, will form a parity commission that will take charge of organizing the work preceding the fusion, a process that, on the part of the GCI, will be oriented around the resolutions of this congress."

Through this decision the short-term construction of the Mexican section of the Fourth International is being prepared; this will result from the unification of the GCI and the LS, the two organizations of the Fourth International in Mexico.

The congress of the GCI thus marked a real step forward toward the merging of the revolutionary Marxist program and the process of class struggle itself. From this standpoint, the first congress of the GCI was closely linked to the problems stressed

by the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses of the Fourth International. In fact, in a certain sense, the GCI congress cannot be explained without an adequate comprehension of these two world congresses. The Ninth World Congress had initiated the transformation of the movement of the Fourth International. In view of the powerful upsurge of the world revolution that began in 1968, the tasks of constructing the revolutionary Marxist leadership were transformed. Comrade Ernest Mandel defined the organizational change marked by the Ninth World Congress in this way: "The penetration of revolutionary Marxism to the point of building mass revolutionary parties is not yet possible. That will be the task of the next stage. But in the present stage it is possible to build vanguard organizations capable of independent initiatives in the revolutionary struggle. History will show that these initiatives will be able to exert a far from negligible influence on the behavior, activity, and level of consciousness of broader masses. In this sense, the Ninth World Congress is the congress that initiates the transformation of the Trotskyist movement from a propaganda group into a combat organization capable of effectively directing vanguard revolutionary actions." (Quatrième Internationale, July 1969.)

In Mexico the GCI, whose delegation participated in the Ninth World Congress, was a typical example of what Mandel was describing: a Trotskyist group tied to representative elements of the Mexican vanguard who in 1968 had assured their place in the revolutionary history of the country.

But the development of the GCI was more difficult than that of other organizations of the Fourth International that emerged (like the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/ETA-VI in Spain) or were strengthened (like the Ligue Communiste in France) during the same period. Two factors were responsible for this: first, the absence of collective political and organizational continuity of Trotskyism in Mexico; second, the very problems of building the Fourth International in Latin America, aggravated by the absence of experiences and traditions of proletarian struggle. In Latin America the revolutionary Marxist program is confronted not only by the traditional enemies of the workers bureaucracy (Stalinism and reformism of the social-democratic type); it also must fight against the insidious influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois populism in many decisive cases. Argentina and Mexico, each in their own way, are examples of the latter phenomenon. In Mexico the GCI, with its very great political immaturity, has had to confront the virtually absolute domination of both Stalinist reformism and the political demagoguery of Mexican Bonapartism.

A whole series of objective and subjective factors have forced the GCI to begin practically from zero,

with the exception of a small political and organizational capital of a primarily individual character. Since 1969 we have begun to resolve some fundamental problems of the revolutionary Marxist program that were virtually not broached during the whole prior history of the Mexican left during this century: characterization of the Mexican revolution and of the government that emerged from it; analysis of the present social structure, of trade-union "charrismo,"* and of the present tasks to accomplish, given the specific conditions of the GCI as (1) a revolutionary Marxist group that must as quickly as possible implant the revolutionary Marxist program through the sorts of propagandist actions that were taken years or even decades ago by other sections of the Fourth International, and as (2) a Marxist group that must at the same time participate to the greatest extent possible given the forces it commands in the actions undertaken by the vanguard that emerged in 1968 (not to do so would risk isolation from that vanguard).

The congress drew a positive balance sheet of the accomplishment of these tasks of the nucleus of the party. It made a sober judgment of the work of the organization, avoiding the easy road of triumphalism. But the congress also observed that the fundamental reason why a small group of leading comrades and militants of the 1968 movement were able in October 1968 to launch this enormous undertaking with some chance of success is that the undertaking was not carried out under the aegis of a centrist program, but was instead based on the perspective of building a group of the Fourth International in Mexico. The founding core of the GCI, fifteen comrades, knew that the best way to build the national party was to participate in the construction of the revolutionary international, which today more than ever must determine all the efforts of communist renovation.

The resolutions adopted on the building of the revolutionary party, on the situation in the workers movement, and on the tasks of the revolutionary Marxists are a solid basis on which the second phase of party-building can be begun.

The central committee elected by the congress was formed in accordance with the votes obtained by the two tendencies. A control commission was also elected.

Finally, in its opening declaration the congress launched a call to Mexican revolutionaries to consider the positive balance of its work as their own. ■

*A word colloquially used by the Mexican workers to apply to labor bureaucrats directly linked to the ruling parties and the government.

the evolution



We are publishing below three articles dealing with the evolution of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The first consists of some comments on a previous article published in INPRECOR; the second is a response to those comments; the third is a translation of an analysis that appeared in the January-February 1975 issue of *el-Munadil*, the bi-monthly Arabic journal published by the comrades in the Arab East affiliated to the Fourth International.



1. comments on «the turn of the plo»

The article by Comrade Jon Rothschild published in INPRECOR No. 13, November 28, under the title "The Turn of the PLO" calls for some comments.

The principal thesis of the article, contrary to what might be suggested by the title, is the assertion of "the fundamental political continuity of the orientation of the PLO leadership," a political continuity that the reader is given to understand as programmatic continuity. The axis of this continuity, again

according to the article, is the program of the "democratic secular state in Palestine."

We have always criticized this program from two complementary standpoints (apart from the fact that it ignores the national aspect of the Jewish question in Palestine): (1) from the standpoint of the permanent revolution, in that this program creates illusions as to the possibility of liberating Palestine under a bourgeois-democratic leadership; (2) from the standpoint of the Arab revolution, in that the same program creates illusions in the possibility of liberating Palestine solely through the forces of the Palestinian people.

This critique does not at all mean — and here is the source of the confusion into which certain sectors of our movement have fallen, in spite of the fact that what is involved is an elementary aspect of Trotskyism — that democratic and secular demands have no value in the struggle against Zionism. On the contrary, they are very important for the struggle of our comrades inside Israel.

But the "democratic" program has precisely no mobilizing value outside Israel. It only adds illusions to the real mobilizing goal: the liberation of Palestine; that is, the destruction of the Zionist state and the restitution of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people.



of the plo

Now, the fundamental program of Fateh, the PLO, the PFLP, and so on, a program that is implied by their names, is the liberation of Palestine and not the democratic secular state, which is mainly destined for external consumption (at the UN, for example!). That is what Comrade Jon fails to see when he tries to justify the assertion in his article that "the leaders of Fateh considered the struggle against the Zionist state fundamentally as a struggle aimed at eliminating from Palestine one of the backward social forces that had already been eliminated in countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq. . . ." This is a total aberration. The goal of the struggle of Fateh was not at all "to democratize and secularize Palestine in the same way that Egypt was democratized and secularized by the Nasserist revolution." It was in the first place and above all to liberate Palestine in the same way that Algeria was liberated. Comrade Jon passes in silence over the whole dominant national aspect of the Palestinian struggle.

Thus, the turn of the PLO is much more radical than is suggested by Comrade Jon's article. It is true that the final goal has not been abandoned. It is maintained, but in the same way as the communist goal is "maintained" by Stalinist parties; that is, it is abandoned in practice and, more and more, in theory.

The leadership of the PLO is trying to spread the belief that the Palestinian state that it is trying to obtain erves the goal of the liberation of Palestine;

in fact, this state, born in the framework of the "peaceful solution" and thus of the guarantees of the security of the Zionist state and its de facto recognition by the Arab states, is in total contradiction with the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian Arab people. It implies halting the Palestinian armed struggle, the fundamental aspect of this struggle for liberation.

It is thus not a matter of a simple change in the form of the struggle, but very clearly a betrayal in reality of the final goal (in which we see once again the dialectical unity of form and content). Comrade Jon goes so far as to write: "In the past, the leaders of Fateh believed that in the conditions of the Arab East, this goal could be achieved only by people's war. Now they believe it can be achieved through a peaceful evolution beginning with the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan."

It is obvious, in fact, that it is not the "beliefs" of these leaders that have changed, but rather their objectives; and this turn is the result of a transformation that is classical for Trotskyists: the bureaucratic degeneration of the Palestinian resistance, which has become a "state apparatus in search of a state at the cheapest available rate" since the equilibrium of the Bonapartist balancing act (of the leadership) has been changed. This necessary Marx-

ist analysis of the turn of the PLO is absent from Comrade Jon's article. We will not go into this in any more detail, for it is taken up in the Munadil article.

One last remark to conclude: Comrade Jon ends his article with a prognostication of two alternatives that are rather bleak: new conflagration or crushing of the vanguard of the Arab revolution. This is an erroneous interpretation of the "peaceful solution." Even if we consider the Palestinian vanguard as the vanguard of the Arab revolution (which is, to say the least, debatable), the Palestinian state will not mean the crushing of this vanguard but rather the creation of better conditions for its development: the regroupment of Palestinians and therefore of the Palestinian vanguard; the end of the power of mystification of the leadership of the PLO, and therefore the weakening of its grip over a section of the masses; an inter-Palestinian restructuring and therefore the crystallization of the class struggle, and so on. There will not be a significant crushing of the vanguard because the relationship of forces can only give an impetus to the potential oppositionists. Moreover, any confrontation (even limited) can only feed the future struggle within the Palestinian state. In this sense, as el-Munadil has affirmed, the creation of a Palestinian state will only add one more government to those that the Arab revolution will have to bring down. ■

January 4, 1975

-S. Jaber

2. a response

A good part of Comrade Jaber's remarks about the article "The Turn of the PLO" appear to be based on differences that are largely semantic. In responding to the comments, it would perhaps be useful to begin by clarifying the areas of agreement in the two positions. First, there is no suggestion in my article that the leadership of the PLO has not made a turn in accepting the establishment of a Palestinian rump state on the West Bank of the Jordan. In fact, I clearly characterized (more than once) the current policy of the PLO leadership as being one of betrayal, which certainly implies a turn. Second, we both agree that the practical essence of the turn (and the betrayal) is the PLO's abandonment of the struggle to destroy the Zionist state. Third, Comrade Jaber's suggestion that I "pass in silence over the whole dominant national aspect of the Palestinian struggle" is rather an exaggeration. In fact, one of the central points of the article was the argument that the

current betrayal of the PLO "is the inevitable betrayal by a bourgeois leadership of the struggle for national liberation in the era of imperialism." Fourth, we agree that the project of establishing a Palestinian ministate is "in total contradiction with the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people."

We agree, then, that the PLO leadership has made a turn; that the turn represents a betrayal of the national struggle of the Palestinian people; that the Palestinian ministate "implies halting the Palestinian armed struggle, the fundamental aspect of this struggle for liberation"; and that it is the duty of revolutionaries in the Arab world not only to denounce this turn, but also to counterpose to it a revolutionary-Marxist program capable of mobilizing the workers and peasants of the entire Arab region. In fact, we even agree on the essential aspects of the weakness of the program of the PLO: that it creates illusions in the possibility of liberating Palestine under a bourgeois-democratic leadership and that it projects the possibility of liberating Palestine solely through the forces of the Palestinian people. I may add here that the Munadil article describing the bureaucratic degeneration of the leadership of the resistance pinpoints the concrete process of transformation of the resistance leadership — the material causes of the transformation and the mechanism through which it occurred.

Where, then, does the disagreement, if there really is any, lie? Comrade Jaber describes the (previous) fundamental goal of the resistance organizations as the liberation of Palestine rather than the construction of a democratic secular state in Palestine, which he says is a slogan designed almost exclusively for external consumption. There is certainly truth in this. But it does not seem to me to be the whole truth. Liberation of Palestine fundamentally means the destruction of the Zionist state. But the destruction of the Zionist state immediately raises the question of what will replace that state after its destruction. The answer given to that question determines to a great extent not only the sort of documents that will be written (whether for internal or external consumption), but also the manner in which the struggle will be conducted. (To paraphrase Comrade Jaber, we see here once again the dialectical unity of means and ends.) One of the major differences between the post-1967 resistance and the earlier PLO lay precisely in the fact that the "new" resistance took its struggle seriously. It proved this by actually mobilizing the masses to a significant degree — which is something the old PLO never did. (To deny this would be to deny that the resistance leadership was ever for the liberation of Palestine, which would be to deny that there has been any turn at all.) The fact that the resistance was serious about its struggle to destroy the Zionist state meant that it had to project what sort of society would replace the demol-

ished Zionist structure. The answer that was given to that question was the "democratic secular state," which, I would maintain, was and still is something real exactly in the sense that it was and still is the genuine answer given by the resistance leadership to the question of what sort of society they intend to rule over after the destruction of the state of Israel. (It should be noted, incidentally, that by itself the "democratic secular state" says absolutely nothing about the number of Jews who will theoretically be allowed to remain in the liberated Palestine.)

The "democratic secular Palestine" was never — and never could be — a slogan capable of mobilizing the Palestinian people. On this Comrade Jaber is absolutely correct; there is nothing in my article that suggests the contrary. But it can be — and is — an expression of the political consciousness of the leadership of the resistance, an expression that is in its turn an expression of the class origins and aspirations of that leadership. In terms of consciousness, the formula "democratic secular Palestine" is an articulated resumé of the outlook of Palestino-centrism; it directly implies both isolation of the Palestinian struggle from the more general Arab struggle and the limitation of the Palestinian struggle to bourgeois-democratic tasks. Given the changes in the objective situation in the Arab world (which are excellently described in the Munadil article),

a leadership that views the struggle against the Zionist state purely as a struggle for a liberation that is expressed in the form of democracy and secularism and completely leaves out the necessity of the transformation of the social relations in the entire region, could not act otherwise than to insert itself into the process aimed at attaining the "peaceful solution." That is where the programmatic continuity lies.

It does not seem to me sufficient to denounce the turn of the resistance or even to describe the mechanisms by which the turn occurred, as necessary as this certainly is. It is also necessary to demonstrate that the program of the resistance was a false one and that the behavior of the resistance leadership is fully an expression of that false program. That program was not completely subsumed in the slogan or goal of the liberation of Palestine, for the liberation of Palestine presupposes the destruction of the Zionist state and therefore the replacement of the Zionist state by something else. In the final analysis, this is where revolutionary Marxism differs from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism of the resistance leadership. Ultimately, all the other differences — on Palestino-centrism, maximalism, the acceptance of subsidies from the Arab states, etc. — flow from that basic difference. ■

-J. Rothschild

3. the resistance: degeneration and perspectives

The shift of the leadership of the Palestinian resistance from the struggle for the liberation of Palestine to the race for the Palestinian mini-state; the total and harmonious integration of the resistance leadership into the chorus of the Arab regimes, particularly after the Rabat "Arab summit"; the moderate statements of the resistance leaders and the warm welcome the resistance has been receiving in international circles; in short, all the things symbolized by the "olive branch" that has replaced the "freedom fighter's gun" in the hands of the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization, are indications that clearly point to the mature and complete degeneration of the Palestinian resistance movement. There is no doubt that the causes of this degeneration

lie in large measure in the original limitations of the emergence of the resistance, in its organic crisis. But the development of these original causes into an actual degeneration has resulted from a totality of circumstances linked to the relationship of the resistance to its external milieu. These circumstances must be elucidated if the analysis of the degeneration is to be thorough and complete. To be sure, the goal of this analysis is above all to sketch out the main lines of future developments in order to work out a plan of action that enables us to confront these developments.

It is regrettable that none of the components of the left wing of the resistance, whether official or not,

have managed to come to an overall consciousness about the crisis of the resistance. The reason for this is the absence of a consistent revolutionary Marxist tendency within the resistance. All the leftist analyses of the resistance have centered on only one of its features, the petty-bourgeois character of the leadership. The relationship between the leadership's petty-bourgeois character and its behavior has not been made explicit. Likewise, there has been no examination of the relationship between the behavior of the resistance and the social milieu in which it functions: the refugee camps. In fact, the leftist tendencies of the resistance have remained prisoners of the same general line of conduct, have not gone beyond the narrow limits of the resistance, and have themselves shared the organic crisis of the resistance along with all the other tendencies.

Our current (from outside the resistance) has been the only one that has described the organic limitations of the resistance in an overall fashion. We did this in an article entitled "The Crisis of the Palestinian Resistance," which appeared in the April 1972 issue of *el-Munadil* — reprinted in our booklet *Intisaara li-Lenin (For Lenin's Victory)* — and in the resolution on the Arab revolution issued by the Trotskyists of the Arab region. (The resolution has been published in Arabic and will soon be translated into French and English — INPRECOR.) Our analysis can be summed up as follows:

For reasons that are in the first place historic the leaderships of the resistance emerged from the various components of the petty-bourgeois nationalist current. Despite the multiplicity of their political tendencies, ranging from the radicalized left to the reactionary right, all these leaderships were petty-bourgeois. The common class nature of the organizations of the resistance found expression in their common inability to work out a program of class struggle linked to the national struggle against Zionism and imperialism (in spite of the fact that some tendencies claimed adherence to Marxism). Likewise, all the currents remained prisoners of a Palestino-centric practice (and, in the case of Fateh, a Palestino-centric theory) that sowed illusions about the possibility of liberating Palestine through the strength of the Palestinian people alone instead of through integrating the Palestinian struggle into a vast effort to build a revolutionary party embracing the whole Arab region that would be capable of breaking all the forms of imperialist dependence, including, of course, the Zionist bulwark that defends this dependence.

This Palestino-centric practice also found expression in the fact that all the organizations of the resistance without exception were linked to one or another of the Arab regimes or to the Arab regimes

as a whole (Fateh), sacrificing the interests of the toiling masses living under these regimes on the altar of the "interest of the resistance." This interest was in turn interpreted as being determined by subsidies — as if these subsidies could in the slightest advance Palestine's liberation, which in reality must assuredly be accomplished through the revolutionary overthrow of the existing Arab regimes. This aspect of Palestino-centrism was also common to all the resistance organizations, despite the speeches some leaders made about the dialectical relationship between the Palestinian struggle and the Arab socialist revolution.

Moreover, because of the absence of real, as opposed to verbal, class-struggle perspectives in the program of the various components of the resistance, the program was reduced to the slogan of "liberation." This was an illusory program, for it was tied to a Palestino-centric outlook. If the organizations of the resistance were able to recruit rather massively in spite of their maximalism and their inability to define class perspectives, this was due to the nature of the social milieu in which they acted, that milieu being the refugee camps. The Palestinian refugees constitute a social category the majority of which (especially in Jordan and Lebanon) lives outside any productive social structure and is dependent on subsidies distributed as "aid" and on some marginal or seasonal activity. The liberation of the territory from which they were expelled is far and away the dominant desire of the masses of refugees, and that is a goal that is sufficient to mobilize them, or at least to mobilize the youth among them.

These masses lack any class consciousness; they perceive only their national enemy; they do not perceive the contradiction between their own interests and those of the Arab ruling classes, except to the extent that one or another of these ruling classes places itself in opposition to their national struggle. The consciousness of the refugees is the consciousness of a "category" that is based on a "Palestinian identity" created by their isolation in the refugee camps and by the desire that their "cause" not be liquidated. (This also accounts for the Palestino-centrism of the organizations of the resistance.)

Such are the general features of the organic crisis that has racked the Palestinian resistance since its formation. These features were later to crystallize into characteristics embodied in the behavior of organizations, and then of apparatuses that would become the bearers of the crisis and that would degenerate under the impact of the crisis.

Since the refugees were not integrated into any productive structure, the resistance was far from constructing an army of producers, an army of workers and peasants, especially in that the resistance did

not include any politically proletarian tendency.

Both the political and military organizations of the resistance were made up of salaried personnel whose incomes varied according to their positions within the hierarchy. The army of the resistance was an army whose structure was similar to that of bourgeois armies, the difference being that the army of the resistance had an anarchic character since the refugee camps are not barracks. After June 1967, and especially during 1968 and 1969, there was a very rapid development of an enormous apparatus swelled with functionaries collecting salaries. The majority of these functionaries were not engaged in any useful activity. The cancer of offices and administrative bureaus spread very rapidly, nearly attaining the level of a state apparatus, as in Jordan; it is known that the budget of Fateh in Jordan was comparable to that of the Jordanian state. In short, an enormous bureaucracy of office holders getting high salaries was formed, a bureaucracy that was like any other bureaucracy in that it had an interest in defending its privileges. But it was unlike other bureaucracies in that it drew its base not from the people over which it was ruling but rather from the contributions of the Arab states that were financing it.

In the light of this characteristic, it becomes clear that the phenomenon of "bureaucratism" is not the natural result of the marginality of the refugees, as some may think or deduce from what we have said above. Without the subsidies from the Arab states the organizations of the resistance would have remained poor combat organizations, organizations of poor people strongly motivated by the idea of liberating their usurped homeland. The enormous parasitic apparatus that gradually drew compensation for the loss of Palestine from the privileges that it acquired would not have developed. In fact, we have no doubt that the policy of trying to drown the resistance in a sea of cash subsidies was the result of a plan consciously worked out by some Arab regimes, the Saudi regime in the first place. These regimes certainly knew that this policy was the best way of emptying the resistance of its revolutionary content and of subjecting it to the will of its contributors, since the resistance became dependent on these contributors. The maintenance of the apparatus became dependent on the continuous inflow of "aid." The reactionary Arab regimes did not try to cut any corners in laying out money for achieving their policy; Saudi subsidies granted to Fateh through 1973 are estimated at nearly \$50 million, and this leaves out of account the subsidies advanced by the Arab emirates, Libya, and other states.

The Rabat summit decided to grant \$100 million to the PLO. The resistance has now accumulated so much money that the PLO itself has offered to pay \$1 million in contributions toward funds for African

development! It is the height of absurdity that an organization that claims to represent a people plunged into poverty should transform itself into a financial backer of poor countries. (We have described this as the transformation of the Palestinian revolution into the Palestinian fortune.)*

Obviously, the Arab regimes would not have offered this money to the resistance if the resistance had adopted a revolutionary attitude toward the Arab regimes. But the characteristics of the resistance that we have described above (especially the characteristics of Fateh), which permitted the resistance to use its right-wing Palestino-centrism to justify relations even with Saudi Arabia, allowed for the inflow of these funds. Nevertheless, for a long time after it attained maturity, the bureaucratization of the resistance did not overturn its single general program: the liberation of Palestine. For a long time, all the organizations of the resistance continued to invoke the necessity of liberating all of Palestine, and they centered their propaganda around this slogan, despite their obvious and complete bureaucratization. This was not in itself a contradiction; rather, it rested on a contradiction: the contradiction between the Arab regimes and their policy aimed at the "peaceful solution" on the one hand and the desire of the Palestinian mass movement to liberate their homeland and their resolve to struggle for this liberation on the other hand. The task assigned to the leadership of the resistance, and in the first place to the leadership of Fateh, was this: to dominate the Palestinian masses — which required advancing the slogan of liberation — and to prevent their movement from being directed against the Arab regimes. We have described the paradox of the resistance in the resolution on the Arab revolution cited above, which speaks of "the ambiguous position of the Fateh leadership, which has to balance between its relations with the Arab regimes and its relations with the mass movement it is leading; the radicalizing pressure of this movement accords the Fateh leadership a certain margin of autonomy."

The ultimate, political, degeneration of the apparatus of the Palestinian resistance began when the equilibrium on which it had based itself since its development after the Arab defeat of 1967 was broken; that is, when one of the two poles between which it was balancing received a decisive blow through the liquidation of the resistance in Jordan in 1970 and 1971. The equilibrium was broken to the benefit of the Arab regimes, for the main battalion of the Palestinian mass movement, its Jordanian battalion, was broken. The blows that followed, especially during the May 1973 events in Lebanon, further weakened the autonomy of the

*An untranslatable pun. In Arabic "thawra" means revolution; "tharwa" means fortune — INPRECOR.

Palestinian masses and thus strengthened the hegemony of the Arab regimes over the resistance. What we had predicted in the article published in April 1972 progressively occurred: "The relationship of forces is such that the regimes are carrying the day and Fateh is becoming transformed into a new version of the PLO (meaning the old PLO of Shukhairi, before the resistance took over the name). That is, Fateh is consciously agreeing to play the role of an instrument of diplomatic pressure."

The degeneration and its political expression

The repression that came down on the movement of the Palestinian masses — a movement that totally lacked any revolutionary leadership capable of responding to the repression — is thus the principal cause of the degeneration of the resistance. This is true not only because the repression fractured (to the benefit of the Arab regimes) the equilibrium on which the bureaucracy of the resistance had based itself, but also because the repression physically eliminated thousands of the best militants of the resistance, militants who stood in the front lines during the confrontations with the armies of Hussein and the other butchers of the Palestinian people. The rear guard, the people sitting in the offices and the bourgeois neighborhoods of Beirut, survived; the vanguard sacrificed itself. Thus, the relationship of forces within the resistance itself shifted in favor of the elements most inclined to sell out the Palestinian cause in exchange for safeguarding and extending their own privileges. This shift was reflected in the politics of the resistance and in our attitude toward it.

In fact, the political degeneration of the bureaucracy of the Palestinian resistance was virtually complete as of 1970-71. Already at that time it was clear that the leadership of the resistance had lost the narrow margin of autonomy it had commanded during the rise of the resistance and was becoming transformed in reality into an instrument of diplomatic pressure to be used by Cairo and Damascus to win concessions from Washington and Israel during the bargaining over the peaceful solution. What we mean to stress here is that while it is true that what appears as a turn in the political trajectory of the leadership of the resistance — that is, its adoption of the project of the Palestinian state — is a clear and declared political turn, it is not linked to an internal transformation but rather was already possible and in fact had occurred in an undeclared fashion after 1970-71. The degeneration of the bureaucracy of the resistance was already complete, but the circumstances of the time — before October 1973 — did not permit the bureaucracy to adopt the

liquidationist project of the Palestinian state or to publicly integrate itself into the efforts aimed at imposing the peaceful solution. Likewise, the same circumstances — the prevailing climate of defeat and the consequent fear of a mass reaction in case of open attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause — prevented Egypt and Syria from negotiating with the Zionist regime and from reconciling themselves with U.S. imperialism.

After the October War and the vast propaganda campaign that accompanied it, it became possible for the "battle front" — Egypt, Syria, and the Palestinian resistance — to move collectively to the application of the peaceful solution. Since then, the leadership of the resistance has openly adopted the project of the Palestinian state, with the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (the group led by Nayef Hawatmeh — INPRECOR) paving the way among the masses by becoming the first group (for a time the only group) to advance an apology for this project. The bureaucracy of the resistance has since integrated itself totally and openly into the efforts aimed at the liquidationist settlement.

The project of the Palestinian state is the direct and complete expression of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Palestinian resistance, just as the ideology of "socialism in one country" was the political expression of the bureaucratic Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet revolution. The resistance leaders are abandoning the liberation of Palestine just as the Stalinists abandoned the world revolution.

The Palestinian bureaucracy finds its immediate interest in the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The bureaucracy of the resistance has long since become a state apparatus without a state, and this apparatus is now quite naturally seeking a state within which to assert and extend its privileges by institutionalizing them in a state independent of any of the states where refugees are now living.

Of course, no one should be fooled; such a state could not be and will not be a "point of departure" for the continuation of the armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine (unless this happens against the will and policy of the leaders of the state). Rather, the precondition for the establishment of this state will be that it accept a peaceful coexistence with Zionism that will be consecrated by international agreements. Moreover, any combative intentions manifested by such a ministate would result in its immediate occupation, or rather, its re-occupation, by the Zionist army. In any case, it is obvious that the bureaucracy of the resistance has no such combative intention. And how could it be otherwise when the bureaucracy of the resis-



«*the
bureaucracy
has become
a state
apparatus
without a
state...*»

tance intends to live peacefully in the new state, enjoying its privileges and the funds that will continue to flow in from the oil-producing Arab states. Despite the affirmations of principles, which are made for propaganda purposes, it is clear that the bureaucracy of the resistance has abandoned the goal and slogan of the "liberation of Palestine"; it has abandoned this goal and slogan by accepting a state whose precondition is peaceful coexistence with Zionism; it will now progressively abandon it in the sphere of concrete principles and raise it again as an abstract general ideal in the same way that the Kremlin Stalinists treat the ideal of world communism. The degeneration of the resistance leadership will thus have attained its lowest point; the resistance will be transformed into a state instead of into a revolution.

The only faction of the resistance that is today rejecting the project of the Palestinian state in reality — that is, not on the basis of seeking a better deal, like the Iraqi regime — is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). From its origin this group was a faction that was excluded from the vital bureaucratic posts because of the hostility and historic rivalry between it and Fateh. The PFLP has not departed from its nationalism and refuses to abandon Palestine; but the nationalist opposition that it represents is a "reformist" opposition; that is, it is not accompanied by an effective struggle for the overthrow of the present leadership of the resistance. It is instead a pressure opposition that will most probably become the official opposition within the future Palestinian state. Any real

opposition prepared to continue the armed struggle after the creation of the state, which means continuing the struggle in opposition to the government of the new state, would have to be a clandestine revolutionary opposition. Such an opposition is beginning to emerge within the organizations of the resistance, among the rank-and-file militants and the patriotic and revolutionary cadres; this is occurring within the PFLP, of course, but also within Fateh itself.

Perspectives of struggle

The possibility of a fifth war (unleashed by the Zionist military establishment) cannot be ruled out; but given the gravity of the effects a new war would have, it is an unlikely possibility. The most likely possibility is undoubtedly the complete realization of the peaceful solution more or less rapidly, sooner or later, with the participation of the resistance. The settlement will result in the creation of a Palestinian state, whether "independent" or federated to other states. This is a solution that would satisfy Israel and that cannot be ruled out, in spite of the present appearance of things. (There is no question here of Hussein's project but rather of a formula of federation with Jordan or with some other state within which the Palestinian state would have de facto "autonomy": something along the lines of the Federation of Arab Republics.)

What this means is that the Palestinian state is the most likely possibility, whatever form it may take.

What, then, are the perspectives of struggle in the light of this state? That is an essential question for Palestinian revolutionaries and for all revolutionaries in the Arab region.

There are those who think that the creation of this state would be a crushing victory for reaction, and in this pessimism they find the justification for their abandoning the struggle or abandoning their "rejection" of the peaceful solution, since reaction will inevitably triumph anyway. (Some of the so-called Marxists in Fateh justify abandoning their rejection of the peaceful solution by sowing illusions as to the impossibility of a settlement!) The pessimism in these cases flows from the optimism that preceded it. Those who believed that the Palestinian resistance by itself, with the given composition of its factions, could someday advance down the road of the liberation of Palestine are today the same people who are thunderstruck by the impending victory of the project of the Palestinian state. We are not among them! Because of the organic crisis of the resistance, it was clear and inevitable from the beginning that the only possible road for the leadership would be to join up with the advocates of the settlement. If this settlement has taken the form of the creation of a Palestinian state, it is an indication of the fact that the Arab regimes cannot ignore the Palestinian cause. If the settlement had taken place in the form of a pure and simple liquidation of the resistance everywhere it existed and of a simple return to the pre-June 1967 situation but with a new American hegemony, that would have really been a heavy defeat for the mass movement. But that sort of solution has proved to be impossible, and the failure of the attempt of the Lebanese government to liquidate the resistance in May 1973 confirms this. American imperialism has been unable to impose the solution that would have been the best for it, the solution expressed in the project of the United Arab Kingdom proposed by Hussein. The solution toward which we are moving today is not that of a pure and simple liquidation of all traces of the Palestinian mass movement that arose after June 1967. To be sure, the solution is a consecration of imperialist domination — and how could it be otherwise, given the nature of the forces in conflict — but it is a consecration in the form of a compromise. And this compromise creates a reality whose effects on the mass movement must be studied; there is no point in sounding the bell of defeat.

On the Palestinian level itself, the Palestinian state will mean the definitive discrediting of the bureaucracy of the Palestinian resistance and the end of its ability to politically contain the mass movement in the name of the national liberation struggle (but obviously not the end of its repressive power). It will assemble all the Palestinian refugees on the

same territory, creating a vast refugee camp, and therefore a highly explosive "powderkeg." It will also crystallize the class differentiations within the Palestinian people, creating a concentrated Palestinian proletariat facing a government whose repressive bourgeois character will be clearly revealed, a government that has already created a finished state apparatus that includes a parliament in which the owning classes play a preponderant role. This means that the creation of a Palestinian state will in the final analysis create more favorable conditions for the development of a revolutionary Palestinian vanguard.

On a more general Arab level, the Palestinian state will in no case result in the crushing of the Palestinian cause in the consciousness of the masses, for this cause is above all based on the existence of the Zionist colonial state, the military bastion of imperialism in the Arab East. On the contrary, the settlement will permit the deepening of the division between the movement of the Arab toiling masses and the pseudo current of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist movement.

The revolutionary movement in the Arab region must prepare itself today for waging the most important battles after the conclusion of the wrangling over the peaceful solution. The revolutionary movement must build itself, lay the groundwork for a proletarian revolutionary party on the scale of the whole Arab region, and sharpen all its material and programmatic weapons in order to respond to the requirements of the new rising wave of the Arab revolution, a wave that will have a class basis. The revolutionary movement must respond to the vanguard that the Egyptian workers have established and are continuing to build, which we foresaw in our analysis in the document on the Arab revolution in spite of the pessimism of all superficial impressionism. This time the Palestinian workers will participate in an overall Arab revolution whose advance guard will be much stronger than it was after June 1967 when it was constituted by the Palestinians themselves because the movement of the Arab toiling masses was so weak. They will participate in a revolution whose driving wedge will be represented by the workers of Egypt, the main battalion of the Arab proletariat.

January, 1975

an appeal for solidarity

We are publishing below an appeal for international solidarity issued by a leader of the Malayan student movement who is living in hiding. The end of the year 1974 was marked by a hardening of the repression in both Malaya and Singapore. In fact, neither the Tun Abdul Razak regime in Malaya, with its democratic facade, nor the open police regime of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore could accept the junction that was beginning to occur between the student movement and the struggle of the workers in the countryside and the cities.

This was the process that had begun to unfold in these two states of Southeast Asia. The letter below explains the conditions under which this is occurring in Malaya. In Singapore the students mobilized in support of a workers struggle that erupted when the American Marine yacht-building company closed down. The new leadership of the student movement of the University of Singapore was hit by repression for setting up a "Center for Research on Reduction of Personnel" and for denouncing inflation, layoffs, and factory closings. The president of the student movement, Tan Wah Piow, was accused of engaging in subversive activities and was indicted along with

two workers involved in the struggle, Ng Wam Ling and Yap Kim Hong.

INPRECOR No. 9 (October 3, 1974) published an interview with a member of the Socialist Club, which leads the Student Union at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. This interview explained the importance of the new radical leaderships now emerging at the head of the student movement. Likewise, the concrete junction between student mobilizations and worker and peasant mobilizations that has occurred in past months is the prelude to a big new rise of class struggle on a regional scale. Hence the violence of the repression.

The Tun Abdul Razak and Lee Kuan Yew regimes are counting on the wall of silence they have erected around what is going on in Malaya and Singapore in order to continue their repressive policy with impunity. It is up to revolutionaries throughout the world to break that wall of silence.

IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF THE STUDENTS AND WORKERS IMPRISONED IN MALAYA AND SINGAPORE!

Dear Friends,

I am the President of the Students' Union of the University of Sains, Malaysia, and at present I am in hiding. I am writing this letter to you from my hide-out to seek your support to end the reign of terror launched by the Malaysian government against our students. More than 14 student leaders, two university professors, one university lecturer, and one youth leader have been detained under the obnoxious Internal Security Act which enables a minister to detain a citizen indefinitely without trial. This law is used

by the government to detain anyone who poses a real and immediate threat to the monopoly of power by a small group of rich people. Several hundred people are still under detention under this anti-democratic law, some of them for more than 10 years.

Under the current reign of terror many student leaders have now been forced to go into hiding to escape the government dragnet. Although we are in hiding, our struggle for justice and democracy and against exploitation, corruption, and abuse of power by the authorities continues with the same, if not increased,

intensity and dedication. In this letter, I shall attempt to describe briefly the events preceding the current reign of terror.

Malaysia is among the richest countries in Southeast Asia, with a per capita income of more than m\$1,200 annually (approximately US\$480). Yet many of our people are extremely poor. Even the government admits that 40 percent of our people live below the poverty line. This situation worsened with the recent drop in the price of rubber and the steep increase in the price of food. The incomes of many families in places like Baling, Selama, and Kulim fell sharply — below m\$25 per month per household. They could not afford rice and had to be content with eating tapioca. Some lived on tubers found in the jungle. Several children died as a result of eating wild poisonous tubers. According to the state assemblyman from Baling, when he visited the home of the family of one of the victims, he did not find a single grain of rice there.

The peasants from these districts appealed to the authorities — including the "people's" representatives — for help, but they received only empty promises. Therefore they decided to dramatize their plight by means of demonstrations to force the authorities to take some remedial measures. They marched by the thousands to the various district towns, some walking as far as 22 miles. They surrounded the district offices and demanded to speak to the chief minister of the state. In one place, they lowered the state flag and in its place raised a bunch of tapioca and the portrait of Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, together with a slogan. The slogan read "Razak, we do not want to eat tapioca." They demanded that the price of rubber be raised, the price of food lowered, and the allowances and salaries of ministers and "people's" representatives be cut. (There is a bill before parliament to increase the salaries and allowances of ministers and "people's" representatives by 50 percent.)

On December 2, 1974, students from all the universities and colleges staged peaceful mass demonstrations throughout the country in support of the just demands of the peasants. Some 10,000 students demonstrated in Kuala Lumpur, 2,000 in Penang, and 1,000 in Ipoh. The students did not carry any weapons, not even sticks. They did not cause any inconvenience to the public. In Kuala Lumpur the students wanted to hold a rally in the Sclangor Padang to explain to the public the plight of the poor people and their demands. Instead of commending the students for their selflessness and deep concern for the people, the government sent truckloads of riot police to disperse them. The police fired tear gas and beat the students. The students ran and took sanctuary in the National Mosque thinking that the police would not attack them there. Before entering the mosque, they

took off their shoes. The riot police came charging into the mosque with their filthy boots on. They beat up the students who in self-defense picked up whatever they could find in the mosque compound, including bricks, and fought back. The police also fired tear gas into the mosque. Using the mass media, including radio, television, and all the newspapers, the government is trying to misrepresent this incident to the public by accusing the students of desecrating the mosque. By this dirty trick, they hope to bring the public into confrontation with the students. We are hopeful and confident that the government's vile attempt to divide the people from the students will fail.

More than 1,200 students and members of the public have been charged in court in connection with these demonstrations. Not content with this repression, the government followed this up by arresting and detaining three university lecturers and one youth leader under the Internal Security Act. This wave of repression reached its climax in the early hours of the 8th and 9th of December 1974 when the military (euphemistically called the "Field Force") invaded the University of Malaya, the University of Kebangsaan, and the University of Sains Malaysia and occupied them. In gestapo-like fashion, they then made room to room searches and, using informers, they arrested some 14 student leaders and detained them under the Internal Security Act.

At present these universities are still being occupied by the military. The public is not allowed access to the university grounds. Students are searched by armed soldiers before entering the universities. The government has threatened to cancel the scholarships of all those students who took part in the demonstration. This will be a hard blow to the students, most of whom come from very poor peasant or working class families. The police harass the students if they distribute pamphlets or go to the villages to explain issues. Some student leaders even fear that the government may use thugs to beat them up. The government repression has not deterred the students from pursuing their struggle. Demonstrations are being held daily, and the students are going to the people to explain the real issues since the radio, television, and the newspapers have become the mouthpieces of the government for spreading lies and slanders against the students and sowing dissension in the ranks of the people.

As usual, the government has accused the "communists" (without identifying these "communists") of being responsible for the demonstrations. According to the prime minister, the communists instigated the students who, in turn, instigated the people in the villages. Anyone with some common sense will realize that Tun Razak is telling a blatant LIE. Many people walked more than 22 miles braving the rain

to demonstrate their plight. Will anyone walk this distance merely because of instigation by the communists or the students? Certainly, NO. Only the pangs of hunger and the cry of the babies for food can compel a person to walk this distance, and not instigation from the outside. Tun Razak knows this but he is blaming the communists in order to divert the attention of the people away from the real issues of hunger and poverty in the rural areas.

I expect further repression from the government in the near future. Those who are being detained under the Internal Security Act may be detained without any legal redress for many years. Only the support and agitation of our people and our friends overseas can bring pressure on the government to abandon its criminal acts. Therefore, on behalf of my fellow students and the poor people of Malaysia, I appeal to you to give your support to our struggle in the following ways:

1. Send letters and telegrams to Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak protesting against the government re-

pression, calling for unconditional release of all those detained or charged in court, and urging the government to meet the just demands of the peasants and students.

2. Organize demonstrations and protest meetings for the above-stated purposes.

3. Help to distribute and publicize this letter.

I firmly believe that the struggle of the common people for justice and democracy will finally triumph despite the power and might of the rulers.

Thank you.

Yours fraternally,
Selamat Ahmad Kamal, President, University Sains of Malaysia Students' Union, Batu Uban, Penang, Malaysia

P.S. Please send copies of letters or telegrams to the above address.

PERSONS DETAINED UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT

1. Dr. Syed Hussein Ali, Associate Professor, University of Malaya
2. Tunjku Shamshul Bahrain, Associate Professor, University of Malaya
3. Gurdial Singh Mijar, Lecturer, University of Malaya
4. Annuar Ibrahim, President, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
5. Mohd. Idris Jusi, President, National Union of Malaysian Students
6. Abdul Rahman Rukaini, President, University Kebangsaan Students' Union
7. Hassanuddin Yoop, Deputy President, University Kebangsaan Students' Union
8. Ahmad Shah Bin Mohd. Noor, Secretary-General, National Union of Islamic Students of Malaysia

9. Adi Kastria, Assistant Secretary-General, University of Malaya Students' Union
10. Basroh Hassan, Secretary-General, University Kebangsaan Students' Union
11. Mohamed Hussain, Secretary-General, MARA Institute of Technology Students' Union
12. Ibrahim Ale, President, MARA Institute of Technology Students' Union
13. Ishak Jaafar, Deputy President, MARA Institute of Technology Students' Union
14. Zainuddin Abdul Rashid, President, Kedah Students' Union, University of Malaya
15. Shukri Hj. Abdullah, President, Islamic Society, University Sains Malaysia
16. Hoo Kee Ping, President, Social Science Society, University Sains Malaysia
17. Lai Sung Kit, President, Chinese Language Society, University Sains Malaysia
18. Tooh Thien San, student leader

The preceding letter was sent to us by the Center for Information on Asian Political Prisoners, which was set up at the end of the Conference of Asian Youth held in Tokyo July 24-26, 1974. (See IN-PRECOR No.8, September 19, 1974.) The address of the center is:

Center for Information on Asian Political Prisoners
Suzuki Building, 3F-B, 5-3 Sarugaku-cho
1-chome,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101, Japan

TEN YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

by JOHN BLAIR

On October 24, 1974, the Republic of Zambia celebrated the tenth anniversary of its independence from British colonial rule. The occasion was utilized by the leadership of the only legal political party, the United National Independence party (UNIP), as a means of trying to raise the level of mass support for its policies and leadership. No expense was spared in the attempt to present the image of a rapidly developing economy that affords higher and higher living standards to the mass of its population. Above all, it was stressed, the state was a model of the formula of "one-party participatory democracy," giving a place in decision-making and the execution of policy to every individual. Acting as the guiding light of this spectacular development was President Kenneth Kaunda's unique philosophy of "Humanism." What is the reality behind this euphoric picture?

Propaganda myth and economic reality

It goes without saying that Kaunda's claim to have developed a state founded on a philosophy in advance of that conceived anywhere else in the world falls into the same category as all the other versions of "African socialism" which have been utilized over the past 15 years to mislead the masses into supporting political leaderships whose roots actually lie firmly implanted within international imperialism. From Senghor through Nkrumah, Mboya, Nyerere, and Kaunda we have seen the most multifarious flowering of ideology and sloganeering. The common feature of the whole phenomenon, however, has been a total failure to analyze African society in genuine class terms and to locate that society within a global analysis of imperialism. Thus its advocates can use the word socialism as long as they are never called upon to define it. They can continually rail against the machinations of imperialism while simultaneously accepting the domination of their economies by that very force.

Internally, they can preach socialism while promoting capitalism.

For instance, what could be more contradictory than Kaunda's statement at a recent meeting that "There is no room left in Zambia for capitalism. It must be fought and replaced with the national philosophy of humanism." Apart from the manifest absurdity of attempting to substitute a totally abstract philosophical theory for a very concrete economic system, such a statement sounds somewhat strange coming from a leadership which devotes its energies to promoting private enterprise in farming, marketing, and property. Indeed, spokesmen for the government have recently gone out of their way to praise examples of businessmen who have been successful, attributing their achievements, needless to say, to a proper application of "humanism"!

Fortunately, there are indications that Kaunda's verbal gyrations are beginning to be less and less convincing to wide sectors of the population. Most of the credit for this must go to the effects of the international crisis of the world imperialist economy. For a period Zambia's economy had been relatively immune to this crisis compared to that of much of the Third World. Fundamentally, the economy depends on the constantly volatile price of copper, the commodity which accounts for 98 percent of Zambia's exports by value. In April of 1974 the price of copper on the London Metal Exchange, which controls world prices, stood at 1400 Kwacha per ton (1 Kwacha equals approximately US\$1.50). As a result of the decline in demand due to the recession of the imperialist economies, copper now stands at only just over K900 per ton, and further falls are predicted. In an attempt to rectify this position by creating a world scarcity of copper, CIPEC, the international consortium of the world's four largest producers outside the United States and the Soviet Union — Zaire, Zambia, Chile, and Peru — has agreed on a reduction of 70,000 tons each in the amount to be ex-

ported in 1975. But even this measure is unlikely to arrest the downward price spiral, particularly since Japan has recently been unloading large quantities onto the market.

The heavy reliance of Zambia's economy on the world price of copper is constantly exacerbated by its own increasing dependence on food imports. Imports of food stood at K14 million annually at the time of independence and now stand at K37 annually. The root cause of this problem is the total failure in the past ten years to promote efficient agricultural development in the rural areas, where 70 percent of the population lives. Any solution is currently being rendered even more difficult by the spectacular escalation of fertilizer prices which have quadrupled in the past few years. This is a chronic problem for an area whose relatively poor soil over most of the country demands massive chemical inputs in order to produce reasonable surpluses. But in a country where, at the time of independence, half of the marketed produce was grown by 1,000 European farmers along the "line-of-rail" between Livingstone and the Copperbelt, the fundamental failure has been the failure to diversify and develop the economy of the rural areas through massive injections of capital and the mobilization of the peasant producers into cooperative production.

Rural development has been a constant slogan for the UNIP for the last ten years. But in practice the priorities of the government have constantly negated it. Thus while average urban incomes went from K250 in 1964 to K600 in 1970, those in the rural areas, according to official figures, increased only from K25-40 to K30-50. It is this failure in the agricultural sector combined with the inflation of the world economy which is leading Kaunda's government into its most serious crisis to date. Startling confirmation of the problem came on November 19, 1974, with the announcement by the government of the withdrawal of an annual subsidy of K30 million on flour, soaps, stock feeds, fats, and detergents. The result was an increase in the price of a loaf of bread from 13 to 27 Ngwee (100 Ngwee=1 Kwacha). The price of a giant package of detergent rose from 89n to K1.73, while cooking oil has gone up by 60 percent. For the average urban family the increase in the price of bread alone will mean finding another 7 or 8 Kwacha each month to keep up with present levels of consumption. To understand properly the problems involved it is only necessary to know that wages for the lowest-paid grade of workers in the local authority — who comprise nearly 10 percent of the working population — have recently been increased by 10 percent to K31.35 per month.

The imposition of these penal price increases led to spontaneous displays of anger of a sort unprece-



KAUNDA.

ented in Zambia since independence. In Kitwe, the industrial center of the Copperbelt, a mob of housewives attacked bakery salesmen in Chamboli mine township. They were forced to return to their depot without unloading their supplies. In Mindolo township a salesman escaped unhurt when angry women surrounded his truck and threw stones. In Kwacha township another salesman was ordered not to unload bread as angry women advanced threatening to beat him up. In both Kitwe and Ndola organized groups of youth have been circulating urging people to refuse to buy bread. On Friday, November 22, the local political secretary, John Simbotwe, was greeted with chants of "Bread, bread" when he stood up to speak at a reception in Ndola to celebrate the anniversary of Mobutu's seizure of power in Zaïre.

In a political situation as retarded as that in Zambia such actions are unlikely to be sustained and undoubtedly do not represent anything but a brief and spontaneous eruption of protest. Nonetheless, they are a sign of the weakness of the UNIP leadership faced with this grave economic crisis.

More articulated opposition to the price increases came from the University of Zambia Students' Union in Lusaka. Secretary General James Mupeta declared that the reasons given for the increases were "absurd, dubious, and full of ambiguities." He suggested that "all progressive members of Parliament should fight and defeat the price increase move in order to save the poor people from starvation." Clearly the students represent one section of the population capable of developing opposition. Already the previous week four students, members of the editorial board of a campus newsletter "Trunza," had been arrested on charges of publishing seditious

material and managing an unregistered publication. Their main offense appears to have been their criticism of "excessive" government expenditure on the independence celebrations and their consistent campaign against the importation of 50 to 70 Mercedes Benzes every year for the use of the officials.

Not mentioned by the students but very relevant as support for their case were the agreements recently reached by the government with the international mining corporations who still maintain a 49 percent holding in Zambia's mines. These give concrete evidence — if any is needed — of the government's determination not to offend imperialist interests. Compensation has been paid of K33 million to Oppenheimer's Anglo-American Corporation and K22 million to the American Metal Climax Company to recompense them for termination of their contracts to provide management consultant and sales services after the takeover of these functions by the majority shareholders (the Zambian government). These agreements were in any case due to expire in 1979. Thus these two companies have made a cool K55 million while being relieved of any expense from now on.

Unfortunately, the government appears relatively successful in its attempts to isolate the students. Defending the use of UNIP spies on the campus of UNZA, Home Affairs Minister Aaron Milner said: "If there are such students at the university (informers), they should be commended for the job they are doing for the country. . . . We must all together fight all those individuals who are engaged in acts of espionage, subversion, and sabotage." Undoubtedly, one of the things which has rankled the government most has been the refusal of the students at UNZA to allow a UNIP branch to be formed on the campus. It will also certainly be disturbing to the government that one of the arrested students has just been elected unopposed as chairman of the Zambia National Union of Students. But the students remain weak primarily because of the abysmally low level of political ideas in Zambia which has so far meant that no Marxist tendency of any kind has emerged to give leadership and a structured ideology to the movement.

While the student field undoubtedly offers hopeful prospects for oppositional developments, the same cannot be said at this moment for the key sector of the trade unions. Undoubtedly the UNIP leadership's strategy of integrating the trade union movement into the state apparatus has proceeded very successfully. This was evident at the quadrennial conference of the ZCTU (Zambia Congress of Trade Unions) held at Livingstone immediately after the announcement of the price increases. The conference never began to tackle the question of how to fight their effects on the living standard of the working class.

Instead, they passed a resolution which merely urged the government "to consider the hardships caused by unsystematic measures aimed at countering inflation" and asking that there be "consultations" with the ZCTU before any future price increases.

The extent to which the government controls the trade unions was demonstrated by the way in which it was blandly announced that Labour and Social Services Minister Dingiswayo Banda would be present throughout the conference to ensure "fair play." Indeed, he gave the keynote speech, which consisted mainly of threats that if the unions were not better organized the government would withdraw their legal status. More direct interference in the trade unions is commonplace. In July, for instance, twelve candidates in the branch leadership elections for the Mufulira section of MUZ (Mineworkers Union of Zambia) were arrested and detained seven days before the election took place. Three days after they had all been defeated, they were released. Absolutely no public explanation was ever made for their arbitrary detention.

But if the trade unions are clearly at this moment well under government control, this is a situation which cannot last indefinitely without posing intolerable strains. It was important that in his address to the ZCTU conference Banda stressed the failure of certain unions to maintain contact between the leadership and the rank-and-file members. Obviously, the government fears the consequences of allowing such divisions to develop as they threaten independent action by the working class.

Weakening of the UNIP

Without doubt the new price increases enhance the possibilities for action on the part of the working class. For most of the post-independence period the government has been able to maintain regular wage increases for substantial sections of the population. This was made possible by rapid "Zambianization" of posts previously held by Europeans, especially those in government administration, combined with the expansion of industrial and commercial sectors made possible basically by relatively high copper prices. This means that expectations in the key sections of the working population — in mining, manufacturing, and government — have been raised to levels which cannot possibly be fulfilled in the coming period.

The urban population is also deeply conscious of the disparity between their own wages and those of high administrative and government officials,

whose annual earnings often top K10,000 to K12,000. Nor has their cynicism been dispelled by Kaunda's "Leadership Code." This is a weak imitation of Nyerere's attempts to curb the tendency for self-enrichment by top officials who utilize their control of the state machinery to acquire businesses, property, etc. The fact that implementation of the code has been postponed twice to enable "leaders" to make proper returns has hardly convinced the masses of its eventual efficacy.

The immediate likelihood is for increased expressions of discontent among the working class taking forms which are currently quite unpredictable but which will be a reflection of disillusionment with the UNIP regime. Despite the one-party state and its almost total monopoly on the media, this will be made easier by the fact that the party itself as a mass organization is now a pale shadow of what it was ten years ago. In the period prior to independence the party won the support of broad masses of the urban and rural population for its uncompromising stand against the racist Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and for its position in favor of self-rule. At that stage it could accurately be described as a grouping with a firm mass base. Now, however, there are nothing but complaints from the leadership about the need for more intensified membership drives and other devices to revive its sagging fortunes. It is well known that in many rural areas the UNIP consists only of officials. Hence the plans which have been suggested for making all branch and constituency chairmen full-time. Hence also the need which is increasingly felt to make attacks on ex-members of the UPP (United Progressive party) who are alleged to be making attempts to sow dissension and troubles within the UNIP. This grouping, led by former vice-president Simon Kapwepwe, was abolished in

1972 with the proclamation of the one-party state. It stemmed essentially from intra-bureaucratic wranglings, but for a period had acted as a rallying point for discontent with UNIP rule. In 1972 the detention of its leadership undoubtedly destroyed any base that the party had and the continuation and even increase of attacks on its ghost are merely symptoms of the desperate need of the UNIP leadership to find some rallying point around which they can try to re-create some mass support for their party.

The overall perspective for Zambia, then, is a period during which the standard of living of the working class will be under increasing attack. This will lead to a further weakening of the UNIP leadership's position. But the question of a genuine alternative will be rendered more difficult by the total absence of any Marxist tradition within the working class movement. Also, there can be no doubt that the continued existence of the white racist regimes to the south actually provides the Kaunda government with a valuable tool to use against any oppositional elements. One of the cruder government spokesmen has in fact already accused the students of being tools of the South Africans. Of course, such an accusation is rendered even more absurd by the fact that Kaunda himself has recently implied that the sole remaining obstacles to a détente with the racist Pretoria regime are Rhodesia and Namibia (see his speech of October 26 terming Vorster's latest pronouncements on southern Africa "the voice of reason"). Nonetheless, the highly charged atmosphere created by the continued existence of the white racist regimes makes such charges a powerful weapon against any potential opposition.

November 24, 1974

sri lanka: ruling coalition shaken

Once again Sri Lanka is being shaken by a most serious social, political, and economic crisis. The evolution of world market prices has hit the economy of Sri Lanka especially severely. The cost of imports is rising ceaselessly, while the prices for the country's main export products are continuing to decline markedly. Unemployment is rising constantly in the cities and the countryside and is accompanied by galloping inflation. The standard of living, which tens years ago far exceeded that of the Indian subcontinent, has fallen to the level of India's or even lower. Entire families of plantation workers are on the point of starving to death.

Under these conditions the popularity of the coalition government, which includes the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP, the "liberal" bourgeois party of Bandaranaike), the social-democratic Lanka Sama Samaja party (LSSP, which broke with Trotskyism to join a government of coalition with the bourgeoisie), and the pro-Moscow CP, is steadily diminishing. The popular base of this government has already been shaken severely by the bloody repression it unleashed against the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP — People's Liberation Front), the mass revolutionary youth organization on the island. (See IN-PRECOR No. 18, January 31.) That popular base is

now being further undermined by the growing misery to which the masses are being subjected.

The first group to attempt to profit from the unpopularity of the ruling coalition has been the United National party (UNP), the conservative bourgeois party. The UNP has been able to take the offensive because the workers movement, with the exception of the Ceylon Mercantile Union and some far-left groups that represent only a small minority of the working class, has been paralyzed by the association of the leaders of the mass organizations with the government.

The UNP is demanding parliamentary elections in 1975. It is winning votes and seats in every by-election and feels prepared to return to power. But at the time of the promulgation of the new republican constitution the coalition government postponed legislative elections to 1977 and affirmed that it wanted to continue to hold power until that time, in spite of its repeated failures in the by-elections.

When the UNP unleashed a campaign of street agitation against this decision, the coalition accused it of being fascist. But the combination of antifascist agitation and the deteriorating economic and social situation has provoked tension within the government. Fearing a political regroupment of the main bourgeois forces (the SLFP and the UNP), and fearing a general offensive against the workers movement — even its reformist components — the leaders of the LSSP began to mobilize their youth organization. They asserted that they wanted to avoid a "second Chile" in Sri Lanka. It could be thought that this policy remains simply a means of putting pressure on the bourgeois coalition partner, and does not herald a break from the coalition with the bourgeoisie. Even so, Bandaranaike reacted with a good deal of bad humor.

In December 1974, during the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of its founding, the LSSP wanted to organize a big street demonstration in Colombo. Bandaranaike banned the demonstration. But the trade-union leaders of the LSSP decided to violate the ban. The government then decreed a daytime curfew. The LSSP leaders retreated.

Nevertheless, things have heated up since then. The government has banned training and parading by the LSSP youth. Anura Bandaranaike, the prime minister's son, has accused the LSSP of wanting to organize an "armed insurrection" of the type the government accused the JVP of planning as pretext for unleashing the repression in 1971. The coalition seems on the point of breaking down. But the LSSP leaders are continuing to demand only the "closest consultations among the government partners."

The stakes are being raised by the entry of the working class onto the scene. The trade-union leaders indentured to the government coalition have each time diverted discontent among the workers toward purely platonic protests. Since 1973 the trade unions led by the LSSP and the CP have been advancing a twenty-eight-point program demanding an immediate wage increase of 75 rupees a month for all workers, a sliding scale of wages, and nationalization of the banks, the textile industry, and the tea and rubber plantations. But up to now they have refused to wage a real fight for this program.

Under the pressure of the growing poverty and increasingly explosive discontent of the masses, however, they have been compelled to announce a twenty-four-hour general strike for January 31, 1975. This announcement has served as a focal point for the whole workers movement on the island. The two unions of plantation workers have decided to participate in the strike by raising their own demands, particularly an immediate solution for the serious problems of famine now racking the plantations. The CMU also decided to participate in the strike, as did all the teachers unions. Nearly two million workers have asserted their determination to stop work on January 31.

The general strike thus threatens to be more than a simple warning gesture aimed at putting pressure on Bandaranaike, which is what the reformist leaders intended. It remains to be seen whether the SLFP and the whole bourgeoisie will be prepared on this occasion to engage in a test of strength with the entire workers movement. That could radically change the situation on the island.

January 28, 1975