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## the civil war in Lebanon

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# Angola: INDEPENDENCE

by C. GABRIEL

A few days before independence, November 11, the military situation suddenly deteriorated for the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola — Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). On the northern front the forces of the FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola — National Front for the Liberation of Angola) have stepped up their pressure on Luanda, although they have not reached the area around Quifangondo, where the water-treatment plant for the capital is located. For several weeks the FNLA has been intent on taking this village in order to break the resistance of the population. The major weapon being used in these encirclement operations is the Panhard tank equipped with 60 mm mortar and 75 mm recoilless cannon mounted on jeeps. The defense by the FAPLA (the armed forces of the MPLA) is being waged through two main tactics: bombardments with Soviet 122 mm missiles and counterattacks by light units equipped with grenade launchers and AK-47 rifles. The stagnation of the Luanda front is bad for the MPLA. It restricts an important part of MPLA forces to a very small part of the territory, tires and discourages the population of the city, and, finally, permits the FNLA to advance toward Malange and solidify its apparatus in the northern part of the country.

At the same time, the military situation in the South has changed qualitatively. Several weeks ago, the MPLA controlled the entire coast and part of the province of Huila. UNITA (União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola — National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), barred from Nova Lisboa and Siloa Porto, hardly extended beyond the provinces of Huambo and Bié. In the past several days, however, the relationship of forces has been turned around. Sa da Bandeira fell, then Mossâmedes, and finally Benguela and Lobito. For the first time since July, UNITA and FNLA reinforcements in the center and south command a broad opening to the sea, which allows them to bring in supplies and use a pincer strategy against Luanda.

Apart from these military aspects of the situation, it must be noted that Lobito is the country's second major port after Luanda and that Benguela is the terminal of the famous railroad line that carries copper from Zaire and Zambia. Thus reorganized in the South, the forces of UNITA and the FNLA will be able to attack South Cuanzo province and try to take Malange from the south.

What has happened to make such a turnabout of the situation possible? The first cause, and this is undoubt-

edly the major factor, is the massive military support imperialism has given the reactionary forces during the past period. Sa da Bandeira was retaken with the aid of South African troops and Portuguese mercenaries supplied by the ELP (Portuguese Liberation Army, a far-right paramilitary group). Several weeks earlier, UNITA president Jonas Savimbi had revealed that his organization would soon acquire exceptional heavy weaponry. And that happened.

In the North, the training of FNLA forces by troops from Zaire has not diminished, and Zaire itself has received increased military assistance from the United States and France. As a sort of warning, France has just delivered the first Mirage jet fighters to the Zairois air force.

While South Africa is taking an increasingly decisive part in the conflict, and while Zaire is massively supporting the FNLA and Zambia is doing the same for UNITA, the military aid to the MPLA from the so-called progressive African countries is a bluff. Granted, the People's Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) is aiding the MPLA in the transfer of matériel, and Guinea, Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique are giving diplomatic support to the Neto leadership of the MPLA. But when Congolese President N'gouabi threatens an intervention by his army, one can only smile, given the instability of this regime and the disciplinary internal function of this army. Once again, the Organization of African Unity is demonstrating its counterrevolutionary function. Once again, the grotesque illusion of a "progressive Africa" is crumbling. Against the nationalist rhetoric of "progressive Africa," a very real world is organizing, a world composed of the strong links in the imperialist chain in the region: the South African and Zairois armies.

Nevertheless, the reverses of the MPLA cannot be accounted for solely by the intrinsic military power of its enemies. Other factors come into play. The immensity of the country makes it impossible for a small politico-military apparatus emerging from a rural guerrilla war to control the country militarily and administratively. The distances involved, combined with transport difficulties, have made the logistical factor decisive, and the FAPLA has no air force. It is certainly on this level that the Soviet aid to the MPLA has been especially inadequate; massive supplies of helicopters are needed.

Moreover, the duration of the battles and their civil-war character have accelerated the decomposition of Angolan society, particularly in the cities. Centrifugal ethnic forces have massively reappeared and a section

of the population has preferred to return to its region of origin, thus increasing social disorganization and aiding the control of the population by tribal notables cultivated by the FNLA and UNITA.

The industrial investments of the past several years had permitted the development of a proletariat that was young and concentrated, although little skilled and lacking in traditions of struggle. In 1973 about 130,000 wage earners were employed in manufacturing production, mainly in the industrial zones of Luanda and Lobito. But because of its youth this proletariat could not avoid the traditional pressures of its rural origins. The MPLA itself was not shielded from this weakness of the "universal point of view" conferred by the urban milieu on the proletariat cut off from its peasant origins. The reduction of the MPLA's antitribalism to ideological slogans did not help to raise the consciousness of the most backward sectors. UNITA's control of the most important agricultural region is causing a food shortage that is giving an impetus to the exodus of the population. In Luanda, lines form in front of the stores early in the morning. The food departments are almost empty; oil, salt, sugar, and meat have become scarce. A kilogram (2.2 pounds) of rice now costs 20 or 25 escudos; the previous price was 9 escudos a kilo. The price of salt has risen from 1 to 3 escudos. Manioc, which is the basic foodstuff for the African populations, has risen in price threefold, and the MPLA is trying to reduce this inflation by organizing distribution by "neighborhood commissions." Finally, the departure of the Portuguese is intensifying the disorganization of the trade networks.

Such a situation generates apathy among the masses and is now affecting the structures of "popular power," provoking a decline in dynamism and increasing tailendism of the MPLA leadership on the part of these structures.

## Internationalization

The South African intervention has now become official. The Americans are no longer hiding the aid the CIA has given the FNLA and UNITA. An article by Leslie Gelb in the September 25 New York Times asserted that reliable sources in the CIA considered Holden's FNLA a possible alternative to Portuguese colonialism as long ago as 1962. Nevertheless, the imperialist commitment in Angola was not deliberately set on provoking civil war. After April 25, 1974, when the Salazarist regime was overthrown, the divisions of the MPLA and the weakening of the organization rendered quite credible the Spinoist operation based around the FNLA and the organizations of the Portuguese colons. What imperialism totally underestimated was the urban mass movement and its immediate adherence to the MPLA, which, despite its weakened condition, conserved great prestige.

It was too late to take advantage of the political weakness of the MPLA. It was too late to integrate the leadership or a faction of the leadership into the neocolonialist project. The Alvor accords and the coalition

government came too late.\* The mass movement was placing its trust in the MPLA. The right was no longer able to counterpose itself to the MPLA. Lucio Lara of the MPLA declared, "Part of the population has been armed, but that was done in July 1974 to resist aggression from reactionary whites. These self-defense units have since placed themselves under the MPLA banner, but we do not control them."

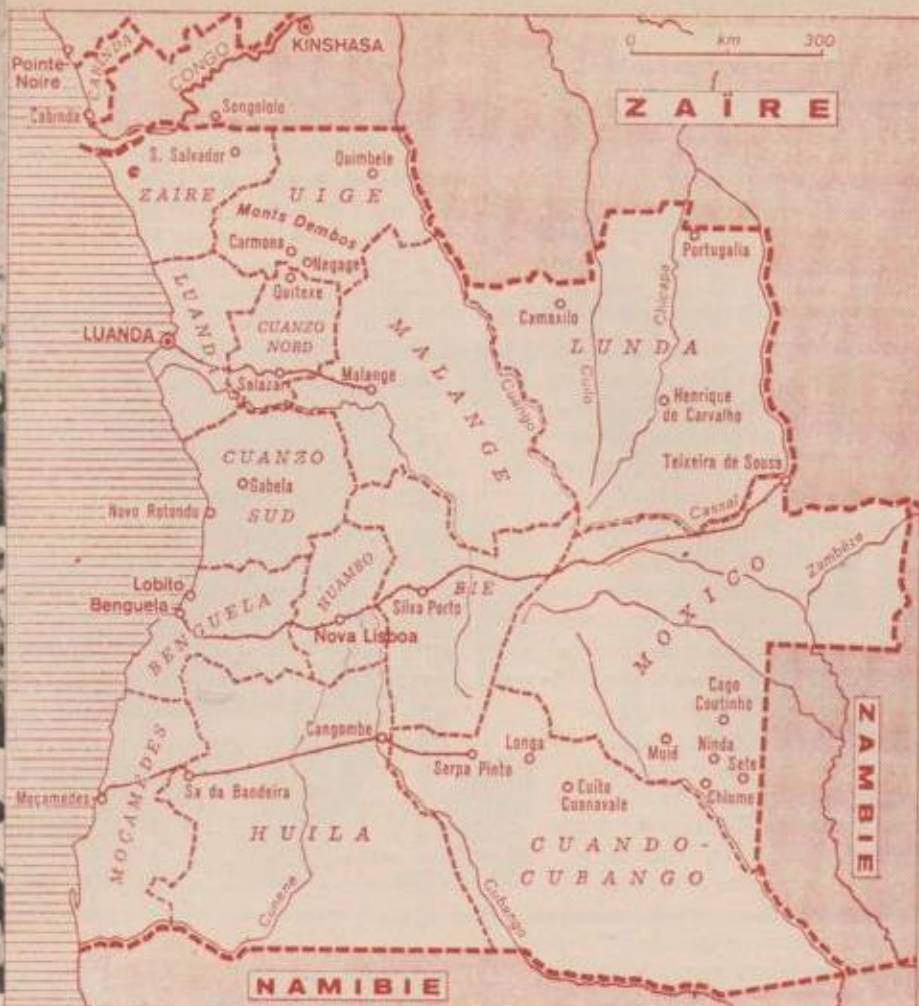
The MPLA leadership, which in spite of its divisions is on the whole a petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership, then had no choice but to rely on the mass movement for "self-defense" against the FNLA; the MPLA leadership thus decided to develop this movement while maintaining control over it. No imperialist group placed any trust in the MPLA, because of the mass movement that remained attached to it. The provocations of the FNLA in Luanda and its physical attacks in the muceques (the urban slums) turned out to be insufficient to break down the activity of the masses. It thus became necessary to opt for civil war; otherwise there was a risk of losing the last trump cards for negotiations with the Neto leadership of the MPLA.

But the internationalization of the conflict meant not only the reaction of imperialism against the movement of the Angolan masses. It also meant interimperialist conflicts exacerbated by the eclectic links maintained by the FNLA and UNITA throughout the world. Thus, the intervention of South Africa is also an intervention aimed at strengthening UNITA; the aim is to stabilize a zone in direct contact with Namibia, mainly the Ovambo region and the Caprivi strip, which constitute the key regions in Pretoria's strategy.\*\* Zambia, which is now on a honeymoon with the South African regime based on the mutual desire to preserve stability in southern Africa, is involved in this because UNITA can assure Zambia that the Benguela railroad will continue to function and thus to carry Zambian copper to the sea.

Thus, the southern counteroffensive also represents a political conflict with the FNLA aimed at guaranteeing a fair regional balance for the future neocolonial Angola so as to preserve the markets for the development of the Cunene valley. The Cassinga mines, which are owned by Krupp, and the European and South African investments increase the interest of the Common Market in aiding Savimbi's UNITA.

\*The "Alvor accords" were signed in Alvor, Portugal, on January 15, 1975. They set up a coalition government composed of representatives of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, with a representative of the Portuguese government acting as "arbitor."

\*\*Namibia, just south of Angola, is occupied by South Africa in defiance of United Nations resolutions and the will of the country's inhabitants. Ovamboland, the territory of the Ovambo tribe, is in the northern region of Namibia and is used by the South African regime as a source of forced labor for mines in Namibia. The Caprivi Strip, a 300-mile-long, 40-mile wide band, is an extension of northeast Namibia separating Angola and Zambia on the north from Botswana on the south.



Savimbi has implicitly recognized that without this "mandate" he would be unable to play such a political role. On October 19 he stated (in the Cameroons): "Neto will not be able to create an African Cuba as he announced, because Angola, regardless of the sentiments of the population, is located in a zone that is too sensitive politically and strategically." In other words, what the Angolan people have to understand is that the lusts of imperialism will be stronger than their own mobilizations!

The same Savimbi, in Paris once again, told Agence France-Press on October 27 that "if Africa can do nothing, no one will be able to prevent the United Nations from sending in troops." And he recognized, without protest, that South Africa was effectively occupying the province of Huila in the South.

### The final battle?

The FNLA and UNITA, armed wings of imperialism, prepared for November 11 as one prepares for a stage in a struggle; but they did not consider this to be the final battle. The battle will continue, regardless of what form it takes.

The MPLA has decided on a "general mobilization" to repel the invaders. Such an initiative could give new strength to the mass movement, provided it is accompanied by a clear political definition of the stakes involved. But the leadership has now announced that it will establish a "government of national union" including "independent patriotic personalities." It is not very precise, but it maintains the "nationalist" and frontist formulations of the MPLA.

In a recent issue of the MPLA's newspaper, *Vitoria é Certa*, the leadership explained how it sees the situation:

"Our movement has raised the slogan 'Let us construct a broad anti-imperialist front, let us defeat the lackies of imperialism and create a democracy of a new type!' . . . In that sense, this is a just struggle that will contribute to strengthening the camp of the progressive forces on a world scale, the camp of the exploited in struggle against the exploiters. It will aid in the inevitable fall of imperialism. . . . Now, this struggle against imperialism can be victorious if it draws together all the anti-imperialist forces of our fatherland. Among these forces will be the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, and the anti-imperialist layers of the Angolan bourgeoisie. . . . Nevertheless, our revolu-

tionary vanguard must be prepared to create a government of a democracy of a new type in our country. This government represents an alliance of all the anti-imperialist classes, which must be led by the most consistently revolutionary class. . . . Democratic centralism and discussion will occur among the organized popular masses on all the national problems and on the application in practice of the conclusions reached by the government. . . . To achieve its aims, this government will have to struggle for the nationalization of the big industrial, commercial, and banking enterprises. But since this government represents an alliance of various classes, it will not eliminate the existence of private property, nor will it prohibit the development of capitalist production. In relation to the Angolan peasants, this government will have to define a consistent agrarian reform in its program. Land abandoned by the colons will remain the property of those who till it."

Obviously, such rhetoric is used in order to satisfy everybody within the MPLA. It is symbolized by Agostinho Neto, who is a sort of Bonaparte standing above tendencies. "Democracy of a new type" is nothing but the concept of the party-state formulated in a situation characterized by pressure from the mass movement. Let this movement retreat, and the concept will become reality, as was the case in Guinea under Sekou Touré and as is now happening in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The leadership team, drawing its legitimacy from the nationalist struggle, bases itself on holding the masses strictly in check through powerless committees in which bureaucratism and careerism are cultivated, committees that supposedly represent "mass control over the party."

In such a political context, revolutionary Marxists support the MPLA against imperialist reaction, against the FNLA and UNITA, and against the Zairois and South African allies of these organizations, but they also address themselves to the mass movement so that the "organs of popular power" may become real instruments of the power of the masses. They work for real independence of the mass organizations and committees from the MPLA. They work for the future state to guarantee democratic rights, the right of political organization for all anti-imperialists, for the right to publish literature, hold meetings, and so on. They work not for an MPLA government with people like Lucio Lara under the cover formula "democracy of a new type" (with the class content ignored), but instead for a government of a new type, a workers and peasants government responsible to assemblies of delegates. To do this, there cannot be a "new course" on paper aimed at winning over the leadership of the movement. The vanguard must be regrouped and the construction of the revolutionary party must be prepared. In the political resolution of the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International (February 1974) it was pointed out that "in the context of the readjustment of imperialist strategy in southern Africa, the development of the process of permanent revolution on the basis of the internationalization of the conflict throughout this region (southern Africa — INPRECOR) will be able to be achieved mainly through a clarification within the MPLA and

FRELIMO, revolutionary nationalist movements with multiclassist conceptions." The "mainly" meant that a section of the urban movement, in which the MPLA was not at all implanted at that time, would also make an important contribution to the political recomposition. Now, after April 25, the totality of the radical urban elements have joined the MPLA, particularly through the organs of "popular power." That is why it is more correct today to consider that the political recomposition will take place through a clarification within the MPLA toward the regroupment of an anticapitalist tendency, for the construction of a revolutionary party.

## International support

It is this point that is forgotten by those who believe that for revolutionary Marxists to support the MPLA is heresy. We must not support any particular group, we are told, because all three adversaries are nationalists with very similar programs and there is, after all, no revolutionary party. Thus, the Fourth International should pose the question of the roads that lead to the building of such a party. What would Angolan political life be like if Holden's kind of order reigns in Luanda? What would become of the hundreds of militants working in the muceques and in the university around anti-capitalist slogans? They would be the first victims, as is attested to by the attitude of the FNLA before July 10.

In several communiqués the FNLA declared that "the people themselves have objectively delegated popular power to the liberation movements" and that it is because of "the infiltration of certain bodies (among them the neighborhood committees) by anarchist elements and agitators . . . that the FNLA has always opposed any form of Angolan organization outside the liberation movements."

That is what is involved in supporting the MPLA. On the eve of November 11 it is regrettable to observe that international support is scarcely any greater than it was during the fourteen years of the armed struggle. The committees in Europe slowed down their activity after April 25 because these committees, most often controlled by reformists, had illusions in the anti-neocolonial character of the new Portuguese regime. Today this past weighs heavily against relaunching international solidarity. The lack of massive and permanent support to the MPLA and to the Angolan people will in turn weigh heavily on the relationship of forces with the counterrevolution and on the prospect of a social transformation of the struggle, which is still possible.

It will not be possible for anyone to demonstrate that support to the Angolan socialist revolution could avoid the necessity of supporting the MPLA when the whole of the anti-imperialist youth are assembled around the MPLA and the counterrevolution is embodied in the FNLA and UNITA.

November 9, 1975

The truce at the beginning of November that put an end to the fighting in Beirut and the rest of Lebanon in no sense represents a return to social peace or the reestablishment of the situation prevailing before the outbreak of the civil war. At bottom, nothing is settled; the conditions that led to the outbreak of the civil war persist, and a new resort to arms could occur at any moment.

The factors that led to the present clashes have accumulated at growing speed throughout the history of Lebanon since the country was created on a confessional basis in 1943, when it was formed as an independent state. The development of the international situation in the Arab East, combined with the internal contradictions of Lebanon itself, led the country to internal warfare.



# civil war in Lebanon

by G. VERGEAT

## What is Lebanon?

Ever since its formation, Lebanon has increasingly become the almost exclusive private property of the Maronite Christian comprador bourgeoisie. Little interested in the development of this economically backward country, this bourgeoisie draws its commercial and financial strength from the position it occupies at the crossroads of economic operations between the Arab East and the imperialist West. Its unique function as banker and transit organizer for funds in the region has allowed this bourgeoisie to amass immense fortunes. The lack of any juridical controls over international exchange, a result of the lack of a state capable of imposing its law in the realm of trafficking, has little by little undermined the structure of this state, capitalist anarchy and the frantic race for profits eventually working against the general interest of the bourgeoisie.

A precise idea of the reality of this financial paradise was provided by the recent publication of a notice to foreign banks from the Banking Association of Lebanon stating that "since the beginning of the present events, the exchange market has remained relatively balanced without the Bank of Lebanon being able to intervene at any time. Consequently, Lebanese monetary reserves in gold and currency have remained unchanged, at their relatively high level. These reserves exceed three times the amount of Lebanese pounds in circulation (if gold is evaluated at market prices)." During these years of the assertion of the commercial and financial role of the Maronite bourgeoisie of this state, a sizeable per-

sonnel cut off from all these international economic operations has been created, representing a technical capital needed for the development of the Arab economies based on oil as well as for the penetration of the investment of imperialist capital in the Arab East.

Totally concentrated around Beirut, this activity, oriented toward outside the country, has drawn more than half the population of the country into the capital city through the jobs that have been created and through the financial by-products it generates. A small and medium-sized trading sector has developed in Beirut linked to the enormous growth in services in all branches. Under the domination of the Maronite Christian bourgeoisie, this activity has reflected itself within the framework of institutional confessionalism in a policy of religious discrimination in the private and public schools, in the state administration, and on the job market, a discrimination that tends to penalize the Muslim population. Secondary and university education in French and English by institutions owned by French and American religious or secular organizations reflects the total integration, both economic and cultural, of the Maronite bourgeoisie into imperialism.

## Development of the present situation

The most cherished desire of this ruling class was to maintain this state of affairs as long as possible. The Muslim wing of the Lebanese bourgeoisie shares this

desire with its Maronite colleagues. This attitude implies keeping Lebanon out of the social and political convulsions of the Arab East, out of the wars of aggression waged by Israel against the Arab states. This meant preventing the Arabization of Lebanon and maintaining an underhanded policy of de facto recognition of the Zionist state. Above all, Arab nationalism in reaction to Zionist aggression could not be allowed to gain a foothold in Lebanon.

But that is just what happened. The consequences of the Zionist enterprise in the Arab East have been manifested in the country in several ways. The settlement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees after 1948 in camps around the suburbs of Beirut, Tripoli, and Saida, people with no jobs or hopes of finding jobs in such an underdeveloped country, created the conditions that led to the crisis now ravaging the country. Little by little, this explosive historical factor came forward as such with the rising mobilization of the Palestinian masses against Zionism throughout the Arab East. With the organization and arming of the Palestinians outside any real control by the Arab regimes, an independent political and social force emerged in Lebanon, the functioning of which meant that sooner or later there would be a confrontation with the Maronite bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie, paralyzed by galloping laxity and total corruption, with its structures undermined by clique struggles for power, was incapable of reacting on the level of a central Lebanese state. It was difficult if not impossible for the Muslim wing of the confessional system, both the bourgeoisie and the masses, to rest passively in the event of a real attack against the Palestinians: The Lebanese and Palestinian masses are united by the same Arab nationality, and sensitivity to the question of Zionism runs deep among the Lebanese masses.

Since 1969 there had been intermittent local armed conflicts when the Maronite bourgeois militias attacked Palestinians, clashes that exactly prefigured the current internal developments. These repeated clashes moved the country further and further toward the limits of generalized civil war. Who had an interest in this war to liquidate the Palestinian resistance? The same forces that were threatened by the spread of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into Lebanese territory, which inevitably led to a linkup between the Lebanese and Palestinian masses. The Muslim bourgeoisie of Lebanon, like its Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian counterparts, wants peace with Israel but has no means with which to force the Palestinians to submit. Hence it is stuck with the confessional system and solidarizes with the Maronite bourgeoisie out of necessity.

For its part, the Maronite bourgeoisie has been divided into diverse political currents because of the civil war. The militarily dominant current, the Phalangists (Kataeb in Arabic) of Pierre Gemayel, represent a genuine private army armed hand and foot by American imperialism. The strengthening of the Phalangists represented the initial response of the Maronite bourgeoisie outside the structures of the Lebanese state to the threat it perceived

to its socioeconomic order. Driving lance of anti-Palestinian, proimperialist, and pro-Zionist reaction, trained by white mercenaries with combat experience in Africa, the Phalangists recruit mainly among the lower layers of the Maronite bourgeoisie. These layers, whose possessions are directly vulnerable to the exploited and disinherited Arab masses, whether Palestinian or Lebanese, carry on economic activity that is directly oriented toward the internal market and has been affected by the increasing precariousness of the situation during the past several years. The upper financial bourgeoisie involved mainly in international transactions is not as directly affected by the internal conditions in Lebanon.

## Outbreak of the conflict

For the internal conflict to escalate into a process of civil war, however, more was necessary than the permanent conditions of contradiction. The choice of the moment and the pretext had to serve the common interests of imperialism and its allies both in the region in general and in Lebanon in particular. It was the Sinai disengagement accord worked out by Kissinger that gave the signal for the outbreak of hostilities. A Phalangist ambush of a bus carrying Palestinian fighters of the Rejection Front furnished the immediate cause for the explosion. The Phalangists took the initiative, placing the entire Maronite and Muslim bourgeoisie before a fait accompli. The bourgeoisie had no consistent plan





for holding back the Palestinians and muzzling the increasingly combative Lebanese masses.

Behind these clashes, the internationalization of the conflict was quite obvious. Through the medium of the Lebanese, this conflict opposes Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the one hand to American imperialism and Israel on the other. It is around these two axes that the camps have formed on the battlefield. The stakes of the combat are the conditions of a general "peaceful settlement" in the region:

On the one side, Israel wants to maximally reduce the fighting capacity of the Palestinians before any possible final agreement with the Arab states is reached; the United States, Lebanon, and Arab regimes like those of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan share this desire.

On the other side, fearing that a separate peace between Israel and Egypt would isolate them in face of the United States and Israel, the Baathist leaders in Syria, while also seeking a general peace agreement in the region (although on different terms), want at all costs to prevent the conclusion of the separate peace already set in motion by the Sinai disengagement accord; directly linked to those Palestinian forces that can be utilized as means of exerting pressure, the Syrians want to integrate the Palestinians, especially Fateh and the PLO, into a general settlement. This position tallies with the positions of French imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy, who have diplomatically recognized the PLO and favor a solution that entails the creation of a Palestinian rump state.

Thus, the two camps in the Lebanese conflict indirectly represent Syria on the one hand and Israel on the other. A direct American intervention in Lebanon as in 1958 or an Israeli invasion would threaten to provoke a rising of the Arab masses in the region, which would challenge the bourgeois regimes in each country, thus wrecking the chances for an imperialist peace.

The immediate objective of the Phalangists was to force the Lebanese army to intervene against the Palestinians, to reproduce in Lebanon the Black September that occurred in Jordan in 1970. But the Lebanese army was neutralized by the popular upsurge and by the combativity of the masses. What occurred instead was the fusion in struggle of the Lebanese and Palestinian Arab masses. The first manifestation of this rank-and-file armed linkup occurred last spring in Saida in reaction to an attempt by Beirut high finance to forcibly take over the local coastal fisheries. (The prime mover of this operation, Camille Chamoun, present minister of the interior, was the man who demanded the sending of American troops in 1958, when he was president of the republic.) In face of these threats of being deprived of their means of making a living, the fishermen, the local population, and the Palestinians launched a real insurrection. These events were revealing to both the Maronite right and the masses themselves, who became more conscious of their own power. It was a warning that was duly noted by the Phalangists.

The first objective of the Phalangists was not attained; the conflict then settled into successive rounds involving ever broader sectors of the masses. The linkup between the Palestinian detachments and the Lebanese masses, led by their armed political organizations, prevented the conflict from being reduced to one between Phalangists and Palestinians, which could have permitted the intervention of the army. The use of the army, the rank and file of which is Muslim while the officers are Maronite, could have provoked the total breakup of the unity of the armed forces. Kept apart from the fighting, the army would remain the only significant guarantor that the interests of the bourgeoisie would be maintained.

The country's slide into civil war occurred most violently during the summer. The involvement of broader and broader sectors of the masses in the fighting was an illustration of the predominance of confessionalism. This confessionalism was also the direct cause of the atrocities that were committed by the two camps, which demonstrates the political backwardness of the broad masses. Democratic, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist slogans were raised by those sectors influenced by the Lebanese revolutionary organizations.

At the beginning of the fighting, the clashes were limited to the armed detachments of both camps. What followed from this was an exclusion of the masses, because of their lack of political and military preparation to deal with the situation in an overall manner. But the course of events compelled the organized mobilization and arming of the masses. Only then a turn began to occur, a turn that gave the armed conflicts a dimension of civil war in which the center of gravity of the crisis was no longer a conflict between Phalangists and Palestinians, but a conflict between the Arab masses and imperialist reaction. The masses began to struggle for themselves, independently of the bourgeois political apparatuses. Thus, the risk became very great, first for the Maronite bourgeoisie and then for the Muslim bourgeoisie. The situation got further and further out of their control, wrecking any attempt to apply the combined plan of the Phalangists, Israel, and American imperialism.

It was during the summer that the tendency toward the mass politicization of the conflict asserted itself more strongly, going beyond the original framework of the hostilities and going beyond the policy insisted on by Syria and the PLO.

This process manifested itself in the popular neighborhoods that were most affected by the economic consequences of the civil war. Wages were no longer paid, work stopped, food supplies were no longer assured by the usual means (the markets disappeared because of the spread of the fighting). The masses were thus compelled to initiate a process of elementary self-organization in order to obtain and distribute means of subsistence. In many cases, the inclinations of the inhabitants of the neighborhoods and the intervention of the mili-

tants of the far-left organizations resulted in the formation of popular committees to take charge of these tasks. Concurrently, self-defense teams assured the security of the neighborhoods in which the self-organization of the masses was developing.

The truce of the beginning of November intervened when a new stage of the development of the self-organization of the masses was taking shape in certain neighborhoods because of the intervention of the revolutionary organizations, notably the neighborhoods of Shiyah and Nabaa. The objective of these localized but exemplary experiments in self-organization was to form neighborhood councils composed of elected delegates that would go beyond the limits of the independent organization of daily economic life on the scale of the neighborhood in order to pose the problem of an organization of councils in all the neighborhoods linked together and dealing with central political problems. Leaflets distributed by revolutionary Marxists asserted: "We are struggling against Gemayel and Chamoun, but not for Salem and Karamah," thus rejecting the bourgeois solutions of the two central leaders of the Muslim bourgeoisie. These leaflets called for "a workers and peasants government." The slogan of a government of national union was raised by the bourgeois and left reformists, the Progressive Front of Kamal Joublatt and the Lebanese Communist party.

The limited strength of the revolutionary currents and the continued grip of confessionalism over the masses are two elements that make the revolutionary transformation of the civil war difficult or impossible. Moreover, the fighting forces are divided into a multitude of organizations claiming allegiance to Nasserite nationalism, the far left, and other currents, such as those directly tied to the Soviet Union (the Lebanese CP) or Syria (Saiqa), all reflecting divergent and contradictory political programs.

## The bourgeoisie's perspective

The Lebanese bourgeoisie and the reformist currents are still in position to control the situation and define solutions.

Within the Maronite camp, there are two opposed currents. The current led by the petty and middle bourgeoisie and the lower ranks of the clergy favors a partition of the country, in opposition to the upper bourgeoisie and the high clergy, who call for the maintenance of the present Lebanese entity. These positions are dictated by the respective economic positions of the two currents. The first is limited to the internal market and has nothing to lose from partition; in fact, it could make gains from tourism, relations with Israel, and the offshoots of the direct or indirect military presence of imperialism. For the upper bourgeoisie, the disappearance of Lebanon would mean the destruction of the territorial base from which it carries on its lucrative enterprises, thanks to the semi-Arab and semi-Western character of the Lebanese state.

While the upper Maronite bourgeoisie's riches have been little affected by the fighting, the petty and middle bourgeoisie have often been hard hit; shops, restaurants, hotels, buildings, apartments, factories, etc. have been destroyed in great numbers. The rich bourgeoisie have their private armies and capital to protect themselves and their families.

The maintenance of Lebanon as an entity implies the complete reform of the structure of the state and therefore the abandonment of confessionalism. Already the religious chiefs of various Muslim currents have demanded the elimination of confessionalism as a political system. If the constitution is amended, the electoral law changed, and the census retaken — measures that are necessary if confessionalism is to be abolished — the Maronite community would certainly find itself in a minority and would be under the pressure of the hard-liners, who could once again seize some pretext to relaunch a battle for partition. There has already been some shifting of the Christian population in the Akkar, leading to partial exoduses. The whole business is very delicate.

A regroupment is also occurring between the two wings (Muslim and Christian) of the bourgeoisie, the objective being the establishment of a strong authoritarian state that would be rid of the private armies of Gemayel and Chamoun and company, a state capable of controlling the Palestinians and the Lebanese masses while respecting the local cliques. The Karamah-Raymond Eddé axis is the embodiment of this orientation, Karamah representing the Muslim bourgeoisie, Eddé the Maronite bourgeoisie. An important network of support for this solution is now taking shape, assembling the international forces whose political and economic interests converge in this direction.

French imperialism sees this as an alternative to the pro-American clan of Chamoun and Suleiman Franjeh and as a new means of boosting its presence in the region in line with the policy developed under Gaullism. The high Maronite clergy, tied body and soul to colonial Christian France, supports this perspective. Moscow has received Eddé on several occasions and has advocated solutions close to those advanced by French imperialism, particularly the recognition of the PLO and a material solution to the Palestinian problem: a Palestinian rump state. Syria also regards this operation with favor.

There are two levels to the bourgeois solution to the crisis: First, an agreement between Syria and Israel, negotiated through Kissinger and involving the PLO, which would have the effect of decreasing tensions in Lebanon, thus permitting a restabilized regime to turn against the masses; second, a reform of the structure of the country ensuring the end of civil war.

If this operation does not come to pass, a new outbreak of hostilities must be expected; this would also imply a move toward partition, a solution that in one form or another would ease the Muslim masses toward the control of the Syrian state, thus posing the development of the Arab revolution in a new context. ■



# Sahara: Beyond the «Green March»

by PACO ROBS

The world was not much interested in western Sahara until the beginning of the 1960s, when fabulous mineral riches were discovered in its territory, including the world's largest deposit of phosphates, in the region of Bu Craa. These deposits, which extend over an area of 250 square kilometers (the essential part of which can be exploited in open air), present the twofold advantage of an extremely profitable mineral and a rapid access to the Atlantic Ocean, which is only a few hundred kilometers from the deposits.

Exploitation began only in 1972 with the creation of a company called Fos-Bu-Craa in which the Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas, the Banque Rothschild, and Krupp invested; this company provided highly technical extraction equipment. It employs 2,500 wage earners, of whom only 1,000 work in the mines. Only a minority of these workers come from the Saharan population; the others come from the Canary Islands or Spain. Exploitation of the phosphate deposits on a large scale would enable western Sahara to profit from a virtually complete monopoly on the world phosphate market, pushing aside Morocco, which is now the leading producer. It is thus easily understandable why the imperialist powers would be in no hurry to foster the accession to independence of a country that could then make them pay a high price for the decades of brutal colonialism and deliberately maintained poverty. The mishaps the imperialist powers have experienced in the realm of oil in recent years serve as a lesson. Thus, neither U.S. imperialism, which has the greatest interest, nor West German and French imperialism, hide their desire to Morocco annex this territory.

But the phosphate mines are not the only natural resource of western Sahara. Along the coast there are extremely rich fishing zones, which Spanish colonialism has sold off and abandoned to the pillage of the fishing fleets of

several countries. Exploration has also revealed the existence of important oil deposits, deliberately undervalued up to now by the big oil companies in charge of prospecting. But the companies' haste to reach exploitation accords with the Spanish regime during the most recent period says a lot about the real richness of these deposits, hitherto regarded as strategic reserves. Finally, in addition to deposits of iron and uranium, the subsoil of western Sahara contains a virtual underground lake, an immense sheet of fresh water that would enable Río de Oro (the southern portion of western Sahara) to be transformed into a giant garden in the midst of the desert. There is no need to look any further in seeking the reason for Mauritania's interest in this region.

But apart from its economic importance, western Sahara is an especially important political and military target in view of the profound change in the balance of forces in Africa caused by the accession to independence of the former Portuguese colonies. U.S. imperialism is anxious to strengthen its presence in this region by fostering the annexation of this region by Morocco and, secondarily, by Mauritania. The formation of an independent Sahara in which a decisive role would be played by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Sahara (PFLS) supported by Algeria is especially dimly regarded by imperialism, since such a development could endanger the U.S. military bases on the Canary Islands. Since the fall of the Caetano regime in Portugal, the bases in the Azores have no longer represented a very reliable piece in NATO's military apparatus.

The development of the MPAIAC (Movement for the Self-Determination and Independence of the Canary Archipelago) and the fraternal ties it has established with the PFLS confirm that such concerns are well founded.

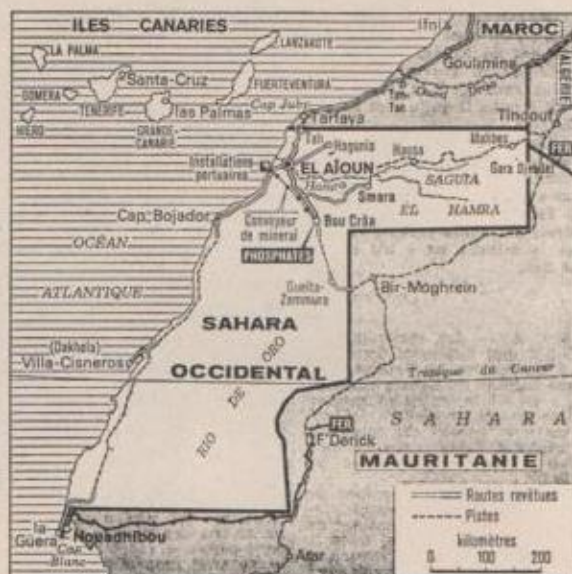
# WESTERN SAHARA

A sizeable stake, western Sahara has been the object of complex negotiations and dangerous initiatives of which the "green march" is only the latest. For a year now, Spanish colonialism, forced to fight while retreating, has been committed to a policy of pseudo-decolonization, a policy all of the aspects of which Madrid has been unable to control. The Spanish regime has sought to safeguard the essential part of its economic and military interests in the region while at the same time opening up negotiations on several fronts.

The first objective was to postpone the date of decolonization by unleashing a brutal repression against the first actions of the PFLS and by opening fire on demonstrators in el-Ayoum, the capital, in June 1970. There were dozens of deaths and hundreds of wounded; besides that, there have been many cases of torture. But the repression did not succeed in halting the development of the PFLS, which held its founding conference in August 1973. The fall of the Caetano dictatorship and the aggravation of the crisis of the Francoist dictatorship forced a change in Spanish policy. On August 22, 1974, Madrid announced its intention to organize a referendum to determine the status of the territory. Concurrently, it fostered the creation of the PUNS (Party of Saharan National Union), a legal party composed of Saharan notables won over to collaboration with the Spanish regime. The PUNS was supposed to assure a neocolonial link that would preserve the essential interests of the Spanish state.

The census taken by the colonial administration in preparation for the referendum rated the population at 75,000, which is very small for a territory practically half the size of France. The leaders of the PFLS advance a much higher figure, on the order of 250,000-300,000. It is true that the overwhelming majority of the Saharan population is composed of tribal nomads who are quite unconcerned with the artificial lines dividing the region into areas of Spanish, Algerian, Moroccan, and Mauritanian administration. An essential part of this nomadic population escaped notice in the census especially because they often are forced to seek refuge in neighboring territories, driven away by the poverty and underdevelopment to which Spanish colonialism has condemned the territory. (1) This population would certainly be prepared to settle down in a free and independent western Sahara, as is shown by the massive support they have extended to the PFLS, even forcing Mauritania to tolerate PFLS activity in its territory.

The Spanish maneuvers came to grief with the spectacular defeat of the PUNS, which despite its ability to act legally proved incapable of checking the development of mass support for the PFLS, as indicated by the demonstrations that greeted the visit of the United Nations mission to the country in the spring of 1975. Moreover, the secretary general of the PUNS, who felt which way the wind was blowing and knew that Spain was losing ground, preferred to go over bag and baggage (and with the organization's treasury) to Morocco and declared allegiance to the Moroccan regime. The PFLS then put itself forward as the undeniable representative of the Saharan people and of their will to form an in-



dependent state. Both the Morehob (Movement of Blue Men) and the FLU (Front of Liberation and Unity), directly armed and supported by the Moroccan regime, defend the thesis of attachment to Moroccan territory but do not command any serious influence among the Saharan population.

With the quick defeat of the PUNS, Spain was compelled to readjust its policy during 1975. Particularly in the most recent period, the international isolation of the Francoist regime, its grave internal crisis, and the Moroccan offensive have forced the Spanish regime both to commit itself to vacating the territory and to open negotiations on several fronts. Spain has had to renounce preservation of some of its privileges, notably the maintenance of a sizeable military contingent in western Sahara, which comes to about 55,000 soldiers and 4,500 members of an armed police. The decisive role played by the troops stationed in Morocco during the fascist uprising of July 1936 is too well known to disguise the regime's interest in maintaining reliable armed forces overseas prepared to intervene again as a counterrevolutionary driving lance in the Iberian peninsula. But the objective being sought in the present negotiations, with Morocco and Mauritania on the one hand and with Algeria and the PFLS on the other, is limited to the maintenance of a military presence in el-Ayoum, which would serve as a support to the air base in the Canary Islands, where some 35,000 troops are stationed.

But it has been economic more than military factors that have turned Francoist policy around several times, occasionally at intervals of several days. The lightning trip of Francoist minister Solis to Morocco about two weeks ago led to the announcement of an imminent Spanish-Moroccan agreement, while the de facto recognition of the PFLS as the only real representative of the Saharan people several weeks ago heralded a rapid evacuation of the territory by the Spanish army and administration and the establishment of an independent state. But scarcely several days later, the trip of acting chief of state Juan Carlos to el-Ayoum turned things around once more and hardened Spain's position against Mo-

rocco, under the energetic pressure of Algeria, a pressure that was in any case more economic than military.

In point of fact, on the one hand Spain was seeking to reach an agreement with Morocco to maintain a significant participation in the exploitation of the Bu Craa phosphate deposits, a participation that preliminary accords indicate may be as high as 60 percent. On the other hand, however, the resolve of Algiers seems to have weighed heavily on the Spanish government, for Algeria is far and away Spain's leading trading partner in Africa. According to the Spanish Trade Ministry, of 36,590 million pesetas worth of exports to Africa in 1974, nearly 10,000 million worth were purchased by Algeria. Likewise, Spain imported more than 20,000 million worth from Algeria (nearly exclusively oil), out of a total of 70,680 million pesetas worth of imports from the African continent. The economic agreements that have been reached with Algeria are even more important than those with the United States, and Morocco lags far behind that.

The determination of the Algerian government is also explained by the political and economic interests at stake. Algeria is aiming mainly at enlarging its political influence through the formation of an independent Western Sahara under the aegis of the PFLS, at isolating Morocco and Mauritania, and at preventing the strengthening of the military and political presence of U.S. imperialism in this region. But Algeria is also seeking an access to the Atlantic Ocean, which would permit rapid transit for the oil and natural gas that lie in the part of the Sahara that is under Algerian control. The cost of constructing pipelines to the Mediterranean would be exorbitant, and negotiations with Morocco to gain permission to pipe gas and oil across Moroccan territory, which would permit more rapid access to the Atlantic, fell through very quickly.

As for Morocco, it plays just as important if not even more important a role. The consequences of King Hassan's decision to withdraw the 300,000 participants in the "green march" cannot be evaluated yet. But even though this decision seems to herald the possibility of an agreement with Spain, it appears to represent a political defeat for Hassan, an adventure that turned out badly. In fact, the green march was conceived and organized not as a simple means of putting pressure on the Spanish government, but as a real invasion that was intended to permit the immediate annexation of the territory by Morocco. An important part of these 300,000 marchers had been recruited from certain layers of the active population that Hassan wanted to see installed in western Sahara as new colons. Likewise, technicians specializing in the exploitation of phosphates had been mobilized to provide replacements for the Spanish administration in Bu Craa. In addition, the criminal adventure of Hassan II was aimed at precise internal political objectives: to strangle the opposition to the regime, an opposition that plunged into this crusade (with the CP in the lead), reconstituting a degree of national unity not hoped for by such a tottering regime; to firm up the regime's popular base; and, finally, to offer an easy "war" for the Moroccan army, which is still not very reliable for the regime. On the internal level, Hassan's

operation, largely inspired and supported by the United States, which was anxious to exploit the internal difficulties of the Francoist regime, turned into a fiasco and could well result in the elimination of the crown. This retreat is especially delicate in that what remains posed is not only the question of western Sahara, in regard to which the Moroccan claims are absolutely illegitimate,<sup>(2)</sup> but also the problem of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which are integral parts of Moroccan territory and should be immediately handed back. Thus, only the immediate proclamation of a Spanish-Moroccan accord on Morocco's annexation of western Sahara could safeguard Hassan's position. But for such an accord to become a reality, it would be necessary for Morocco to invade the territory, which would run up against determined resistance from the majority of the Saharan population, which backs the PFLS, which is in turn supported by Algeria, which has the most powerful army of the countries concerned. In the event of such an accord, Spain would hurry to evacuate the territory as quickly as possible, for Madrid has no desire to get its army embroiled in a difficult conflict in which its interests would not be directly at stake and whose consequences could prove to be quite serious.

The future of western Sahara rests essentially with the PFLS. This organization, whose political contours are difficult to discover, seems to enjoy mass support among the Saharan population, whose social structures remain precapitalist. The weak proletariat that has emerged in the mines and the urban subproletariat, which suffers from tragic unemployment, exert too weak a social weight today. The leadership of the PFLS is in the hands of the small Saharan intellectual elite trained in Spanish and Moroccan universities. It appears to be under big pressure from the Algerian leadership, with which it broadly identifies. Under such conditions, it is difficult to envisage the PFLS being able to lead the national liberation struggle of western Sahara through to the total national and social liberation of the Saharan people and the constitution of a socialist state. But it can at least resolutely commit itself to the road of the rapid proclamation of an independent state. In this struggle against the military threats of Morocco, against the possibility of an intervention by the Spanish army or a direct intervention by the United States, it must receive the resolute support of revolutionary militants and of our comrades in Spain in the first place. That is how things are understood by the militants of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/Euzkadi ta Azkatasuna-VI (Revolutionary Communist League/Basque Nation and Freedom-Sixth Congress, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in the territory of the Spanish state), some of whom are now on military service in western Sahara and are fraternizing with the PFLS.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. In all, western Sahara has 2 secondary schools and 350 hospital rooms, half of which are reserved for Spanish colons.
2. Morocco appeals to links that existed before the colonization between Saharan tribes and the sultan of Morocco, to whom the tribes swore an allegiance that was purely symbolic in any case.

# PORTUGAL CONSTRUCTION WORKERS DEFEAT GOVERNMENT

by A. UDRY

The two-week-long campaign of support to the sixth government organized by the Socialist party and the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic party) has been cut down to its proper size by the four days of struggle by the construction workers. The hopes of the government — or the hopes the government pretended to have — rapidly evaporated. Pinheiro lost his air of swagger in face of the tens of thousands of construction workers. The people demonstrating in front of São Bento Palace bore little resemblance to the "people" who had acclaimed Pinheiro on October 25 in Porto, November 4 in Faro, and November 10 in Lisbon.

A bit shaken up, Pinheiro lost his head and in one unguarded phrase summed up the antiworker policy of the sixth government: "Vão a merda" (Go take a shit), he shouted at the tens of thousands of workers chanting their demands. That was a mistake. The workers took up the slogan and aimed it back at Pinheiro.

The mobilization of the workers of a key sector of Portuguese capitalism drove home the reality of the relationship of class forces for all those who had been talking of a retreat or an inversion of the trend.

After the victory of the construction workers, the demonstration called for Sunday, November 16, by the coordinating body of the workers commissions of the industrial belt around Lisbon (controlled by the Communist party), will certainly reflect the rise of the movement for workers demands that has been developing since the beginning of October. Moreover, the bourgeoisie has understood the situation quite well, even though it has decided to launch an alarmist campaign about a "coup" supposedly being prepared by the CP.

Thus, the CDS (Centro Democrático Social — Democratic Social Center, a far-right party) issued a communiqué on November 15 stating: "The sixth government and the forces that support it have not succeeded in carrying through their programs. The government has no authority to compel respect and obedience or to permit the reestablishment of the minimum conditions of order, discipline, and authority without which power evaporates, states dissolve, and parties wind up perishing." As for the PPL, it has "taken refuge" in Porto,

affirming that "Lisbon is no longer reliable." If the PPD is playing the card of a North-South opposition, which could encourage a reactionary offensive in the North, this nevertheless expresses the bourgeoisie's fear of the mobilizing capacity demonstrated by the construction workers.

The SP took a luke-warm shot at the future of the November 16 demonstration and cried: "It is obvious that such a demonstration has the aim of preparing to block circulation in the city and of launching an assault against the basic structures of the state apparatus." The SP concluded its communiqué by calling for "vigilance" and by raising the slogan "Everyone into the streets!" Nevertheless, the Socialists refrained from organizing a counterdemonstration in Lisbon, especially a counterdemonstration around the traditional slogan: "The people are in the streets!"

## AMI: first defeat

At the very moment that important sectors of workers are engaged in struggles for their demands, nearly all of which lead to confrontations with the government and the Ministry of Labor, the struggles of the soldiers are continuing. That is what gives a real dimension to the present political crisis.

Thus, the government and the Council of the Revolution assigned the troops of the DGFA (General Air Force Depot) the task of destroying the Radio Renascença broadcasting tower in Buraca. Pinheiro de Azevedo explained: "The Council of the Revolution has accomplished its duty in the manner that appeared least risky, and the armed forces executed their task with freely observed discipline, as is proper."

The day after this action, however, the paratroopers of the DGFA, united in a plenary assembly, condemned this operation and voted the following motion:

"We repudiate and condemn the destruction of RR on orders emanating directly from the Council of the Revolution.

"We inform public opinion that the mission was executed

by elements foreign to this unit, concretely by specialists of the PSP (Public Service Police), in the presence of paratroopers belonging to the AMI (Military Intervention Group).

"Further, this action was aimed essentially at the destruction of an information instrument in the service of the exploited class and the toilers.

"We demand the immediate dissolution of the AMI and we repudiate its actions."

There were also reactions in other paratrooper units. For example, the plenary assembly of the sergeants of the Paratrooper Base and School of Tancos demanded that "the paratrooper companies that have been detached from Lisbon to serve in the AMI be immediately sent back to the Tancos base."

The government's success was really complete! Not only did the soldiers of the DGFA give a long explanation on the radio and television of the fact that they had not been informed of the objective of the mission, they even made a comparison between the way the paratrooper commanders tried to drag them into an attack on the RALIS (Lisbon light artillery regiment) on March 11, 1975, and the Rádio Renascença operation.

"Dissent" has thus taken hold in the ranks of the very troops on whom the government and the Council of the Revolution had counted for support. The explanation the soldiers gave for their refusal to continue to be part of the AMI expresses a process of radicalization and politicization that is unusual for troops of this character. In reaction to the attack on the Rádio Renascença broadcasting tower, the soldier-paratroopers thus took a position directly opposed to the sixth government. A very clear cleavage was introduced between the soldiers and sergeants on the one side and the officers on the other. The latter, virtually unanimously, supported the prime minister and the Council of the Revolution. They in turn got support from the Socialist party. The defense of bourgeois institutions has a certain logic. For example, in face of the stated desire of the paratroopers not to serve as an antiworker striking force, the SP federation of the Lisbon urban zone gave its support to the officers, for: "To destroy the paratroopers would mean to destroy an important weapon of our revolution." (Portugal Socialista, November 12.)

Statements against the AMI were voted in many units. The soldiers of the RIA (Infantry Regiment of Abrantes), for example, held a general assembly and adopted a motion "condemning the AMI and denouncing the reactionary maneuvers of the sixth government of the bourgeoisie, which, through the formation of an army of mercenaries, is creating the conditions for the Portuguese people to be crushed by a bloody dictatorship as in Chile. . . . Our weapons will always be at the side of the people in the struggle against fascism and capitalism." (November 6, 1975.) Concurrently, the movement for free transportation is continuing. Hundreds of soldiers are taking the train and refusing to pay. In addition, a tendency is emerging for soldiers to take di-

rect control of the arms depots. In the DGMC (General Depot of War Matériel) of Beírolas, a struggle commission was formed with the aim of implementing the slogan, "The weapons must be controlled by the soldiers who stand at the side of the worker and peasant masses." A support demonstration for this struggle was organized by some soldiers from other units as well as by the workers and tenants commissions.

The hierarchy is now counting on special troops returning from Angola to qualitatively strengthen the forces of intervention.

The man directly responsible for the attack on Rádio Renascença, Air Force General Morais e Silva, gave a long explanation of the importance of once again placing military maneuvers on the agenda. The aim was clear: the troops returning from Angola have to be drawn into a structure; their contamination has to be avoided: "The return of the air force and the troops from the ex-colonies gives the units a feeling of lack of mission. Under these conditions . . . the creation of these detachments (combat detachments) is extremely dynamic and mobilizes the troops." In face of the many challenges to these maneuvers by assemblies of soldiers, the general exclaimed: "It would be strange for these maneuvers not to take place, for that is the very reason for the existence of the armed forces, to defend the Portuguese people and not to serve to multiply general assemblies of soldiers." The soldiers understand the task of defending the Portuguese people somewhat differently.

Of course, the level of radicalization is not even on a national scale and the measures demobilizing an important part of the soldiers of the land army are going to have some effects. But it is certain that for the moment the bourgeoisie does not command sufficient forces to deal any important blows to the mass movement, at least not without risking a very serious crisis. The re-emergence of terrorist acts, carefully calculated and well prepared technically, is an index of the loss of confidence in the sixth government by reactionary sectors. In fact, as if by a miracle, these attacks had stopped when Pinheiro came to power. Today they are starting up again.

It is even difficult for the government to utilize the police forces, the PSP and the GNR. These troops bear the mark of the past too much, and that makes their utilization politically dangerous. Moreover, they are beginning to be affected by demoralization, at least the ones stationed in Lisbon. The government's impotence, its retreats, the attitude of the military police, and the massive character of the mobilizations (in civil construction, for example) must generate doubts even among those who were considered invulnerable less than two years ago. For example, more than one policeman hesitated to intervene against the picket of the workers of the Ministry of Social Communication, who wanted to prevent the secretary of state for information — a former collaborator of the "scientific" services of the Salazarist secret police — from entering the buildings of the Ministry. After several hours, the prime minister

replaced them and dealt directly with the workers of the ministry!

It thus appears that one of the characteristics of the current period, an extremely deep crisis of the state apparatus, has been confirmed and even intensified, even though the government tried to assert its "authority" by shutting down Radio Renascença. This crisis only reflects the level of class confrontation now developing in Portugal.

### A clear defeat

The struggle of the civil construction workers came on top of the mobilizations of the metalworkers, the bakery workers, the truckers, etc. All these struggles clashed with Tomas Rosa, the minister of labor, and more generally with the government. The construction workers forced the ministers to back down.

In its latest "emergency plan to reestablish basic economic mechanisms," the government has clearly opted for an "austerity policy." As the plan itself recognizes: "The austerity policy is not a popular policy and consequently poses serious political problems." (A Capital, November 10.) At five o'clock in the morning of November 14, when the government had to give in on the main demands of the construction workers, the ministers were compelled to concretely take notice of the fact that the austerity measures did indeed pose "serious political problems." Especially since according to the text of the "emergency plan" itself, construction was considered a decisive sector for straightening out the economy as a whole (along with the export sector). Capitalist pump-priming of the construction industry implied, among other things, not making any concessions on wages, refusing to increase monthly wages from 4,500 escudos to 6,500 escudos.

For two days, the ministers had to apply some austerity of their own! The construction workers had them under siege in São Bento Palace. All the streets were blocked. The capacity for the organization of self-defense was impressive. Strict controls were established at each roadblock. In face of this show of force, the neighborhood inhabitants, almost naturally, presented their identity cards at each roadblock. The organization of automobile traffic was taken over by workers pickets. For two entire days and nights the workers besieged the government. These thousands of workers — among whom were a large number of immigrant workers (from Cape Verde), who were totally united with their Portuguese comrades — quickly developed a sharp sense of political response. That is an undeniable sign of a revolutionary upsurge. On November 14, for example, at two o'clock in the morning, the negotiations commission announced that the prime minister was prepared to accept the proposals that had been made, but that he had to consult the Council of the Revolution, which was then meeting at Belem Palace.

The negotiations commission had already accepted this request by Azevedo. But the thousands of workers on the scene responded: "Pinheiro does not get out! The



### The Constituent Assembly

Council of the Revolution has to come here!" In two days these thousands of workers, who had gone on such a strike for the first time, had assimilated the basic elements of political tactics. They had perfectly understood where their strength lay: The capacity to physically prevent the government from making any move, not only because of the level of self-defense, but also because of the very crisis of the repressive apparatus. A government so well under control that when a helicopter arrived carrying food (on the night of November 13), the workers seized the cargo and taught the ministers what austerity really means.

Finally, the degree of the organization of self-defense constituted a guarantee against any adventurist military action on the part of certain ultraleftist organizations who too easily confound the seizure of power with the seizure of the "winter palace."

There is no doubt that the victory of the construction workers will boost the feeling of strength of the entire working class. It will also act as a point of reference for future struggles. For the first time, during a struggle for their own demands, the workers took such sweeping measures as the construction of barricades in the cities, controlling traffic, etc. All these experiences, which go beyond the usual terrain of the factory, are essential in preparing an effective response and counter-offensive to all the maneuvers of reaction. A new step was taken by the Portuguese working class, drawn into action this time by a section of the class that had not been part of the vanguard. That is also a sign of the revolutionary upsurge.



Along with this "triumph," very advanced lists of demands have been drawn up in many sectors (see INPRECOR, No. 37, November 6). Three points should be noted. First, the importance of solidarity with the most important struggles. Every time a mobilization acquires a certain breadth or becomes a point of crystallization, motions of support come from workers commissions from all over the country.

Second, a debate has begun within the workers vanguard over the question of workers control. Since September the "commission of control of production and management" at Soreframe has been publishing a bulletin called "Workers Control." In the big SACOR factory (petrol), a real program of workers control, preceded by an explanatory text, was voted in a general assembly. This definition of workers control was published in the Soreframe bulletin: "Workers control is thus a transitional phase. It is a school in which the workers learn the secrets of managing their enterprises and in which new democratic methods of management are created." While the workers of many enterprises, and even restaurants and shops, immediately place the label "workers control" on their struggle, the reporting of such resolutions — by República, for example — obviously plays an important role in determining the objectives of the workers actions.

Finally, because of the link between the level of the demands (workers control, socialist planning, reconversion) and the confrontation with the government, the problem of the functioning of the workers commissions, of their coordination and centralization, is posed ever more sharply. During the plenary assembly of the workers commissions of the "Lisbon industrial belt," an assembly controlled and strongly manipulated by the CP, the secretariat could not prevent the debate from turning around this crucial question. In line with their perspective, the members of the CP emphasized the role of the workers commissions as "organs of popular will and of defense of gains won," that is, as organs that exist side by side with the institutions of a bourgeois-democratic parliamentary system. Other tendencies, on the other hand, affirmed that the workers commissions "are instruments through which workers power is asserted and are the organs of the embryonic popular power of the future proletarian state." A good part of the strategic debate now going on can be summed up in these two definitions.

The objective basis for assuring a centralization of the workers commissions is thus being affirmed ever more strongly. The same is true for the tenants commissions, which on the one hand are much more subject to divisions among the various political currents and on the other hand are very heterogeneous in terms of their real representativeness, the degree to which they function regularly, etc. But this movement toward centralization requires both a very clear position in favor of workers democracy and propaganda and concrete initiatives that pose centralization as an inherent necessity of the movement for workers demands. The political weakness of the far left, often marked by a frenetic ultraleftism, constitutes one of the major obstacles to the launching

of this process of centralization, which would be possible despite a relatively uneven development of the workers mobilization between the North and the South.

## Remodeling the government

During the most recent period, the CP has undeniably taken the initiative again and is asserting its authority against a far left that is incapable of taking advantage of the relationship of forces and the gains that were made between August and the beginning of September.

Thus, the CP has proven its capacity for mobilization in the Alentejo and in Lisbon through the peasant organizations and the Intersindical (trade-union federation). Its objective is clear. On October 29 Octavio Pato, leader of the CP in the Constituent Assembly, declared: "The solution to the crisis must come about through a rapprochement and entente between the political parties and the MFA, through an entente among the left parties, the CP and the SP. . . . The solution to the crisis necessarily implies the existence of a government that has the confidence of the various tendencies of the MFA, the officers, sergeants, soldiers and sailors, the left parties, the popular masses, the working class. Only a government that is capable of inspiring this confidence will be able to reestablish the authority, discipline, and intensive work that it is essential to develop." (A Capital, October 30.)

The CP does not want to overthrow the government, for it fears the crisis that would open up as a result of the fall of the government while the workers mobilization is continuing. It desires only a realignment of the government and of the Council of the Revolution around an SP-CP-MFA axis.

Because of that, the CP refrains from attacking Pinheiro de Azevedo and attacks mainly the PPD and various ministers. In addition, in face of the mobilization of the construction workers, the CP lagged behind somewhat (the union organized and controlled the mobilization) and took its distance from certain measures of struggle. On November 13, for example, the CP published a communiqué affirming: "While supporting the demonstration and the encirclement of São Bento Palace, the CP nevertheless disagrees with the sequestering of the deputies of the Constituent Assembly and of the prime minister." The overture toward the SP and the respect due Pinheiro have their exigencies!

Given the workers mobilizations, it is not impossible that a section of "the nine" (the group of Melo Antunes) may arrange a rapprochement with the Gonçalves supporters in order to present some proposals to the SP, and formally to the CP, proposals for the recomposition of the government on an SP-CP-MFA basis. The sixth-and-a-half provisional government could then come into existence. It would remain provisional. This "solution" would be difficult, but any other would be even more difficult.

November 15, 1975

# CZECHOSLOVAKIA SEVEN YEARS AFTER THE INVASION

by TIBOR SERETI

During the past year the Czechoslovak authorities have been unpleasantly surprised by the public appearance, several months apart, of two documents that they would have preferred to pass over in silence. Last February, the publication of the memoirs of Josef Smrkovsky, a member of the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovak Communist party under the Dubcek leadership, threw some harsh light on the decisive weeks that preceded the Soviet intervention of August 1968. Next, it was Dubcek himself who took the floor, as the Czechoslovak socialist opposition made public a letter he had addressed to the Czechoslovak parliament in October 1974, the publication of which provoked a vigorous counterattack by the bureaucrats.

## Content of the Dubcek letter

"The major reason for which I am writing this letter," Dubcek began, "is that socialist democracy and legality are being trampled under foot. In violation of the Constitution and of Communist morality, the organs of the Ministry of Interior have ceaselessly restricted my free-

doms and that of my family. . . . Respect for the opinions of the majority has been virtually abolished; the utilization of a whole series of methods has left a free field for abuses of power by the army and, above all, by the organs of the Ministry of the Interior, which have risen above the rest of society thanks to the powers of their command." After affirming that even the judicial organs are manipulated by the political police, Dubcek enumerated, in detail, the methods, functionaries, and even the vehicles used against him in the daily surveillance to which he is subjected, furnishing many examples of police activities and describing, often humorously, some of the informers he has spotted.

Dubcek then spoke of the letters he had sent to various authorities, including Communist party Secretary Gustav Husak, receiving only ridiculous answers. He also mentioned the complaint he had finally filed against the public prosecutor. This complaint, of course, led to nothing. It only intensified the police measures. The first conclusions Dubcek drew concerning democracy within the party and society as a whole were as follows:

"On the one hand, some sections of the security service use and abuse their powers to carry on the illegal activities I have mentioned above (the surveillance and intimidation — INPRECOR), and on the other hand, some forces within these units are trying to take over exclusive control of all public and political life. . . . That is why this security network has been woven around me, and that is also why informers of all varieties have been posted at all levels of society. This inhibits the activity and political education of the party, the principal function of which has been replaced by coercion. . . . In a party that is deprived of the possibilities of free discussion, a party that is not even capable of exercising regular control over its own most important bodies, it is inevitable that corruption will spread. The double game becomes gen-



eralized: People act differently in public and in private, in meetings and with their friends. Instead of conducting themselves frankly in the party, the trade unions, among the youth, in the women's organizations, . . . and in the press, the population becomes gripped with indifference, an indifference that drags in its wake an atmosphere of suspicion, fear, hypocrisy, and police informing. In such a situation, it is impossible to obtain a democratic majority in the party."

As against this method, Dubcek reaffirmed the democratic legitimacy of the line followed after January 1968 and asserted that even (and especially) after the invasion, his policy was the only realistic one for lifting the country out of the crisis into which it had been plunged by the invasion. He then described the process by which he and his team were removed from power in April 1969 and how the new leadership of the party wound up annulling the party resolution of November 1968 and challenging the whole policy carried out after January 1968, the date he took power. He reaffirmed the differences of his line from that of the present leaders and stressed that what were involved were "two irreconcilable lines."

Dubcek then refuted the various accusations that have been made against his policies: that they were leading to a return to capitalism, an abolition of the planned economy and of collective property in agriculture, an abandoning of the community of socialist countries, and, especially, a relaxation of links with the USSR. Said Dubcek: "Today, just as at the time the Action Program was published, I am convinced . . . that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic cannot base its policy on withdrawal from the community of socialist countries; on the contrary, it needs this cooperation vitally, especially with the Soviet Union. That was and will be the basis of Czechoslovak foreign policy."

Then Dubcek brought up the present situation in the country, and especially the system by which professional competence is measured by the degree of ideological conformity, as defined by the party leadership. He affirmed that such a system has led to the "forced resignation of a great number of professionals in industrial and cultural life" and that this system causes irreparable damage to the country. He charged that the current leadership of the party had proven itself incapable of resolving any of the problems of society and warned that there was danger of an evolution similar to the one that led to the Polish workers uprising in December 1970.

## Quick and clumsy reactions

Dubcek's letter provoked violent reactions, both in Czechoslovakia and abroad. But the most surprising thing was the clumsiness Husak turned out to be capable of (from the standpoint of his own interests). He appeared on television, defeated and foaming at the mouth, and threatened Dubcek and others of his ilk

with arrest at worst and forced exile in Sweden at best. Henceforth, Husak concluded, those who wage such campaigns and publish such letters will be considered "open traitors, avowed enemies of the Czechoslovak people and their social system." The newspaper *Smena* (in its April 25, 1975, issue) went further, indicating that "all tolerance has its limits" and heavily insisting that of all those responsible "for the chaos of 1968 and 1969," none of them, Dubcek included, had been condemned to death or deprived of the possibility of leading a "normal life." It must not be deduced from that, the author of the article continued, that those responsible will be allowed to take advantage of this leniency to sow chaos.

Not even the trials of the summer of 1972 had given rise to such a spectacle and such a flowering of invective. The slanders at least had the merit of revealing the existence of the letter to the whole population and of confirming the identity of its author. Husak's televised tirade was a big help to the opposition, saving it several months, if not more, of propaganda work. Another consequence of Husak's sortie was the credit he granted the opposition, despite himself. Such violent attacks would be directed only against an important enemy that represents a real danger; thus, in making these attacks, Husak confessed that after several years of normalization and consolidation, the regime is so unstable that a simple letter is sufficient to threaten it.

The official reactions did not stop there. A press campaign was launched against Dubcek, and also against Smrkovsky and his memoirs. It was like the good old days: The press campaign was accompanied by a campaign in the factories to have workers vote indignant resolutions. But this time, unlike in the good old days, this campaign did not at all achieve the success that had been hoped for. In the *Aritma* factory in Prague, for example, the workers had the insolence to ask to see the content of the Dubcek letter before voting on the resolution. This was refused, of course, but the resolution was consigned to oblivion.

The security services had less difficulty. At the end of April they launched a series of searches in all the milieus considered oppositional, that is, the intelligentsia, the former collaborators of Dubcek and Smrkovsky, former members of the party apparatus who resigned during the normalization, and, finally, former political prisoners freed after having served their sentences. The confiscation of books, documents, and various newspapers was followed by interrogation conducted in the offices of the security services. And although it seems that those arrested were held for only a few hours, the scope of the police operations was nonetheless confirmed by the newspaper *Svobodne Slovo*, which indicated that 522 suspects had been questioned. These police sweeps took place simultaneously in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava, which underlines the regime's nervousness and its desire to strike a heavy blow.

## An admission of weakness

But what were they afraid of? One can only note that the Dubcek letter did not seem to bother the Soviet leaders for very long. They were even rather tranquil about the whole thing, for there is nothing in the letter that would really clash with the Soviets — from the constant reference to the November 1968 resolution, which was personally approved by Brezhnev, to the recognition, explicit once again, of the need for privileged relations with the Soviet Union. Dubcek was especially careful in the delicate chapter on "anti-Sovietism," for he stressed the responsibility of the Husak leadership, whose "policy has deepened anti-Soviet sentiments among the population," and overlooked the responsibility of the Soviets themselves, whose tanks have something to do with this state of affairs. Obviously, this is a piece of deliberate forgetfulness, which was aimed at preventing Husak from calling for protection from "big brother" and at keeping the polemic restricted to the domestic terrain, where Husak is weakest.

In fact, the Husak leadership is reaching the end of its rope, having achieved none of the objectives it had set itself. In reality, this is the major factor that moved Dubcek to break his silence, a silence he had maintained for several years. Dubcek knows that he holds an essential trump card: credibility; more than anyone else, he can draw on the confidence of the population, and in Czechoslovakia today that means a lot. Dubcek proposed to place this confidence at the service of the party in order to reunify the population, something that Husak is incapable of doing, as Dubcek himself stresses.

This sort of language is aimed essentially at the cluster of middle-level cadres of the apparatus who are uneasy about their ever growing isolation. This type of language is more apt than any ideological discourse to attract an important section of the apparatus strongly disturbed by the uncertain discussion that is now going on at the ruling heights of the party.

## Economic and political situation

This discussion, the stakes of which are both political and economic, involves all the problems that Czechoslovakia has confronted since the invasion. The choices have never been more difficult. Neither tanks nor trials have been able to deal with the problems they were supposed to resolve. Above all, they have been unable to make the machines in the plants run properly. And, once again, it is here that the Husak leadership is being hit most painfully. In the first moments of its euphoria, the Husak leadership thought it could count on unreserved economic aid from the Soviet Union. And, in fact, two years after 1968, Czechoslovak store windows were the best stocked in East Europe, which stimulated an unprecedented wave of consumption in the country. It was forgotten that this consumption did not rest on a volume of production capable of satisfying demand. In fact, the armed intervention had destroyed the necessary eco-



Dubcek in Prague, 1975.

omic reforms that had been the main subject of discussion among leading circles during the 1960s. It was this discussion that had led to the replacement of Novotny by Dubcek on January 5, 1968, after a fierce faction fight. After August 1968, the normalizers, who understood the explosive character of the discussion on the economic reform, scurried to suspend any innovative economic measure and decided that it was urgent . . . to wait. Thus, the same old problems persisted: poor quality of production, excessively high production costs, waste, and so on. Not to mention, of course, corruption, sometimes at the highest levels of the party leadership.(1)

The political particularities of the moment did not at all help the situation. The nascent resistance of the working class, which replied to the invasion with slow-downs, absenteeism, and sometimes even sabotage, was rounded out by the lack of competent personnel in entire branches of production. The normalizers had removed thousands of cadres and technicians who were considered too favorable to the Dubcek regime; atomic scientists are sweeping streets, electrical engineers are doing manual labor or working in warehouses. During the great wave of purges in 1969 some 40 percent of technical personnel in the economic apparatus were given their walking papers and replaced by bureaucrats whose incompetence was equaled only by their servility toward the new regime. The same development occurred in the trade-union apparatus, nearly all the workers who had been elected by their comrades being removed. This process eventually reached broad layers of the intelligentsia who, prevented from working, were sent into production. In Prague, for example, the latest bridge built over the Vltava River is popularly known as "intelligentsia bridge," so high was the number of

former writers and journalists who participated in its construction.

In a period of full-blown technological change, no country can afford the luxury of sending half of its technicians, trained over long years and at great expense, back to the assembly line. But that is just what Czechoslovakia did during the normalization. Under such conditions it is not surprising that the problem of competent personnel is a burning one that comes up constantly. The problem of reintegrating cadres removed for political reasons was brought up as long ago as the Central Committee plenum of October 1972, but no solution was proposed. Two years later, during the November 1974 Central Committee plenum, the question was placed on the agenda once again, for it had become still more serious because of the difficulties that were piling up. The discussion must have been quite sharp, for, contrary to the usual practice, Husak's speech was not published in the press, and no information worthy of interest was revealed to the public. The functionaries and party membership had to be content with a short innocuous internal document; the public was served with some severe criticisms of Dubcek. But there is no doubt that this session of the Central Committee was devoted mainly to economic difficulties, as is testified to by, among other things, a sentence in the internal document admitting that the Czechoslovak economy had suffered a loss of 20,000 million crowns following the increase in the price of Soviet oil.

The price of oil, and more generally the prices of all raw materials and energy sources, is one of the great problems of the hour. The Soviets, who enjoy a virtual monopoly on these products in East Europe, decided to raise the prices. In doing this, they seem not to have taken account of the development plans of the "people's democracies," which were worked out at the beginning of the 1970s and anticipated that prices would remain stable. A meeting of the Comecon countries in December 1974 led to an average increase of 54 percent in the price of oil and raw materials; moreover, it seems that the Soviets made no guarantees on deliveries(2), contrary to what was requested by their clients, who were uneasy about current plans and investments. These clients will thus have to turn to other exporters and pay the high prices of the capitalist market, prices that are higher than those offered by the Soviet Union, even after the Soviet increases.

The oil problems are added to the problems posed by the world capitalist crisis. There is no question of claiming that this is a decisive factor for Czechoslovakia, but it is in any case not a negligible one. Generally speaking, the volume of exchange between East and West has steadily increased during the past decade and has even accelerated during the past several years. Czechoslovakia, which did not escape this trend, now finds itself in a situation in which imports from the capitalist world are much more expensive because of inflation, while exports are more difficult to sell because the capitalist crisis has worsened the competitive position of Czechoslovak products.(3)

Finally, and this is not intended to blacken the picture artificially, internal economic factors have some weight in the bad economic situation of the country. These are the traditional economic problems of the people's democracies, directly derived from the political choices of the bureaucracy, its social parasitism(4) and its political hegemony. Just to recall the situation, we could mention the low productivity of labor, the new investments that entail excessively high wholesale prices, anarchic economic choices that too often render production inadequate to the needs of the population, accumulated savings that people refuse to spend on products of poor quality. The incessant and nit-picking controls further weigh down an economic mechanism that, in Czechoslovakia, is already particularly heavy.

### New talk of economic reform

In such a situation, some people think that it will inevitably be necessary to raise consumer prices in order to absorb the new charges. But to what extent will such increases (there is talk of 15 percent) be tolerated by consumers? In Prague, as in the other capitals of East Europe, the bureaucrats have strong memories of the Polish revolts in the Baltic ports following the sharp increase in retail prices in late 1970. That shot came too close for comfort for them to lightly plunge into a similar experiment. Thus, it appears more likely that the future measures will be gradual, less immediately felt, and oriented toward the long term.

It is in this context that there is new talk of the economic reform and of the measures that were taken by Dubcek when he was in power. A few weeks after the November 1974 Central Committee, a member of the presidium of the Slovakian party had a significant article published dealing with economic questions. Some passages had a somewhat smoldering odor. For example: "The efforts to establish solid relations between production and trade are based on considerations of rational order. Such efforts should be our major concern today. The ideas of those difficult years (that is, the years of the Dubcek leadership — INPRECOR) were neither wholly reactionary nor irreconcilable with socialist society. It would be a big error to think so. After all, it was precisely the errors and faults, insufficiencies and weaknesses, that, ignored for long years, served as an objective basis for abuses when demagoguery gave rise to hysteria or half truths."

If these words have any meaning, it is no more or less than a recognition of the validity of the theses of Ota Sik, that is, the economic policy of Dubcek! And the concessions to the given circumstances ("demagoguery," "hysteria," "half-truths") do not lessen the weight of the confession. For those who are familiar with the debates that went on and are still going on in the upper circles of the party, there is as much between the lines in this passage as there is in the lines themselves. Contrary to all official declarations, the author not only recognizes that the Dubcek economic policy was cor-

rect (even if it led to abuses), but also issues a discrete warning about the future, when it might become impossible to correct "errors and faults, insufficiencies and weaknesses." To avoid this, the author proposes a better utilization of the market as an economic regulator, giving more flexibility to the planning system, allowing more room for initiative to the "middle-level" economic cadres, and so on. Ota Sik, exiled and regularly insulted by the Prague press, could easily find his own ideas here.

A long road has been traveled. Seven years after the military invasion, an important member of the bureaucracy recognizes that this intervention has been so unable to settle anything that it is necessary to return to old recipes. You would think you were back in the 1960s, when the debate on the economic reform was at its height. From this standpoint, 1975 looks more and more like 1967, the difference being that Navotny is now named Husak; but the competitor is still Dubcek. A Dubcek with a martyr's halo to add to his scarcely tarnished glory.

### Meaning of the letter

That is the context in which the Dubcek letter must be understood. He wrote it in reference to debates with which he could not have been unfamiliar. More quickly than Husak or the Soviet leaders, Dubcek understood the meaning and possibilities of these debates. Instead of having the policy of the reformers be applied by old Stalinists on the rebound, it would be better to give the policy a minimum chance of success by having it be applied by the reformers themselves.

To be sure, the Czechoslovak leadership is not yet prepared — far from it — to accept such a solution. But some leading circles are already prepared to consider a rapprochement with some of the ousted personalities. As long ago as early 1975, exploratory discussions took place between Husak's emissaries and representatives of the opposition. The point was to set the price for possible future collaboration. Such contacts did not go very far, because they came to grief over the prior demand of the opposition: the immediate release of all the political prisoners.

In any case, there is no indication that the Dubcekist opposition was prepared to collaborate. The Dubcek letter would indicate rather the opposite, since it insisted strongly on the irreconcilability of the two political lines. Dubcek is putting himself forward as an alternative to the Husak regime rather than as an aide in resolving the current difficulties. It would of course be dangerous to consider such an attempt as won in advance, for the threats of expulsion from the country or of a frame-up trial are many. But against such threats there is a given objective situation and a constantly shrinking maneuvering room for Husak. If Dubcek were definitively prevented from speaking, the current he represents and the credit attached to his name would remain. And above all, there would remain a parlance

to which the middle-level bureaucrats have proven sensitive, so great is their fear of the future and so profound is their doubt about the possibilities of the Husak team.



**PRAGUE, AUGUST 1969:** demonstration against "tank communism" marks first anniversary of the Soviet invasion.

From the standpoint of Husak's interests, such doubt within the apparatus is far from healthy. It could suddenly lead to rivalries and clique battles, turning today's majorities into tomorrow's minorities. The history of the people's democracies still provides lessons in this.

The fight around the party — that is what was really at stake in the Dubcek letter. That is what explains the incredible nervousness of a team that now feels its troops slipping away. And the battle is far from over. After beginning on the national terrain, it inevitably moved to the international arena. A long document drawing a balance-sheet of the six years of normalization is now circulating in Czechoslovakia. Written by Zdenek Mlynar, former secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovak Communist party under Dubcek (fired in September 1969 and then expelled from the party), this document is said to propose a series of measures capable of erasing the effects of the intervention in Czechoslovakia. But all these measures have one precondition: the elimina-

tion of the present leadership team. In certain circles it is said that this document was written to be presented to the meeting of the European Communist parties, perhaps even under the aegis and responsibility of the Italian CP.

Husak's responses to this offensive have been remarkable for their precipitousness and clumsiness. We have already mentioned the press campaign and the police actions. Another aspect of the disputes was the amnesty decree promulgated on May 8, 1975, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the country's liberation from Nazi occupation. The milieu concerned, comforted by rumors coming from high places, expected broad amnesty measures. But the change in the political conjuncture considerably reduced the field of application of this decree, which turned out to affect only those who had committed merely "benign errors." That is, it excluded all those who were sentenced for acts related to the events of 1968. This measure will make any reconciliation between Husak and the opposition still more difficult. It may already be impossible.

The Husak leadership has never been so isolated and impotent. The most characteristic sign of this impotence is that the leadership is constantly forced to reassert the legitimacy of its power and, concurrently, to burn all bridges to the groups with which some collaboration would be conceivable. This weakening of the Husak leadership may appear paradoxical, since Husak was relatively recently "elected" president of the republic. In reality, however, this election was an additional admission of isolation. The replacement of Svoboda, former president of the republic, had in fact been on the agenda for more than a year, the time at which his impotence had become quasi-official. The most varied rumors were making the rounds about who his replacement would be, but in real life the choice finally settled on Husak, who is now president in addition to being secretary general of the Communist party. From the standpoint of the real importance of the post of president, it may as well have been somebody else. But the same is not true of the symbols and memories involved. Every Czechoslovak citizen remembers Novotny's situation in 1968; he occupied both posts and was accused of holding exorbitant power and finally removed. Today Husak is rather in the position of a Novotny who happens to be Slovakian, an aggravating circumstance. A circumstance that will be utilized by a good part of the Czech population to fortify both its chauvinism and its opposition.

It is highly significant that in spite of these inconveniences, it was judged that any other personality, even the most neutral and least compromised, would be a worse choice than Husak. It is as if there was no other choice.

An additional subject of uneasiness for Husak is the strange reserve the Soviet leaders exhibited throughout the whole affair. Of course, at the end of April Pravda published an account of Husak's television speech; later, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the victory over Nazism, Krilenko described Husak as a "loyal

son of the working people, a patriot and internationalist, an important member of the international communist movement." But Soviet support never went beyond that. Above all, no campaign was waged in the Moscow press to come to Prague's rescue. Dubcek's name was not even mentioned. One cannot assume from this that there has been an overturn in the intrabureaucratic alliances — not at all — but Husak certainly remembers the sudden and unexpected abandonment suffered by Novotny when the Soviet bureaucrats judged him less capable than Dubcek of controlling an uncertain situation. And he especially remembers 1973, when Piotr Shelest was removed from his functions in the Political Bureau of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. As is usual in such circumstances, there was no lack of rumors charging the fallen bureaucrat with all sorts of sins, among them having tricked the Soviet leadership into carrying out the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. As if it was necessary to find a scapegoat for a sad misunderstanding that was going to be quickly put right. After all, it would not be the first time for such surprising turnabouts.

Husak, who knows this better than anyone else, has every reason to be uneasy. Seven years after the intervention, nothing is settled, and everything seems to be starting all over again. To the point that things are happening that seem like re-runs. In the autumn of 1967 the students of Prague demonstrated against electricity cuts in the university dormitories, chanting "Light! Light!" The police saw this as a subversive demonstration, and they repressed it savagely, which led to the process that culminated with the eviction of Novotny. This year, on the first day of spring, some students marched through the campus under a banner reading, "Long live spring! Grass, have you decided to grow?" A whole program.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. In its June 12, 1975, issue *Le Monde* reported that heavy sentences (ten to thirteen years in prison) had been handed down against three high functionaries of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Trade. They had pocketed 1 percent of all transactions with foreign countries arranged by their agency, which came to about \$105,000. According to other sources, a disciplinary procedure was launched against two members of the Central Committee and one regional party secretary (from the Czech branch), also on charges of corruption.
2. The reason, very simple, was explained by the Warsaw weekly *Polityka*: "In 1974 the USSR obtained 1,000 million rubles from the Comecon countries for delivery of 50 million barrels. During the same year, the Soviet Union obtained more than 4,000 million rubles for the 70 million barrels sold to the West."
3. On this subject, see the figures cited in *Die Wochenbericht*, January 23, 1975.
4. A small symbol: The special shops for bureaucrats, most of which had disappeared during the 1960s in the countries of East Europe, have now been reopened, discretely, in Prague. Is that a sign of the crisis?

# THAILAND...



Thai students demonstrate in Bangkok in 1973.

The legislative elections of January 1975 were unable to resolve the chronic crisis of the Thai regime that emerged from the sudden fall of the military dictatorship in October 1973. On the contrary, they reflected the deep political and social instability of the country. (See INPRECOR, No.21, March 13, 1975.) The first government, the minority government of Seni Pramoj, was succeeded by a more durable coalition of parties led by Kukrit Pramoj, brother of the previous prime minister. But above and beyond the parliamentary game, there has been a gradual recomposition of the mass movement on the one hand and the forces of the right on the other, a recomposition that has taken the form of a growing class polarization. This is a new phenomenon for Thailand, and it confirms the character of the period opened by the "revolution" of October 1973 as one of the awakening of class struggle.

## The agrarian crisis

This ongoing polarization has taken an especially acute form in the countryside in the North, where the large landed proprietors have arranged the systematic murder of the cadres of the Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT). This organization was officially founded only on November 27, 1974, but it nevertheless has roots in peasant mobilizations that took place before the fall of the military dictatorship. At one time, in fact, many farmers from various provinces came together in Bangkok in response to a demagogic invitation issued by Colonel Narong Kittikachorn, one of the strong men of the military triumverate then ruling the country.

The first chief of government named at the end of 1973 — Sanya Dharmasakti — was conscious of the explosive potential of the countryside. In fact, the agrarian crisis is a structural one, as is the crisis of the entire economy. Thai agriculture is largely extensive. According to Brian Phelan, 90 percent of the country's growth in agricul-

tural production since the second world war has been due to the extension of the amount of land under cultivation, through the clearing of new land and the planting of new crops. However, "Today the land frontier has been reached in many parts of the country, with growing landlessness, tenancy, and attendant agrarian unrest. (Broadly speaking, landlessness is more acute in the northern valleys, tenancy in the central plain, and indebtedness in the arid northeast, while in the South there are extensive illegal settlements that have produced land uses termed 'ecologically catastrophic.')(1)

A "green revolution" in Thailand would have meant transition to an intensive agriculture, which implies a complete restructuring of the rural economy, which is characterized by a class of landed proprietors organically tied to the state apparatus and jealous of its privileges and a mass of landless peasants, who now constitute 60-65 percent of the rural population.

During 1974, Sanya had three laws adopted: the Land Reform Act, the Farm Rent Bill, and the Farmer's Aid Fund Bill. Officially, the point was to assure a significant distribution of land to the needy, to drive down the rate of farm rent, to assure a minimum price for grain, and to furnish financial aid for modernization and for the purchase of fertilizer. After calling for the adoption of an agrarian legislation (and in spite of the moderation of the one that had been adopted), the peasant movement sought to put pressure on the government to force the application of the law. Apart from a few grandstand gestures (the king donated some of his personal land holdings and some of the crown lands to the reform fund), the agrarian laws turned into dead letters in the provinces.

Successive delegations of peasants went to Bangkok, a process that culminated on May 1, 1975. More than 20,000 peasants assembled on that day, linking up with the workers and students movements. There were six simultaneous demonstrations in the cities of Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Pittsanulok (in the North), Udorn and Surin (in the Northeast), and Bangkok. The FFT laid siege to the ministries for a week. But in vain. Kukrit Pramoj slammed the door and broke off discussions. The farmers were supposed to continue to give 50 percent and more of their harvests to the landed proprietors.

This breakoff of negotiations marked an important turn in the history of the peasant struggles. At the time of its foundation, the FFT had proclaimed its apolitical character. But after the breakoff of the negotiations, its members went back to their villages to turn the FFT into a militant movement of mass struggle. Since then, the FFT has supported left parties, like the Socialist party of Thailand during the by-elections in Chiang Mai. An initial test of strength occurred immediately after the rupture of discussions in Bangkok. During a period of four months, twenty-one leaders of the FFT were murdered one after another by professional killers.



# Growing Class Polarization

by PAUL PETITJEAN

Half of these murders took place in the North, where Intha Sriboonruang, regional president of the FFT, was murdered on July 30.

The agrarian crisis is especially acute in the North. Fragmentation of land occurs quickly for the smallholding peasants. In 1961 average holdings were 16.1 rai (with a national average of 21.7 rai). In 1972-73 the figure in the North had fallen to 8.8 rai.<sup>(2)</sup> In an interview granted shortly before his death, Intha gave a good illustration of the process of radicalization going on in the peasant movement. He said, on July 15:

"If we are united and if we have a large number of farmers participating in fighting the cause, we will be able to get somewhere. From now on, we will only fight for land reform so that the farmers can have their own land to till. The present system of land reform cannot work, because those supervising the scheme are all rich people chosen by the officials themselves. Believe me, as long as the capitalist government is in power, we will never see improvements in our living conditions. As long as the state power is not in our hands, we will continue to live this way. . . . I'll have to fight. I am not scared about death. If we didn't fight we would be dead anyway."<sup>(3)</sup>

This test of strength between the landed interests and the farmers movement required a national response unifying the struggles of the peasants, workers, and students. This national response, however, was limited by the internal weaknesses of the mass movement and the Thai revolutionary formations.

## Division in the workers movement

The Thai "October" of 1973, initiated by the student movement, had been prepared by the development of an initial series of workers struggles. But it was above all after the overthrow of the dictatorship that the real wave of spontaneous strikes broke out. (See INPRECOR, No. 21, March 13, 1975.) Success was often won rapidly. But that was not to last long.

The social weight of the working class is still small. The active population numbers only 18 million out of a total population of 41 million, and 14 million of this 18 million are rural workers. Of the remaining 4 million, only half work in industrial enterprises, "the major portion of which are widely dispersed rice mills."<sup>(4)</sup> The Thai proletariat could have compensated for this relative social weakness only by a capacity for independent political intervention. But this proletariat is only gradually breaking out of the traditions of precapitalist

social and cultural relations and is only gradually casting off the weight of the organizational atomization it suffered under the dictatorship. Moreover, the Thai working class is largely made up of immigrant Chinese workers who suffer political oppression and have a separate status, foreign to the Thai peasantry.

Under these conditions, the post-October 1973 workers movement, while it experienced an important spontaneous growth, divided into three big currents. The first group essentially includes the unions of the state sector, in which a practice of collaboration with the government labor department predominates. While its militant rank and file is weak, it receives significant financial aid. The second current comes from the formation of workers groups in 1968 and from the establishment of workers educational courses at the University of Chulalongkorn in 1972. Its members, such as Sanan Wongsuthee, have very often become "professional negotiators" appointed by the official bodies for labor relations, internationally linked to the American trade-union movement and to Catholic associations. This group particularly includes unions based in the foreign companies, especially in the textile industry. The third group, the Labor Coordinating Center, may be defined as a class struggle current. It is the product of the linkup of the militant workers radicalization and the politicization of the student vanguard.

As of July, the Labor Coordination Center (LCC) included seventeen unions, while the three groups taken together included about sixty-five. The LCC is contesting the second group for influence in the textile industry. While the current represented by Sanan Wongsuthee is predominant in the important industrial zone of Samut Prakarn (Saman Pimpas is the director of the Samut Prakarn Textile Workers Union), the same is not true in the industrial zones of Korat, Nakon Pattorn, and Samut Sakorn (Prasit Chaiyo is the leader of the Samut Sakorn Textile Workers Union). The junction of this class-struggle workers current with the radical wing of the student movement cannot be considered simply unity in action and a de facto collaboration. While members of the young generation of workers leaders are effectively directing the Labor Coordination Center — leaders like Terdpoom Jaidee (hotel sector) and Prasit Chaiyo (textiles) — another member of the secretariat of the LCC is Seksan Praesertkul, former leader of the FIST.<sup>(5)</sup>

This division of the workers movement, long latent, was clearly manifested during the demonstrations on May 1, 1975. The two first currents, the class-collaboration currents, refused to call for the traditional assembly point in front of Thammasat University of Thai-

land, which is known for its radicalism. Nevertheless, Sanam Luang Square (near the university) had generally been the site of the major social demonstrations. Thus, two popular demonstrations were organized on May 1. One, held in Lumpini Park called by the sixty-five unions (that is, all the unions, since the class-struggle current did not want to break off unity), lasted all day. It drew 200,000 participants. The second demonstration, called by the Workers Coordination Center of Thailand, was held in front of Thammasat University. Although smaller (20,000 demonstrators), this assembly was more militant, even though the official slogans of the two demonstrations were actually very close, sometimes having been worked out by the same leaders.

Two strikes broke out during the May Day demonstrations, one at Dusit Thani Hotel, the other at the Standard Garment Textile Company (which is Taiwanese owned). The employers, who had long since established an employers organization, decided to turn these strikes into tests of strength. Negotiations were blocked. The police attacked the striking workers of the Standard Garment Company in order to bring in scabs. One of the workers was seriously wounded. Commandos of the "Red Gaur" (Red Buffaloes) harassed the employees at the Dusit Thani Hotel night after night with plastic bombs, while the police remained passive. Divided, the workers movement of Bangkok and the surrounding region was unable to respond with sufficiently active solidarity. The Dusit Thani Hotel strike in particular ended in a stinging defeat for the workers.

This crisis of the workers movement — which nonetheless does not prevent the continual outbreak of many strikes — is serious. Between May and August a real offensive of the far right developed.

## The far-right offensive

During the third and fourth quarters of 1975 the offensive of the far right, sometimes disorganized by the eruption of the mass movement, was not limited to the murder of a number of leaders of the FFT, to the organization of the division of the workers movement, and to the breaking of advanced strikes. The military far-right also tried to take the political initiative again. This far right still holds the key posts in the state apparatus and does not hesitate to attack the Kukrit government, from within and from without.

Obviously, there is a bit of the con game in the different policies of Kukrit and some of his military ministers. The prime minister is not visibly opposed to the formation of a parallel repressive force for whose actions the government does not have to take official responsibility. And the "liberal" pretensions of Kukrit should deceive no one. In this sense, he follows a policy analogous to that of Tun Abdul Razak in Malaysia (see INPRECOR, No.37, November 6). He asked for the lifting of the anticommunist law, only to replace it with an even more rigorous antismuggling law.<sup>(6)</sup> But there does seem to be some division within the ruling class. The

Investor published a series of articles in its August issue dealing with workers and peasant struggles, the aim of which was to warn the employers and the people bank-rolling the killers against the possible consequences of their actions: To murder peasant leaders is to contribute to radicalizing the FFT; to reject the workers movement as a whole, not to support its moderate wing, is to renounce isolating the "class-struggle wing," "the extremists" of the Labor Coordination Center. "The Labour movement in Thailand at the moment," concluded the Investor, "is not by any standard alarming. . . . It is useless for management to pray for a military coup to put an end to the Thai labour movement, because the consequences would be much worse." Kukrit and General Kris Sirara — who has just withdrawn as commander in chief of the army and is probably getting ready to enter political life — seem to share this view.

Nevertheless, at least a part of the military hierarchy has opted for a "policy of tension." The tension has been regularly stepped up on the Thai-Lao border ever since the month of May. A protracted strike and violent demonstrations by the Thai guards at U.S. bases, who were threatened with layoffs, took a decidedly antigovernment tone. The policy of the individual murder of mass leaders has made its appearance in Bangkok, although it is much more limited in scope than in the countryside. Two student cadres were killed in this manner, and on June 3, 1975, Terdpoom Jaidee (leader of the Hotel and Hostel Workers Union) was shot in the hand.

Perhaps even more serious, the organizations of the far right (if not outright fascist organizations) are seeking to win a mass base among the vocational school students and among the petty bourgeoisie. There are many such organizations, but the two best known ones are the Navapol and the Red Gaur (Red Buffaloes).

The development of the Red Gaur is perhaps the most significant success of the military. The students of the vocational schools had fully taken part in the demonstrations of October 1973. Nevertheless, the police and army have cleverly played on the antagonisms between the university students and the vocational school students. They have thus gained a mass base for many operations against urban struggles, such as systematic attacks on student demonstrations with plastic bombs, antistrike actions, various sorts of threats, and so on.

These right-wing organizations are openly led by military officers. It was General Wallop who founded the Navapol organization in October 1974. He had "studied" in the training schools for "psychological warfare" in the United States. And it was an officer of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), Colonel Sudsai Hasdin — leader of the "Montagnard tribes" division of the ISOC — who gave an interview to Norman Peagam in the name of the Red Gaur. He explained the group's objectives foursquarely:

"We had to cut off the head from the arms. The Red Gaur's first plan was to cut off, to separate the vocational student from the university student. . . . We try

to back the police. The government and the police are afraid to take action because of the newspapers. That is the next important thing. We plan to warn the newspapers to report correctly or we will take some action against them. The bad newspapermen must be washed out. We are not afraid of the newspapers."(7)

The string of generals participating in this policy of tension are not small fry. They include Generals Wallop Rajanawisut and Chamnian Phongpaibrod (respectively former and present chief of Thai Military Intelligence), Saiyud Kerdphol (chief of ISOC), Vitoon Yasawat (former chief of Thai mercenaries in Laos and a member of the general staff), Prachvab Sundarangkul (general staff, former head of the police department), Sant Chitpatima (commander of the Thai Fourth Army), Suraphol Chulapram (chief of the Border Patrol Police). They are said to be linked to the clandestine anticommunist command — known as Command 333 — which is based at Udorn along with General Paitoon Inkaranuwat and the CIA. These far-right elements have their counterparts within the Kukrit government, notably in the person of General Pramarn Adireksarn, the minister of defense.(8)

According to Norman Peagam, this minister of defense in the Kukrit government could well have been behind the sacking of the house of the prime minister during an organized antigovernment demonstration of between 1,000 and 2,000 policemen of the city of Bangkok.

That happened on August 19. Kukrit had just ordered the release of eight peasants and a student who had been arrested. The police demanded a harder policy against the social movements — and behind them a section of the military hierarchy and the government apparatus did the same. The next day, the Red Gours attacked the campus of Thammasat University with firearms and home-made bombs, briefly occupying some of the offices of the university. At the time, Thailand seemed to be on the brink of a military coup.

## An incomplete recomposition

Nevertheless, it does not seem likely that a coup had actually been planned. That would not correspond to the interests of American imperialism in the region. The mass movement and revolutionary formations on the one hand and military and paramilitary forces on the other remain too weak and divided to impose any sharp change in the current equilibrium.

The Thai Communist party increased its activity after the overthrow of the military regime. The victory of the Indochinese revolution strengthened the position of the CP's guerrilla bases in the North and the Northeast. The level of military operations was very high during 1974: officially, the government admits 526 soldiers killed in the fighting. And the number of clashes increased rather than decreased during the rainy season of 1975. More important, the influence of the Thai CP seems to be continuing to grow, beyond the areas in-



## Kukrit

habited by ethnic minorities (the zones of the CP's greatest implantation) among the Thai peasantry and in urban radical milieus. But the CP is not in position organizationally or politically to offer centralized leadership to the various ongoing movements of struggle. Its direct role in the mobilizations in the capital during recent months was probably rather small. And it appears that the Thai CP is now going through a strategic debate about what orientation to adopt, a debate similar to the one that divided the Malayan CP. It is concentrating its propaganda efforts against the Kukrit government — which "is pursuing the same policy line as previous traitor governments. It is selling out our national independence and sovereignty in exchange for weapons to suppress the people and protect the throne"(9) — and against the presence of U.S. imperialism. But it also denounces the action of "Soviet social imperialism" in Thailand,(10) which makes for divisions, at least in the urban areas, where some elements of the CP favor an orientation closer to that of the Vietnamese CP, with a more prudent balance between the USSR and China.

In the absence of a nationally implanted Communist party it is the student movement — and above all the radical student groups that developed after October 1973 — that are once again taking up objective responsibility for centralizing the struggles. Nevertheless, this movement is now reaching the limits of its capacities. The student movement registered some successes at the beginning of this year in its denunciation of the illegal concessions the military had made to Temco in the southern part of the country and in exposing the provocations of the far right. But the division introduced by the military and the police between the student movement and the vocational school students and the constant confrontations that have followed from that division have little by little shifted public opinion and par-

tially isolated the movement. The mobilization against the murders of the peasant leaders highlighted this weakness.

The Kukrit government had begun with a complete rejection of the demands of the Farmers Federation of Thailand. None of the killers were arrested. What's more, on August 4 the prime minister permitted the imprisonment of eight peasants and one student for acts allegedly committed three months earlier (the burning of a tree farm, site of a conflict between the government and the peasants, and the occupation of a mine near a village). The Antidictatorship Front, the National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT), the FFT, and the Workers Coordination Center of Thailand tried to respond to this provocation with a massive mobilization. The campus of Thammasat University was occupied for a week. But although there were about 20,000 demonstrators at first, their number decreased rapidly. And Kukrit's eventual decision to release the nine militants was due more to his desire to lessen the pressure being exerted by the mass movement on his left at a time when he had to deal with a large movement on his right than to a direct victory of the mobilization against the government. In fact, the movement turned most of its attacks against military reaction, but without massively demonstrating after the sacking of the prime minister's house and the attack on Thammasat University. The student movement remains divided among many organizations and individual leaders, permeated by liberal reformist currents and revolutionary currents and dominated by a strong populist tradition. More serious, its capacity for action is partially paralyzed by the constant attacks of the far right. It cannot arm itself openly without risking political isolation and police repression.

Under these conditions, the Kukrit government, although it is incapable of solving the problems it is facing, remains in control of the situation, on the whole at least. The prospect of a military coup may find some response among the urban petty bourgeoisie, which is fed up with "disorder." But the army is still divided into various factions, and the two major government parties — the Social Justice party and Chat Thai party — seem to be essentially concerned with squabbling over posts in the state apparatus. Further, American imperialism, which is still strong in the country, is probably not prepared to unify the military right behind the perspective of a coup. The state-military cliques still lack an overall project.

The "American choices" appear decisive for the future of the policy of the ruling class in Thailand. The withdrawal of U.S. forces affects only combat troops. The regional electronic spy network remains in place, as do the tens of thousands of "advisers" of the JUSMAG and MAGTHAI. Washington remains the eminence grise of organizations like the Border Patrol Police and the ISOC.(11) The strategic importance of Thailand rules out any real voluntary disengagement of U.S. imperialism.

But while the Kukrit government maintains general control of the situation, and while the mass movement and

the forces of the far left are still incapable of offering a national response to the crisis of the regime, it is nonetheless true that the ruling class has little chance of being able to stabilize the situation. Even when the economic situation was favorable — and before the Indochinese revolutionary front won the final victory over U.S. imperialism — the social crisis continued to deepen. (See INPRECOR, No.21, March 13, 1975.) Today, the favorable economic situation seems finished: "While high commodity prices for Thai exports tended to offset oil price increases for a time, the prolonged strain of recession has now begun to affect Thailand's export performance," wrote the Far Eastern Economic Review.(12)

While the growth of the gross domestic product in constant terms was 8.7% in 1973, it fell to 3.8% in 1974 and will not exceed 3% in 1975. A comparison of export values for the first six months of 1975 with the first six months of 1974 shows a general decline for the major products, apart from tapioca, sugar, and clothing. A crisis of confidence among investors has appeared following the victory of the Indochinese revolution. Industrial production grew by only 4.3% in 1974 (9.4% in 1973), the lowest figure in twelve years. Thailand's currency reserves, however, remain large.(13)

Under these conditions, the objective social crisis will inevitably intensify, and this at a time when a rise of the regional class struggle is taking place. What is now shaping up in Thailand is a new accentuation of the ongoing class polarization.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Brian Phelan, Far Eastern Economic Review, October 12, 1975.
2. Figure given by The Investor (a Thai monthly) in August 1975. A rai is slightly more than 21/2 acres.
3. Interview published in The Voice of the Nation, Thai daily, August 13, 1975.
4. Figures cited in The Investor, August 1975, p.24.
5. Federation of Independent Students of Thailand, probably the most radical student organization, along with the People for Democracy Group.
6. The major part of this law (the National Security Bill) was published in the September 6 Bangkok Post.
7. Far Eastern Economic Review, July 25.
8. See the articles by Norman Peagam in the Far Eastern Economic Review.
9. Far Eastern Economic Review, May 9, 1975.
10. Radio broadcast of Voice of the Thai People, P6kin Information, No.31, August 4, 1975.
11. See the article by Marcel Barang in Le Monde Diplomatique, November 1975.
12. August 17 issue, p. 9.
13. Figures cited in the Far Eastern Economic Review, October 17, 1975.



The Conference of Communist Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Havana, Cuba, June 9-13 this year.

Of the various meetings that have taken place on the continent since the OLAS conference of 1967, this one was probably of the greatest political significance. Not only because it was the first time that a sort of continental congress took place uniting all the old pro-Soviet CPs with the Cuban Communist party, but also and more fundamentally because of the resolutions it passed and their meaning for the struggle in Latin America in the immediate and near future. Every one of the old CPs of the continent showed up for the meeting. This time nobody was missing. There were no expulsions and no notes of discord. The agreements reached were sealed with unflinching and complete unanimity. The common declaration issued by the conference committed all these parties to the same line and to similar tasks.

This time, the Cuban Communist party, leadership and government of the first workers state of Latin America, sat side by side with Communist parties like the CPs of Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and worked out common objectives.

This time the Venezuelan CP did not suffer attacks of the sort that had been directed against it by Fidel Castro himself at the OLAS conference. And the Uruguayan CP did not have to defy the Cuban leadership in the name of all the "fraternal parties" of the continent.

It was the most important such event since OLAS because of the "lineup" it engendered (or rather confirmed) in the ranks of the workers and revolutionary movement of the continent; and also because of the devastating effects this will have on the centrist Latin American organizations in the immediate future, the abandonment it will mean for the Castroist and neo-Castroist movement, the confusion it will create among the "new vanguard" that arose in Latin America out of the triumph of the Cuban revolution and developed within the wave of struggle that swept the continent during the ensuing years. Finally, there will be future implications for the development of the struggle, starting with the necessary recomposition through which the workers and revolutionary movement will have to pass in many countries after the deep defeats that have been suffered in recent years.

## Havana Conference of Latin American Communist Parties

# APOLOGY FOR DEFEAT

by PABLO ROJAS

It will henceforth be necessary to take account of what the Cuban workers state formally calls its alignment not with the "socialist camp" in general but with the Communist parties of the continent in particular.

To analyze the results of this meeting in this context thus involves an analysis of the process of the Cuban revolution, of the course followed by this workers state, of the significance of Castroism as a political current over the past fifteen years, of the defeat of the guerrillas and the bloody failure of the "peaceful road to socialism" in Chile. This requires deepening the analysis of the causes of the defeats in Brazil, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, etc., as well as broaching subjects like imperialist strategy in the continent since Cuba, the role of Brazil today, the role of the armed forces throughout the continent, and so on.

### Reaffirmation of the bloc with the «national bourgeoisie»

The document of the conference is divided into nine chapters in which a description and historical analysis of the various periods of struggle on the continent is offered. The text begins with the defeat suffered by the Spanish colonialists in the Battle of Ayacucho against the Latin American "independentist" forces, which occurred 150 years ago, and runs through the present day.

This manner of beginning the document by mentioning the struggle for the "first independence" is much more than a purely formal and rhetorical device. In a general way, it points to what the overall line of the analysis will be. Yesterday the Battle of Ayacucho, during which the "first independence" was consolidated; today the conference of the CPs on the struggle for the "second independence." Yesterday a foreign enemy on the continent, an imperialist power that was able to be beaten by dint of the common efforts of various movements of "national liberation," which in each country — and beyond the borders of each country — acted above and beyond the varying "social conditions" of their component parts. This means that all classes — regardless of the "detail" of their different interests —

were able to unite against the main enemy and drive him off the continent.

Today as well, the Communist parties cite a main enemy: Yankee imperialism, the foreign power that oppresses all peoples and plunders the countries of Latin America. Why not do the same thing today as was done yesterday, they reason, and unite our efforts in a common struggle above and beyond borders and also, why not, above and beyond the various existing "social conditions"?

We could almost say that this is the fundamental "message" of the conference, the nub of the declaration. Hence the constant mention throughout the nine chapters, whenever the opportunity arises, of the "patriotic" character of the struggle for the "second independence."

Nevertheless, this message is not abstract and is not addressed to "the peoples in general." What is involved is not a ceremonial declaration of patriotism launched into thin air with no particular target. On the contrary, the target was named very specifically, several times, so there can be no doubt: all the patriotic, anti-imperialist, and democratic forces. In chapter 6 these forces are labeled more precisely:

"It is for this reason, without abandoning the struggle for democratic rights and for the conquest of new structures in our countries that we communists are prepared to support the positions of Latin American governments that can stand for the defense of our natural resources or can assert their will to put an end to the attempts of multinational corporations to preserve and increase their control of our economies every day."

"This historical reality does not at all mean that there do not exist sectors within the Latin American bourgeoisie that because of the contradiction between their interests and those of imperialism adopt certain positions analogous to those of the proletariat, peasantry, and other noncapitalist layers of the population in struggle against imperialism and for the conquest of economic independence and complete national sovereignty." "Consequently, these bourgeois sectors can contribute to the unity of democratic and anti-imperialist action jointly with the popular forces." "The CPs and all other anti-imperialist fighters . . . accord great importance to this possibility . . . which constitutes an indispensable factor in this complex and multifaceted struggle." "The incorporation into the broad anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic struggle front of forces and organizations that represent sectors of the bourgeoisie is of great importance."

Not only is this possibility of fronts and alliances established, but precedents are sought in Latin America, from the Popular Front of Pedro Aguirre Cerda in Chile to the defense and lauding of the "efforts" of the Latin American CPs before and during the second world war "to form national, antifascist, and anti-imperialist fronts." It is indicated in passing that "the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (1935) played an important role in this sense." Finally,

the text refers — with no doubts or hesitations — to the "Chilean experience" of our time. On this subject, the following is said in chapter 4 of the document: "It was possible to obtain this victory (in the 1970 elections — INPRECOR) because the popular movement had succeeded in uniting around a correct political line that precisely showed who the main enemies were: imperialism and the monopolist and agrarian oligarchy, against whom the struggle was oriented." "The Chilean working class had constituted a political and social front — Unidad Popular — which succeeded, thanks to this correct policy, in winning the government and at the same time in gaining a piece of political power."

And for good measure: "The conference energetically condemns the foreign policy of the leadership of the Chinese Communist party," which "fosters pseudorevolutionary groups that, on the basis of a false radicalism, divide the left, attack the Communist parties, inhibit the development of progressive processes, and often act as agents of the enemy within the revolutionary movement."

This point is closely linked to what is said in chapter 8 about other groups of the left, namely "certain organizations that claim to be Marxist-Leninist," in regard to which "the time has come to cite our differences with certain strategic conceptions and tactical viewpoints held by these forces." "The Communist parties . . . cannot pass in silence over their differences with these groups, but must always establish their differences with these erroneous positions and adventurist attitudes, which they condemn." To conclude: "An anti-Communist and anti-Soviet left is inconceivable. Communists will work to isolate those who adopt such attitudes."

Let us stop here for a moment. The document is dated June 13. On June 27 in Berlin, at the conclusion of another conference, the representatives abroad of the parties that compose the Chilean Unidad Popular released a document. In reference to the Chilean MIR, they said: "Antifascist unity with the MIR is possible on the basis of a common policy that eliminates any intention of division or alternative and is based upon mutual respect." It should be noted that somewhat earlier in the same document the Unidad Popular said: "The armed men (that is, the Chilean armed forces — INPRECOR) who, deceived by antihistorical ideology and propaganda, believed themselves to be outside the popular liberation movement have a possibility to express their demands here (that is, within the antifascist front the UP proposes for Chile today — INPRECOR)."

These quotations give an indication of the conceptions that guide the political policy of the Latin American Communist parties at the present time.

## The role of Cuba

Faithful to their policy of "revolution by stages" and their conception of the bourgeois-democratic character of the revolution at the present stage, the Communist

parties have been adept at class alliances, the policy of popular fronts, and the "peaceful transition to socialism." The Chilean example is still fresh in the memories of the Latin American masses; the "peaceful form" in which the CP led the Chilean working class to a massacre is a lesson that the masses have not forgotten; but the conference forgot it, favorably recalling the "experience" (it would be more appropriate to call it a reformist adventure). Not content with that, the conference treated the "Chilean experience" as a good example to be repeated. The CPs committed themselves to promoting similar experiences wherever conditions permit.

There is nothing new in this, and it would not be very important to analyze a conference of the CPs if there were not some new element that has altered the Latin American political panorama and will alter it still more in the immediate future. The new element is that the conference reached political agreement with the Cuban CP, which for more than a decade had maintained an attitude of relative political independence of the Soviet bureaucracy and had tried to stimulate the revolutionary struggle on the continent apart from the CPs and against them, creating and supporting alternative organizations in each country and often publicly attacking the CPs, sometimes in speeches by Fidel Castro himself.

OLAS represented the most important Cuban attempt to form an organizational alternative to the traditional Communist parties on a continental scale. This conference represented the formal end of OLAS, but in addition, it acknowledged, with the signature of the Cuban CP, the defeat of the previous attempt and the recognition of its failure.

Cuba also tried to form the Junta de Coordinación Revolucionaria (Council of Revolutionary Coordination) for Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay in 1974. Does the present conference mean an end to support to the Junta? Has its failure also been recognized? Everything indicates that this is the case, not only because of the content of the document and the political tasks it outlines, but also because of the treatment of the organizations that are members of the Junta. The Chilean MIR, for example, received the treatment already mentioned at the meeting of the UP in Berlin on the part of the Chilean CP, "fraternal party" of the Cuban CP. Also because of what was said by Armando Hart, a member of the political bureau of the Cuban CP in his speech in Havana last year in honor of Miguel Enriquez.

This is important not only because it implies recognition of that defeat, but also because of the enormous influence of the Cuban leadership on the "new vanguard" that arose throughout the continent under the impetus of the victory of the Cuban revolution. The traditional CPs have been unable to capitalize on the emergence of this new vanguard; in fact, they were almost completely bypassed by it. That is why this conference will have important effects and grave consequences for the future. The word of Cuba is listened to and respected by broad sectors of the masses throughout the continent.

It is also true, however, that Cuba no longer plays a leadership role in relation to significant sectors of this vanguard. It is a fact of life that the balance-sheet on attempts to duplicate the Cuban experience is negative, and it is also a fact that many of the organizations and tendencies of the broad vanguard no longer act in accordance with the line set by the Cuban leadership. The class struggle has compelled them to seek other roads apart from the old Castroist schemas. All this is true, but the point made earlier about the continuing influence of the Cubans remains valid as well. And that is what the CPs are seeking to take advantage of: They want to use the influence and authority of Cuba to draw sectors of the masses now standing outside their control back toward their reformist orientation. At the same time, they want to use this against the vanguard and its organizations, placing them before the dilemma: Either hitch onto the reformist wagon of class collaboration or, as is stressed in the document, confront the fact that the CPs are agreed on "working to isolate those who adopt such positions," that is, positions opposed to class collaboration.

But today it is not simply the traditional CPs who are asserting this; today the weight of Cuba has also been thrown into the balance. The groups of the "anti-Soviet left" have been warned that if they "persist" in their positions, they will have to suffer attacks.

Cuban support for the "anti-Soviet left" has now ended; the Castroists and all the centrist organizations of the continent now find themselves caught between hammer and anvil. Is this an advance sign of the end of this type of centrism in Latin America?

The Cuban signature on this document will have devastating effects on Latin American centrism in general. It will lead to much confusion and demoralization. The consequences of the future application of the line of the conference will be even more serious. The worst projects of class collaboration and the most counterrevolutionary alliances will begin to emerge with the active support of the Cuban workers state. The effects of confusion among the masses will in turn have important consequences. Revolutionaries will now have to count not simply on the silence or passivity of Cuba, as has been the case in recent years, but on Cuba's active opposition through the support Havana will extend to each national CP. The full impact of these consequences will be felt over the coming period, but one period has now definitively ended and another has opened.

Many Latin American centrists had placed their hopes in the changes that "would lead Cuba back to its previous policy," changes that were somehow expected to emerge miraculously at the time of the first congress of the Cuban CP. Those who believed in the maneuvers and tricks of a few leaders or factions will now have to do a lot of thinking about the document that the Cuban leadership has signed. This document defines a whole strategic line, offering positions on the character of the revolution on the continent, the role of the USSR, the "socialist camp," imperialism, the bourgeois-

sie of the continent, the mass movement, the program, Vietnam, Portugal, the CPs, the role of the armed forces, and so on.

Moreover, the Latin American CPs, weakened and seriously affected by their reformist adventures, need the recognition and approval of Cuba. There is now no doubt that the CPs will present themselves to the masses and vanguard of each country as the big winners in the more than ten-year-long historic struggle against the Cuban line. Cuba now recognizes the CPs, says they are correct, adopts their line and, going even further, accepts the line of the "new period" that opened after Chile, the period of "progressive" military governments.

It amounts to a *de facto* self-criticism by the Cuban CP of its line of more than ten years' duration, without explanation and without analysis. Before its first congress, the Cuban CP made a complete turn, burying everything it had done during the first decade of the Latin American revolution.

### Meaning and consequences of the conference

It would take a long time to analyze the errors of the Cuban leadership. It must be remarked, however, that this leadership sought to stimulate the revolution in all countries. The Cuban leaders tried — with many failures and oscillations and with much empiricism — to create a new Cuba, to break Cuba's isolation, to overcome the danger of imperialist attack, without retreating before or conciliating with imperialism, but by opposing imperialism with many fronts of struggle. A new Latin American workers state would have given the Cubans a new base of support, weakened the bourgeois and imperialist forces, and given an impetus to the socialist revolution in all countries. Cuba's political independence of the USSR and the "socialist community" could have asserted itself only if Cuba had strengthened its positions in Latin America.

An important part of the Cuban leadership was conscious of this at bottom, even if only empirically. They understood the political impossibility of "socialism in one country," a country only ninety miles from the imperialist colossus at that. The most heroic and most tragic testimony to this empirical consciousness was Che's guerrilla struggle in Bolivia and the entire continental plan that lay behind that struggle.

But the Cuban leadership always held a paternalistic attitude toward the masses. It believed more in the organizations and apparatuses than in the working class and the exploited themselves. It is not enough to create groups for the struggle; a policy is needed to organize the intervention of the masses, their self-organization and their independent mobilization. In the realm of competence of the apparatus, the Cubans were lost in advance against the CPs. It was within the working class itself that Cuba should have contested the reformists. The lack of understanding of the role of a real Leninist party, of the transitional program, and of the

importance of workers councils in Cuba itself are deviations that were paid for very dearly in the development of the revolutionary process; these are not just "Trotskyist obsessions." Initial immaturity and a "young and idealistic" empirical spirit cannot overcome the inexorable and implacable laws of the class struggle.

The price was very high. Thousands of the best of the Latin American vanguard paid with their lives, and the working class of many countries suffered grave defeats, counting their dead in thousands. Cuba remained isolated and suffered manifold failures throughout the continent. Eventually, the Cuban leadership capitulated in face of its consistent reformist adversaries.

The analysis of this process applies not only to the Cuban leadership, but also to the Latin American revolutionaries who were unable to create another Cuba. They failed for reasons and even motives that were often identical to those of the Cubans themselves. A big responsibility also falls upon the revolutionary Marxists, the Trotskyists.

At the hour of defeat the reformists, on the basis of their analysis, draw a conclusion more "optimistic than ever." First, in their laboratory of class conciliation, they "isolate" the "main enemy." Then they demonstrate that whoever is not the main enemy is in fact a "main friend." Hence their policy of alliances, the "antifascist" fronts that they propose, and, going a bit further, the joint work with "progressive" governments of "patriotic" officers and their most "loyal and firm" support to these governments. That is the "realistic" policy of the Communist parties (which has led them to characterize the Chilean coup as the work of a group of "traitorous officers" and to now discover "progressive sectors" within that same military hierarchy). Their strategy: "isolate the main enemy" and then, in alliance with all the other social sectors, "democratize" the situation in order to use interclass alliances to form "broad" fronts that permit them to get into the government and, as they stress in the case of the Chilean elections of 1970, to simultaneously obtain "a piece of political power." In this way they intend to demonstrate the superiority of socialism through economic success and thus to "convince" even sectors of the bourgeoisie of the necessity for a "peaceful transition" and to undertake the struggle for the "second independence."

The meeting of the Chilean Unidad Popular in Berlin, which took place only two weeks after the Havana conference, went in the same direction. In their apology for defeat they called upon the Latin American proletariat to hitch itself to the wagon of the "progressive" military governments and to undertake new adventures of class collaboration by building popular fronts broader than those of the past. Their balance-sheet of the Chilean experience is that the UP was not reformist enough. Today they have taken the road of "rectifying" that error. There is no doubt that this policy of popular fronts of a "new type" will be one of the elements that will mark the political future of Latin America.

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