

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

Leading Mexican Trotskyist arrested

MEXICAN TROTSKYIST Dr. Fausto Davila was arrested by agents of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, Mexico's most brutal group of secret police, on December 2. It is thought that this was a combined state and federal action against one of the best-known working-class leaders in the state of Veracruz. Dr. Davila's present whereabouts are not yet known.

In fact Dr. Davila had left a statement, placed in a prominent position to be found by his wife in the event of his disappearance, saying that he feared he might be detained, tortured and killed.

It is thought that the authorities, who have already carried out a number of arrests, killings and jailings of members of working-class organisations, will attempt to force a 'confession' from Davila linking him with a recent oil refinery explosion or arms smuggling.

Costly blast

The explosion, at the Pemex refinery in Poza Rica—the centre of the oil industry and the area in which Dr. Davila has been living for some time—cost the government more than 12 million US dollars.

At least one worker was killed and many injured in the blast.

The management of Pemex has recently forced workers to weld supposedly empty gas lines with torches. This has led to at least 60 minor explosions. It is also claimed that second-hand equipment in a dangerous condition has been installed at Poza Rica.

It would be convenient for the company to raise the issue of sabotage now, casting Davila in the role of scapegoat.

An investigation was made at the time of the explosion, about three months ago, but possible sabotage was ruled out. People jailed at the time were later released.

The issue of arms smuggling is less clear cut. At about the time of the explosion 'illegal' arms shipments were intercepted near Poza Rica. There is a rumour that these were destined for Mexican campesinos* in Northern Veracruz and that of five shipments only one was captured by the Mexican authorities.

Wider cause

Federal agents may believe, erroneously of course, that Davila was in some way connected with these shipments.

Regardless of these immediate motivations for the detention, it is evident that the basic cause is much wider and of much more importance.

There has been a serious deterioration of the Mexican economy in recent years. This year the Nacional Financiera, the leading financial institution of the country, published statistics to show that the standard of living of the Mexican people has risen by only 148 per cent since 1910.

* Peasants

Since this includes the new Mexican multi-millionaires and the considerable middle class, it is obvious that the workers, excepting favoured categories, have bettered their position hardly at all in the last half century.

Mexico as a whole and Veracruz in particular suffer from the constant widening of price relationship between the manufactured goods that are imported and the raw materials that are exported.

Another feature is the general resurgence of militancy among some workers, a considerable number of campesinos and a great number of students.

Recent months have seen clashes between the federal and state governments and students and campesinos in Sinaloa, Guerrero, Michoagan, Yucatan and the Federal District.

Militancy

Another important factor is the decline of the Stalinists and the Partido Popular Socialista led by Lombardo Toledano.

These parties have recently been revealed as of no use in their traditional role of keeping the masses under control. They are now used by the Mexican government primarily as spies and informers.

Radicalised workers have rejected the Stalinists and have turned markedly towards spontaneous, overt mass actions.

Because of their failure to recognise this the Stalinists and the government have given all the credit for recent actions to the Trotskyists.

The Partido Popular Socialista leader Lombardo Toledano attacked the Trotskyists in particular in the November 2 issue of 'Siempre':

'What does the coalition of the Fourth International, the Spartacist League (Mexican Maoists) and the Communist Party that agree and work for the violent mobilisation of the masses? Do they believe this mobilisation will bring them to power, that they will be able to overthrow the government and replace it? They know this is impossible. Then what is their intention? It is evident they are trying to provoke the government, accusing the President of the Republic of being a dictator . . . in order that the government loses its serenity and takes repressions which would result in civil war, rather than a new revolution, which would result in the intervention of America imperialism in the domestic life of Mexico and the installation of a government of the right. In other words, these groups are working for the counter-revolution.'

With despotic tendencies he has taken unprecedented action against the students and against his rivals within his own party.

tionary action, which they consider 'reactionary'.

The great 'revolutionary' Partido Popular Socialista in fact supported the government candidate and present president of Mexico during the elections. Toledano himself is a congressman.

Parallel with the militant spirit of the masses there is an increasing hardening of the reactionary wing of the government. The President, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, is widely considered the most reactionary president since the 1910-1917 revolution.

With despotic tendencies he has taken unprecedented action against the students and against his rivals within his own party.

Repression

The Federal government, which remains encrusted with fossil Stalinists, and which is headed by a religious reactionary, has a special dislike for people they believe to be responsible for the new militancy.

Government repression of Trotskyists began, however, with the former president, Adolfo Lopez Mateos, who is known to have been a close sympathiser of the Communist Party in his youth, and possibly a member.

He ordered Ruben Jaramillo to be shot by Federal troops. This order was carried out in a particularly violent way—the pregnant wife, being publicly assassinated.

Jaramillo was a very popular and powerful peasant leader in Morelos state. He was the successor of Emiliano Zapata, personally and ideologically

connected with the Mexican Trotskyist movement.

In the last year Diaz Ordaz has jailed a number of people connected with the Trotskyist movement. In the Spring five Mexican and three Argentinian members of the Posadas group accused of smuggling arms into Guatemala were jailed.

Protests

There were international protests at their arrest and torture, but there is still no indication as to when they will be released.

In August Diaz Ordaz jailed Victor Rico Galan and a number of youth alleged to have been fomenting an uprising among the campesinos throughout the Republic.

Rico had been near to the Stalinists, but was close to a public break with them at the time of his arrest.

The arrest of Davila is the most direct blow yet and has fallen on Mexico's most important Trotskyist.

The governor of Veracruz, Lopez Arias, is known as a former member of the Mexican Communist Party and a personal enemy of Davila.

In view of this latest move by the Mexican regime, the international working class must make every possible protest and demand the release of Dr. Davila and all political prisoners.

Letters and telegrams must be sent to the Presidente de la Republica Mexicana, El Palacio Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico, and to the Ambassador, the Mexican Embassy, 48, Belgrave Square, London, S.W.1.

Vietnam's 21st year of war Resistance as strong as ever

Newsletter Correspondent

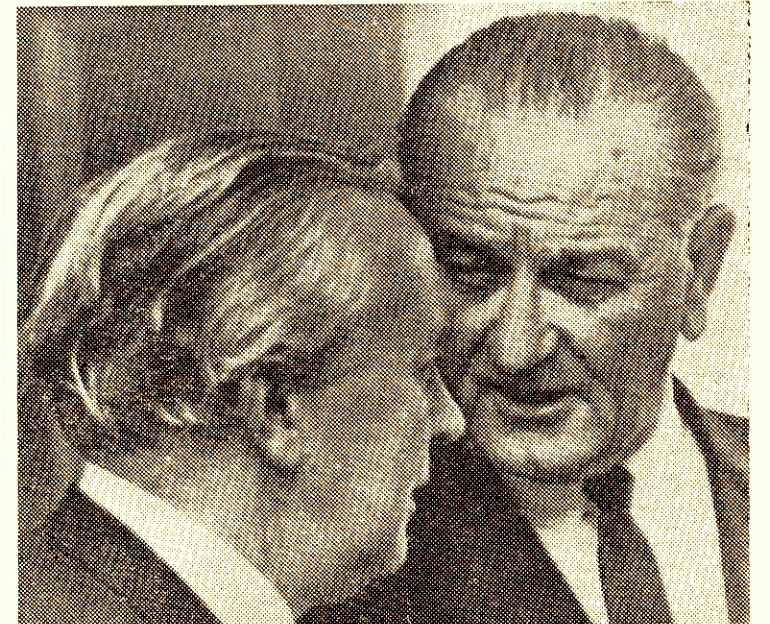
WHEN TUESDAY'S (December 27) 'New York Times' published the dispatch from Harrison Salisbury in North Vietnam, the US State Department was forced to admit that US bombs had dropped on civilian targets.

Salisbury had visited the town of Nam Dinh where 89 people had died as a result of US bombers destroying blocks of houses. Previously the Americans had insisted that only military targets had been attacked.

But the residential areas of Nam Dinh have suffered repeatedly over several months. In the outskirts of Hanoi over

100 people have been killed or wounded in the past two weeks.

President Johnson thus continues his 'double strategy' in Vietnam. On the one hand he talks about the possibility of a negotiated settlement. At the same time, and to the same end, he steps up the brutal attempt of the imperialists to smash the resistance of the Vietnamese workers.



Wilson's government figures prominently in Johnson's Vietnam calculations.

As the war against French and US oppression enters its 21st year, this resistance shows no signs of abating. On the contrary, despite napalm raids, destruction of crops and mass bombing of North Vietnamese cities, the most powerful imperialist state has to throw even greater resources into the fight. In Johnson's calculations, both the Russian and British governments figure prominently. The American aim is to strengthen Russian influence in Hanoi, thus forcing the North Vietnamese to agree to terms.

Settlement?

Perhaps the object is now to get a settlement under which South Vietnam would be guaranteed safe from imperialism.

Of course this would be dressed up in terms of 'free elections' as were the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The United Nations would be employed to carry through this betrayal of the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people, thus releasing the American economy from the crippling burden of the war.

This is where Mr. Wilson comes in. His performances as a 'mediator' have, over the past two years, been well appreciated by his United States creditors.

In the event of a Moscow-Washington deal coming to fruition, Wilson will be called upon once more.

In the course of his previous efforts, Labour MPs with a reputation for leftishness have played an important role. Recall, for example, the farcical 'peace mission' of Harold Davies.

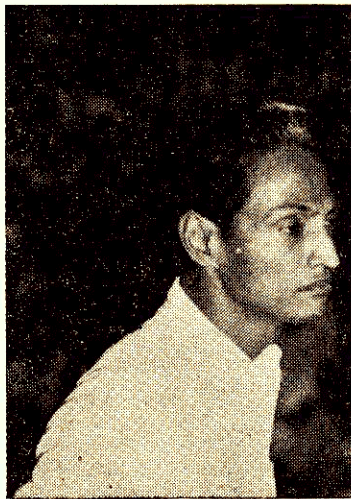
That is why those MPs who say they are against Wilson's backing of US policy must not be allowed to make do with a few protests at the bombing of Hanoi.

Such actions can only assist the treachery of the Labour leaders.

As an accomplice of the butchers of Nam Dinh, Wilson and his supporters must be thrown out of the leadership. A mass campaign on these lines is the way the British working class can best aid the victory of the Vietnamese fighters.

FROM TONY BANDA

CMU now turn the fight to demand nationalization



BALA TAMPOE, general secretary of the CMU

on-the-spot report

PORT BOSSES at Trincomalee, Ceylon, were attempting to starve workers into a submission by locking them out, hoping to initiate an anti-union regime in the port, said Bala Tampoe, general secretary of the powerful Ceylon Mercantile Union, at a rally on November 26.

He was visiting Trincomalee just after the successful conclusion of the CMU strike in Ceylon ports for a new bonus scheme, new parity wage scales, etc.

A demonstration had been arranged for 4 p.m. when the sun begins to set. At the head of this procession, beneath the red silk CMU banner Tampoe marched with committee members of the union's five Trincomalee branches.

Behind them came hundreds of chanting, poster-bearing members—stevedores, dockers, warehousemen, winchmen, tally clerks, in fact, the entire labour force of the port. Finally, bringing up the rear, was a mass of cyclists.

Shouting slogans and lighting fire crackers at every street crossing, they snaked their way through the town's narrow dusty streets gathering strength. Gradually, swelling to several thousand, their slogans met with the support of the local inhabitants, service personnel, small shopkeepers and bystanders, all of them dependent on the docks in this one-industry town.

In Sinhalese and Tamil and sometimes in English they shouted 'Nationalize Trincomalee Port!', 'Out with the contract system!', 'Down With Racism!' and 'Long Live the CMU!'

General meeting

By 5.30 p.m. the demonstration had found its way back to the Trincomalee Maidan Esplanade in the shadow of Fort Frederick for the general meeting. It was growing dark and in anticipation of this the platform was illuminated with festoons of coloured lights.

Speaker after speaker rose to denounce the big imperialist tea and shipping companies, the government, the port contractors and the communal-racialist minded unions.

Puneswaran of the Bank Employees' Union (which has recently had a bitter but indecisive dispute with the banks) pledged the support of his union.

S. G. Hendryk, an ex-leader of the Union of Port Workers, but now a CMU member, traced the history of the union in the port, particularly its struggle to unite the portworkers and thwart the plans of the racialists. He called for the crushing of the Mudalaks (capitalists).

Thankeraja from the Port General Branch denounced the other unions as communal-minded and abetting the employers with their talk that the pace of work in the port was too slow!

The formation of the stevedore pool in early October by all four

port. There were four such contractors, all native capitalists, so the imperialist firms had never entered into direct relationship with the labour force as they had had to in Colombo. Moreover, the mixed composition of the national groups in this area had been and were exploited to pit one worker against another. Each contractor paid different wage rates.

Against this line up of employers there were now three unions, he said. They were the CMU, the UPW (backed by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party [Reformist]) and the ITTK (Tamil Federalist capitalist). The last two are now losing ground to the CMU.

(In fact the CMU can claim 80 per cent to 90 per cent membership in the port. The workers are nearly all first-generation proletarians with peasant backgrounds who have left their villages and home towns in search of employment. As can be expected their's is a hard lot, and this port has its reputation for violence, second to none, where unionisation was achieved at a price. Nonetheless, it seems that the major obstacles to this have been successfully liquidated and the contractors and their imperialist masters face a port which is very nearly completely organised.)

He said that Trincomalee had been a major link in the chain of imperial naval fortresses that girded Asia.

(In fact today it is a run-down, down-at-heel little town, its great concrete fortifications and casements overrun by jungle.)

But, said Tampoe, its port, situated in what must be one of the most sheltered and natural deepwater harbours in the Far East, had found a new use—a new lease of life.

When the East India Squadron was withdrawn at the time of the Bandaranaike regime it was found that the port possessed the facilities for the export of Ceylon's major export and foreign currency earner, tea.

Wages and conditions in Colombo port had decided the major imperialist tea-owning and export businesses to shift to Trincomalee where, they had imagined, they would enjoy greater profits as a result of the lower level of union organisation.

The other main 'advantage' was that whereas Colombo and Galle (a small southern port) were nationalized, Trincomalee was a 'free port', which had meant the employers had done very much as they pleased there.

They had instituted a novel regime of contractors whom they hired to employ labour for the

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Bandaranaike regime, a special rebate on tax of 2 cts. for every pound of tea exported from Trincomalee had been granted. This was aimed at encouraging exporters to use the port.

With the 1964 coalition government the rebate had been abolished and the subsequent United National Party government had continued this practice.

It was reliably reported that the major imperialist firms had precipitated the present situation in the port in order to force the government to restore the rebate and break the unions, thus killing two birds with one stone.

Important factor

But the employers had reckoned without the one important factor—the CMU. Tea that was not exported through Trincomalee had to go through Colombo. There the CMU was all powerful, particularly after the recent strike victory. The employers would meet a complete embargo in that port if they did not settle up in Trincomalee, he said.

The government was hesitant as usual, caught up between the obviously just demands of the workers, which had the support of sections of the middle class as well, and the pressure of the imperialist interests, who, by twisting the arm of the government financially (by halting a greater part of the country's tea exports) hoped to extort the 2 cts. rebate and more.

Bala Tampoe concluded by saying that the imperialists had decided to starve the workers into submission. It was the CMU alone that could defend them. He called on the workers to place no trust in the capitalist parties and if the Trincomalee workers were prepared to fight to the end then Colombo would go 'the whole hog'.

He warned that there was still a state of emergency in Ceylon when a strike could be illegalised and its leaders jailed simply by the placing of a notice in the government gazette.

The British imperialists, he said, would ride the government as they had done all previous governments. They had a stranglehold on the country and the UNP government was very reluctant to

Instant dismissal

On November 12, said Tampoe, over a thousand portworkers had been given instant dismissal on the grounds that the firms could not pay them.

To make matters worse, it was the time of the Hindu festival, Deepavali, when workers were normally paid an advance on their wages. What was worst of all was that their entire wages for October were never paid.

The contractors had decamped fearing the wrath of the workers. It was clear that the employers hoped that a great part of the labour force would return to their homes during what amounts to a protracted lock-out and then introduce an anti-union regime in the port.

The government, he said, had played a non-committal, 'neutral' role.

But behind the lock out was another issue. Under the first

Outlook for 1967

From page 1

Stalinist movements that we are able to estimate the support which the Socialist Workers' Party recently extended to the Stalinist candidate Aptheker in the New York elections.

These renegade Trotskyists have, like their ally Pierre Frank, joined the Gaullist block. In this way, and in the name of pacifist opposition to the war in Vietnam, they are in fact strengthening the counter revolution. But this is only one side of the coin.

On the other side we have the growing crisis of world imperialism, the development of large-scale unemployment in the metropolitan countries of Western Europe, the continued nervous economic reaction on the part of Wall Street towards its own future. More and more the ruling class and their labour and Stalinist agents are preparing repressive legislation against the independence of the working class.

More and more, and especially in Britain, the working class is being driven along the road of independent class action. The slightest victory achieved by this great movement in its struggle against British imperialism will do more than a hundred thousand war crime investigations into what is happening in Vietnam.

The defence of the Vietnamese revolution begins at home in the fight against our own bourgeoisie. Because of the mass movement now growing in Britain as well as in Western Europe the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants will be strengthened a thousand-fold in the coming period.

All those Marxists who dedicate themselves to the building of independent revolutionary parties based upon the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International and the present policies of its International Committee, which carries on Trotsky's work, will, we are convinced, contribute greatly to this struggle during 1967.

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