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## palestine:



## the turn of the plo

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## FAMINE AND RECESSION

The world food conference, which ended November 14 in Rome, took a frightening inventory of the beginning of famine in the world and the threat of its extension. In face of this inventory, the decision taken to establish a world stock of food reserves remains fraught with so much uncertainty, and so many preconditions nowhere near being met, that there are grounds for serious doubt that the decision will ever be implemented.

The attempt to cast responsibility for the looming famine on natural catastrophes or the population explosion is fundamentally deceitful. Leaving aside some very long-term predictions that are generally based on extrapolations devoid of any scientific rigor, it is a simple fact that the present world population could be well fed without exceptional effort on the basis of existing agricultural technology if world food production were planned and determined by the priority of feeding all humanity instead of by the priority of profitability.

The absurd and inhuman character of the capitalist economy is more striking in the realm of food production than in any other. The big cereal-exporting countries (mainly the United States, Canada, Australia, and Argentina) have deliberately practiced agricultural Malthusianism, and have deliberately reduced their food production with the sole aim of "preventing a collapse of prices."

In these four countries, the total land under cultivation was reduced from 120 million acres to 81 million acres between 1968 and 1970 in order to

make prices rise on the world market. Prices did in fact rise. By 1973 they had increased 100 percent compared with 1970. But the reduction in the cultivation of cereals had reduced world stocks by some 90 million metric tons between 1969 and 1972, a reduction that is being cruelly felt today. It can be affirmed that every man, woman, and child who dies of hunger anywhere in the world this year is a victim of the monstrous absurdity of a system that produces food not to feed the human race but to reap maximum profits for the capitalist exporters, for agribusiness, and for the big cereal producers.

There is no doubt that the increase in the price of oil has hit poor countries like those of the Indian subcontinent, of the Sahel zone in Africa, and of Latin America with particular gravity. The irrigation pumps are run by electricity produced by generators that usually run on gas and oil. The price increases for petroleum products impose an intolerable burden on these systems and thus have the effect of reducing agricultural productivity and thereby agricultural production.

But even heavier is the burden imposed by the increase in the price of chemical fertilizer on which the so-called green revolution was largely based. The exorbitant profits of the companies producing and exporting fertilizer are not going to "oil sheikhs" but rather to good old imperialist trusts.

In a noteworthy article published in the May 16, 1974, New York Review of Books, Emma Rothschild stressed that in 1973 alone U.S. food exports to the semicolonial countries brought in more than \$3.4 thousand million; exports of chemical fertilizers by all the imperialist countries to the semicolonial countries brought in more than \$3.8 thousand million during the same year. In apportioning "responsibility" for the current famine, this \$7 thousand million must be compared with the \$1.2 thousand million the poor countries paid out for imports of petroleum products. cont'd. on pg.31

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# palestinian ministate:



## the turn of the PLO

by JON ROTHSCHILD

Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was received as a head of state by the United Nations General Assembly in New York City on November 13. A month earlier, on October 14, the General Assembly had voted overwhelmingly (105-4, with 20 abstentions) to invite the PLO to participate as the representative of the Palestinian people in the UN session's debate on Palestine. The October UN vote was followed by several other milestones in the PLO's march toward international recognition. On October 21 French Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues held a formal meeting with Arafat in Beirut and emerged from the discussion describing Arafat as "realistic," "moderate," and "a statesman." On October 28 the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization voted to invite the PLO to its general conference with observer status. On October 28 the Eighth Arab Summit voted a resolution designating the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Already this year, PLO delegations have attended the world conference on maritime law held in Caracas, the world conference on population in Bucharest, and the world food conference in Rome.

But the UN appearance was the high point. "For Arafat to go to New York," said a PLO spokesman, "is like a commando operation in Tel Aviv." At the UN Arafat was escorted into the hall by the

UN's chief of protocol. He was given a prolonged ovation by the delegates, with only a few exceptions. (The Israeli delegation had left the room.) "I have come," Arafat said in his speech, "bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."

The international recognition the PLO has been gathering during the past few months represents a political defeat for the Israeli state. It has always been a cardinal point of official Zionist policy and ideology that there was no such thing as a Palestinian people (only "Arab refugees") and that the entire Palestinian movement (in whatever form and under whatever program and leadership) was nothing but a band of bloodthirsty gangsters impervious to human reason. The Israeli delegation opposed inviting the PLO to New York on exactly that basis. When the vote came, Tel Aviv's only allies were the American, Bolivian, and Dominican Republic delegations, all three representatives of governments whose commitment to human rights in general and the fight against anti-Semitism in particular are world-famous. The diplomatic defeats for the Zionist state on the question of the status of the PLO are continuations of the political defeat represented by the October War of 1973. They likewise reflect the increasing strength and influence on the international scene of the Arab ruling classes. They do not, however, represent victories

for the Palestinian liberation movement or for the struggle for the Arab socialist revolution, of which the Palestinian movement is a part.

Moreover, the isolation of the Zionist state and the political changes going on among the Palestinian leadership raise the very real danger of a new explosion of war in the Arab East — in spite of the continuing diplomatic whirl and the PLO's offer of the olive branch.

### The PLO: how big a turn?

The international recognition of the PLO has been accompanied by the discovery by people like Giscard's foreign minister that the leadership of the PLO is not so revolutionary after all. It has also been accompanied by a serious turn in the strategy of the PLO, a turn that will be manifested by the PLO leadership's *de facto* recognition of the existence of the Zionist state. The preparation for that turn by the PLO has generated crises and shake-ups within the Palestinian movement, and it will undoubtedly continue to do so. That much has been noted by nearly everybody, both among the international revolutionary movement and among its opponents. But what has not been noticed so clearly (and is nevertheless crucial for understanding the evolution of the Palestinian movement and the tasks of revolutionary Marxists within it) is the essential political continuity of the politics of the PLO leadership.

The present Palestinian organizations emerged as mass movements in the wake of the defeat of June 1967, which exposed the bankruptcy of the Arab regimes and their inability to defend the Arab nation against Zionist aggression or still less to wage a real struggle against the Israeli state. Before 1967 the PLO was a creature of the League of Arab States. It was a body with no mass base and functioned under the direct political tutelage of the Nasser regime. The discredit that fell upon the Nasser government because of the 1967 debacle also enveloped the old PLO.

But to the surprise of the Israeli rulers, the 1967 war did not result in the demoralization of the Arab masses. During 1967 and 1968 organizations that had hitherto been small and relatively inactive picked up the challenge posed by the defeat and began to wage armed actions against the newly expanded borders of the Israeli state. By the spring of 1968, the new Palestinian movement had become a mass force in the Arab East. The PLO was shunted to the side. In its place emerged Fateh, the largest of the Palestinian organizations, and a number of other formations that grew out of the old Arab Nationalist Movement (such as the Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine, led by George Habash, and the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a split from the PFLP led by Nayef Hawatmeh).

Fateh, the organization that is headed by Arafat and has since taken over the PLO, differed from the pre-1967 PLO in three fundamental ways. First, Fateh based itself on the notion of independence from the Arab regimes. The concept that the Palestinian liberation struggle had to be led by the Palestinians themselves and not by other Arab governments, whose lack of ability or desire to combat Zionism had been demonstrated only too amply, was central to the ideology of Fateh. Second, while the old PLO restricted its activities to the diplomatic and propaganda arena, Fateh relied on mobilization of the masses of Palestinian refugees, stressing the idea that if the liberation of Palestine could not be carried out by the Arab regimes, the task would have to be accomplished by the armed struggle of the Palestinians themselves. Thus, Fateh called for people's war against the Israeli state apparatus, and it defined itself as part of the worldwide struggle of the colonial world against imperialism. Third, and most important, Fateh carried out its words in practice. It did not restrict itself to explaining the need for armed struggle; it waged it. And not without considerable success.

Throughout the latter half of 1968, all of 1969, and most of 1970, the Palestinian fedayeen waged daily raids on Israeli border patrols and occupying forces, inflicting casualties that were not at all insignificant in a country whose total population is only around 3 million. Fateh's power of attraction (and that of all the other organizations of the Palestinian resistance movement) was based on the fact that it was actually waging a fight against Zionism; that is, it was the embodiment of the revolutionary will of the Palestinian and all the Arab masses to destroy the apparatus most directly responsible for their oppression: the Israeli state.

In all these respects, the post-1967 Palestinian movement represented important advances for the Arab revolution. Nevertheless, from the very outset, the movement (or rather, the dominant section of it, represented by Fateh) suffered from weaknesses that limited its revolutionary role and were destined to clash even with Fateh's three basic ideas as enumerated above. The essence of those weaknesses can be summed up in this way: Fateh's political program never went beyond bourgeois nationalism (as expressed in the organization's programmatic goal: a democratic, secular state in Palestine). At the same time, the social base of the organization was limited to refugees, a fact that played the positive role of endowing Fateh with the revolutionary audacity characteristic of those who have nothing to lose, but also gener-

ated an ultimatum that left an unbridgeable gulf between the armed struggle itself and the ultimate programmatic goal. To put it another way, Fateh was an organization that was leading a mass movement but was unable to offer that movement either a revolutionary-socialist program to orient the movement's general strategy or a transitional program able to extend the base of the movement and lead it through the complexities of the social and political struggle of the region.

This fundamental weakness was expressed in a number of specific propositions that became principles of the Fateh leadership. First there was the principle of "noninterference" in the affairs of Arab governments. In reality, this meant that Fateh would not attempt to take an active part in political struggles in Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria (not to mention Egypt). A corollary principle was that the Palestinian struggle, while fraternally related to the more general Arab struggle, was nevertheless distinct from it. In practice, this meant that the ties between Jordanian peasants and Palestinian refugees in Jordan, for example, were held to be solely Platonic. On the one hand, Fateh consistently opposed Palestinian participation in peasant struggles in Jordan and Lebanon (on the grounds of "noninterference"); and on the other hand, Fateh never encouraged Jordanian or Lebanese peasants to mobilize actively against their own governments in support of the Palestinian struggle (on the grounds of Palestinian specificity).

The concepts of noninterference in the affairs of Arab states and of Palestinian particularism were direct products of Fateh's bourgeois political program. That program envisaged the possibility of destroying the Zionist state without a thoroughgoing revolution in the social relations prevailing in the Arab East. In fact, the Fateh leaders regarded the struggle against the Zionist state fundamentally as a struggle to eliminate from Palestine one of the backward social forces that had already been eliminated from countries like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq; namely, a religious community with a communal leadership enjoying vast privileges. The Israeli Jews were conceived of as simply a collection of co-religionists, not as a nationality. The Zionist state was regarded as an extreme form of religious communalism that had been imposed on Palestine by imperialism, which the Fateh leaders understood as an essentially political phenomenon consisting of the domination of weak nations by strong ones. Thus, to the Fateh leaders, the struggle against the Zionist state represented a convergence of the struggle against imperialism and the struggle against communalism; the goal was a sweeping secularization, that is, the abolition of religious privilege and of the Zionist-enforced isolation of the Jewish and

Muslim communities from each other. That is, the goal of the struggle was to democratize and secularize Palestine in the same way Egypt had been democratized and secularized by the Nasserist revolution or Iraq democratized and secularized after the destruction of the monarchy in 1958. The future liberated Palestine, ruled by a democratic and secular state, would take its place among the modernized, anti-imperialist states of the rest of the Arab world and of the entire "third world."

This political program, which served to isolate the Palestinian struggle from the workers and peasants struggle in the rest of the Arab East, also had immediate implications for the day-to-day conduct of the struggle. The masses of Palestinians in the refugee camps who rallied to the banner of the resistance movement (and especially to Fateh) were attracted to the movement not because it was preaching democracy, but because it was actually waging a real struggle against the Israeli state. When they entered Fateh, they were educated in the spirit of its program. But by its very nature, that program held out no possibility for the mobilization of the Palestinians around transitional demands. It barred the Palestinians from merging with the mass movements of the Arab countries surrounding Israel. It excluded the possibility of trying to draw the Israeli working masses into the struggle against Zionism, holding a position on the Israeli-Jews that was not entirely free of chauvinism. It directed the Palestinian masses solely toward the organization of the refugee camps so that they might become bases for the armed struggle against the Israeli state. As necessary as that armed struggle was and is, alone it was in no way sufficient for maintaining the mobilization of the Palestinian masses either in the refugee camps or in the territories under Israeli occupation.

The dominant section of the Palestinian resistance movement (that is, Fateh) suffered from a profound contradiction. The political program and strategic goal of the movement was bourgeois in nature, objectively expressing the class interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie in exile. Objectively, the call for a democratic, secular state in Palestine meant the establishment of another bourgeois state, with its own class structure, national anthem, and seat in the United Nations. The leadership of the movement was petty bourgeois in composition and political consciousness. The social base of the movement lay among the declassed elements of the refugee camps; through 1967-1970 it never penetrated the Palestinian workers and peasants of the occupied territory in any serious way. This profound contradiction between program and base was to render the movement incapable of meeting the challenge of its tasks.

## The first crisis

Despite the intentions of the Fateh leadership, the dynamic of the Palestinian struggle inevitably clashed with the ruling classes of the Arab states within which the movement was functioning. The strongest base of the movement throughout 1968, 1969, and most of 1970 was Jordan, more than half of whose population is Palestinian. As the resistance movement grew, it progressively took over administration of the refugee camps. In defending itself against Israeli attacks and against attempts by the Jordanian regime to restrict its military operations against Israel, the movement found itself compelled increasingly to take administrative control over the western sections of Jordan. By the middle of 1970, the fedayeen had more than 10,000 people under arms; a situation of dual power was emerging in Jordan. The more advanced sections of the Palestinian movement took steps to extend that situation. Popular militias were formed alongside the "full-time" guerrillas. In some areas, popular councils were created that represented potential organs of state power. The regime of King Hussein stood in serious danger.

The leaders of Fateh, prisoners of their conceptions of noninterference in the affairs of Arab states and of Palestinian particularism, were completely unprepared for the intensity and barbarism of Hussein's response to the threat to his rule. In September 1970, when Hussein's army launched its assault on the Palestinian refugee camps, the resistance found itself facing an enemy of overwhelming superiority in troops and equipment. The fedayeen were isolated from the only force that could have saved them: the Jordanian peasantry and proletariat. The result was the destruction of the military power of the resistance, its political elimination from Jordan (followed in 1971 by its physical elimination), and the murder by Hussein's troops of as many as 10,000 Palestinians.

Hussein's victory in the 1970 civil war inaugurated a general shift to the right in the politics of the Arab East. But not only that. It also cut the resistance movement off from its main social base, the refugees living in Jordan. And it eliminated any possibility of the fedayeen continuing their Jordan-based armed actions against the Israeli military. The center of the resistance movement shifted to Lebanon.

In the wake of the Jordanian civil war, the leaders of the Palestinian movement were faced with a critical choice. Sections of the movement produced impressive analyses of the reasons for the defeat in Jordan. But the majority of the leadership, especially the Fateh leadership, chose to maintain its old policy and simply adapt it slightly to the new circumstances. The policy of "noninterference"

was continued — this time in Lebanon. The fedayeen in Lebanon remained just as isolated from the struggles of the Lebanese peasants as they had been from the Jordanian peasants. When the Lebanese government assaulted the fedayeen camps (acting under the same sort of compulsion as Hussein had), the Fateh leaders sought to avoid a repetition of the Jordanian defeat by consistently making concessions to the regime, promising to restrict operations against the Israeli army, and decisively rejecting any "interference" in Lebanese politics. With armed actions from Jordan out of the question and those from Lebanon vastly reduced, the resistance movement stood in danger of losing its major power of attraction for the Palestinian masses: the fact that it was waging an armed struggle against the Israeli state.

Deprived of its mass base and in danger of falling under the tutelage of the Arab regimes in the same way the old PLO did, the resistance movement tried to assert itself, maintain its appeal, and prevent the Palestinian problem from being again shunted aside. It continued the armed struggle in the only way it could: small but spectacular actions carried out by teams of guerrillas. Politically, the Fateh leadership defended itself by falling back on ultimatic pronouncements bordering on bombast, declaring repeatedly that there could be no settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict without liberation of all of Palestine and putting diplomatic pressure on the Arab states to prevent them from initiating any settlement behind the backs of the Palestinian people. The resistance movement stood at an impasse. It was unable to continue the struggle against the Israeli state the way it had before. At the same time, the leadership of the movement, steadfastly maintaining the old combination of a bourgeois political program and day-to-day ultimatism, was unable to develop any new ways of continuing the struggle.

## October 1973

The October War of 1973 changed the whole situation. The results of the war and the emergence of an Arab finance capital with substantial power in international politics placed the problem of finding a "peaceful settlement" of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the order of the day. (See INPRECOR, No.3, July 4, "Eight Months After the October War: A New Situation Emerging," and No.10, October 17, "An Arab and Iranian Finance Capital Emerges.")

In the immediate aftermath of the War, the resistance leadership issued a few of its usual pronouncements ("For us there is no cease-fire," "The resistance recognizes no disengagement," etc.). But as soon as it became clear that there was a real possi-



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**“the thing that gave Fateh its revolutionary content was... the fact that it was waging a struggle against imperialism & zionism in real life.”**

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bility of an Israeli withdrawal from some of the territory seized during the 1967 aggression, the resistance leadership began to alter its position. The central operating concept became preventing Hussein from reestablishing control over any territory the Zionist state might be compelled to relinquish on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The drive of the PLO to gain recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (the next logical step in which is the establishment of a Palestinian government in exile) does not represent any change in Fateh's programmatic goal. It is simply the continuation and application to the current circumstances of the organization's basic precepts ever since its foundation: independence from the Arab regimes and confinement of the Palestinian struggle to the limits of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The establishment of a government in exile and the drive to establish a Palestinian state on any territory from which the Israeli army withdraws flow from Fateh's strategic policy with iron logic. Under the present circumstances fighting for a state on the West Bank is simply the most effective way of continuing the struggle for a democratic, secular state in Palestine. The fight for the West Bank state expresses on the one hand the real advance that the post-1967 resistance leadership represented over the old PLO. (The old PLO of Shukhairy would undoubtedly have accepted Hussein's recovery of the West Bank in exchange for the appointment of a few PLO officials to posts in the Jordanian government. There can be no doubt at all

that such a solution would be the one preferred by all the Arab states of the region, with the exception of Syria. The Shukhairy PLO would have engaged in no battle with the Hussein regime over control of the West Bank.) On the other hand, it expresses the fundamental incapacity of a bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leadership to lead a consistent struggle against Zionism — for the very simple reason that such a struggle requires a struggle against capitalist social relations throughout the Arab region. The acceptance of a West Bank ministate by the PLO (which implies acceptance for a certain time of the existence of the Zionist state and the repression of all those not inclined to go along with that policy) is, to be sure, a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. But it is a betrayal that derives not from the PLO's abandonment of its earlier positions but rather from the continuity of those positions. It is the inevitable betrayal by a bourgeois leadership of the struggle for national liberation in the era of imperialism.

The leadership of the PLO still holds to its long-term goal of establishing a democratic, secular state in Palestine. In any case, that is what Arafat said at the United Nations. And there is no reason not to believe him on this score. For the Fateh leadership, the democratic, secular state was never conceived of as a transitional or immediate demand. It was the programmatic goal, the ultimate target. In the past, the Fateh leaders believed that conditions in the Arab East were such that this goal could

be achieved only through people's war. Now they believe that it can be achieved through a peaceful evolution beginning from the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. "War is the worst way to solve our problems with the Israelis," a Palestinian leader told Washington Post correspondent Jim Hoagland. "If we can live in peace with the Israelis as good neighbors for a number of years, social changes could produce the results we want."

What the PLO's new turn amounts to is not an abandonment of its previous program, but an abandonment of the concept (and practice) of achieving it through armed struggle. The most decisive aspect of this turn is that the thing that gave Fateh its revolutionary content was not its program, but rather the fact that it was waging a struggle against imperialism and Zionism in real life. It is just this struggle that the PLO is now prepared to abandon. That is where the betrayal lies.

The inability of the opponents of the new turn within the Palestinian movement to understand this point is what makes them incapable of counterposing a coherent strategy to Arafat's. The organizations of the "Front of Refusal" (which is led by Habash's PFLP and supported by the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front) have condemned the PLO's acceptance of the West Bank state. But they have done so simply on the basis of asserting that the resistance must continue doing today what it used to do in the past. No explanation for the past defeats has been offered. No way out of the pre-October War impasse has been projected. Thus, the members of the Front of Refusal, while they do give expression in a distorted form to Palestinian opposition to the PLO's turn, are defenseless against the charge raised by Arafat that they are "unrealistic" and "utopian." For the Palestinian movement, the way out of the present difficulties does not lie in a return to the bankrupt past.

### Rabat and after

Three positions were taken during the maneuvering that preceded the Rabat summit's decision to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The first was the camp represented by Hussein. This camp rejects establishment of another state between Israel and Jordan. It counterposes maintenance of Jordanian rule over the Palestinians in one form or another (formation of a federated Palestinian-Jordanian state under Hussein's domination, reestablishment of a united Jordanian state with a token Palestinian ministry, etc.). The second camp advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank, a new Palestinian entity that would "ingather" the Pales-

stinian exiles and transform the refugees into producers in a capitalist state. This camp was composed of the majority of the PLO leadership (including Arafat), the Syrian government, and the Lebanese government. These two regimes see the Palestinian ministate as a convenient means of inducing some of the refugees to leave Syria and Lebanon, where they exacerbate the unemployment problem and act as a source of continuous political disturbances. This camp is also supported by the Soviet bureaucracy, which views the establishment of a West Bank state as a means of defusing the revolutionary potential of the Palestinian movement and of promoting a potentially friendly state in the region that could be useful in countering U.S. penetration of the Arab East.

Between these two camps was an intermediary one, the main members of which were Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Sadat's principal concerns in the negotiations now under way are to recover enough of the occupied Sinai peninsula to pacify the Egyptian population and to obtain the PLO's approval for his negotiating stance so as to provide himself with a left cover. Sadat recognized that it would be easier to move to the next step of the negotiating process if the PLO were included in the Jordanian delegation to the Geneva conference, a solution the Israeli regime would be more inclined to accept than that of negotiating with an independent Palestinian delegation. Faisal was also favorable to working out a compromise between the PLO and Hussein, since Hussein represents a more reliable and stable force than does the PLO.

Forcing the Rabat summit to endorse the PLO rather than Hussein as the rightful representative of the people of the West Bank thus required a struggle. The PLO itself was divided on how to deal with the situation. The pro-Saudi wing of Fateh, inclined to seek a compromise between the PLO and Hussein, clashed with the wing of Fateh led by Abu Iyad, which has been the most vigorous advocate of the West Bank state. In this situation, a section of the left wing of Fateh friendly to the Front of Refusal was won over to the Abu Iyad position on the grounds that Hussein's plan was the "main enemy." Thus, the majority of the PLO leadership was won over to the Abu Iyad position. The PLO leaders then firmly rejected the Hussein plan and any suggestion that a compromise could be reached bridging Hussein's position and the position favoring a West Bank state. Once the PLO leadership had stood its ground, Sadat and Faisal had no choice but to back up the PLO. Hussein became completely isolated, and the PLO was endorsed as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people. Arafat's appearance at the United Nations was a means of solidifying the decision of



the Rabat summit so as to prevent Sadat or Faisal from undoing it in the future.

The UN speech, then, marked a turn in the PLO's diplomatic struggle. The PLO has now achieved what appears to be decisive recognition from the Arab states. (The summit decided that the PLO, in its capacity as the representative of an embattled country, was entitled to a grant from the oil producing countries. It was set at \$50 million, which we assume will adequately cover operating expenses.) The next step for the PLO is to obtain the same sort of recognition from American imperialism in order that Washington may order Tel Aviv to negotiate with the PLO over the future of the West Bank. For that, however, Arafat will have to come up with some serious guarantees. And therein lies the problem.

The establishment of a Palestinian ministate between Israel and Jordan is in no way incompatible with the interests of U.S. imperialism, provided such a state would not serve as a focus of political upheaval and revolutionary agitation. Washington's basic concern is to maintain capitalist exploitation and political stability in the region. Both the Israeli state and the Hussein regime have demonstrated that they can do this and do it well. The PLO has made no such demonstration. It is not difficult to imagine what the PLO will have to do if it is to win Washington's confidence. First, it will have to formally renounce armed struggle as a means of liberating Palestine. This Arafat has already come close to doing. In an interview with the American television network ABC granted just before he left for New York, Arafat said: "As the chief of the PLO I accept no terrorist action. I say categorically, terrorism is incompatible with our humanitarian principles. It is not possible for us to adopt terrorism, especially against civilians." His remark about the olive branch and the freedom-fighter's gun has an analogous meaning: If Washington can convince the Israeli regime to be reasonable, the PLO will abandon armed actions; if Washington cannot do this, the armed actions will be continued as a way of putting pressure on both Washington and Tel Aviv.

But more than that will be necessary. The PLO will also have to prove that it is capable of repressing those forces in the Palestinian movement that are not willing to accept the West Bank state or the formal cessation of armed struggle. Moreover, should American imperialism decide that the PLO is serious about its commitment and ability to meet these guarantees and should the Israeli state actually be compelled to cede some of the West Bank to the PLO, there will be a standing threat by Washington or Tel Aviv to militarily intervene swiftly and massively if the PLO were ever to prove ineffective in suppressing the revolutionary move-

ment in the new Palestinian state. The fedayeen who yesterday had pointed their Kalashnikov rifles against the occupying troops of the Israeli army would have to point them instead at the Arab workers and peasants of the West Bank. The armed forces of the PLO would be transformed into the guardians of bourgeois law and order, much as the Bengali Mukti Bahini were transformed into the shock troops of the Mujibur Rehman regime after Bangladesh won its independence.

A Palestinian state in the West Bank established under such conditions would in no way be a step forward for the Palestinian liberation movement or for the Arab revolutionary struggle. It would rest on the political (and perhaps physical) elimination of the Arab vanguard, the demobilization of the Palestinian masses, the de facto recognition of the security of the Zionist state, and the liquidation of the Palestinian cause as a mobilizing factor in the Arab East as a whole. It is only under such conditions that U.S. imperialism would tolerate the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. The state would not have been won through struggle, but through an agreement (backed up by the threat of armed force) to cease the struggle. The winners in such a settlement would be American imperialism, the Arab bourgeoisie (including its Palestinian component), and the Zionist ruling class. The Palestinian masses would be the losers.

Whether this project can be brought to fruition, however, is entirely another question. The sudden increase in mass activity against the Israeli occupation among the Arabs of the West Bank, which has now attained its highest level since 1967, demonstrates that the PLO may have serious difficulties in proving its ability to contain the struggle of the masses. The PLO is seeking to use that struggle as a means of exerting pressure on Washington and Tel Aviv in its fight for direct negotiations between the PLO and the Israeli state. But to whatever extent that struggle gets out of the control of the PLO, Washington and Tel Aviv will be that much less inclined to accept the PLO's guarantees. Paradoxically, the mobilization of the Palestinian masses of the West Bank in favor of the PLO's project may be the very factor that prevents the project from being realized. The PLO leadership has made its intentions clear. But between intention and capacity there is a wide gulf.

## Toward a fifth war

The danger of a fifth Arab-Israeli war derives fundamentally from the crisis now racking Israeli society. Tel Aviv's international isolation, reflected in the UN vote on the PLO, is virtually complete. The political crisis of the ruling class provoked by the "earthquake" of the October War and its after-

math has steadily deepened. (See "One Year After the 'Earthquake,'" INPRECOR, No.11, October 31.) Now, the economic crisis has provoked government measures whose effects on the Israeli masses will be nothing short of catastrophic. On the morning of November 10 the Israeli pound was devalued 42 percent, one of the largest single currency devaluations in the recent history of capitalism. In addition, a series of measures were taken that the government deemed "necessary to the success of the devaluation." The price of bread was doubled, the price of sugar tripled; the price of cooking oil went from £1.05 to £2.60; the prices of water, gas, and electricity for home consumption increased by nearly 100%. Import of thirty so-called luxury items (including automobiles and televisions) was suspended for six months; taxes on thirty-nine other items were increased by 10-20%. The travel tax (charged for taking a trip out of the country) was increased by 25% and from 10% to 15% of the fare. State food subsidies were cut in half. The price of meat was raised to an average of nearly \$5 a pound. According to the government's own statistics, the cost of living went up by 17% in one day! And this in a country in which retail prices have already risen 34% since January 1974 and in which the inflation rate could reach 50% next year! As if to leave no doubt about where the government's priorities lay, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin also announced that the "defense" budget, which accounted for 17% of the gross national product before the October War, would increase to 33%.

Minister of Finance Yehoshua Rabinovitz explained that the measures of "austerity" were essential for stopping the "hemorrhage" of currency. Israel's balance of payments deficit for 1974 is expected to be more than \$3.5 thousand million, three times what it was in 1972. Currency reserves have been halved during the past ten months (to \$900 million) and the country is already \$6 thousand million in debt. "If this hemorrhage had continued," Rabinovitz said, "in six months our economy would have suffered terrible upheavals, and we would have had 100,000 unemployed." "The immediate aim," commented the November 16 issue of the British weekly *The Economist*, "is to improve Israel's balance of payments by \$700 million a year, by a sharp cut in private consumption of some \$1 billion (milliard) a year. Although special taxes have been slapped on banks and insurance companies, and capital gains tax is being increased to 50 per cent, it is the wage-earner and housewife who will feel the new austerity most."

Moreover, the crisis is not simply conjunctural. "Until last year," *The Economist* wrote, "Israel had always been able to cover its trade deficit rather easily from international aid, funds raised by world Jewry, and government bond sales. Not so this year.

American assistance, now running at a record \$900 million a year in grants and \$400 million in loans, plus world Jewish support — likely to touch \$600 million — add up to \$1.9 billion. But the likely deficit is \$3.5 billion.

"Before it all happened, devaluation fears had led to a build-up of speculative positions against the Israeli pound. Unwinding these should lead to an inflow of \$400 million. International aid agencies, which have long disapproved of Israel's spendthrift economy, may also now lend some help. The International Monetary Fund, for example, has just announced a \$39 million loan to Israel. But it is doubtful if the traditionally vital support raised by charity from international Jewry will pick up yet. Wealthy individuals, mostly in the United States, are themselves reeling from inflation and collapsing world stock exchanges. Recent financial scandals in Israel have not helped either."

Under these circumstances, the declaration of the devaluation and the austerity measures were so universally detested that even the Histadrut, the so-called trade-union that is actually a pillar of the state apparatus, felt obliged to issue a protest. Workers from the Hatikvah quarter — the worst slum in Tel Aviv, inhabited mostly by Sephardic Jews — acted more directly. They took to the streets, stoning buses and stopping traffic. Later, about 300 workers from the same neighborhood attacked police guarding stores and broke into several stores, carrying off whatever they could get. A battle with the riot police took place: about thirty people were reported arrested. The November 12 *Le Monde* reported that strikes took place in several factories to protest the austerity measures.

The combination of the economic and political crisis is a deadly one for the Israeli ruling class. The intensity of the economic disaster is obviously rooted in Israel's character as a Zionist state — the enormous military budget and the economic isolation of the country from the neighboring countries being the two clearest Zionist-determined causes of the crisis. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the ruling class to stifle opposition to the government's various economic measures on the grounds that national unity against the Arab aggressor must be preserved.

The most obvious solution to the crisis would be for the United States to bail Israel out of its economic difficulties. In exchange, Washington would require political concessions from the Israeli regime, possibly including recognition of the PLO as a negotiating partner in one form or another, due regard being given to Tel Aviv's need for a face-saving formula. (Negotiations between Israel and a "united" Arab delegation including members of the PLO

might be such a formula.) Over the long term, Washington could point out to Tel Aviv, a general settlement of the conflict in the region with the establishment of a Palestinian ministate of the sort described above could allow Israel to reduce its defense budget vastly. This could go a long way toward easing both the political and economic crisis.

This sort of solution is clearly the one desired by U.S. imperialism, which still has to rely on Israel as its most reliable gendarme in the Arab East and has no desire to see its junior partner suffer economic collapse. It is also a solution that could look very attractive to wide sectors of the Israeli ruling class. In fact, if Israel were a normal bourgeois

through such colonization (which is true). It has created a chauvinist hysteria against the PLO in particular and the Palestinians in general that the government itself is now a prisoner of. Additionally, a substantial sector of the Israeli ruling class, including a good number of leading generals, is prepared to take any measure necessary to block the developing negotiation process. These sectors, personified by the maniacal General Ariel Sharon and supported by leading Labor party figures such as Moshe Dayan, dream of returning to the swaggering arrogance of 1967-1973 by unleashing yet another blitzkrieg against the Arab states. They reason that if such a war were launched, U.S. imperialism would have no choice but to accept the fait accompli and back up Israel with all the weapons it would need. And they are probably right.

The immediate danger derives from this: The peculiarities of the Zionist state are such that the combination of economic and political crisis, international diplomatic isolation, and the conjuncturally favorable military relationship of forces could lead a decisive sector of the Israeli ruling class to reject Yassir Arafat's olive branch and Henry Kissinger's charm and opt instead for yet another lightning war of aggression. It is hardly necessary to dwell on the threats involved in such an action.

The Arab East today stands not merely at a crossroads but on a razor's edge. The alternative to a new conflagration appears to be a historic attempt to impose the "peaceful solution," which means American imperialist hegemony and the crushing of the vanguard of the Arab revolution. On the other hand, the bankruptcy of Zionism and the Arab ruling classes was never more crying. The attempts to impose the "peaceful solution" will be met by increasing opposition among the Arab masses as the real character of that solution becomes more clear. The choice facing the Israeli-Jewish workers — economic catastrophe and perpetual warfare or a break with Zionism and integration into the revolutionary struggle of the Arab world — is being posed ever more sharply. More than ever it is clear that the "Arab-Israeli problem" is soluble not in Palestine itself but only on the scale of the entire region, through a socialist revolution that can create the conditions for the economic development of the region and for the elimination of national oppression in all its forms.

It is for that alternative that the revolutionary Marxists in the Arab region are working today, both in the Arab countries and in Israel itself. Today their size is small, but it will grow larger, not only because their solution is the only one that is just, but also because it is the only one that is realistic. □



Israeli cop takes demonstrator away.

state, it would be safe to predict with certainty that this solution would be adopted.

The problem is that Israel is not a normal bourgeois state. It is a bourgeois state, all right, but it is also a Zionist state. That is, it is a state devoted to the project of "ingathering" all the world's Jews, a state that has ingathered its current population on the basis of dislocation of the Palestinian Arabs and can preserve its existence as an exclusively Jewish state solely on the basis of maintaining hegemony over the Arab East. For seven years the Israeli government has insisted on the inalienable right of Jews to keep control of the West Bank; it has defended Jewish colonization of the West Bank on the grounds that the entire country was established

# THE POLITICAL CRISIS

by LIVIO MAITAN

In the last issue of INPRECOR (No. 12, November 14) we published an article detailing the economic crisis of Italian capitalism. The following article deals with the political crisis that has been racking the ruling class. Previous articles in INPRECOR have dealt with the response of the Italian Communist party to the general crisis and with the perspectives of the revolutionary Marxists of the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (Revolutionary Communist Groups), Italian section of the Fourth International. (See No. 8, September 19, and No. 9, October 3.) In a future issue, we will present an analysis of the policy of the Italian far-left groups. — INPRECOR

The great wave of struggles and the vast processes of political maturation that began in 1968 had their roots in the profound changes in economic structure and composition of social forces that had occurred in Italy since the beginning of the 1950s. It is enough to recall that there was a gigantic rural exodus of more than 4 million people who moved to the cities between 1951 and 1967; that is, an annual average of 250,000. Between 1961 and 1967 this internal migration ran at an annual average of 100,000, while a nearly equal number of people were emigrating abroad. (Emigration from the country had been even higher between 1951 and 1961.) Taken as a whole, the size of the working class increased from 8,250,000 in 1951 to 9,060,000 in 1961, and to 9,400,000 in 1971. (The percentage of the active population made up by workers rose from 41.2% in 1951 to 44.6% in 1961 to 47.8% in 1971; in the northern part of the country, the figures were 44.6%, 49.1%, and 51.7% during these same years.) On a national scale the section of the active population

made up by the "relatively independent" petty bourgeoisie fell from 44.4% in 1951 to 37.2% in 1961 and to 20.1% in 1971, while the figures for the white-collar workers for the same years were 9.7%, 13.1%, and 17.1%.\*

## Situation of the working class

During the period of the boom and the big industrial development, the working class acquired a greater weight in society and also increased its cohesion as a class. It was not subjected to a process of political integration into the system, even during the period of great stagnation. In 1968 the workers be-

\*These data are based on the census and other official statistics. They were summarized and analyzed in particular by the economist Sylos Labini in "Saggio sulle classi sociali" (Essay on Social Classes, 1974) and in "Problemi dello sviluppo economico" (Problems of Economic Development, 1970). In the former work, Labini makes some international comparisons that demonstrate, among other things, that in Italy the size of the working class as a percentage of the total active population was inferior only to that of Britain (where it was 50.3% in 1966). In fact, the Italian figure is higher than the British if only those workers employed in industry properly so called, including construction, are considered. On that basis, the figure would be 33% in Italy and 31.6% in Britain. It must be noted, however, that the number of small and medium-sized factories is significantly larger in Italy. In Italy 43% of all companies had more than 100 employees; the figure was 46% in Japan, 61% in France, 64% in West Germany, and 74% in the United States. Finally, let us mention that in Labini's work the category "relatively independent petty bourgeoisie" includes farmers, merchants, and artisans, among others.

gan to question the hegemony of the ruling class on all levels and to contest the mechanisms of the system in struggle. The breadth of the differentiations within the working class was limited as a result of struggle; the separation between the blue-collar and white-collar workers was reduced; wage increases were won consistently; a favorable relationship of forces was imposed in many factories; new democratic rights were won.\*

Beginning from the middle of 1971, after the absence of a revolutionary leadership had prevented full utilization of the general political openings created by the great strike wave of 1969 and after the turn in the economic cycle, the working class found itself generally on the defensive. The bourgeoisie sought to concretize its attack by turning to a center-right government. But the contract battles between October 1972 and the spring of 1973, particularly the struggles of the metalworkers, concluded politically with a positive change — although the economic results were totally insufficient — in the sense that the workers manifested an increase in combativity (big successful strikes, massive demonstrations in Milan and Rome, occupation of Fiat Mirafiori and other Turin factories) and the bourgeoisie had to make a turn, returning from the center-right to the center-left.

Similarly, the bourgeoisie drew the balance sheet on the big contract disputes between autumn 1973 and spring 1974, which once again were marked by a high level of combativity, significant mobilizations, strong pressures from the rank and file, and dynamic initiatives by vanguard cadres. Furthermore, the results of the referendum on divorce last May 12 showed that the working class was responding in no uncertain terms to the insidious offensive of its class enemy on the political and ideological level as well. The 80% No vote by the workers of Turin was eloquent in this regard. (For an analysis of the stakes involved in the referendum, which proposed abolition of the law permitting divorce, see INPRECOR No.0, May 9, and No.1, June 6.) The response to the fascist bombing in Brescia, with its unprecedented

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\*Calculating on the basis of 1971 lire, average real wages rose from 71,000 lire a month in 1960 to 122,000 in 1970, to 130,000 in 1971, and to 145,000 in 1973. (The increase in real terms between 1969 and 1970 was about 13%.) The proportion of white-collar salaries to blue-collar wages, which was 3.0 to 1 in 1960, dropped to 2.0 to 1 in 1970 and 1.9 to 1 in 1973. As for political gains, the most important element was most probably the emergence of the workers delegates; but from a juridical standpoint, the importance of amendments to the labor code limiting employers' powers to lay workers off must not be underestimated.

edly broad mobilizations, was a similar demonstration. (See INPRECOR No.2, June 20.)

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to underestimate certain negative social and political tendencies that have begun to appear. First, the decline in buying power resulting from the exacerbation of inflation is provoking a vast increase in overtime hours (a phenomenon that was sharply declining in the preceding period). Second, because of the lack of an overall response by the trade-union organizations, success in the defense (or partial defense) of living standards depends largely on the strength of the workers in each individual sector and company. Finally, suspensions and layoffs are on the rise, hitting various layers of workers in various forms. The consequence of all these phenomena is the emergence of widely different conditions among the workers, even within a given category. It is perhaps premature to postulate a real turn in the trend as compared with the post-1968 period. But let us repeat, concrete indications already exist and it is easy to understand the implicit dangers in the symptoms we have mentioned. It goes without saying that the situation would become extremely serious should the present bourgeois offensive against employment levels not provoke an energetic response in time; that would lead once again to the formation of a vast reserve army of labor.

## Petty bourgeoisie: radicalization or reactionary regression?

The social and political crisis that opened in 1968 has provoked a radicalization of wide layers of the petty bourgeoisie. The basis of this radicalization was the various changes that had occurred within this social layer. We have offered some data in previous articles. Other facts could be added. But all the statistics indicate that there has been a decline in the so-called old middle classes and a clear increase in the so-called new middle classes (private and public white-collar employees, professionals, certain categories of employees in commerce and transport, etc.). Considerable changes have continued to occur during the past few years. Here are two examples involving layers that are politically important: The number of teachers, which had already risen from 325,000 to 451,000 between 1951 and 1961, rose to 600,000 in 1971 and is approaching 700,000 today; according to CENSIS, the number of employees in public administration rose by 140,000 during 1971, while the number of small shopkeepers declined by 49,000 during the same year.

The radicalization was stimulated on the one hand by processes of declassing and disintegration of tra-

ditional layers and on the other hand by the aspirations of the "modern" layers more closely linked to production and administration; these layers wanted to improve their conditions, taking advantage of the favorable political conditions. The collapse of traditional values, which occurred in the context of the storms that shook the educational institutions, did the rest.

In the past, the crisis of the middle classes has quite often favored reactionary, fascist, or Bonapartist operations. In the Italy of those years of turmoil the road was opened for a relative — and temporary — broadening of the social base of the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano — Italian Social Movement, the largest neofascist organization) and for some partial electoral success by the fascists in 1971. Should the present crisis become even more pervasive without any positive outlet being presented, some sectors of the petty bourgeoisie (small merchants facing bankruptcy, for example) could become susceptible to new, dangerous suggestions and could furnish a basis for an authoritarian turn. Up to now, though, this has not happened, or has happened only to a limited extent. The radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie and of some layers of the intelligentsia has not at all been co-opted. In fact, as a result of a perfectly explicable unevenness, some layers have radicalized only in a very recent period. This is the case, for example, with teachers, whose struggle has developed especially during the past two years as a by-product of the student movement. It is also the case for numerically less important but nonetheless significant layers, such as journalists, whose opposition to the merger of editorial boards and to the complete subjection of the press has given rise to conflicts that have generated a broad response, conflicts that in the last analysis are expressions of the ideological crisis of the ruling class.

Finally, one must not forget one massive phenomenon that has been at the root of remarkable political and social tensions and has provided the major contingents for the struggle in the neighborhoods and regions and for particular types of actions (against high rents and the housing shortage, for example). At the end of the 1960s, according to statistics that certainly do not err in the direction of exaggeration, the number of those marginally employed or underemployed stood at 3,700,000 (three-quarters of whom lived in the Mezzogiorno). The subproletariat at that time numbered about a million and a half.\* Given the recessionary period

\*In his essay "Disoccupazione ed esercito industriale di riserva in Italia" (Unemployment and the Industrial Reserve Army in Italy, 1972) Luca Mellolesi evaluates the industrial reserve army for 1968 at 6.6 million to 7.7 million (including those un-

employed and looking for work, the marginally employed, and the unemployed work force). Some of his quantitative estimates are debatable, but the importance of the phenomenon is difficult to contest.

## Stratification and differentiation in the bourgeoisie

For about two decades, and especially during the prolonged boom of the capitalist economy of Western Europe, private industry had taken on a predominant role, despite the noteworthy strength of the state sectors. In fact, in the absence of a determined plan and during the phase of leadership crises, the big capitalist groups (in the first place Fiat, Pirelli, and Montedison) had imposed their will, determining the type of development and, in the final analysis, assuring the relative dynamic equilibrium of the system. But with the exhaustion of the boom and the new situation that emerged after 1968, even these groups ran into growing difficulties, suffering serious crises at various times. Generally speaking, profit reductions, crises, and actual bankruptcies resulted in intensifying state intervention into the economy and thus further enlarged the part of industry under the total or partial control of the state. (As is well known, even a bulwark of private capital like Montedison now has a considerable dose of state participation.) At the same time, the accentuation of the process of supra-national concentration has entailed a massive penetration of foreign capital. (Recall, for example, the events in the various domestic electronics companies.)

Schematically, then, the following stratification can be outlined: (1) the bourgeoisie of the big private industrial groups, whose weight has diminished for the reasons listed above; (2) the bourgeoisie linked to specific sectors, like petroleum, that are closely linked to international capital; (3) the financial and speculation-oriented bourgeoisie, whose weight, far from declining, has been increasing; (4) the technocracy, the leading bureaucracy of the public sector, whose positions have been further strengthened.

These distinctions are to some extent arbitrary, for there is an interpenetration, while not an identity, among some of the indicated strata. But the interpenetration is not total, and in any case the various strata and groups have different overriding interests;

employed and looking for work, the marginally employed, and the unemployed work force). Some of his quantitative estimates are debatable, but the importance of the phenomenon is difficult to contest.

in times of crisis, when decisive choices have to be made, this fact can have a particular practical urgency. Another consideration must be taken into account, however. The extension of the public sector — even in the most radical form — does not entail a break with the system as a whole; in fact, it can even strengthen the system. Nevertheless, it does not involve a decrease in the weight of the bourgeoisie as such, which has inevitable political consequences. (The technocracy or state bureaucracy cannot carry out all the social and political functions traditionally handled by the industrial bourgeoisie with a view toward improving the operation of the system and lending it an overall balance.) Here another of the objective roots of the crisis of the ruling class must be delineated.

To what extent is it possible to establish a correspondence between the various sectors of the bourgeoisie and the political tendencies that are being manifested in the current phase? Is there any foundation to the interpretations being advanced in some quarters that there is an alliance between the financial and speculation-oriented bourgeoisie on the one hand and the bureaucratic "bourgeoisie" on the other? It is necessary to refrain from establishing connections that are too mechanical. This is all the more important during a period in which the fate of the system as a whole is at stake and in which political choices are determined generally by the need to defend the interests of the system as a whole. That said, however, it is impossible to disregard certain specific inclinations. The financial and speculation-oriented bourgeoisie can find broad agreement on a conservative basis with the state bureaucracy, all the more so in that it is not directly concerned with the problem of relations with the working class. The same can be said about the oil industrialists. These are the sectors of the ruling class most strongly inclined toward reactionary solutions; they are the sectors that have had the decisive weight in the right wing of the Christian Democracy in the past. The industrial sectors, which would need to continue to develop in a more "modern" and "rationalized" atmosphere and which employ larger sections of the work force, feel pushed in a different direction. International factors also come into play in some cases (Fiat's relations with the Soviet bureaucracy, for example). These are the sectors that favored the center-left government when it arose and, beyond conjunctural tactical political oscillations, they are the sectors that could end up accepting the "historic compromise" proposed by the Communist party.

But today there is an element that unites all the various strata of the ruling class, and that is their growing lack of faith in the instruments used to administer and defend the system in the framework of the institutions that emerged out of the fall of fas-

cism. The Christian Democracy, the leading party for about thirty years now, is considered these days as an instrument that is too costly and at the same time too little effective. The same evaluation has been extended to the state and administrative apparatus. At a time when profit margins are tending to decline again and when what is needed is instruments that can act quickly and comprehensively, the bourgeoisie cannot passively resign itself to such a situation continuing to drag on.

## The Christian Democracy

The Christian Democratic (CD) National Council last July, which was advertised as an occasion of self-critical reflection, rather amply reflected the profound crisis of both the party and the ruling class. The most important speeches had to recognize very heavy liabilities, from failure of economic planning to cultural bankruptcy; many tears were shed over the deterioration in relations between the CD and the country's social forces. More concretely, the CD notables were forced to observe that the bourgeoisie no longer has confidence in them, that the middle classes, and even some small and middle-sized industrialists, were succumbing to the lure of the Communist party, and that the current ferment of discontent had spread even to the small farmers, traditional bulwark of conservatism.

Small and middle-sized industrialists had established good relations with the CP in the so-called red regions some time ago. Recently, representatives of these categories have paid visits to the CP federations in Lombardy and Sicily as well. More than 300 entrepreneurs participated in a meeting on small and medium-sized industry organized by the CP in early November. On October 30 representatives of the association of building contractors held a meeting with CP parliament members. These are all indications of the orientation being worked out by some sectors of the bourgeoisie and could constitute a prelude to the realization of the Historic Compromise.

The depth of the crisis was confirmed by the total inconsistency of the solutions that were proposed. With the exception of a few admissions uttered in a pathetic tone of grotesque lack of understanding, Amintore Fanfani's speech stressed preserving the status quo.\* But the discussion — insofar as any

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\*For example, Fanfani described the consequences of Vatican Council II, or its "interpretations," in the following terms: "It happened that new interpretations of the social apostolate induced many sheep of the old fold to regard themselves as shepherds and to devote themselves to converting supposedly lost sheep to these new interpretations. The result

thing came out of it at all — never went beyond totally vague projects for "social pacts," vacuous yearning for the New Deal or for the French planning system, and time-worn commonplaces about making the most of local bodies or institutions like the CNEL (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro — National Council of Economy and Labor, a body containing representatives of both the employers and the trade-unions and having only consultative powers). The sterility of the discussions need not be demonstrated. And the whole thing ended up with an outline of organizational proposals on the methods of selecting ministers and on the transformation of the Christian Democratic study center into a research institution.

The Christian Democrats were concrete on some points: They flaunted their own contradictions in the face of the industrial bourgeoisie; they revealed the ephemeral character of certain attempts at direct economic cooperation between the employers and the trade unions; and, above all, they revealed that while the old instrument had perhaps grown rusty, there was no new one on the market. Effectively, the relative strength of the CD lies in the fact that there is no available substitute for it so long as the democratic constitutional framework is maintained. The bourgeoisie is condemned to sustain the CD despite everything, even if the Historic Compromise is carried out. In fact, what other counterweight could there be to the strength of the CP, possibly united in a bloc with the Socialists?

### Authoritarian solution or Historic Compromise?

In a context in which the parliamentary regime has suffered great erosion and in which the exploited classes and wide layers of the middle classes are compelled to bear the heavy costs of the crisis, the authoritarian solution presents itself to the ruling class as a possible way out almost as a matter of course.

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was that the great old fold lost a part of its flock, and the sheep already said to be lost were considered to be on missions. These sheep who had transformed themselves into shepherds were in their turn lost, instead of carrying the lost sheep back to the fold and thereby increasing its numbers." And here is a real pearl of Fanfanesque interpretation of the demands of the new generation: "The youth today should take note of the fact that the satisfaction of the just demands they are raising often requires not revolution but only the reestablishment of the good old rules that have fallen into disuse, besides, of course, adding the new rules called for by experience."



Nevertheless, the conditions are lacking for a fascist solution of the 1920s Italy or the 1930s Germany type. The fascist movement has been able and will be able to polarize sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the subproletariat on the electoral level. Concurrently, it has been able to organize far-right nuclei to carry out paramilitary actions and terrorist undertakings. But it has not succeeded in gaining the political and ideological hegemony among substantial layers of the petty bourgeoisie that could permit it to appear as a credible alternative. Nor has it organized a substantial antiworker strike force. The failure during the past two years of the attempts to repeat operations of the Reggio Calabria type (when the fascists were able to generate mass





mobilizations) has had especially negative implications for the fate of neofascism in the current period. At the same time, the conditions necessary for an operation of a Bonapartist type, whether classical or Gaullist, also do not exist today. Apart from clumsy figures more suited to musical comedies, no de Gaulle or other Bonapartist candidate has emerged — even in the remote distance.

It is exactly for these reasons that the attempts to break the democratic-constitutional system have been confined to attempts at a coup of the Chilean or Greek variety. It is now common knowledge that on several occasions such attempts have reached a stage of advanced preparation and even of momen-

tary fulfillment. On December 7, 1970, a squadron organized by Borghese\* actually penetrated the Interior Ministry; just a few weeks ago a "leftist" terrorist offensive of vast proportions was supposed to be set off with the aim of provoking a resolute intervention by the armed forces; there have been many intervening attempts as well. The people who have been behind these projects cannot be reduced to wizened old commanders yearning for the Mussolini era or the Salò Republic, nor to reactionary fringe groups headed by megalomaniacs who are more noisy than harmful. As we have mentioned, there are sectors of the bourgeoisie inclined toward an authoritarian solution, and given the impossibility of achieving this through fascism or Bonapartism, they could foment or support a coup. It is no big news that financial backers of the fascists are to be found among the oil men (the name of Monti is the best-known in this regard, but it is not the only one). Among the backers of the so-called Rosa dei Venti (Points of the Compass), the clandestine far-right organization founded in November 1973, we find the industrialist Piaggio; and at the time of the Brescia massacre the existence of financial supporters of the fascists among the industrialists of the region was revealed. Orlandini, the building contractor, figured as one of the major suspects in the abortive coup of December 1970.

Moreover, supporters of authoritarian solutions and potential putschists are found in the very parties that define themselves as constitutionalist. The case of Edgardo Sogno, a former monarchist supporter and now a member of the leadership of the Partito Liberale Italiano (Italian Liberal party), is symptomatic. Sogno openly proclaimed himself in favor of the overthrow of the existing institutions; nevertheless, several months after this declaration, he has not yet been expelled from his party. In addition, no one doubts that infectious germs have spread widely within the ranks of the right wing of the CD, among leaders of a Mafia and Camorrist stamp. (Not only among these sectors, however. In a recent interview Senator Pastorino, one of the CD's major leaders in Genoa, did not hesitate to openly declare himself for a putsch.) Possible putschists could certainly find useful accomplices among the ranks of the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (Italian Social Democratic party), a filthy bought-and-paid-for formation, one of whose parliamentary deputies associated himself with fascists to protest the arrest of Miceli and whose president, Mario Tanassi, has been accused by Saragat himself

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\*Prince Borghese, noted for his military actions during the second world war, supported fascism even during the Nazi occupation of Italy (the period of the so-called Salò Republic, which was marked by antipartisan repression).

of keeping quiet about what was going on at the time of the Borghese adventure.\*

The arrest of Miceli and the indictment of Fanali, former air force chief of staff, on charges of complicity with the fascist Borghese offered resounding confirmation of the fact that the putschists are far from insignificant. (According to the October 12 *Corriere della Sera*, Fanali's office wall features an autographed photograph of Vittorio Mussolini, the ex-king and ex-queen, and Kappeler, the SS official responsible for the massacre of the Fosse Ardeantine near Rome in 1944.) And there is no reason to doubt that foreign secret services, in the first place those of American imperialism, have close ties with the putschist sectors that could take the initiative under the right circumstances.

In its November 3 edition *La Stampa*, the Turin daily owned by Fiat, wrote in an editorial: In spite of innumerable inquiries, we do not know enough about this great destructive design to be able to say how much of it represents foolish ambition or to identify the perhaps more hidden plots. But that part of the network that has come to the surface or been revealed is sufficient to require that we conclude that the dangers not only were, but also remain, real." The assertions of Agnelli's newspaper clarify the motives that led decisive sectors of the bourgeoisie and the government to finally opt for launching an attack on the putschists: They took account of the fact that these people have not at all been disarmed and even consider that further deterioration of the regime would create more favorable premises for the putschist initiatives.

The same article clearly indicated why the great majority of the ruling class continued to reject the putschist or dictatorial solution. "In Italy," the editorial concluded, "whoever attempts a coup is provoking civil war."

In other words, the relationship of forces between the classes remains such that any fascist or putschist attempts are extremely risky. The army itself, whose ranks are increasingly massively filled with youth

\*Vito Miceli, former head of the Servizio Informazioni Difesa (SID, the counterintelligence agency attached to the Defense Ministry), was arrested recently on charges of having been involved in various attempted coups and of having covered for the putschists when the coups failed. The SID, it should be noted, is in charge of preventing coups, among other things. Giuseppe Saragat, a leading member of the PSDI and president of the republic at the time of the 1970 attempted coup, charged recently that Tanassi, then minister of the interior, knew what was going on and did not report it to his president.

who have been through the critical experiences of political struggle during these past years and within which ferment is on the rise, could be thrown into a grave crisis. The bourgeoisie is perfectly well aware of this, so much so that its major press organ, the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, wrote explicitly: "Even if, as has happened, a leader should concretely take to the road of sedition, his ruin would be certain. The soldiers, who come from all over the country, could not follow him. The tanks would stop in the middle of the road." (November 2, 1974.)\*

The Historic Compromise represents a way out of the crisis in a diametrically opposite direction. This would be a large-scale political operation that would imply participation of the CP in the government and could create conditions more favorable both for the reformist plans of rationalization that the center-left government has proven incapable of carrying out and for an economic reconversion of the type we described in our previous article. (See INPRECOR, No. 12, November 14.) But can the Historic Compromise be actually realized?

From the political standpoint, the conditions for the Historic Compromise are generally more favorable now than in any period in the past. We have already mentioned the open attitudes being taken toward the CP by layers of the small and middle-sized industrialists and the inclination toward dialogue among a category like the building contractors, who have traditionally lined up behind conservative or reactionary positions. And it is no big news that still more decisive sectors of the ruling class have an attitude toward the CP that is very different from the attitude they held during the 1950s and that they consider the participation of the CP in the government as a plausible hypothesis. From the international standpoint, the present context entails no absolute obstacles. Significant events of the past few years — from the policy of the French CP during the revolutionary crisis of 1968 to the participation of the Portuguese CP in a government of national union — have stimulated a further evolution of positions. And it must be added that the Italian CP has repeatedly offered serious guarantees. On the parliamentary and administrative level it has in fact collaborated with the parties of the government coalition, has allowed certain governments to survive, and has renounced parliamentary fights that, if they were carried on energetically, could have succeeded in blocking

\*Obviously, the fall of the Salazarist dictatorship in Portugal and, perhaps even more so, the fall of the Greek military dictatorship have weakened the position of the supporters of the authoritarian solution still further.

government projects. (A good recent example is the fiscal decrees of the summer of 1974, which would have had a difficult time being approved within the time limit set by law had the Communist deputies resorted to obstruction.)

Nevertheless, it is improbable that the Rubicon will be crossed immediately or in the short term. The bourgeoisie and its parties are torn by very bitter polemics and are suffering continual vacillations. At its National Council the CD reacted to the CP's advances with a very clear rejection. Further, and perhaps even more significant, a "no" answer was given by Agnelli, the top leader of Fiat and head of the national employers organization, who has correctly been considered as one of the people most inclined to accept the Historic Compromise. Imperialist circles, already alarmed by the Greek events and concerned about strengthening the Italian NATO bases, have made no secret of their negative attitude. The unhealed internal crisis of the CD constitutes one of the major complicating factors. Would this party be in position to engage in such a daring operation without risking being overwhelmed or being threatened by multiple uncontrollable centrifugal tendencies?

For its part, the CP is hesitating and will hesitate further before taking the decisive step. (In fact, the CP might temporarily radicalize its criticism of the government, as it did for a short time last spring when it adopted the formula of "intransigent opposition.") In reality, the CP has to take care to preserve its links with the masses and it is not inclined to assume any heavy responsibility for the present state of affairs without getting something in return; that is, without receiving a guarantee that it is getting into an operation of broad scope. The difficulty lies precisely in the fact that in the present circumstances, the CP finds it hard to see what the reward would be. When the CP participated in the coalition government of 1944-47, it was able to present itself as the force restoring democracy and as the guardian of the immediate economic interests of the broad masses after the catastrophe of the war. (A similar reasoning applies for the Portuguese CP today.) The Popular Front government in France in 1936 could be justified by the CP because of a series of important gains won by the working class, even though in the final analysis the popular front allowed the bourgeoisie to extract itself from a critical situation. But in Italy today a government functioning within the system with a CP participation could not assure any new political gains for the proletariat, and given the economic situation, it would be difficult for it to guarantee even modest economic gains.

For all these reasons, the Historic Compromise appears difficult to realize, although it is inscribed

in the potential tendencies of this period. If the crisis of the system further sharpens on all levels and if the bourgeoisie feels it has reached the end of its rope, the terms of the problem will change. For its part, the bureaucracy of the CP could be driven to leap over the impediments in the conviction that it is its duty to do so given the extreme danger facing the institutional framework that it has every interest in maintaining because of its definitive acceptance of the traditional reformist logic of lesser evilism.

Could the Historic Compromise lead to a restabilization if it were realized? For a brief period the impact of the new situation could provide certain maneuvering room and could even ease political tensions temporarily. But in a more general sense, the answer to the question must be negative. The crisis the Italian economy is going through is simultaneously conjunctural and structural. It is so extensive and so deep that an early restabilization would not be possible even with the Historic Compromise. Insofar as the Historic Compromise were not just an ephemeral operation or a continuation of the old routine under a new label, insofar as it should begin to take the radical measures necessary for the reconversion we have described, and insofar as the masses should begin to demand something concrete, tensions would not only rise again very rapidly, they would also become even more acute. From this standpoint, it is not at all arbitrary to recall the situation in Chile during the Allende period. Once again, this conclusion is called for: A restabilization could come only after decisive battles between the main classes, and to the extent that these battles should develop, the very basis of the operation attempted with the Historic Compromise would evaporate.

The risks involved in a putschist or dictatorial solution combined with the persistent difficulties blocking the path of the Historic Compromise have had and are still having the effect of resigning decisive sectors of the ruling class to a chronic crisis of leadership. It would be inexact to say that the center-left still lives. As a comprehensive political solution, as a formula for effective leadership, the center-left is dead and buried. The ruling class is condemned to continue to flutter back and forth, to suffer perpetual crises of its government. It is condemned to seek ever more precarious governmental solutions whose only element of continuity with the past (except for the Andreotti period) lies in the fact that the parliamentary base is the same, or very nearly the same, as that of the center-left. The ruling class certainly knows very well that it can't go on this way. And yet, for the moment, it has no other choice but to do so. □

# the FUNK gains ground

by PIERRE ROUSSET

The proposal to recognize the GRUNK as the Cambodian government and expel the Lon Nol delegation is soon to be discussed in the United Nations. Britain, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, and seventeen other countries have put forward a resolution opposing this and calling instead for negotiations between Lon Nol and the GRUNK. By taking up this proposal — formulated by Lon Nol last July and rejected immediately by the FUNK and the GRUNK — they aim to maintain the status quo and halt the growing isolation of the Phnom Penh puppet regime on the international arena.

At a time when the imperialist powers are once again trying to postpone the question, it is important to reaffirm the necessity for a solidarity struggle for the recognition of the GRUNK of Cambodia and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, a struggle in which the Fourth International has always participated. — INPRECOR

November 1974. For the second time, the problem of Cambodia's representation is going to be discussed at the United Nations. The debate is being prepared at a time when a broad offensive by the FUNK has yet to come about, although important fighting is going on, especially around the capital. The past year did not see the final collapse of the puppet regime, which had been expected by many after the cessation of American bombing on August 15, 1973. Superficially, the situation seems frozen.

Nevertheless, the Cambodian resistance, the last to take its place amid the mass rising of the Indo-

chinese populations in the second Indochinese war, had registered astonishingly rapid and considerable success during the previous four years. First of all, there was the immediate failure of Lon Nol's coup. In spite of the unanimous vote in the Cambodian parliament to remove Sihanouk, and in spite of the quick support the new "republican" regime garnered among numerous circles in the capital (particularly among intellectuals and students), the peasantry rallied broadly to the side of the FUNK after Sihanouk launched his appeal to struggle. Even though the guerrilla units had been very small until that time, in 1970 the FUNK emerged straightaway as a mass movement with a national implantation. In an article in the November 1974 issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* Khieu Samphan, vice prime minister of defense of the GRUNK, recalled the main stages of the war that has unfolded since then:

\*The abandonment of the "Vietnamization" of the ground war, followed by its "Americanization." The battle of Krek in January 1972 marked the end of the direct and deep intervention of the Saigon army.

\*The "Khmerization" of the war ended no more happily. After the defeat of the "Chenia 2" operation, launched by Phnom Penh in December 1971, Lon Nol gave up trying to organize any "counteroffensive," no matter how modest, and definitively lost the initiative.

\*Given these successive defeats and the general development of the situation in Indochina, Washington tried to bludgeon the FUNK into submission between February and August 1973 through an enormous air assault. The entire U.S. air force in Indochina was thrown into this battle. But the resistance was not broken. On the contrary, it continued to register success, and on August 15, 1973, the Amer-

ican government was compelled to bring the bombing to an end.

### The dry season, 1973-74

There was no very apparent or spectacular success during the 1973-74 dry season. The Lon Nol regime managed to survive. But that did not prevent Phnom Penh's positions from suffering a continued and important deterioration. On the military level, the two dominant features of this dry season were the virtually complete isolation of the city of Phnom Penh and the other various puppet positions on the one hand and the severe losses, devastating all down the line, suffered by the Lon Nol army.

Every year in May the FUNK publishes a report on the military situation in Cambodia. According to the May 1973 report, the Cambodian Peoples Armed Liberation Forces (PALF) already controlled about 80 percent of the country's territory. But Phnom Penh preserved its road links to the port of Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) and to the provincial capitals of Kompong Chnang and Kompong Cham. Highway 5, between the capital and the western city of Battambang, was occasionally open along its entire length. By May 1974 these roads had been cut completely, and apparently definitively. Today, the same is true of the Tonle Sap River, which flows along the same route as Highway 5. Phnom Penh is supplied only by air and by the Mekong River, which links it to Saigon. (Losses suffered by river convoys seem to be rather heavy.) Finally, the province of Battambang, which borders on Thailand and was the only relatively "quiet" province of the country, has seen guerrilla activity grow to a considerable extent. The enclaves held by Lon Nol have progressively clustered closer and closer around Phnom Penh itself.

Moreover, the losses suffered by the puppet army have been very heavy. The Peoples Armed Liberation Forces have successively opened "fronts" at the most distant points of the country, thus forcing the Phnom Penh command to rush its elite units hither and yon. These units have been largely decimated, during the first battle of Oudong in March 1974 for example. It is probable that the FUNK has sometimes suffered significant losses as well, during the fighting around the Pochentong airport in January and February 1974, for example. But overall the balance of men and materiel in the field (including 105 mm cannon) seems clearly favorable to the FUNK. Moreover, the puppet army is now experiencing a deep crisis of recruitment and there are many more desertions than previously.

But perhaps the most important feature of the past dry season was the deepening of the urban crisis in the cities under Lon Nol's control. Work stop-

pages (although, it is true, very small ones), unemployment, inflation, misery among the refugees, shortages of basic necessities, the black market, money hoarded by the rich to be converted into foreign currency and sent abroad — these are the trends. Prices have increased twentyfold since 1970 and the buying power of wage earners has declined 90 percent! A family of five in Phnom Penh needs 220 pounds of rice a month. The average wage earner makes only 15,000-25,000 riels a month. Supposedly, he is entitled to 100 pounds of rice a month at the controlled price of 2,500 riels. But the real price is 10,000 riels, and it costs about 130 riels a pound to buy the supplementary rice needed, that is, about 15,000 riels. (The figures come from the weekly *Afrique-Asie*, No. 67.) In face of this sort of misery, the Cambodian bourgeoisie and generals are enriching themselves through smuggling, control of air transport, and so on. As for the riel, it has been sharply devalued — from 400 riels to 1,200 riels per US dollar. In Phnom Penh, people strip the bark from trees for fuel.

The social crisis is stimulating the movement of urban struggle. Lon Nol rapidly lost the confidence he had earlier commanded among the students and intellectuals of the capital. They had hoped for "democracy" and a "republic"; instead they got war and more police . . . and the American intervention. Consequently, the student movement has played the role of transmission belt in the development of urban opposition, in spite of the repression it has suffered. April 27, 1972 (at the law school), March 27, 1973 (at the teachers colleges), and May 26 and June 4, 1974 (at the Yukanthor high school) were the most important dates in the struggle of the student youth in Phnom Penh.

In Phnom Penh, unlike in Saigon, the social movements express themselves more directly, while the political or politico-religious opposition remains more diffuse. Along with the student struggles, workers strikes have occurred (the Ministry of Labor was recently partially occupied by workers). There has been motion among all categories (prolonged and successive strikes among professors; demonstrations of war widows, veterans, and invalids in front of the U.S. Embassy demanding payments and pension increases, etc.). The gravity of the economic and social crisis has led the opposition to be willing to confront a very tough repression if need be. If the urban political opposition differs from that of Saigon, it is because conditions in Cambodia (economic backwardness, the French policy of making it a buffer state, the weight of Sihanoukist Bonapartism, etc.) prevented the development of a social base for the formation of heterogeneous currents like the South Vietnamese politico-religious currents.

The economic and social crisis has plunged the Lon



Nol regime into a continuous political crisis marked by governmental shifts, defection of functionaries to the FUNK, loss of authority, and tendencies toward feudalization of the army. It is a crisis that John Gunter Dean, the all-powerful American ambassador to Phnom Penh, was unable to conjure away.

Finally, the American-puppet position has deteriorated on the international plane. A year and a half ago, the Soviet delegation to UNESCO was still voting for seating the Lon Nol delegation instead of that of the GRUNK. Now the Soviet regime is supporting the GRUNK delegates, even if only superficially. The GRUNK was accepted among the Third World at the conferences of Lusaka (September 1970) and Georgetown (August 1972), and at the Algiers conference of the so-called nonaligned countries in August 1973, which received the GRUNK triumphally. At the UN last year, Washington reaped the results of a year of such decisions when the GRUNK was recognized by a vote of 53-50. (Today, the GRUNK is recognized by 61 governments, three of which are not in the UN, and by the Palestine Liberation Organization.) Finally, the overthrow of the Thai military dictatorship in October 1973 had immediate repercussions in Laos and Cambodia, even though the American-Thai axis was not broken.

Lon Nol's proposals for negotiations reflect the deterioration of his position. During 1970 and 1971 he asserted his will to defeat "the Vietnamese invasion." In 1972 he had to recognize the existence of Khmers "on the other side." On July 6, 1972, for the first time, he proposed negotiations, but only on the condition of a prior "Vietcong and North Vietnamese withdrawal." On July 9, 1974, that condition was dropped.

## A new resistance

Thus, the relationship of forces during the past year has been neither reversed nor stabilized, despite the "hesitation waltz" appearance of the fighting. Nevertheless, this relationship of forces has not

developed with the rapidity that could have been predicted when the American bombing was halted in August 1973. There are a few basic reasons for this.

There is one common cause for the (relative) slowness of the revolutionary process in Cambodia and South Vietnam: The commitment of American imperialism. Washington gives just under \$2 million a day to Lon Nol. Between 3,500 and 4,000 U.S. advisers are training the puppet army, according to the FUNK. The American air force based in Thailand has not ceased to supply isolated puppet garrisons (the figure of 700 sorties a month has been cited by U.S. Secretary of Defense Schlesinger), and the GRUNK has denounced bombings by American F-111 planes. The pumped-in American aid is the only thing that is really keeping the puppet regime alive.

The military factor certainly has real weight. Up to now, the Peoples Armed Liberation Forces have lacked antiaircraft defenses, and the Lon Nol air force has been able to strike at will wherever PALF troops are concentrated. And Phnom Penh itself is not easily attacked, for the best puppet troops are concentrated there and a broad defense system has been set up. On the other hand, the FUNK has never seriously tried to close the vital Phnom Penh supply line represented by the Mekong River. It seems, however, that the FUNK does have the military resources to do this, at least during the dry season. The uneasiness of the FUNK leaders about a possible massive American intervention if they exert too much pressure is certainly a factor in holding them back. But the situation of the Nixon government had vastly narrowed Washington's maneuvering room, tending to make a massive U.S. intervention suicidal. The military factors exist, but to be properly understood they must be placed in a more general context.

The American commitment is decisive, but it plays a different role in Cambodia than it does in South Vietnam. In South Vietnam, the problem is created

by factors related to the U.S. escalation — political, economic, and social, as well as military — which through "pacification," "Vietnamization," and "forced urbanization" created a parasitic and artificial but no less real and weighty social reality. There has been nothing of the sort in Cambodia. The rapid formation of the FUNK after the 1970 coup prevented a Vietnamese-style operation from being carried out.

What is decisive in Cambodia is the extreme newness of the resistance. In Vietnam there has been a virtually uninterrupted thirty-five-year struggle. In Cambodia there was a weak armed struggle between 1945 and 1953, and there were some small guerrilla centers beginning in 1963 and especially after 1967. As an armed mass movement, the Cambodian resistance is only four years old. Cambodia was the last component to come into the Indochinese revolutionary front, because the national and social revolutionary dynamic there was less powerful than in Vietnam.

The agrarian crisis played a key role in the development of the Vietnamese resistance. It was infinitely less strong in Cambodia (and in Laos). "Land hunger" did not exist. The landlord system remained based on small-scale property (with the king theoretically holding right of tenure); the large landholdings (apart from plantations) were created only recently and on a localized basis. Exploitation of the peasantry was effected primarily through usury and trade, and not through tenant farming, sharecropping, or proletarianization. Even on the plantations the agricultural proletariat was Vietnamese (and played an important role in the formation of the "Khmer Issarah" front at the end of the second world war). The strategic situation of Cambodia also came into play. In Cambodia, unlike Vietnam, French imperialism did not try to create a colony of exploitation and settlement. Cambodia was instead intended to be a sort of buffer zone between French and British possessions. Unlike Laos (in 1953 and during the air war), Cambodia did not become a decisive field of battle in the Indochinese war until after 1970.

That is what permitted the French in 1953 to easily create an "independent" and "neutralist" state, that of Sihanouk. That is what retarded the development of the communist movement in Cambodia and allowed for the formation of a Bonapartist regime, while in Vietnam and Laos the acuteness of the conflict barred such a development. And this also furnishes the context for a better understanding of the crisis of 1970.

Sihanouk's Bonapartist regime was in crisis under the weight of its internal contradictions: The capitalist forces in Cambodia wanted to put an end to the nationalizations and to the development of the

state sectors; at the same time, peasant revolts had begun to break out in 1967. But the effects of the regional context were decisive. Sihanouk fell at the moment he did because imperialism could no longer tolerate the fact that the "western front" of the Indochina war was not carrying its full share of the war effort. Imperialism had to "harden up" the Vietnam-Cambodia border at any cost. Sihanouk, the Bonapartist, could not openly go over to the American side. So he had to fall. That is, a stronger role was played by external pressure than by the development of social struggles within Cambodia itself during 1970. Sihanouk himself, while he was isolated in the cities, had not lost his prestige in the countryside. Hence the massive response of the peasantry to his appeal of March 23, 1970, and hence the weight of the Sihanoukist component of the resistance at the beginning.

Thus, at the outset, the FUNK had a rather different composition from the Vietminh and the NLF. It was more heterogeneous; it did not rest on the same historical bases, on the same traditions of national and social struggle, or on the same strength of the CP. It is this lag that has to be made up. But, the role of the militant base and infrastructure of the Cambodian communists before the 1970 coup must not be underestimated. It was only their earlier activity — and the fact that they had foreseen the coup — that allowed for the organization of the FUNK and the launching of the struggle on a grand scale within a relatively brief period.

The Cambodian communist movement, whose initial nucleus came from the Indochinese Communist party, regrouped around the Pracheachon at the end of the second world war; it was the least well-known Communist movement of Indochina. It is dangerous to make too rigid analogies. Nevertheless, the tendencies that have developed since the 1970 coup are clear: The "Khmer Rouge" nucleus, which had reactivated its intervention in 1963 and especially in 1967, now occupies a dominant place in the FUNK and the GRUNK. Sihanouk himself shed light on this point when he told Jean Lacouture that the fusion of the various components of the FUNK was surely "going in a revolutionary direction. At the outset," he said, "the Sihanoukist element was probably preponderant, or at least was the most numerous. But without Sihanouk being present on the field of battle, Sihanoukism certainly lacked the vigor of the left currents. These currents command trained cadres, valiant leaders struggling shoulder to shoulder with the fighters. The synthesis could only be made in this direction. I cannot complain about it." (*L'Indochine vue de Pékin*, Editions du Seuil, p. 124.)

In his article in November's *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Khieu Samphan described a "national union"

without internal conflict or contradiction. He even shamelessly transcended the limits usually imposed on the front by the Stalinist theory of the "bloc of four classes." The "national bourgeoisie," Samphan claimed, was not the only force to rally to the FUNK, nor was Sihanouk, the former king. In addition, he said, besides workers, there were some feudalists and some landed proprietors and even some comprador capitalists (a significant nuance was nevertheless maintained, for the FUNK is supposed to include the national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie). He was thus preparing for the UN debate. But the reality seems rather less ecumenical. The Cambodian bourgeoisie today is shipping its capital out of the country. About a year ago, tensions appeared between Sihanouk and the leaders of the FUNK inside Cambodia, former members of the Pracheachon. This "crisis" was resolved by the dissolution of the "external" GRUNK in Peking and the installation of all the governmental organs in the liberated zones. The leadership of the struggle was taken over by those who had launched the resistance in 1963 (such as Ieng Sary) and in 1967 (the three leftist deputies Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn, and Ho Nim, who are today respectively vice prime minister, minister of defense, and commander in chief of the PALF; minister of the interior and of communal reforms and cooperatives; and minister of information in the GRUNK). It is this leadership that is now coming to the fore in the international arena through the trips of Khieu Samphan.

Once again, Sihanouk has not refrained from openly pointing out his problems. At the end of January 1973 he told the *Nouvel Observateur*: "Many times I have asked the leaders of the internal resistance most energetically for permission to go to the liberated zones. They have refused. . . . I know that while they shield themselves behind the legitimacy and continuity of the Khmer state, of which I am the incarnation, the Khmer Rouge leaders are mainly intent on carrying out the work of the proletarian revolution over all the territory of Cambodia before allowing me to return to the country as a powerless head of state.

"Actually, if Sihanouk were to return to Cambodia too soon, a great majority of Khmers, including some who are presently Lon Nol supporters hostile to communism, would not fail to try to make use of him to restabilize a nonsocialist regime. I have told my Khmer Rouge associates that I would absolutely not be prepared to play that role, but it seems to me that while they trust my word of honor, they have some reason to fear certain mass movements that would be prejudicial to the consolidation of their peoples democracy." (*Nouvel Observateur*, No. 423.)

In the countryside, mobilization has been based on the elimination of usury, the generalization of the peasant tradition of "mutual aid," and the experience of agricultural cooperatives, with the consequent increase of production. In the cities, the workers movement and the popular movements have taken on new dimensions. But four years is not an extremely long period. To a large extent, this can explain the gradual character of the offensives. It would be important to know how far the social process of the Cambodian revolution has gone, and that appears impossible to find out today.

But it must be noted that while the orientation of the FUNK is clearly toward the combination of military offensives and urban insurrection, and while the strengthening of the social opposition movements in Phnom Penh is undeniable, there has not yet been a real uprising in the cities.

## The regional framework

The need to consolidate the social base of the revolution has thus played a big role in the FUNK's choices of orientation. It will perhaps play a role in relation to the final offensives. But it is certainly not the only factor at work. The development of the solidarity of the Indochinese revolution also has weight, as it does in Laos and South Vietnam.

Let us be clear. It is not a question of forgetting the specificity of each of the components of the Indochinese revolution. The distinct "personality" of the Cambodian revolution is especially apparent. The role played by Sihanoukism has no equivalent in the rest of Indochina. The Cambodian communist movement has had its own history (let us recall that the guerrilla centers were reconstituted in 1963 and 1967 while Sihanouk still held power in Phnom Penh, and some of them were far from the Vietnamese border), and has established a network of international alliances different in important ways from that of the Vietnamese Communists (the break with the Soviet Union has been infinitely deeper and Chinese support has been more unilateral). But the Laotian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese revolutions are integrated into the same Indochinese revolutionary process, whose motive force has historically been located in Vietnam.

This combination of objective and subjective solidarity and of different situations and choices within the Indochinese revolutionary front is particularly clear today. The signing of the Paris accords on Vietnam has had profound repercussions in Laos (where analogous accords were signed shortly after) and in Cambodia (in that the August 1973 American bombing halt was also the product of the new regional situation), and in the Democratic Republic



of Vietnam (with the problems of reconstruction). A new phase was thus opened not only in the Vietnamese revolution, but in the Indochinese revolution as well. But the accords also stimulated regional developments that were very different from those that occurred during the American escalation and the military offensive of the revolutionary forces.

The distinct orientation that has been adopted until now by the FUNK and the GRUNK is clear: Withdrawal could be negotiated with the Americans, but there could be no negotiations with the puppets of Phnom Penh. Sihanouk made this known immediately after Lon Nol's latest proposal (July 6), when he declared: "We still reject a Pax Americana that would impose on us either a division of our country or a 'government coalition' with traitors, Quislings, or Pierre Laval, whom it is permissible to shoot but not to meet around a governmental table, or even a negotiation table." (See the French CP daily *L'Humanité*, July 11, 1974.)

Likewise, a year ago Thiounn Prasith, a GRUNK minister, drew the lessons of the world revolution in these terms: "The Cambodian people, who have learned much from the painful events in Indonesia in 1965 and from the more recent events in Chile, have already made their choice, which is irrevocable. The people will continue their resolute fight, always without compromise." (*L'Humanité*, December 5, 1973.)

A choice of orientation is clearly affirmed here that differentiates the path of the Cambodian revolution from that of its neighbors. But solidarity, objective and many times reaffirmed, has perhaps led the leaders of the FUNK to accentuate the gradualist character of their policy. Could this be because they are conscious of the stakes involved in their final victory in Cambodia? The fall of Phnom Penh would accentuate the disequilibrium of the puppet regime in Saigon and would have deep repercussions in Thailand. Consequently, without having greater assurances, they do not want to push themselves to the forefront too far, thus risking a massive new intervention by U.S. imperialism, which might be sufficiently up against the wall to attempt a suicidal gesture. At least, this is one of the major reasons advanced by representatives of the FUNK abroad.

This situation is obviously heavy with tension, both on the Indochinese scale and within the FUNK itself. Moreover, this tension could have been at the origin of the crisis in relations between Sihanouk and the internal resistance a year ago. In fact, Sihanouk clearly manifested an impatience to see the end of the struggle in Cambodia and regretted not having any control over the policy drawn up by the FUNK.

## FOR THE INDOCHINESE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

The constant progressive shift of the relationship of forces in Cambodia in favor of the revolutionaries is taking place in combination with the apparent "slowness" of the processes in operation in the Indochinese revolution today. The factors underlying this combination are the importance of the commitment maintained by U.S. imperialism, the newness of the Cambodian resistance, and the weight of the regional situation. It would be difficult to assign the correct relative importance to each factor.

But all these factors are little by little losing their impact. The crisis of the American intervention in Indochina, the joint crisis of the puppet regimes of Phnom Penh and Saigon, and the evolution of the international situation make the prospect of a major new direct American intervention in Cambodia ever less credible. If the GRUNK is awarded the Cambodian seat in the UN debate — not that this is decisive — Washington's difficulties will be increased. According to the FUNK, important progress has been made in the organization of the liberated zones, while the movements of the population and the soldiers in the puppet zones are intensifying. The exhaustion of Lon Nol's elite military units is said to be extreme. And the entire Indochinese situation is moving toward a turn.

When will that turn come? It is still too early to try to make a prediction. But it is hard to see how American imperialism could now reverse the wave in Cambodia. The most favorable conditions for victory of the Indochinese socialist revolution are now in the course of coming together. Although it has not developed into a great offensive, the fighting near Takao, Kompong Speu, Svay Rieng, Phnom Penh itself, and the Mekong has taken on a new dimension, while the political crisis of the Long Boret government is having repercussions and workers strikes are becoming harder. The 1974-75 dry season promises to see a new acceleration in the evolution of the relationship of forces, in Cambodia as in all of Indochina. □

# A NEW PHASE OPENS IN WORKERS STRUGGLES

by GOTE KILDEN & TOM GUSTAFSSON

January 15, 1970: Sixteen workers on strike for eighteen minutes at Volvo in Gothenburg. The next day 1,500 workers on strike for one hour. A few days later, it is all over: The workers have obtained a wage increase of 2 kronor per hour (approximately US\$0.50) and full salaries for eighteen-year-olds and service workers; three times as many people are hired as relief workers on the conveyor belts.

April 2, 1974: One thousand workers gather at a trade-union meeting at Volvo in Gothenburg to consider two alternative proposals: A class-struggle demand for an increase of 3 kronor an hour against a line of compromise presented by the union bureaucrats. After a big confrontation, the proposal of the bureaucrats carries; but only because they have rounded up all the old Social Democratic voters at the factory and turned the voting into a vote of confidence.

During the more than four years that passed between these two events many of the conditions of the class struggle in Sweden had changed. The strike at Volvo in 1970 was a typical expression of the 1969-70 upturn in the working-class struggle. After a period of dissatisfaction among the rank and file, both the employers and the union bureaucrats were taken by surprise by vehement outbreaks that generally resulted in successful strikes — but with a subsequent return to work without the struggle being followed up through more permanent bodies for continued activity. The part of the working class that was prepared for more protracted and militant activity was very small, and the number of workers capable of taking up oppositional work against the bureaucracy within the unions was even smaller. This explains why the response of the bureaucrats to the growing militancy of the workers was so hard and inflexible.

In the same way, the spring 1974 events at Volvo can stand as an example of the important changes that have occurred. A broadened radicalization has given rise to more intense activity by larger

groups of workers who see it as a natural thing to follow up the struggle for their demands by fighting within the unions. The increased willingness to struggle has thus been expressed inside the bureaucratized unions, resulting in a more favorable relationship of forces.

This separation into stages is of course a generalization that gives an "ideal picture"; it does not reflect the struggle in many individual factories. Nevertheless, this interpretation does represent a reality that corresponds to the economic and political background in the country. It also makes it possible to draw some tactical conclusions from the changed situation.

## The 1969-70 strike wave

The strike wave that began at the end of 1969 opened the most important period of struggle in Sweden since the 1945 metalworkers strike. Both the employers and the union bureaucrats were taken completely by surprise by the strike wave, which thus forced them to their knees. In many strikes the employers gave in immediately and granted the workers' demands. At first, the trade-union ombudsman was altogether inactive, not knowing what to do.

Almost all the striking workers organized their strikes outside the union bodies. In a situation in which the unions were unable to offer any leadership whatever, the workers created their own leadership by electing strike committees in almost every strike. The winter 1969-70 strike in the state-owned mining company (LKAB) in the northern part of the country provides a good example of the strength to be found in self-organization through strike committees and general assemblies. The strike began in the Svappavaara mine and later spread to Kiruna and MalMBERGET, about 190 miles away. At first, separate sets of demands were adopted at each workplace, but because of the similar working conditions throughout the company, the workers readily came to adopt a common

set of demands. Local strike committees were elected initially, but after just a few days the three local committees fused into a common body for all the 5,000 miners. The united committee negotiated with the employers and called general assemblies before each important step in the fight. Without this organization the strike would likely have ended in a fiasco within a week. Without the common strike committee serving as a link among the three mines, it would have been easy for the union bureaucrats to have taken over the strike, urged a return to work, and started secret negotiations with the employers. The demands would have been compromised and the collective strength of the workers dissipated.

### The 1971-73 downturn

Official statistics indicate that 137 strikes occurred during 1970; more than 23,000 workers walked off the job and 155,200 work days were lost. But in 1971 the number of strikes declined, and during 1972 only 7,340 workers went out, with only 9,100 work days lost. The downturn in the struggle was a result largely of conjunctural causes, but it gave the employers and the union bureaucrats the breathing space they needed to shape up their apparatuses, which had become senile during two decades of class peace.

The employers developed new anti-strike tactics during that time, and they continue to use them today. The leadership of the SAF, the employers' association, now demands absolute loyalty to a hard line from all its members. Negotiations are allowed only with the unions, not with strike committees. The SAF sends specially trained "strike experts" to companies hit by strikes. The local employers are assisted financially by the SAF, but only if they categorically follow the SAF line. Furthermore, the SAF blacklists militant workers and attempts to bring as many workers as possible to trial before the Labor Court. The most militant workers are fired. Threats of mass firings and transfer of production to other countries have also been used. Internal SAF circulars, recently published by revolutionary newspapers, prove the existence of this centralized counteroffensive, which the RMF (Revolutionsrörelse Förbundet — League of Revolutionary Marxists, Swedish section of the Fourth International) has been exposing for two years.

The central trade-union bureaucracy has also been sharpening up its apparatus. Ombudsmen have been trained and trade-union branches have been reactivated. The Landsorganisation (LO — National Trade-Union Confederation), like the SAF, has refused to view strike committees as the direct expression of the workers' interests and has refused to recognize their right to conduct negotiations. The LO bureaucrats have ignored, if not actually encouraged,

the blacklisting, firing, and prosecution before the Labor Court of militant workers. When the local trade union is unable or unwilling to try to break a strike, the LO sends one of its own "strike experts" to halt the militant actions going on outside the unions.

The combined activity of the employers and the bureaucrats allowed the capitalists to strengthen their positions against the workers during 1971-72. The badly defeated strikes at the Arendal shipyard in Gothenburg and at Saab (in the auto industry) were results of this new situation. The low level of strike activity during 1972 and 1973 is therefore to be explained not only by the economic conjuncture (there was a recession during these years), but also by the well-organized counterattack against the workers. This counterattack succeeded because the most militant workers lacked both experience in struggle and effective leadership.

An example of this process is provided by the strike that broke out in 1972 at Urshults Träprodukter AB, a small wood products company in the south of Sweden. Nineteen workers were on strike; their median age was twenty. They demanded a 20 percent increase in the hourly wage and a better bonus agreement; later, they also demanded the dismissal of the head of the company. After a few days the company responded by hauling the workers before the Labor Court. All the strikers were fired and the plant was moved to another location. The workers suffered during the strike because they were not paid their unemployment benefits. But they refused to accept money collected by political organizations, because they wanted to avoid having themselves or the strike tagged with a political label, in the small town they were living in. Except for their selection of a spokesman, they were totally unorganized.

If the workers had acted differently — electing a strike committee, opening a supply post for the strikers, seeking support from other workers both inside and outside the company — the strike might well have ended in victory, especially in view of the fact that shortly after the strike they were able to turn the Labor Court case into an indictment against the company, which had been paying wages lower than the national wage agreement. By then, however, it was too late. Two years earlier, such a strike might have resulted in a compromise benefiting the workers. But the employers' study of the 1969-70 strike wave had resulted in their previous attitude of hesitation being replaced by the well-organized counteroffensive.

## 1974: beginning of a new stage

The strike activity of this past spring has no parallel in the period since the second world war. In spite of the lack of unified leadership, there have been more than 200 strikes in four or five months. At the same time, there has been a clear increase in other types of actions at hundreds of workplaces. These developments justify our separating out a third stage of struggle by Sweden's working class in recent times.

The defeats of 1971-73 were not decisive in any sense and were not viewed as such by the workers themselves. Although some leaders of the past struggles became demoralized by the limited results obtained, the first strike wave inspired a new generation of worker militants. The factors promoting a broader radicalization of the industrial and transport workers remained in force: the relatively worsened competitive position of Swedish capitalism, the decreased room for reforms, the increased exploitation of the workers. Thus, it could be predicted beforehand that a change in the conjunctural situation would produce a change in the readiness for struggle among the blue-collar and white-collar workers, as well as among students. This is exactly what happened when the Swedish economy moved into a real boom at the end of 1973.

The workers' response was not immediate. During the autumn of 1973 strikes were small and isolated. But under the pressure of the boom and the publication of the enormous rise in company profits, indignation increased among the workers. The fear of the effects of the "oil crisis" faded, to be replaced by growing irritation about the false propaganda of the capitalists. Finally, the LO accepted a very bad central wage agreement, and the workers' earlier passivity gave way to intense activity. The central wage negotiations are followed by local negotiations in which provisions of the national agreement are concretized for each plant. At that point, many workers felt the time had come "to make their voices heard."

The most important feature of the growing working-class struggle in the present phase is not so much the increased number of strikes or even the reversal of the trend of defeat, but rather the changes in the organization of the strikes and the role played by the local trade-unions. In many cases, instead of electing a strike committee in an early stage of the struggle, the workers have demanded that the local union initiate negotiations around demands decided on at trade-union meetings and that the union leaders give regular reports at union meetings on the progress of the negotiations. Many of the strikes started when negotiations were blocked by the employers or when union bureaucrats were un-

able or unwilling to put force behind the demands. The strikes have therefore been rather short (a few hours or days), intended as means of exerting pressure to demonstrate the unity behind the demands. Instead of an unambiguous process in which militant workers totally outflank the union at an early stage of the strike through independent organizations, we can now see the outlines of a new dialectic between the different forms of struggle.

It is only natural that many of the newly radicalizing workers in Sweden are turning to the unions, the only permanent working-class organizations, in spite of their deep criticisms about the way the unions function and about the union leadership. No matter how bureaucratized they are, the unions offer a first line of defense against the employers' attacks and also provide a forum for discussion.

Nevertheless, it is important not to draw overly sweeping conclusions from the character of the spring strikes. The spring strike wave occurred during a negotiating period, which always lends special attention to the trade unions. This partly explains why the spring actions took the form of special strikes aimed at putting pressure on the wage negotiators. Further, an additional series of factors was at work:

\* Many workers have pragmatically drawn conclusions from the defeats during the 1971-73 period; they realize that strike committees in themselves are insufficient, because they do not offer a permanent means of organizing and preparing the class. They sprout up during the struggles and gather the masses of workers around them, but they disappear after the fight. The unions, on the other hand, remain.

\* Many local union leaders acted differently from the top LO leaders by trying to offer a real leadership for the struggles.

\* Although a broadened radicalization has taken hold in Sweden during the past few years, it is still very limited, not only in comparison to the radicalization in Italy, France, and Britain, but even in comparison to that in Denmark. The number of workers who have drawn political conclusions from the experiences of the past several years is very small, virtually restricted to the members of some far-left organizations. Because of the only sporadic implantation of the far left in the factories, in most cases there has not been a conscious group of workers able to intervene in the struggle and develop the fight for wage demands into a more extended fight or develop higher forms and organization of struggle.

\* The wage question was seen as the most burning issue because of the stagnation (and in some cases, decrease) of wages during the past few years.

## The coming pattern of struggle

The coming wage negotiations between the SAF and the LO will open at a very favorable moment for the workers. The economic conjuncture in Sweden is out of phase with the international conjuncture; in spite of the recession in the United States and Britain and the signs of a downturn in West Germany, Swedish capitalism is still moving rather swiftly. This situation, which will probably change if the international recession continues throughout 1975, can be explained by the following factors:

- \*Increased internal consumer demand, which has been promoted by government measures during the past six months and has counteracted the lagging growth of exports.
- \*Lower rate of inflation than in many other imperialist countries.
- \*High specialization of the Swedish export industry and an unusual coincidence of delivery dates, which is now being used as an important competitive weapon.
- \*Rapidly expanding trade with Norway, which is experiencing an extreme economic boom because of the exploitation of North Sea oil deposits.
- \*Possession of some raw materials that are scarce in the rest of the world.
- \*An exceptionally good harvest this year.

The boom has created favorable conditions for working-class struggle, which has also been stimulated by the increased will to struggle generated by the spring strike wave. Concrete results were won in the spring strikes. The wage drift — that is, the increase in wages in local areas above the levels called for in the central wage agreement — was as high as 6-7 percent in some branches of industry. This meant that the average industrial worker's real wages were comparable to those of 1971 (which means higher than 1972-73) in spite of the extremely bad central agreement. The big companies are now publishing profit increases that range from 100 to 600 percent. This can only bolster the militancy of the workers.

One sign of this has been the continuation of strikes during this past autumn. Another is the mood at the trade-union meetings that are being held to prepare the coming central wage negotiations. These meetings have been the stormiest in years.

It is the last stage of negotiation, local negotiation, that offers the broadest possibilities for successful agitation. There are much greater possibilities of smashing the plans of the LO bureaucrats on the local level than in the central negotiations, which are held in secret. These local negotiations should begin around February or March 1975. There are many indications that the workers will make use of these possibilities just as fully as they did last spring.

In addition, it is likely that in the next round there will be struggles around issues that go beyond those centered on wages. Given the increased activity among the whole society — which is shown by the radicalization of important layers of youth and white-collar workers and the strengthened self-confidence of the workers — we are seeing a stimulation of struggles that begin from isolated questions but grow over into broader issues with a political character.

This process is helped along by the fact that in a certain sense the trade unions are more politicized in Sweden than they are in most other imperialist countries. LO participates with great authority in all the national political debates. In fact, this participation has been institutionalized so that LO is a part of many of the organs of the state apparatus. This has some restrictive effects on the lower levels of the trade-union hierarchy, which are not so directly the agent of the bourgeoisie within the workers movement. The system of far-reaching laws binding the hands of the working class (laws supported actively by LO) gives local union bureaucrats only a small margin of flexibility. The highly bureaucratic centralization and the wall of undemocratic statutes that has been created by the Social Democratic bureaucracy deprives the local bureaucracy of any independence in regard to methods of fighting and general militancy. This means that the local bureaucrats lack the maneuvering room that some of them want and try to obtain as a means of better controlling and channeling the sharpening struggle. The extreme bureaucratization of the unions and the lack of workers democracy are directly related to the workers' tendency to create organs of struggle outside the unions in the early phases of their battles. We believe that this tendency will be strengthened in Sweden in the future.

## What must be done

The shift in the pattern of working-class struggle — from the organization of strike committees to the raising of demands inside the unions — has been seen by the anti-union tendencies in the revolutionary left as a decline in class consciousness. We believe this to be a grave mistake. Although self-organization had reached a higher level of development during the first wave of strikes (1969), account must be taken of the limited number of workers that participated in these struggles. The current tendency of larger number of workers to act permanently within the unions is allowing for more successful oppositional work against the bureaucracy inside the unions. This must be utilized by raising a political alternative to the class-collaborationist line upheld by the bureaucracy, and not by advocating all sorts of sectarian solutions, whether those of the "workers committees" called for by the centrists (which are

nothing but organizations of sympathizers of the centrist groups) or the "secret all-Swedish strike committees" once advocated by the Mao-Stalinists. The revolutionary left must struggle for a class-struggle program within the unions. Each union must be transformed into a battleground against class collaboration. The trade-union meeting at Volvo on April 2, 1974, provided a hint of what is possible.

We therefore see a fourfold task in the coming period of wage negotiations:

\*The bureaucracy's narrowness and inability to fight for the interests of the workers must be met with mass agitation in favor of unifying class demands: equal wage increases for all (in kronor, not by percentage); equal pay for equal work; automatic wage readjustments according to the rate of inflation as measured by an index put out by the unions themselves; a minimum wage; a shorter workweek with no cut in pay. In addition, demands must be raised around the character of the wage negotiations: against the bureaucratic centralization of the negotiations; for workers democracy in the unions; against all forms of state intervention or incomes policy; for a one-year agreement; no secret negotiations; for the right of union members to vote on the wage agreement. These demands are in the interest of the entire working class. They offer a general, national approach to the bourgeoisie and are a direct answer to the sellout organized by the reformists. They must be applied in the light of tactical considerations depending on the local circumstances.

\*Revolutionary Marxists have a special responsibility to present in their propaganda a global perspective of class struggle in order to stimulate a politicization of the struggle and to actualize the problems of workers control at each moment in the struggle. The goal is to prepare the workers for a situation in which the struggle can be developed toward contesting the power of the bourgeoisie not only in each factory but also in society as a whole.

\*We must also try to counteract a sectoral division of the struggles of different layers. We must stimulate solidarity work and consciously connect the struggle of other layers with that of the working class; at the same time, we must foster the understanding among the workers of their need for allies in the fight against capitalist exploitation.

\*The relationship between the bureaucracy and groups of workers willing to struggle is taking on a very complex pattern that demands a flexible tactical attitude from the revolutionary Marxists.

The anti-union tendencies among the revolutionary left were stimulated by the 1969-70 strike wave, with its highly developed forms of self-organization and the extreme hostility of the workers to the trade unions. None of the left organizations, including the RMF, was unaffected by these widespread feelings. On the part of the RMF this was not expressed in an anti-union policy, but it did result in our engaging in overly general and phraseological polemics with these tendencies and in a certain theoretical confusion and inability to formulate a clear program for intervention in the unions. This makes it all the more necessary to eliminate this weakness.

What, then, is our attitude toward self-organization? Each step forward within the unions toward a line of class struggle makes it easier to activate the workers. There is no Chinese wall between daily work in the unions and creation of a strike committee during an open fight against the employers; and there is not necessarily any contradiction between the union and a strike committee. On the contrary, there is a definite relation between the self-organization of the workers and the union bureaucracy, between the bureaucrats and the collective activity of the workers in general. An increase of activity within the unions — larger attendance at meetings, the right to vote on wage agreements, an end to secret negotiations, and so on — increases the strength of the workers and of the union itself; at the same time, the bureaucracy is weakened. Such a development would also stimulate the emergence of bodies of self-organization during the struggles; general assemblies would be held regularly during the strikes and an elected strike leadership would be under the control of the collective of workers, which could recall any members of the strike leadership at will.

Those who misjudge the class character of the trade unions, who see the bureaucracy as identical to the union itself, and who try to develop tactics in line with this view will more and more be bypassed by the activity of the workers themselves. The class struggle has already proven the hollowness of such ideas. □

# EDITORIAL

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And the culpability of the capitalist system does not stop there. For while there is a tragic food deficit in the poorest countries, a deficit that could have been made up, there has also been an orgy of speculation, fraud, and stockpiling of food reserves that would otherwise be useable. This orgy multiplies the number of victims and their misery tenfold.

The agricultural Malthusianism of the rich countries, which has made stock of food reserves melt away; the recession, which is immobilizing one quarter of the capacity of world production of automobiles instead of producing in their place tractors that could increase food production in the poor countries; the hoarding of the disposable food of the hungry countries by the owning classes who want to transform the food into superprofits with-

out regard to those who die of hunger — all these features of hunger in the world today have a common characteristic. That common characteristic has a name: production for capitalist profit, subordination of the most elementary interests of the human race to the implacable logic of exchange value as an end in itself, to the implacable logic of the realization of capital.

In the world today the necessity of world socialist revolution, of the socialist united states of the world, and the necessity for a world regime of workers and poor peasants derive not simply from considerations of rationality and the relative humanness of different systems of social and economic organization. Rather, they correspond to the necessity of resolving the most burning problem of the human race: allowing three and a half thousand million people to eat when they are hungry. □

# BRITAIN

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general strike in the region. The National Front has been allowed a new place on the political stage—and this after the big antifascist campaign during the summer had created a real base of hostility against it within the working class. The press is playing up these reactions for all they are worth. The Daily Mirror, the paper most widely read among the working class, reported that a new type of bomb had been used, one containing phosphorous, designed to burn people more effectively, despite the fact that army experts totally discount this allegation. Most revealing has been the newspapers' total lack of any mention of the statements by the IRA. During the recent spate of bombings evidence was accumulated by the press suggesting that the bombings had not been the work of the IRA. But by making use of a number of crank phone calls the press tried to give the impression that the bombs were the work of a leftist British revolutionary organization. This orientation reflected the need to frighten the "left" Labour MPs away from unity with such forces in the leadership of the Troops Out movement. Today, none of the newspapers is expressing any doubt that the Birmingham bombs were the work of the IRA. The scale of the blasts was large enough to allow for waging a chauvinist campaign stressing the alleged Irish origin of the bombings and still frighten the Labour "lefts." But the Paris daily Le Monde of October 23 reported that Brendan McGill, national organizer

of the Sinn Féin in Britain, has issued a statement describing the bombings as "shameful." There has not yet been any comment from other Provisional sources. If a denial of responsibility for the bombings should come, it would probably not be printed. Whoever placed the bombs—and it is impossible to rule out either Republican sympathizers or rightist provocateurs—the blasts can have the same political consequences. The British workers will begin to pay the price for the blind eye their mass organizations have turned to the Irish issue for so long. The new government measures, yet to be announced in full, will play an important role in the state's fight to isolate the left in the general class battles to come. Once again, the political weakness of the British working class is being used to turn the relationship of forces against them. Each step that Jenkins proposes to strengthen the state makes more imperative the need for the workers vanguard to understand and fight for the right of self-determination for the Irish people. The right of the Irish of the North, held in a state of siege by British troops, to extend their war to Britain must also be defended, however much we may disagree with the tactics of bombing in Britain. The first steps have been taken by the IMG to establish a united front of the revolutionary left against the Jenkins proposals. It is urgently necessary to extend this united front to as many working-class organizations as possible. □

November 23

# THE BIRMINGHAM BOMB BLAST

by BRIAN HERON

As information on the number of dead and wounded in the Birmingham bomb blasts of November 21 is still coming in, the political toll is also mounting. Out of the vast welter of misreporting, half truths, and lies coming from the British news media, two important steps are being taken that indicate the immediate use to which the bourgeoisie is putting this affair. First, what Home Secretary Jenkins is proposing is not just a special regulation for some particular time. Rather, he is seeking new laws to rush through a hysterical House of Commons—laws increasing police powers to detain people without charges. Banning the IRA in Britain, deportation of Irish found guilty of offenses in Britain, and even the general issuing of identity cards are being discussed as well.

In addition, the reaction of sections of the working class in and around the Birmingham area and the general attitude of anti-Irish-republican chauvinism developing in the country create the most perfect of covers for maintaining and intensifying the desperate repressive policy of British imperialism in the North of Ireland. It also gives a further impetus to the crystallization in Britain of a social base for reaction within the working class (which is something Powell, the fascist National Front, and the ultraright Ulster Loyalists have been consistently working for). After two or three years of ongoing battle between the classes on nearly every front, the ruling class is now trying to recompose unity around itself and its policy, at least on the Irish issue. While the Irish issue occupies the center of the stage, the ruling class uses this unity to push through an imposing list of measures designed to strengthen the state.

British policy in the North of Ireland has passed through many twists and turns, as has been described in previous articles in INPRECOR. After the Loyalist general strike, British imperialism had no choice but to return to the resurrection of Stormont and re-creation of the sectarian special police, the B Specials; in fact, the total reconstruction of the entire sectarian Orange statelet. To create the conditions for an eventual British troop withdrawal and an "Ulsterization" of the struggle against the Republicans in the North, it was necessary to step up the level of direct repression of the beleaguered minority population. This has been met by a massive wave of resistance, which included the burning down of internment camps by Republican prisoners. British imperialism was becoming increasingly desperate to smash this level of resistance in time for the Constitutional Assembly called for the spring.

It was these conditions that began to create real problems for the conduct of imperialism's policy also in Britain itself, particularly within the Labour party. "Left" Members of Parliament found it increasingly difficult to defend the more and more obvious role of British troops. Some, like Joan Maynard, spoke at a recent Troops Out demonstration in London that was supported by various sections of the revolutionary left. And this opening was sufficient to begin once again to raise the issue of immediate troop withdrawal in a small but important way within the working class. Such moves were of tremendous importance to the ruling class, which needed both to defend its Irish policy and to prevent the tacit class bloc it had built around the Irish issue from being eroded. Urgent measures were necessary to prevent the unity of the left Social Democrats and those active on the Irish issue. Sections of the right waiting on the wings of the British social and political crisis had even greater fish to fry on the Irish question. Powell, standing in Northern Ireland in the latest Parliamentary elections, was busily attempting to cobble together a reactionary base within the working class over the heads of the workers' traditional leaders on the issues of Ireland and racism. As long ago as October 3 the Red Weekly, paper of the International Marxist Group (IMG), British section of the Fourth International, had this to say:

"For Powell has every intention of using his success in the six counties to split up, disorganise, and defeat the British Working Class... taking the first step forward towards using the Irish as a political war-cry in the same way that he has already used black immigrants in this country. Unfortunately, sentiment for this already exists inside the British Working Class..." Powell's drive carried in its wake the National Front and the Northern Irish loyalist organizations. These groups attempt to use Powell's Bonapartist initiative in the bourgeois arena to organizationally consolidate a base within the working class.

All these elements have come together around the Birmingham bomb blasts. First reports from Birmingham (part of the area which gave Powell support in the past) indicate that some partial strikes against the IRA calling for reintroduction of the death penalty for IRA "terrorists" have taken place. Workers at big car plants like the one at Longbridge walked off the job for two or three hours and held impromptu anti-Irish demonstrations. In some other factories pro-Republicans have been beaten up. The National Front has issued a call for a one-day

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