

imprecor

international press correspondence

vietnam:

IMPERIALIST POSITIONS DISINTEGRATE



fortnightly N° 18, Jan. 31, 1975

US\$.50, £.20, FB25

The Death of Jabra Nicola

By SALEH JAAFAR

Jabra Nicola, a former leader of the Palestine Communist party (PCP), a long-time member of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, and more recently a leading theoretical contributor to the Israeli Socialist Organization, died in London on Saturday, December 28.

For over three decades comrade Nicola, better known to many as Abu Saïd, held high the banner of revolutionary Marxism in the Middle East. In such a total bastion of reaction as Zionist Israel, this was no mean achievement.

His death comes as a grievous loss to the Arab working class movement and to the Fourth International. An assessment of this loss must take as its point of departure the historical context that produced and was in turn produced by Abu Saïd.

The PCP was born in 1922 out of a split within the Zionist Workers Party. Following the split it affiliated to the Third International. A significant layer of this early revolutionary leadership was deported to Russia in the late 1920s and 1930s by the British Mandate authorities who then governed the area. With the degeneration of the Third International, they all fell victims to Stalin's purges. A new generation of working class leaders, more firmly in tune with Stalinism, then picked up the reins of the PCP. A similar process unfolded in other parts of the Arab world.

Abu Saïd was the sort of exception that did more than just prove the rule. For in him was concentrated not only the voice of political opposition to the equivocations of the PCP between Zionism and Arab nationalism, but also the living spirit of what once was a revolutionary International. In the 1940s he was removed from any leadership position within the PCP. His evolution toward Trotskyism and the Fourth Inter-

national, in which he remained until his death, followed closely after this.

In 1963, Saïd joined the Israeli Socialist Organization (Matzpen), which had been founded in 1962 by a small nucleus of Jewish revolutionaries expelled from the PCP. Largely as a result of Saïd's influence, Matzpen completely rejected Zionism and came to the fundamental recognition that objectively the principal political division in Israeli society revolved around acceptance or rejection of Zionism. Furthermore, Saïd brought into Matzpen the conception of a single Arab nation which had been artificially fragmented by imperialism following the first world war in opposition to the then prevailing Stalinist conception of different Arab nations in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc. In so doing, Saïd drew a direct link with the PCP's revolutionary past, for it was only in 1927 that the degenerating Comintern reversed its stand on the question of the objective unity of the Arab world, despite the opposition of the early revolutionary leadership of the PCP.

Both of these facets of the ISO program were integrated into the perspective of a socialist revolution throughout the Middle East as the only historical solution to the problems of that region, including the national question. On these foundations, an authentically Jewish-Arab organization emerged in Israel that was qualitatively different from the old PCP in that it firmly rejected — while never equating — both Jewish and Arab forms of nationalism. These were tremendous steps forward far surpassing in their importance the limited number of cadres who constituted the ISO.

However, the radicalization that swept the Arab world following the 1967 defeat in the Six Day War, cont'd. on pg. 23

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of INPRECOR.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (25 issues) - US\$10; Can\$10; £4; ¥3,000
AIR MAIL TO U.S. & CANADA: \$16.00. TO JAPAN: ¥5,000. TO AUSTRALIA &
NEW ZEALAND: US\$18. SPECIAL SIX-ISSUE AIR MAIL INTRODUCTORY SUB -
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IMPERIALIST POSITIONS DISINTEGRATE



By PIERRE ROUSSET

On January 11 the American government sent to the countries that had signed the Paris accords on Vietnam a note violently denouncing "North Vietnamese" military intervention in the South and threatening reprisals against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Four days earlier, for the first time since January 27, 1973, a provincial capital, Phuoc Binh, had been liberated by the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). Indochina returned to page one of the international press. But Washington refrained from detailing what reprisals it might decide to take. In fact, that choice is delicate to say the least.

In Indochina the Ford administration is not confronted primarily with a localized retreat (the loss of all puppet positions in an entire province, Phuoc Long) or with a particular problem (the so-called "North Vietnamese infiltration"), but rather with an overall evolution of the situation in the region. And this is occurring in an international and national context that prevents any direct and major U.S. re-engagement in the Indochinese conflict.

INPRECOR No. 10 (October 17, 1974) analyzed the new military and political situation that had been created in the cities and countryside of South Vietnam last summer and autumn. With the beginning of the winter dry season, the shifts in the relationship of forces that began during the monsoon season are continuing. Better, we are witnessing not only the progressive deterioration of counter-revolutionary positions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but also the exposure more vigorously than before of the internal dialectic of the Indochinese revolution that exists among the three countries and the modes of struggle.

Lessons of the latest battles

The regional offensives recently waged by the PRG have an essentially political meaning and do not inaugurate a sudden turn to a general offensive aimed at finishing off the puppet regime. But it is no less the case that the offensives underline the evolution that has occurred in the military relationship of forces in South Vietnam. Three changes can be noted in the nature of the fighting of last summer:

1. There has been a shift of the battle theater to very populous regions (the Mekong Delta and the central coastal plains).
2. There has been a multiplication of NLF counter-attacks leading to the liberation of new territories, especially district capitals (in Quang Nam).
3. There has been a notable improvement in the arms used by the revolutionary forces in the Delta (battle of Ben Cat and Lai Khe).

What has been strikingly demonstrated during the conflicts of these past months has been the lack of any capacity for initiative on the part of the puppet regime.

According to the January 8 edition of the Paris daily Le Figaro (whose views are right-wing), Thieu had set himself three priorities in the third military region:

*Defense of the Vierge Noire valley near the city of Tay Ninh (about 56 miles northwest of Saigon), in which a very important radar station covering the Delta, the Saigon region, and Cambodia had been set up;

*Defense of the capital, Phuoc Binh (85 miles north of Saigon), whose fall represented a heavy blow



psychologically;

*Retaking of the capital of Tanh Linh district (82 miles northeast of Saigon) in order to avoid the complete "decay" of Binh Tuy province.

Phuoc Binh was liberated on January 7; the Vierge Noire valley fell the same day and the radar station was destroyed; not only was Tanh Linh not retaken, another district capital of the province, Hoai Duc, was subjected to strong pressure.

The paralysis of the puppet forces appears more sharply if we study how the fighting unfolded.

Again according to Le Figaro, which cannot be suspected of procommunist sympathies, regular North Vietnamese divisions based in the South have conducted little activity during these past months. The fifth division is said to be engaged in the northwest of the Plain of Jongs (Delta). The liberation of the district capitals in Phuoc Long province was carried out by the regional troops of the NLF. And only about half of the seventh division, supported by an autonomous regiment, is reported to have participated in taking the provincial capital of Phuoc Binh. The eleven other North Vietnamese divisions said to be stationed in the South did not intervene. While leaving the responsibility for the details (number, placement, and activity of the divisions) to Le Figaro, we can get the general picture.

For its part, Saigon was able to send only 250 paratroops to Phuoc Binh as reinforcements. The argument that this was supposedly due to bad weather is not convincing. The fact is that the "elite" of the Saigon army is held in the northern provinces by the offensives that were waged last summer and

autumn by the PRG and by the fear of seeing a big push in the Quang Tri region. This "elite" is composed of paratroops, marines, and the first and second infantry divisions.

The Thieu regime no longer has "strategic reserves" capable of being sent to new fronts, while the revolutionary forces possess important reserves.

The situation in the Mekong Delta is quite significant in this regard. This region is particularly important because of its economic wealth (rice), its high population density, and its strategic position: Close to Saigon, it is crossed by many arms of the Mekong River and borders on Cambodia.

At the beginning of September the Saigon general staff announced that 800 posts in the Delta were being abandoned, about a fourth of the total. In December the loss of 600 new posts was acknowledged. This occurred without any coordinated military offensive by the NLF. The puppet forces retreated before a kind of combination of a semi-spontaneous uprising among the population with guerrilla actions.

It was the collapse of "pacification," one of the pillars of American policy in Vietnam. That is what is illustrated by the statements of one Captain Phac of the Saigon army to the correspondent of the International Herald Tribune (January 28-29): They were forced, he explained, "to withdraw without authorization" from many 10- to 30-man posts. The "zones of Vietcong taxation" are extending, for example, in the provinces of Vinh Long and Vinh Binh, which nevertheless "are areas which had been considered among the most pacified."

In fact, while the PRG has not recovered military control of all the areas in the Delta that the Saigon army had nibbled at after the Paris accords were signed (as in the Plain of Jongs), the current push has allowed the PRG to liberate new areas in many places. Already in October it was noted in Saigon that things were "going badly" in the two provinces of the Plain of Jongs, Kien Phong and Kien Thuong, in the west of the provinces of Ben Tre and Can Tho, in the east of Vinh Long province, in the entire southwest of Vinh Binh province, the south of Ba Xuyen province, in Bac Lieu and Rach Gia, and throughout most of Chuong Tien province. The province of Ca Man was a "Vietcong fief"! (Le Figaro, October 18, 1974.) Since then the situation has gotten worse still.

The general offensives of the PRG obviously have their military reasons. The structure of the Saigon command follows the administrative structure of the regime, and the district capitals are often also military subsectors. It is important to dismantle them

in order to wreck "pacification" and put a stop to "encroachments." But that is not sufficient to explain the frequency of the operations mounted against the district capitals or the liberation of the provincial capital of Phuoc Binh.

It is very clearly a question of a political gesture. Otherwise the PRG would have preferred to leave a few puppet enclaves in the middle of the territories that it controls, as in the case of An Loc. The liberation of Phuoc Binh represented first of all a decision to take a step forward in the policy of riposte initiated beginning October 15, 1973, (the date of a declaration of the Peoples Armed Liberation Forces that warned the Saigon regime that they would push their counterattacks to the rear areas).

The results of this turn in the military policy of the PRG appear in the balance sheet for the year 1974, which has just been published. A total of 13 district capitals were taken, as well as 1,600 hamlets and 170 towns including a total of 1,200,000 inhabitants. Some 225,000 members of the Saigon army were reported put out of action (the command of the puppet army acknowledges the loss of 85,000 men); 4,000 trucks, 510 cannon, and 516 planes of various kinds were said to have been destroyed.

But this decision to liberate Phuoc Binh and to push the regional offensives has a second political dimension. It is not only a matter of acting on Washington (or "warning" Washington) and its man for all seasons. It is also a matter of putting more pressure on the crisis that is racking the cities of South Vietnam. Saigon's political crisis has forced Thieu to thin out his political and military general staff. Some 377 middle-grade officers have been fired for corruption. Many generals, among them three of the four commanders of military zones, have been displaced. All of which can only accentuate the disorganization of the puppet command and the demoralization of the puppet troops. In turn, the new military defeats are going to rebound on the urban political crisis by forcing the opposition currents to define themselves more precisely.

Thieu regime without Thieu?

Thieu has sought, apparently without great success, to unleash a campaign of anticommunist mobilization on the occasion of his recent military reverses. Above all, he issued an appeal and a warning to a part of the urban opposition: You are playing sorcerer's apprentice and you do not have a large enough spoon to risk sitting down to dinner with the devil! INPRECOR No.10 analyzed how the regime's crisis, because of its very breadth, had by enlarging itself rendered the bloc of those opposing the puppet president more heterogeneous politically and socially.

From the beginning of the new demonstrations that accompanied the publication of the Act of Accusation No.1 (a major statement of the urban opposition), the PRG and the DRV had warned the population against American attempts to deflect the objectives of the urban movement. It was not long before things got clarified and cleavages began to appear.

The urban oppositions converge, of course, around some common themes of struggle: a certain number of democratic rights, the release of the political prisoners, the departure of Thieu. The latter objective, like the others, challenges the equilibrium of the regime. In spite of what it costs them, the American services have decided to keep Thieu as long as it is possible, because there is no alternative that would not open a dangerous period of government instability.

While the converging pressure of the oppositions weighs on the weak points of the Saigon neocolonial edifice, the oppositions part company on strategy, motives, and the social circles they defend. The process of recomposition of the urban mass movement has only just begun. That is why a part of the South Vietnamese right wing is trying to take the lead. That is the case with the Reverend Tran Huu Thanh, the most visible leader in the international press of the "Movement Against Corruption."

He explained his strategy during an interview published in the November 8, 1974, Far Eastern Economic Review: "The strategic difference at the moment is that we want Thieu to go while keeping the regime intact. We want (Vice-President) Hung or (Senate Chairman) Lam to replace him pending the elections, preserving at the same time the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies — all the organism. All the organism is now very weak, but can be re-formed and re-employed to save the continuity of the regime, whereas the others want to sweep away the regime."

His motivations are those that could have been expected from a man who spent a long time instructing the officers of the puppet army in the principles of pro-American psychological action (and he retains a good deal of sympathy in that milieu). "I always seek to define a realistic anticommunism," he told Le Figaro (October 21, 1974.) "But to be able to succeed in anticommunism we must eliminate corruption."

The fundamental divergence that opposes such spokesmen for the Vietnamese upper classes to those of the popular opposition movements has already been crystallized around a concrete perspective. On November 17, 1974, Tran Huu Thanh called for the formation of a "government council" com-

posed of leading personalities and charged with aiding the government. In his weekly press conference, the PRG's spokesman in Saigon accused him of being manipulated by the United States in order to channel agitation "in the direction of their choice," meaning to try to demonstrate that the Thieu regime "could be reformed without being overthrown." (Le Figaro, November 19, 1974.) South Vietnam in Struggle, the central organ of the NLF, in its turn denounced this "professor of anticommunism" and appealed to the masses of Catholics against him. (No. 277, December 2, 1974.) The Buddhists of the Forces of National Reconciliation also refused to approve this proposal of Father Tran Huu Thanh. The "government council" was shelved, but the incident indicated the contradictions at work among the urban oppositions.

The taking of Phuoc Binh by the PRG again brought these cleavages running through the urban opposition to the surface. Tran Huu Thanh in effect answered the warnings raised against him by Thieu ("irresponsible speculations" about his fall) by accusing Thieu of treason in the face of the communists. Thieu would be "solely responsible for the loss of (the province of) Phuoc Long," which would be "the greatest loss to the nation since 1954." Moreover, he affirmed during a meeting held in the Saigon suburbs that "President Thieu shamelessly gave in to the enemy by signing the Paris accords in 1973." (Le Figaro, January 10, 1975.) This at the moment when most of the other opposition movements were calling for the application of these same accords. For its part, the PRG has just reaffirmed in a note sent January 14 to the countries that signed the accords that it is "the sole representative of the South Vietnamese population," not being content to recall that these accords set the two administrations on an equal basis. (Le Monde, January 16, 1975.)

But the fact that the leaders of the urban opposition who are most widely known (at least in the international press) are putting out many declarations of anticommunist faith should not give rise to any illusions about the reality of the process now under way.

Crisis of the regime

In the Saigon regions, there is still room for differentiated political currents that reflect on the one hand the process of progressive but deep radicalization now going on and on the other hand the open political explosion of the monolithism of the regime. But the breadth of the economic and social crisis — taking account of the unfavorable relationship of forces from Washington's point of view — prevents the recomposition of a bourgeois force capable of guaranteeing American interests through the applica-

tion of a real "peace policy." That is what makes the "solution" recommended by Tran Huu Thanh a palliative without great credibility.

The bases of this economic and social crisis as well as its amplitude and place have been described in INPRECOR Nos. 0 and 10. Nevertheless, we must return to this point inasmuch as it is a key factor in understanding the possibilities open to the revolutionary forces and the nature of the dynamic of the permanent revolution at work today in Indochina.

Inflation, falling standard of living, unemployment, and even hunger are threatening not only the working class and the refugees. Some civil servants and soldiers have also been hit. It is the same for the petty bourgeoisie. The puppet government, in search of financial resources, has taken some financial measures. And with a heavy hand. The Vietnam Courier (No. 29, October 1974) described the measures that have been adopted; among them are a 10 percent increase in the sales tax since mid-1973; a further increase of 20 percent in the land tax; a six- or tenfold increase in the tax on profits; a 50-100 percent increase in the tax for setting up stalls in the marketplace, etc. In the general atmosphere of crisis prevailing, that was the coup de grâce for a significant part of the urban population. And because of the existence of a situation of dual power on a national scale, it will be very difficult for the bourgeois "opposition" forces to avoid the petty bourgeoisie's increasingly turning its glance toward the revolutionary forces.

This is all the more true in that the urban economy of the zones under puppet control is now plunged deeply into recession. It is not only a question of the absence of new investments and the direct counterblow of the U.S. withdrawal. Again according to the Vietnam Courier of October 1974, some 50 percent of all companies have closed down. The rest are functioning at 30-80 percent capacity. This is what explains the extent of unemployment, which according to Nguyen Tho Khanh, a member of the Central Committee of the Federation of Vietnamese Trade Unions, stands at 50% in Danang, 60% in Quang Ngai and Quang Tri, 40% in Quy Nhon, etc.

The situation in Vietnam is characterized by a very particular form of dual power. On a national scale liberated zones are counterposed to zones under puppet control; "resistance economy" supported by a deep agrarian reform and the existence of the North Vietnamese workers state versus a neocolonial parasite economy strictly dependent on the Saigon zone; revolutionary administration and army against puppet regime and army. But this dual power has not been reproduced in the cities of the South, except in a subterranean fashion; there, clandestine revolutionary committees exist, but the only armed

force and police is that of Thieu. And this apparatus of bourgeois repression is considerable, directly backed up by American imperialism. It is this profound delay in revolutionary developments in the cities as compared to the countryside and mountains of Vietnam that must be made up in the framework born after the signing of the Paris accords.

Because of the means still being made available to the puppets by U.S. imperialism, because of the extent of the repression, and because it is a question of reorganizing not only political forces, but also social movements in recomposition, this process can only be the result of a prolonged struggle. Today, the urban opposition movements whose policy converges with that of the PRG do not seem as yet capable of taking initiatives that would be decisive in bringing down the regime. But their development is carried along by the weight of the national military and political situation, the influence of the PRG, the action of the Vietnamese Communist party, and the aggravation of the economic and social crisis. The same is not true for the various components of the Saigon regime. The most recent ministerial episode demonstrates this.

Strengthened by the support he still has from the Americans (temporarily?) and confronted with the explosion of demonstrations in September and October, Thieu decided to wave the carrot and the stick. A number of ministers were withdrawn from the government, among them the most detested, Hoang Duc Nha, ex-minister of Information and Rallying(!). The laws on the political parties were formally eased (but only formally). The puppet president violently attacked corruption and many officers were consequently sentenced. Simultaneously, other measures were decided: discrete arrests of militants, police harassment of the main leaders of the popular oppositions, repression of the press, an imposing police occupation of the center of Saigon in order to prevent any demonstration there. Thieu hoped in this way to divide the bloc of oppositions. And, at first, Father Tran Huu Thanh demanded precisely the "flexible" measures decreed by Thieu — particularly the departure of Nha. He did not want the resignation of Thieu at that time. But the pressure exerted by the mass movement that had been set in motion prevented him from engaging in maneuvers. Nobody will consider Thieu's retreats as "sufficient" to risk endorsing them.

Since then, Thieu has been unable to prevent the opposition from continuing to organize. In spite of police pressure, the Popular Movement for the Application of the Paris Accords held its first congress on November 10, 1974, with about 100 delegates. It adopted a political declaration defining itself as an integral part of the "third force" (which is not the case for the Movement Against Corruption,

the Catholic organization led by Tran Huu Thanh). Religiously nonsectarian, its policy is axised around the struggle for the application of the accords. It elected as its president Father Chan Tin (leader of the committee for the reform of the prisons) and elected an executive committee of seventeen members, among them Me Tran Ngoc Lieng, the deputy Ho Ngoc Nhuan, Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, and the Venerable Hien Phap. It is working with a second group, which held its congress on November 17, 1974: the Committee for the Defense of the Interests of the Workers, whose president is a worker-priest, the Reverend Father Khac Tu; most of the delegates represented companies of "four seasons" merchant groups. The aim of the conference was to "call on the confederations, the unions, and all the workers to unite in the struggle against layoffs." (Vietnam Information, No. 29, December 1974.) According to the Vietnam Courier, the Popular Movement for the Application of the Paris Accords and the Forces of National Reconciliation (Buddhist) now have a real national base. The Buddhist movement of the An Quang pagoda, apart from the divisions that partially paralyze it, has not offered effective support to Tran Huu Thanh's Movement Against Corruption. And the powerful Dai religious sect seems more and more to consider the PRG as the possible "winner."

Moreover, the Thieu regime has decided on two occasions to postpone the trial of four journalists accused of having defamed the puppet president. The four are Chinh Luan (True Commentary, so-called independent), Tia Sang (Ray of Light, financial daily), Dieu Tin (Telegraph, opposition, linked to General Minh), and Dong Phuong (Orient, so-called opposition). Their trial is supposed to take place on February 20 along with that of two other press organs that had published the Act of Accusation (see INPRECOR No. 10): the Song Than (Divine Wave) and the Dai Dan Doc (Great People).

Liberated zones

The link that exists between the regional military offensives of the PRG and the urban situation is illustrated in an especially clear way in the case of Tay Ninh, an important provincial capital 56 miles northwest of Saigon. The NLF's taking of the Vierge Noire mountain, which dominates the site of the city from a height of nearly 3,000 feet, along with the fall of Phuoc Binh, sharply changed the atmosphere there. The city is now effectively within the range of the artillery of the revolutionary forces. A police officer interviewed by the International Herald Tribune recently declared (January 11-12) that "even during the 1968 Tet offensive Tay Ninh was fairly quiet, and now they're shelling every day." The shelling is effective: it has struck the general headquarters and the helicopter landing field. "Only government functionaries remain in

Tay Ninh," reads a headline in the January 17 Le Figaro. There has been an exodus; but in diametrically opposed directions. The rich have gone to Saigon, but the poor are joining the liberated zones that cover the greater part of the province.

According to François Nivolon, the new arrivals receive from the PRG "two cows, a dozen pieces of sheet iron, construction wood, and some sacks of rice." With this they can feed themselves, build houses, and work.

And this is very important. The dialectic in play in Vietnam is not reducible to the interaction between the military struggle developed in the countryside and the political struggle opened in the cities. Social revolution and national liberation have always been intermeshed in the history of the Vietnamese revolution, even if their respective weight has not always been controlled by the CP. Agrarian reform and anticolonialism or anti-imperialism. But for a long time the liberated zones have remained subjected to terror bombings and raiding operations. They have now been partially relieved of this military pressure. And today it seems the liberated zones are beginning to play the role of a pole of attraction, even beyond the countryside.

While the crisis is ceaselessly deepening in the Saigon-controlled zones, life is being reorganized "on the other side." According to a PRG communiqué, the area cultivated in the zones under its administration exceeds 2.5 million hectares (6.25 million acres), which means a 64 percent increase in one year. In a study published in Le Monde December 19 and 20 Alexandre Caselle described the transformation of the northern province of Quang Tri. The destruction there had been terrible. Of the 70,000 buffalo the province had in the 1960s, only about 2,000 remain. The population had been gathered up and displaced by the puppet army. The land is sown with hundreds of thousands of mines and unexploded shells. Demining a hectare of land requires 100 working days. And the risk of accident is grave. The cities have been razed and the villages devastated. The province had lost more than two-thirds of its inhabitants. But in the past two years it has been reconstructed.

The agrarian reform has given the land to the peasants. Of course, this is not a socialist reform of agriculture. "The land is not collectivized; that would be premature," explained a cadre of the PRG. But the class of landed proprietors has disappeared. And the class of peasant capitalists has no favorable conditions for its formation. Moreover, an important amount of land is communal property and is shared out annually among the peasants of the village. Finally, the PRG is encouraging "mutual aid groups" that facilitate exploitation of the

land by collectivizing labor.

Two markets have been created, one state, one free. Certain products are sold only on the state market (cotton), others are sold 1.5-2 times more cheaply in state stores and are rationed so as to guarantee their division among all the inhabitants. There is no industry properly so called. For industry, Quang Tri, like all the liberated zones, relies on support from the DRV. But crafts are being encouraged. And social activities have been started up anew (schools, theaters, etc.).

Life in the liberated zones remains extremely austere. But the exploitation of the peasants has been broken. And rice costs much less than it does in the Saigon zones. What is true for the province of Quang Tri is also true for the Mekong Delta. The puppet forces there have lost the "rice war." A food surplus has even appeared in the liberated zones (which include, it is true, only a minority of the population). The inhabitants of the zones under Saigon's military control come to the liberated zones for supplies. Not only in rice, but also in cloth and even gasoline, thanks to the pipeline that comes down from the DRV to the Delta. Others come to sell water pumps to the peasants.

Some families of the urban petty bourgeoisie are moving to the liberated zones. But it is still not a large number. The whole family has to leave Saigon simultaneously, otherwise those who remain die in prison. But these moves are significant, even if they sometimes pose problems. In fact, the PRG has to feed these people, whereas they cannot produce. Often, only the man is able to work. And the family, marked by "urban" habits, sometimes regrets the absence of servants.

The revolutionary transformations of the Vietnamese countryside tend to exert a new weight on the national situation at a time when the social crisis is mobilizing the working class, merchants, refugees, intellectuals, and civil servants of the cities. And at a time when the puppet army is shaken. This is also one of the bases of the dynamic of the permanent revolution in Indochina.

Laos and Cambodia

It is a dynamic of permanent revolution throughout Indochina, because the evolution of the situation is not limited to Vietnam.

The fighting has taken on a new scope in Cambodia with the end of the monsoon season. The GRUNK has just met with a diplomatic reverse. But were its hopes of entering the UN demolished? Washington's action and the weight of the dollar counted for

much in obtaining the majority of two votes in favor of the pro-Lon Nol resolution. The Soviet Union gave only lip service to the GRUNK and did not seek to counter American pressure. But the FUNK committed a political error. It believed too much in the support of the so-called nonaligned countries. The PLO had just been acclaimed at the UN. And the GRUNK had been so acclaimed during the Algiers conference. It refrained from launching military offensives before the vote. And several "friendly" countries were absent during the vote (like Egypt) or abstained (like Bangladesh, despite its recognition of the GRUNK). Washington would have been embarrassed by the expulsion of Lon Nol from the international organization. But that is not the essential thing.

In several weeks the FUNK seems to have recovered the land it had ceded around Phnom Penh during the rainy season. More important, an offensive was launched along the Mekong, the principal route of supply for the Cambodian capital. Only three positions in this zone are still held by the puppet forces, according to the GRUNK. And fighting is going on in the main one of these: Neak Luong, an important river port between Phnom Penh and the Vietnamese border. For two weeks not a single convoy has been able to get through. The United States has had to set up a real air bridge to avert the suffocation of the capital. And the airport is being bombarded by the liberation forces.

It is the most important military offensive the FUNK has waged in a long time, even if it is difficult to determine its exact short-term objectives.

But it is in Laos that struggles that are significant for their newness have emerged.

Of the three countries of Indochina, Laos is the one in which the "internal" conditions of the revolution were the least mature when the war broke out. (See INPRECOR, No. 3, July 4, 1974.) This was also the only country in which accords were signed that led to the formation of a coalition government. More than Vietnam or Cambodia, it was in Laos that a freezing of the class struggle could have been feared, even though the relationship of forces in the country and in the Indochinese context did not indicate that this should be predicted.

The relationship of forces between Vientiane and the Pathet Lao was symbolically illustrated last autumn when Prince Souvanna Phouma, the prime minister and principal historic leader of the right, had to retire to France for three months for reasons of health. It was the Pathet Lao leader Phoumi Vongvichit who took the reigns of government during that time, even though Souphanouvong, another Pathet Lao leader, continued to lead the national

council. In spite of that, the policy of the Neo Lao Haksat (the Pathet Lao) remained very cautious: The Laotian delegation refrained from voting on the Cambodian question in the UN.

But on December 24, 1974, two companies of special forces formerly paid by the CIA mutinied against the right in Ban Houei Sai, an enclave of liberated territory in the northwest of Laos, in the "golden triangle" of opium. Even though they took the governor, a half-brother of the king, as a hostage, it could have simply been an incident without great implications. Nevertheless, it soon turned out that it was a movement of the whole population, including soldiers, students, city workers, and many minority tribes of the region. The slogans concerned the strict application of the programs presented by the Pathet Lao to the national council and to the government and adopted by these organizations: the dissolution of the puppet national assembly; free circulation between the zones; replacement of the commander and his deputy; "neutralization" of Ban Houei Sai (that is, the entry of Pathet Lao troops). These were demands that converged with the objectives of the revolutionary forces and that in some respects went beyond the Vientiane accords.

A mixed delegation was sent from Vientiane to negotiate, and the population won most of its demands. It was the first time that such an event occurred in this country, which lacks traditions of urban struggle.

On January 6 an analogous movement developed in Thakhek, a city in southern Laos. At the call of twenty-one organizations, demonstrators marched under nearly identical objectives. But Thakhek is located in a rightist fief. The army encircled hundreds of demonstrators. At the announcement of this news, the surrounding population assembled to break the military vice. The army opened fire, killing one of those who had come and wounding eleven others. In protest against this bloody repression, unprecedented since the signing of the accords, students demonstrated in Vientiane.

A new test of strength is developing in Laos. But this time it is beginning from urban mobilizations. That is the important new fact.

As in Vietnam and Cambodia, the economic crisis in the zones under rightist military control exerts decisive weight on the situation. In December the Kip (the Laotian currency) was sharply devalued, by 67 percent (dropping from 640 kips to the dollar to 1,400). Prices have increased by 100 percent in one year in Vientiane. Departures of Chinese and Vietnamese merchants — and bourgeois Laotians — run into the hundreds. It costs the equivalent of about US\$18 to buy 220 pounds of rice in the zone

controlled by Vientiane. But in the liberated zones the same quantity of rice costs the equivalent of US\$2.65 (at least in the Pakse region, where a correspondent of *Le Monde* was able to make a comparative inquiry (see *Le Monde*, December 1-2, 1974).

In this context strikes have broken out in Laos — a phenomenon virtually unknown in the past. An example occurred last July 14, when more than 1,000 workers and white-collar workers in various American aid services entered into struggle for better wages and social benefits. Or the actions waged from August 10 to 21 by the employees of the U.S. company Air Continental, and, in the same month, by the employees of the city of Vientiane. The woodworkers also went on strike. And the civil service employees in many departments went on strike to demand the removal of directors considered too corrupt or too hard. Finally, on August 23, some 500 policemen "responsible to the Vientiane side" demonstrated to demand pay increases and the transfer of their commander — completely unprecedented in Laos. The Neo Lao Haksat generally officially denies any direct participation in all these mobilizations. But it remarks that "the simple presence of troops of the patriotic front and the mixed police in Vientiane assures the strikers of security and moral support." (*Le Figaro*, October 25, 1974.)

In the meantime, it has obtained the signing of economic accords with Hanoi, which will furnish rice, cement, and pharmaceutical products, while communications between Laos and Vietnam will be strengthened to permit Laotian use of the ports of the DRV. These measures have indispensable effects in breaking the dependence of Laos, a landlocked country, on Thailand, through which the totality of its trade previously passed.

Impasse for the U.S.

It is thus a general deterioration of its positions in Indochina that American imperialism has to deal with. And it cannot blame this on the principal workers states. China has just made it known that it believes the maintenance of American troops in

Thailand, an important base of aggression against the Indochinese revolution, is necessary and desirable to block Soviet aims in the region!

The failure of the Kissinger plan is now apparent. But what policy will replace it? The internal situation in the United States, like the change in world priorities on the part of American imperialism, prevents Washington from launching a new escalation in Indochina. So Ford is taking many partial measures. Stocks of munitions in Thailand are being sent to South Vietnam on an emergency basis. Loc Ninh (the "administrative capital" of the PRG) and Phuoc Binh have been massively bombed by the Saigon air force. The American Congress has been asked for a financial extension of \$300 million for South Vietnam, and another will be requested for Cambodia. Phnom Penh is supplied through an air bridge. Measures of intimidation have been taken; pilotless spy planes are overflying the DRV; U.S. forces on Okinawa have been placed on alert; the Seventh Fleet is undergoing maneuvers; Air Force General David Jones has been sent to Saigon. And the U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh has made it known that American planes could participate in the supply of the Cambodian capital if need be.

But all the measures of intimidation do not conceal the fact that Washington is uncertain about the means of response at its command. And the battle in the American Congress for new credits promises to go badly. Senator Mansfield, head of the Democratic party majority, opposed Ford's request in these terms: "Supplementary aid means more fighting and more dead. It has to stop some day. It is up to these people to settle their differences in their own way." (*Le Figaro*, January 14, 1975.)

The American government will use all the means at its disposal to quantitatively increase aid to the Indochinese puppet regimes. But there is little chance that it will be able to change the nature of its intervention: financial aid, military supplies, operational training, political "advisers," military information, discrete support. This will prolong the war and the sufferings of the Indochinese peoples. But it will not enable Washington to turn the basic situation to its advantage. □



THE IMPERIAL ROAD

By A. PARSİ

The Iranian working class, and especially the worker youth, a product of the "white revolution," is today confronted with a social situation that is ever more laden with tension.

Response to superexploitation

Although the majority of the Iranian population lives in the countryside, the number of those moving to the cities looking for jobs is growing ceaselessly. We are now witnessing the rapid development of a working class, concentrated in the large cities like Teheran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Racht, Abadan, and Mahshad. People now working in the various industrial sectors constitute nearly 32 percent of the active population; that figure was 22.6 percent in 1966. And this has occurred despite the very strong development of unemployment: 10 percent of the active population, according to official statistics. (1)

The workers have no right of association and assembly; that is, they cannot form trade unions to defend their class interests. Of course, there are vertical unions that collaborate with the employers and the SAVAK (the political police). These "unions" have no standing in the eyes of the masses; they are empty structures modeled on corporatist fascist unions. The regime cannot provide them with a mass base.

Wages have gone up during the past few years, but the real buying power of the workers has fallen relatively (there is no index) and the wages of the majority of workers are not sufficient to provide for minimum needs. The increases in the prices of basic commodities is such that the workers do not manage to satisfy their most immediate needs. This situation

has given rise to a wave of strikes in important industrial branches. The toughest and most murderous strike of the past several months was the one that occurred in September 1974 at the Irana factory, which manufactures catelles and mosaics and is owned by the Erier family. The workers had occupied the factory to protest the layoff of four of the workers. They were savagely attacked by SAVAK agents; fourteen of the workers of the factory fell victim to the attack. The strike of the workers of the Land Rover assembly factory in October 1974 was no less militant, and here again there was a brutal repression.

The latest strike, which occurred in the Varamine vegetable oil factory, was especially interesting, for this factory is dependent on the Ministry of War (more precisely, on the ETKA) and provides the Iranian army with vegetable oil. On October 1, 1974, the 250 workers of this factory went on strike demanding wage increases and improvements in working conditions. This strike also provoked some panic among the authorities, astonished by this type of struggle.

It must be stressed that none of these strikes was reported in the Iranian press, and it is extremely difficult to get detailed information about what took place.

These strikes increasingly threw into relief the combativity and strength of the working class in Iran and the political role it can play. But it is clear that so long as the workers are not organized and have no means of defending themselves against the attacks of the SAVAK and the army, other victims will be added to those of the Irana factory.

Shortages and inflation

It will soon be several months since mounting price increases and shortages of foodstuffs took hold. The shah's agrarian reform has not only failed to resolve the problems of the peasants, but has also destroyed all traditional agriculture in the country (subsistence farming, for example) to the benefit of foreign and national capital. The regime's efforts to replace the destroyed peasant communities with agricultural co-operatives has ended in failure. In order to pay their debts (redeeming of state land through monthly installment payments), the peasants have been compelled to sell their lands to big capitalists and to become agricultural workers or to migrate to the cities. The peasant communities have been replaced by "agro-industrial units" often dominated by foreign capitalists. Among the most important of these "units" are Herenger and Naraghi (H&N) with capital of 425 million rials (68 rials=US\$1) and 18,617 hectares of land (1 acre=0.4 hectare), 97.5% of whose shares are held by imperialist capital; the Iran & California Company (Dezkar), with capital of \$1,250,000 and 10,536 hectares of land, 70% of the shares being owned by "foreign" capital; the Trans World Company, and the Iran-Yugoslavia Company.

In general, these companies produce food products for export (oranges, artichokes, endive, asparagus, etc.). This situation has provoked significant shortages and price increases in foodstuffs in the cities. During the past few months, the shortage of meat, eggs, milk, bread, and rice has attained extreme proportions. Hence, the government has been forced to resort to importing these products, but the imported products are intended first for the military and second for the 100,000 Kurds who have fled from Iraq and are lodged in modern camps constructed by the Iranian government in Kermanshah. Furthermore, the prices of these imports (Pakistani rice, wheat and frozen meat from the United States) are so high that the workers cannot buy them. This situation has stimulated a nearly generalized discontent among the population and above all among the workers, especially during the autumn of 1974.

Where the oil money goes

Oil income plays a very important role in the maintenance of the Iranian dictatorship. In 1974 by producing 320 million tons of oil — 293.1 million tons in 1973 — Iran could count on \$20,000 million in oil income, \$16,000 million more than in 1973 and twenty times more than in 1970!(2) During the past several years, the increase in oil prices has stimulated the birth of a not insignificant autonomous finance capital. (On this point, see the article by Ernest Mandel in INPRECOR No.10, October 17, 1974.) Big commercial banks controlled by Iranian capital have been created, among

which the most important are:

- *The Shahrar Bank, with capital of 5,000 million rials;
- *The Industrial and Mining Development Bank of Iran, with capital of 960 million rials (private);
- *The Industrial Credit Bank (Etebarat Sanati) with capital of 2,600 million rials (state-owned);
- *The Etebarat Tavoni Tozi Bank, 300 million rials (private);
- *The Foreign Trade Bank, 275 million rials (mixed);
- *The Commercial Bank of Iran, 250 million rials (private);
- *The Iran-Middle East Bank, 250 million rials (mixed);
- *The International Iran-Japan Bank, 200 million rials;
- *The Teheran Bank, with 250 million rials (mixed).

Thanks to this finance capital, the Iranian bourgeoisie is playing a rather important role, not only in the region of the Arab-Persian Gulf, but on an international scale as well.

This capital is utilized in three essential ways:

1. Abroad, it is spent in the form of aid or of financial or industrial participation. We can cite several significant statistics here. During the first ten months of 1974 these petrodollars were used abroad in the following manner:

- * More than \$100 million to buy 25.04% of the shares of the Krupp Hüttenwerke steel company(3);
- *\$1,000 million in aid to the World Bank;
- *\$75 million in credit to the Grumman Corporation (U.S.A.);
- *\$1,200 million in loans to British companies;
- *\$1 million donated to George Washington University in Washington, D.C.;
- *\$1,000 million advanced to the Banque de Paris for purchase of five atomic reactors from France;
- *\$3,000 million in loans to Italy;
- *\$250 million in aid to Pakistan;
- *\$250 million in aid to India;
- *\$2,000 million in aid to Afganistan;
- *\$100 million in aid to Bangladesh;
- *\$1,000 million to Egypt;
- *\$50 million in aid to Syria;
- *\$10 million in aid to Senegal.

2. The second use to which this capital has been put is to make arms purchases to strengthen the Iranian army. (See INPRECOR No.2, June 20, 1974.) More than 60% of the oil income is devoted to the army.

3. The third form of capital utilization is investment in national industrial projects and the five-year plans. Thus, the revised Fifth Five Year Plan, which began in May 1973, calls for investments of

\$60,000 million. Mixed investment projects are under way in auto (Renault, Chrysler), petrochemicals (Dupont, Union Carbide), and steel (Thyssen, Creusot-Loire, etc.). It is this independent finance capital that has allowed the shah and the Iranian bourgeoisie to take some positions running against the immediate interests of the American government and the oil companies. While in the historical sense the shah's regime guarantees the interests of American imperialism and world capitalism in Iran and the region, it can nevertheless manifest some independence of those interests in a conjunctural sense. It is this relative autonomy that allows the Iranian bourgeoisie to take advantage of imperialist contradictions in order to strengthen itself. This is also what explains both the "anti-imperialist" and "anti-American" campaign that has been launched by the Iranian press and the denunciation of the Iranian dictatorship by the American press. (The October 14, 1974, issue of Newsweek, which contained articles attacking the personal power of the shah and some revelations about SAVAK, was translated and reproduced in the Iranian press in an attempt to forge "national unity" against "foreign enemies.")

Nationalism at the dictatorship's service

The regime is trying to contain the general discontent of the population by using nationalist propaganda. That is why the mass media are relatively well developed; radios, television stations, and the major newspapers carry out this mission. For these propagandists, Iran, the center of formerly colonized Asia, must (under the direction of the shah) lead the struggle of the peoples of the continent against "imperialism in crisis." The propaganda also sings the praises of Iranian nationalism and the grandeur of Iran and of the Aryan race. Some ex-Maoists and old cadres of the Stalinist Tudeh party contribute to this propaganda to a significant degree.

Among the opposition, the two guerrilla organizations that were created several years ago have

played an important role in breaking with the past (the reformism of the Tudeh party and the National Front) and are fighting with exemplary heroism. But because of the confusion of their political lines and because of their militarist conceptions, they have not been able to truly influence political life in the country and mobilize the population. The "Fedai of the People" organization, which has a Castroist-Maoist line, has certainly played a role in touching off several strikes. The "People's Fighters" organization, which claims allegiance to Islam and Marxism at the same time, has a certain audience among the urban petty bourgeoisie. But up to now, neither of these organizations has succeeded in putting forward a concrete program of transitional demands or in making an analysis of the existing social forces and the socioeconomic development of Iran.

Against a modern army and police force and a regime supported by American imperialism and the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, other responses than the fedai's bomb will be required. Only revolutionary Marxism will be able to offer these responses and to prepare the Iranian working class and peasantry for the socialist revolution. □

FOOTNOTES:

1. The total population is 32 million.
2. Iran is the fourth-largest oil producer in the world (behind the United States, which produced 515 million tons in 1973; the Soviet Union: 424 million tons; and Saudi Arabia: 362 million tons), but it is the second-largest exporter of oil (after Saudi Arabia). It holds 11 percent of known world reserves. Moreover, Iran has reserves of natural gas, which is exported to the Soviet Union (8,700 million cubic meters were sold to the USSR in 1974) and, more recently, to West Germany. This gas will provide another new source of income.
3. It might be of some value to list some of the companies in West Germany in which Iranian capital holds stock: Siemens (electrical equipment), Kloeckner-Humboldt-Deutz (engines and trucks), Gute Hoffnungs-Hütte (steel), Linde (refrigerators), Preussag and Bayer (petrochemicals). This indicates some of the options of Iranian capital.



PORTUGAL: POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

We are publishing below the text of an overall analysis written by the comrades of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI — Internationalist Communist League), Portuguese sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, and published in their journal *Luta Proletária*, No.7, January 14, 1975. Our comrades of the LCI decided at their last national conference to participate in the elections to the constituent assembly, which are supposed to take place on March 15. The document sketches out the main lines of the social and political situation in Portugal and outlines the overall perspective within which our comrades will wage their electoral campaign.

* * *

The fall of the fascist dictatorship became necessary not only because its policy was entering into contradiction with the interests and development of the most dynamic sectors of finance capital, but also because it had proven itself incapable of resolving the political and military crisis created by the intensification of the armed struggle of the workers in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau and by the rise of workers struggles in Portugal.

The factors that explain the contradictory character of the situation that arose after April 25, 1974, were the contradictory character of the various forces that were involved in the fall of dictatorship and the fact that the dictatorship was overthrown by the initiative of a layer of young officers subject to diverse influences and threatened by military defeat in Africa.

For an initial period, the military coup of April 25 appeared in large part as a preventive maneuver on the part of Spínola and the most lucid sectors of finance capital. But in the situation prevailing immediately after the coup, another factor was brought into play: Certain sectors of the left of the Armed Forces Movement (AFM) had radicalized be-

cause of the repressive context in which they had to work out their action under the fascist dictatorship and because of the influence exerted on some of the members of the AFM by democratic organizations and reformist worker organizations.

In addition, through the massive strikes and demonstrations that followed the fall of fascism and the powerful May 1 demonstration the workers succeeded in improving their working and living conditions. They dealt many important blows to the fascist state apparatus, expelled the administrators and officials tied to the fascist apparatus and the leaders of the corporatist trade unions from the factories. Thus, they shifted the relationship of forces between the capitalists and the working class in their favor and made it difficult for Spínola's development plans to be implemented.

The development of the class struggle extended into the army. The struggle of the workers in uniform, the soldiers and sailors, was directed essentially against military discipline and the sending of troops to the colonies, as well as toward objectives related to the conditions of life in the barracks.

In Guinea the Portuguese soldiers fraternized with the fighters of the PAIGC, going beyond the instructions coming from Lisbon and thus forcing Spínola and the Junta of National Salvation to immediately recognize the independence of Guinea-Bissau under the leadership of the PAIGC.

During this period the working class openly went over to the offensive, despite all the political and organizational backwardness inherited from the period of fascism. Not having any political parties worthy of the name, the bourgeoisie was compelled to call upon the Communist and Socialist parties and the MDP, which integrated themselves into a National Front government with the PPD, whose ambition to become the party of finance capital was already obvious.

This was made possible because the government crystallized around the recognition and application of the program of the Armed Forces Movement. This is a program that, while adapted to the interests of finance capital, was put forward by some petty-bourgeois sectors of the AFM probably influenced by the policies followed by the Communist and Socialist parties; that is, a policy of alliance between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie and the nonmonopolist sectors of the bourgeoisie. In any case, whether this direct influence existed or not, a convergence of the type described would still have been possible.

The role of the reformist workers parties within the government inevitably had to be to contain the struggles of the workers within the narrow framework of private property. The guarantee of these parties' will to act in this way derived from their own reformist positions, their acceptance of the bourgeois-democratic program of the AFM, and their dependence on the president of the republic, the Junta of National Salvation, and the Coordinating Committee of the AFM.

The period that we are describing here was the period of the strikes at Lisnave, the strike and occupation of Timex, the struggle of the Lisbon transport workers (Carris), the strikes of the workers of the TAP (national airlines), and the strikes in the postal system (CTT) and the textile industry. It was a time of many strikes with occupations of the factories by the workers and of the emergence of many workers commissions. These commissions were in large part a response to the division of workers into different unions, even within the same factory (fascist union organizations). But the workers' actions often developed to the point that real strike leaderships were formed and continued with the perspective of defending the gains won in struggle against layoffs, the work pace, and the hierarchical system in the plants, all within the framework of workers control. Many workers journals began coming out (*O Trabalhador da Messa*, *O Novo Portuário*, *Jornal da Greve da Efacec-Inel*, etc.).

The proletariat, especially its most advanced sectors, increased its consciousness of the decisive role it plays in production and made advances in combativity, experience, and organization. But at the same time, in view of its relatively low level of political consciousness, the working class confused partial and conjunctural victories with definitive, irreversible ones.

In face of the development of struggles, and in a context in which no new regime could stabilize itself, the capitalists, the Junta of National Salvation, and the AFM, each in its own way, demonstrated two major concerns: avoiding a massive and

direct repression, and at the same time making some social and wage concessions in certain sectors and seeking to control inflation and hold prices down. But above all they based themselves on the illusion of the workers in the intentions of the AFM generated by the new situation.

These illusions, created in part by the very support that the reformist workers parties gave to the AFM, were to permit the AFM to isolate and even break the most advanced workers struggles (CTT, TAP, Lisnave, etc); and this was done with the crucial support of the CP and even of the Trade Union Federation, which strengthened itself through the adherence of new layers of workers awakening to struggle.

While the AFM was gaining experience in practical politics, in asserting its own importance, and was pursuing its Bonapartist ambitions, the Communist and Socialist parties set themselves the task of preventing any generalization of the struggles, isolating the most conscious and combative workers from the rest of the working class, and centering more and more on the Trade Union Federation, directing it toward playing the role of a reformist apparatus keeping the workers in line.

Bonapartist military regime of the bourgeoisie

We now find ourselves in a society in which bourgeois relations of production continue to reign and capitalists continue to dominate, but in which the centers of political power escape the direct control of the bourgeoisie; or, rather they escape the control of any of the bourgeoisie's parties. A military caste has emerged over and above the two fundamental antagonistic social classes, over and above the owners and proletariat, the exploiters and exploited, a caste establishing a regime behind which is hidden the reality of finance capital.

. . . Moreover, both the political situation and the regime immediately proved to be unstable. The center of the exercise of political power is located in the political structures of the AFM and the armed forces themselves. Several bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political tendencies, and even certain sectors tied to the workers movement, coexist within the army at various levels of leadership. While it is true that the army properly so called remains a bourgeois institution (like the entire state apparatus), it is also true that within the army there is an unstable equilibrium between the hierarchy and the traditional structures on the one hand and the structures and hierarchy expressing the reformist petty-bourgeois tendencies that have worked out the program of the AFM on the other hand. Finally, be-

PORTUGAL

cause of the relative equilibrium in the strength of the classes, the relative equilibrium within the army itself, and the relations the army maintains with social movements, the Junta of National Salvation, the Coordinating Commission, and the AFM itself appear on the political scene as relatively independent mediators.

The ruling class, the bourgeoisie, rules through a reformist petty-bourgeois military caste. This military caste, in turn, rules thanks to bourgeois institutions, laws, and ideology. Hence, it is clear that conflicts had to arise within the state apparatus between the ruling class and the form through which it rules, conflicts that express themselves more specifically in confrontations between various centers of the exercise of political power. It is thus that the development of the class struggle and the political choices that it necessitated, especially on the colonial question, led to an intense struggle between the Spínola forces and the radical petty-bourgeois sectors of the AFM. While the Bonapartist regime was consolidating its hold, the continuation of the armed struggle of the workers of Angola and Mozambique, the signs of fraternization between Portuguese soldiers and fighters of the liberation movements, and the pressures of sectors of the left wing of the AFM and of the reformist workers parties compelled Spínola to retreat in the implementation of his neocolonial plans, while nevertheless continuing to try to force the liberation movements to make maximum concessions (especially in Angola) so as to impose a neocolonial solution with imperialism and the political forces tied to it (the Angola National Liberation Front, UNITA, Mobutu). At the same time, the sectors of the state apparatus most directly representing the interests of finance capital took advantage of the relative ebb in workers struggles (after the end of June) to repress the action of the revolutionary organizations and issue decrees repressing the right to strike, the right of assembly, etc. They tried in this way to open the road for the capitalists to be able to recover what they had been forced to concede during the period immediately following the fall of the dictatorship. Layoffs, inflation, and intensification of the work pace were the means of implementing this operation. . . .

To attain these goals of economic restructuring, of integration into the Common Market, the Portuguese bourgeoisie needed to deprive the workers of the gains the bourgeoisie had been forced to concede. Hence, the bourgeoisie repressed the most advanced workers struggles, allowed the far-right organizations to develop, and thus encouraged reaction. Galvao de Melo did not hesitate to discuss with the members of the PIDE (former political police) who had mutinied.

«a military caste has emerged over and above the two antagonistic social classes. . .»



The difficulties in the application of the initial tactic of finance capital (federalist decolonization and the establishment of a strong state under the leadership of Spínola) encouraged certain of those sectors most closely tied to colonial exploitation, stock market speculation, and the most backward industrial branches to act on their own account, to seek to organize certain layers of the petty-bourgeoisie in the context of a reactionary program.

After the initial shock, the big bankers and industrialists recovered their forces. . . . They tried through various maneuvers to put pressure on the provisional government to more clearly define its policy as one in service of finance capital and, in any case, as a policy assuring sufficient profits on investment. Thus, the guarantees offered by the second provisional government — which was formed after the unsuccessful constitutional coup of Palma Carlos — were not long in coming. Vasco Gonçalves's speech was clear in this regard. The price of bread, sugar, and milk were to go up. The necessity of saving was affirmed. All Portuguese, he said, had to make an effort to reconstruct the economy that



Gonçalves

had been led to chaos by fascism. He asked the capitalists not to be discouraged, to invest and make a profit. He asked the workers to demand jobs, to accept all sacrifices, and not to disturb the smooth functioning of the factories. . . . This first overall offensive of the bourgeoisie was made possible by the policy of the reformists; but it clashed with the resistance of the most combative sectors of the proletariat (the TAP strike, the *Jornal da Comercio*, Lisnave).

During this whole period the bourgeoisie was seeking to rapidly resolve the colonial question. But after the independence of Guinea-Bissau, the Lusaka accords showed not only that the Portuguese bourgeoisie, with the aid of imperialism and the African bourgeoisie, was hoping to extract accords and concessions from the liberation movements, but also that it was forced to make concessions much more rapidly than it desired. In Angola, where the military situation was not so unfavorable, where the liberation movements were divided (even the MPLA itself), and where the interests of imperialism and the natural wealth (diamonds, oil) were greater,

the tactic was different. Spínola sought to take direct charge of the question of the decolonization of Angola (cease-fire, provisional government including both the liberation movements and the other organizations, elections to a constituent assembly, etc.) with the aim of shunting the MPLA aside and relying on the support of Mobutu and Holden Roberto Savimbi to impose a neocolonial solution.

Political meaning of September 28

On September 19, after an appeal from Spínola, the "silent majority" was invited to demonstrate its support for the president of the republic. It quickly became clear that many forces of the right and the far right were uniting around a demonstration scheduled for September 28. Capitalist sectors that had supported the April 25 coup (Champallimaud, Galvao de Melo) felt they were being overtaken by events and were concerned about the ties between the AFM and the reformist parties. They linked up with legionnaires like Casal, Ribeiro, and well-known colons like Franco Mogueira and Kaulza de Ariaga.

The right and the far right mobilized. There were more and more right-wing banquets; arms were accumulated. On September 25 the reactionary forces occupied the Campo Pequeno (a sports arena). That represented the first show of force by the right. Spínola was given an ovation, and he accepted the role being offered him. Growing sectors of finance capital tied to North American imperialism or Brazilian subimperialism and those sections of the bourgeoisie most attached to the colonial system (Espirite Santo Bank, etc.) more or less openly supported this offensive of the right and the far right. It was above all the rural petty bourgeoisie that mobilized in combination with the demonstrations of the reactionary colons of Angola and Mozambique. This offensive aimed at provoking a split in the army and the dissolution of the AFM. The September 28 demonstration was intended to create a situation of tension that would allow Spínola to declare a state of siege, assume full powers, and repress the workers and revolutionary organizations. But against this demonstration there arose a workers mobilization stimulated by the Trade Union Federation and various workers and revolutionary organizations. This mobilization, with the formation of barricades, in its turn forced the intervention of the AFM and determined the direction of its action. Spínola and the various groups involved in the operation retreated when they saw the relationship of forces both within the AFM and between the AFM and the army was unfavorable to them.

The working class emerged strengthened from the test of September 28. Many workers understood their own capacity to struggle against reaction.

This was the case with the typographers, who prevented publication of advertisements in favor of the "silent majority," and with the drivers and conductors, who disorganized the reactionary demonstration by refusing to take people to it. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between the workers' capacity for mobilization and their degree of political consciousness. The reformist organizations and parties succeeded in deflecting the workers from an anticapitalist struggle concentrating their attention on the struggle against reaction and fascism.

It was the proletariat's incapacity to intervene in the crisis as an independent and determining force that allowed the AFM to regain control of the situation, to replace the barricades erected by workers who were exercising class vigilance against the reactionaries with groups of soldiers who inspected vehicles and even permitted Spínola to deliver a resignation speech in which he called on national and international capitalists to resort to economic weapons and put pressure on the provisional government, preparing to bring it down if necessary.

The political backwardness of the Portuguese proletariat and the class-collaborationist policy developed by the reformists also explains one of the immediate results of the events of September 27 and 28: the "Sunday workdays" proposed by Vasco Gonçalves. These extra workdays were supposed to deepen the workers' illusions in the myth of national reconstruction and to prove to imperialism that the government and the AFM were in control of the situation. Undoubtedly, one of the political consequences of September 28 was the consolidation of the Bonapartist military regime.

Since September 28

The reformist workers parties, above all the CP, judged that their hour had come after September 28. Did they not appear as the saviors of the nation and democracy? This, they assumed, would create a new relationship of forces that would allow them to strengthen their influence and position within the state apparatus. But they succeeded only in strengthening the AFM's power in political life in general and in the workers movement in particular. And the AFM, by its very nature as an integral part of the armed forces, whose existence and functioning are tied in a thousand ways to bourgeois society, can only serve the bourgeoisie itself. It is for that reason that the initiatives of the CP (struggle against the monopolies, agrarian reform, advocating that the AFM participate in the elections to the constituent assembly) will in every case be changed around by government bodies that must represent

the "greatest unity" between the "people and the armed forces." It is for that reason that the CP's veiled criticisms of certain ministers and certain laws run up against a discrete but firm opposition from the Council of Twenty (the AFM) and the Council of Ministers. The CP did not gain anything by abandoning the most radical aspects of its eight-point program (like nationalization of the monopolies) during its last extraordinary congress, when it adapted itself even more to the program of the AFM. At that point a new period opened during which the strengthening of the AFM was to be combined with its progressive transformation (through its managing of the interests of the bourgeoisie) and its program was developed, but in the "worst" sense. At the same time, the AFM is extending its base in the armed forces; its hierarchy is merging with the traditional hierarchy. This is the moment in which the AFM became dissolved into the state apparatus, losing its initial independence of the bourgeois state exactly to the extent that its governmental responsibilities increase. All the laws that the AFM proposes and that the provisional government adopts are marked by bourgeois reformism. The latest example is provided by the Melo Antunes economic and social plan, whose Social Democratic character was in no way altered by the changes proposed by the Coordinating Commission and approved during the most recent AFM assembly of delegates.

The bourgeoisie, forced to retreat, with the sectors most favorable to a new coup crushed, has changed its tactics. It is now seeking all the influence it can get within the armed forces and the government while actively preparing itself for the elections.

At the same time, the reformist workers parties, and above all the CP, are making desperate maneuvers in order to shift the policy of the AFM in their favor, with the more or less declared intention of making the army carry out the process of basic reform, of making the army confirm the decisive importance of the CP, guaranteeing its permanent place in the government and increasing the support and confidence of the workers for the policy of CP participation in the provisional government, thus making possible an "authentic democracy," or at least a democracy as conceived by the CP. But the AFM is not a revolutionary vanguard, and big capital cannot be fought with the means and methods being proposed by the CP and the AFM. The CP is betraying the working class by trying to link it to classes that will in turn betray it. This whole evolution of political relationships is diminishing the fears of the bourgeoisie, strengthening its confidence in the ability of Bonapartism to manage the crisis and defend the bourgeoisie's own interests; it is permitting the bourgeoisie to face the future with more confidence and to prepare for an electoral victory

of the right-wing parties thanks to their financial power and political influence, especially in the rural areas.

Given the Portuguese bourgeoisie's narrow margin for economic maneuver, the political incapacity of the reformist parties, the present fragility of the revolutionary organizations, and the divisions within the working class (divisions that are aggravated by unemployment, some partial defeats, and the isolation of the most combative sectors of the heavy battalions of the working class), a rightist electoral victory would give rise to an attempt to set up a strong state, that is, a state with a strongly centralized executive able to channel and repress workers struggles. But in order for it to be possible to establish such a state without grave social confrontations breaking out, it is necessary that the resistance of the working class be virtually nil, that the workers be demoralized and demobilized by the provisional government.

The present economic and political situation is full of difficulties for the bourgeoisie, however. Contrary to the predictions of Minister Rui Vilar, galloping inflation is continuing, the flight of capital goes on, and crooked bankruptcies are on the rise; layoffs are continuing, and the number of unemployed has already risen to 150,000. This figure is bound to increase even more because of the return of the soldiers from Africa and the difficulties with which Portuguese immigrant workers in West Europe are confronted. Bank deposits remain low despite the increase in the interest rate. This implies credit restrictions. Many small and middle-sized companies are facing grave problems. The balance of trade is deteriorating, with very large deficits appearing. Income from tourism is diminishing and the inflow of currency sent by immigrant workers is not increasing, thus worsening the balance of payments. Investment is being made only cautiously and is even declining. The crisis in agriculture is rampant. And if that is not enough, the attempts to modify the agrarian system through decrees on the rate of cultivation and utilization of fallow land are clashing

with the political backwardness of the peasants and the traditional inertia of agrarian structures. Finally, the students are not studying and the reformist technocratic reform of the educational system is marking time.

The resolution of the economic crisis of the bourgeoisie cannot be effected simply through an attack on the working and living conditions of the working class; it also and above all necessitates the resolution of the crisis of bourgeois rule. The bourgeoisie is now using two means to achieve this goal: Through an emergency economic and social plan it is reducing the power of certain sections of the bourgeoisie that had constituted the main prop of the fascist regime; and it is limiting and attacking the conditions of life and possibilities of struggle of the working class.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie is especially trying to utilize the elections to the constituent assembly to derail the struggles of the workers in the factories, trade unions, and factory commissions, directing these struggles toward electoral channels; it is trying to substitute the demand for a democratic constituent assembly for the economic and social demands of the masses. Further, an electoral victory of the forces of the capitalist right (the CDF and PPD) would permit the bourgeoisie to use the constituent assembly to legitimize the new forms of rule and to accelerate the formation of a strong state that as far as possible would conserve a certain appearance of democracy in order better to fool the workers.

In face of all this, it is necessary that revolutionaries adopt a clear position on the constituent assembly elections. They must intervene actively in the elections and implacably denounce the nature and objectives of the elections by utilizing them to develop their revolutionary agitation and propaganda, by using the constituent assembly as a tribunal for denouncing the exploitation of capitalist society, but always subordinating the intervention in bourgeois institutions to the struggle for self-management and direct action by the toiling masses. □

FOUNDING CONGRESS:

Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire



The constituent congress of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International, was held in Paris December 19-22, 1974. This congress will go down in the history of the French Trotskyist movement, for it was devoted to analyzing a social and political reality very much different from that which prevailed during the three congresses of the ex-Ligue Communiste (1969, 1971, and 1972), which was dissolved by the government in June 1973 for its antifascist and antiracist activities. The new organization recorded the deep changes in relation to the past, especially as regards its links with workers struggles and the consequent new problems of intervention that must be resolved.

The political context

The three congresses of the ex-Ligue Communiste took place in a political context that could be defined as the post-May '68 situation. Gaullism was then entering into open crisis. The reformist workers parties were offering no consistent political perspective to the working class, which was conscious of the impact this deficiency had had during the 1968 general strike. The revolutionary far left was affirming its presence and seizing opportunities for important central mobilizations. A new generation of vanguard worker militants was progressively emerging in the factories.

Today the French political scene is dominated by the international economic recession. Given the

current state of the relationship of forces between the classes, the Giscard d'Estaing regime appears incapable of resolving the open crisis of bourgeois leadership in France, marked by the shaking of Bonapartism. The regime is condemned to administering the crisis as best it can while preparing for the coming social confrontations. The revolutionary and worker militants are now confronted with claims of the big reformist parties (the SP and the CP) that they have a solution to the crisis: the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left) and its Common Program of government. Finally, the struggles waged earlier in the factories, the acceleration of inflation, and the appearance of massive unemployment require that the vanguard be more capable than before of offering precise and concrete responses on the way to struggle.

In this political conjuncture, the weakness of the social roots of the far left and the ultraleft and opportunist deviations that run through it to a large extent exert their full weight. The far left is suffering from a general crisis of growth marked by the recomposition of certain organizations (the departure of the Rocard tendency from the centrist Parti Socialiste Unifié, for example), by the outbreak of splits (in Lutte Ouvrière, an economic Trotskyist current), the disappearance of a centralized Mao-spontanist current in favor of a relative strengthening of the Mao-Stalinist sects (Humanité Rouge and Front Rouge), the absence of any definite orientation on the part of some organizations (like Révolution, an ultraleft current that split from the Ligue Communiste in 1970), and the complete marginalization of the Alliance des Jeunes pour le So-

cialisme—Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (Young Socialist Alliance—Internationalist Communist Organization, a rightist sect claiming to be Trotskyist).

A changing organization

The Trotskyist movement tied to the Fourth International has proven itself the most capable within the French far left of grasping the new features of the political situation and the class struggle. But this has not prevented the necessity of opening a very broad internal debate. All the more so in that we have reached a very particular stage in our organizational development. The statistics on the organization and the congress (social composition, sex, age, and trade-union responsibilities of members and delegates) illustrate the progress that has been registered not only in comparing with the pre-May '68 period but also in comparison with the past two years.

The most important differences with the three congresses of the ex-Ligue Communiste concern social composition. Some 61% of the militants were wage workers (69% if we include salaried students); 12% were blue-collar workers, 17% white-collar workers, 5% technicians, 3% supervisory personnel, 13% tenured teachers, 8% substitute teachers, 4% unemployed (and more than 5% miscellaneous). Students accounted for no more than 24% of the membership (which may increase somewhat during the university year); high-schoolers were barely 5%. Last spring a national conference of the *Taupe Rouge* (Red Mole) groups of worker sympathizers and factory cells of the *Front Communiste Révolutionnaire* (Revolutionary Communist Front, predecessor of the LCR) had assembled 1,300 militants in a provincial city, Lyon. Beyond these figures, nevertheless, the workers implantation is very uneven: strong in the hospitals, posts and telegraphs, for example; relatively weaker in the industrial proletariat, the metal and automobile industries, etc.

More important, a growing number of trade-union militants (nearly 55% of the members are in the CGT, the CFDT — the two main workers confederations — or the FEN, the teachers union) have a real experience of struggle and are taking on responsibilities in the trade unions (this is the case in various forms for more than one-third of the Ligue's trade unionists). The debates on the tasks before us have correspondingly changed; they have become very concrete.

Between the third congress of the ex-Ligue Communiste and the founding congress of the LCR our movement has grown 15–20%, despite the much too frequent departure of militants.

But this considerable progress (let us recall that six years ago we were intervening almost exclusively in the student milieu) should not conceal the weaknesses of our development.

The organization remains very young politically. To be sure, it has "aged" considerably. The average age of the delegates to the congress was three years higher than the average age of the delegates to the third congress of the ex-Ligue Communiste. The most numerous age brackets in the organization are 21–25 years old (47%), 26–30 years (27%), and 18–20 years (13%). But about 50% of the militants have been in the Trotskyist movement only since 1972. Only 26% have more than five years political activity in our current; 21% joined in 1974. This shows that while the organization has grown numerically in a regular way, it has also lost a significant number of militants; and that is serious.

The sexual composition of the organization is progressing. Nevertheless, it is still very unequal. About 30% of the militants of the LCR are women. More significantly, though, this percentage falls to 23% among the delegates and 16% among the city-level leadership.

In a more general fashion, the worker militants meet important difficulties in taking on central responsibility in the organization, and strengthening of the factory cells has occurred much more slowly than the multiplication of organized sympathizing groups (the *Taupe Rouge* groups) in the factories.

The problem cannot be presented solely in figures. The French Trotskyist movement has become a real national political organization (the "smallest of the political parties," as the bourgeois journalists sometimes say). But the LCR is still far from being in position to offer a concrete and credible alternative to the reformist parties. We have never been so deeply involved in important workers struggles (the most recent example being the postal strike); never have the themes we have raised been so hotly discussed in the workers movement (the question of self-organization of the working class, for example); and never has our trade-union implantation been so large. But we are still incapable of practically offering national solutions to the workers struggles or national outlets for the tendency battles waged within the trade unions. The results of five years of antimilitarist activity, fed by the crisis of the French army, have gone beyond anything expected. But the far left has not been able to initiate central mobilizations to support the movement of the draftees as large as the mobilizations against the Debré law in 1973.

We stand at a very particular stage of our develop-

ment in which our objective responsibilities have expanded considerably, in which our capacities for intervention in the class struggle are far beyond what they were six or even three years ago, but in which we still cannot offer a national alternative to the policy of the reformist parties in practice.

Congress debate

The opening of a broad internal debate was made necessary by the combination of a change in the French political situation and a stage of tension in our organizational development, the combination itself unfolding before the backdrop of a deepening of the class struggle on a European scale.

The organization was divided into four tendencies over the orientation to adopt in regard to the analysis of the political situation, the modification of the form and content of our work in the masses, and the organizational measures that should consequently be taken. The theses of Tendency 2 were the ones adopted by the congress.

The congress stressed the structural character of the crisis of the regime. Given the current state of things, the regime cannot expect the breakup of the Union de la Gauche and a consequent move of the SP toward a centrist solution, despite the debate now going on between the SP and the CP. In fact, the recomposition of the SP would be placed in question in the event of the breakup of the Union de la Gauche. While stressing the bourgeois nature of the Common Program of the Union de la Gauche and the existence of a class-collaborationist orientation on the part of the CP and the SP, the congress rejected characterizing the Union de la Gauche as an embryonic popular front (which was proposed by Tendency 4). The essential contradiction of the Union de la Gauche remains that it is a front of class collaboration but is perceived by the working class as representing the unity of the big workers parties. It thus tends simultaneously to mislead the class struggle and to stimulate it through the hopes that it raises by offering an apparently credible alternative to the crisis of bourgeois leadership. Consequently, it is the reformist project of the CP and the SP that must be directly denounced as such, rather than putting the main emphasis on the organic alliance of the CP and SP with some bourgeois forces (the left radicals) as Tendency 1 proposed.

The congress concretely located the place occupied in the construction of the French section of the Fourth International by the emergence of a broad vanguard — and within it a workers vanguard of a mass character — as described in the European perspectives document adopted by the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International. Tendency 4 denied the

central place of this vanguard, rejecting the conclusions of the European document: To reach the masses through concrete mobilizations generated by setting in motion the broad vanguard that represents the generation of militants who, without having broken strategically with the reformists, are concretely escaping the control of the bureaucracies and asserting a capacity for independent initiatives. To win hegemony over this vanguard by orienting it toward the masses and by qualitatively strengthening our implantation in the broad workers vanguard. To apply in this manner a united front tactic based on the desire of the masses for unity and for a program of class struggle. To consequently address ourselves within the far left on a priority basis to the centrist political currents that in their own way reflect the process of radicalization going on among the working class; to do this by opening a debate, especially with the PSU. This overall orientation was rejected by Tendency 1, which saw it, among other things, as a temptation to adapt to the exclusive and confused aspirations of the broad workers vanguard, and by Tendency 3, which feared that too sharp a differentiation was being made between the broad vanguard and its workers component, which would lead to a workerist orientation. This debate was central because of the implications it could have for the analysis of the political situation, for the orientation toward mass work, and for the choices of how to construct the organization (on the city and national levels).

Finally, the congress concluded its work by adopting a series of measures that should accelerate the changes now going on in our organization. Priority was given to political training and above all to cadre-building; to the taking in charge of the workers intervention by the central leadership and the establishment of publications and cadre schools specifically adapted to the education of worker militants; to the transformation of our press system by preparing to launch a daily newspaper next September or October; to a modification in the functioning of the leadership. It is in fact a whole new system of organization that has to be set up progressively, that has to be based on a qualitative politicization of the internal life of the Ligue and on the transformation of the manner of carrying out mass work.

Essentially, the discussion and debate dealt with the application of the planks of the Transitional Program to the tactics of party-building in a given situation with a particular relationship of forces. In this regard the discussion is of interest to the entire International.

This congress was prepared by the holding of a real democratic debate, which is what made the congress possible. Any current assembling the signatures of thirty or more members on the basis of a political

orientation had tendency rights: equal financing provided by the organization; the right to hold local, regional, and national meetings; equal space in the internal bulletin; equal rights in sending speakers around the organization; equal time for presentation of reports at the congress. The discussion time at the congress (apart from the reports) was divided according to the percentage of votes registered at the regional congresses; there was also proportional representation on the new central committee.

The relative political weakness of the organization and some organizational difficulties had negative influences on the debate. But the development of the debate as a whole represented important progress compared with the three congresses of the ex-Ligue Communiste. A real tradition of democratic centralism has thus taken hold. And this is decisive for the future, for other debates will certainly be necessary.

After this debate, Tendency 2 won 59% of the delegates to the congress; Tendency 3 had 19%, Tendency 1 had 18.6%, and Tendency 4 had 3%.

The debate at the congress centered only on the situation in France. But the congress was nevertheless an internationalist one. This was reflected in

many ways: its request to integrate into the Fourth International; the greetings it sent to political prisoners in Spain, to the peoples of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, to the peoples of Indochina in struggle, to the Ceylonese comrade Rohana Wijeweera, who had just been sentenced to life imprisonment, to the Chilean militants confronted by the dictatorship; the presence of members of many organizations of the Fourth International; the greetings brought by Chilean militants: Luis Vitale, Trotskyist militant of the Revolutionary Socialist party, Edgardo Enríquez of the MIR, and a comrade of the Chilean Communist League; the messages sent by the Manifesto-PDUP group and Lotta Continua (Italy), the Junta of Revolutionary Coordination of Latin America, the Argentine Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores; and finally, the greetings brought by a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The first congress of the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire, which has become the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, thus continued the tradition of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste and the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, dissolved by the government in June 1968 and of the ex-Ligue Communiste, dissolved in June 1973. □

...the death of Jabra Nicola

cont'd. from pg. 2

and the radicalization that occurred throughout Europe following the May 1968 uprising, combined to exert their objective pressures on the situation in Israel. A program for the Middle East revolution isolated from a total world perspective was no longer tenable. In 1971 the ISO split into two main groupings, and Abu Said, in accordance with the logic of his whole life's work, joined the ranks of the ISO(Marxist), Israeli section of the Fourth International.

In England, comrade Said was probably best known for an article jointly written with Moshe Machover entitled "Arab Revolution and the National Problems in the Arab East," which appeared in the Summer 1973 issue of *International* (Vol.2, No.2).

We draw attention to this article because it summarizes another of comrade Said's central theoretical contributions to the development of a program for the Arab revolution. Said was literally the first Arab ever to realize that it was in the objective interests of the struggle against Zionism and for a so-

cialist Arab East to recognize programmatically the right of the Israeli nation to self-determination, within the framework of a socialist Middle East. Although much subsequent debate has raged over this question both inside and outside the International, what counts above all is the fact that comrade Said creatively applied the Marxist method to the concrete aspects of the national question in the Middle East. This has resulted in an enrichment of the theoretical heritage of Marxism on the national question.

To appreciate the significance of our loss in the death of Abu Said, it is not necessary to agree or disagree with this or that point. It is enough to realize that Abu Said, like a stubborn, tenacious, and immovable rock, never moved from the side of the working class. It is to this quality in the man that we pay our deepest and humblest respect.

(The preceding article is reprinted from the January 9, 1975, *Red Weekly*, paper of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.)

THE CEASE-FIRE:



A POLITICAL TURN

By BRIAN HERON

Ever since Christmas the Provisional IRA has been discussing whether to extend or end their cease-fire. The original cease-fire, which lasted from December 22 to January 17, was called off by the Provisionals "due to the total lack of response to our peace proposals by the British government." The Provisionals listed eight points as additional reasons for calling off the cease-fire; these included the British regime's failure to release a large enough number of political prisoners and the refusal of the British forces to suspend hostilities. On January 20, however, the press reported that "hopes rose for a new cease-fire." The basis for these "hopes" seemed to be reports that the Provisionals were further limiting their demands and that an initial meeting in Ulster had been held between the Provisional Sinn Féin and representatives of the British government. Latest reports indicate that the Provisionals are offering a new cease-fire in exchange for demands that all internees be released and that further talks be held aimed at winning a British declaration of intent to withdraw forces from Ireland by a certain date.

There is a dangerous logic behind these moves and countermoves, for the date is approaching for the convening of the Irish Constitutional Convention sponsored by British Minister of State for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees. The Constitutional Convention which will probably begin on March 13 or March 20, is supposed to arrive at a governmental system for the North of Ireland. All predictions indicate that the overwhelming majority of the seventy-eight convention delegates will be representatives of the extreme sectarian right-wing Ulster Loyalist organizations. The aim of the British government is to offer a few concessions (as few as possible, in order to prevent a Protestant backlash) in order to gain a cease-fire during the period of the convention — an attempt to expand the maneuvering room of the "middle of the road" forces (like the Social Democratic and Labour party, which is based on middle-class Catholics in the North). Rees reasons that

a cease-fire would strengthen the will for "peace," which would in turn be reflected in a large vote for the forces of "moderation."

For the Provisionals, the cease-fire represents a political turn. They believe that they hold a good bargaining position, precisely because they placed the military struggle against the British troops in the North and later the bombing campaign in Britain in the center of their analysis of how to develop a favorable relationship of forces in the struggle against imperialism. Now, they believe, the time has come for a turn to politics.

The content of this turn throws light on many of the weaknesses of the program within which the Provisionals had conceived their struggle. Community politics, deals and maneuvers with imperialism, and an orientation toward the plebian elements of the Ulster Loyalist organizations are the main elements of this turn. In a recent interview with the Red Weekly, paper of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International, Seamus Loughran, Provisional Sinn Féin organizer for the North, had this to say in response to a question about how to deal with the Loyalists: "You create a situation where you say to them, 'Look, here we have got peace. We have given you this peace in an attempt to get you to listen to us.' . . . Then we produce on the table all of our Programme . . . and we say, 'There, what would you like to see changed in it?'"

The main aim of the Loyalists, however, is to return as rapidly as possible to the total reconstruction of the sectarian Orange statelet with all its trappings, including the notorious B-Special police force. The January 6 issue of the Irish Times commented this way about the Loyalist organizations' responses to the latest Provisional cease-fire: "They are preparing for war."

The danger of the Provisionals' "turn," reflected in their accommodation to the SDLP (in the modera-

tion of the demand for the withdrawal of British troops, for example) is that it may find a basis for support that goes well beyond that provided by the political weakness of their program. The press has been unanimous in pointing to the "feeling for peace" now evident in the Catholic ghettos of the North of Ireland. What the press has got hold of here is the crisis of perspectives in the North and the consequent feeling among the Catholics that the war alone is getting them nowhere. There are two central causes for this: the absolute powerlessness that the Catholic population felt in face of the reactionary Protestant general strike and the failure of the Provisionals to build an all-Ireland movement breaking the isolation of the Northern Republicans' fight against Ulster reaction and imperialism. This crisis of perspectives is now beginning to have a real impact organizationally. A recent split from the Official Republican movement led by Costello and supported by Bernadette Devlin has resulted in the formation of the Irish Socialist Republican party.

Initial reports would suggest a favorable evaluation of their program. They appear to have issued a call for an all-Ireland anti-imperialist united front calling for the immediate withdrawal of British

troops and self-determination for the Irish people. While the importance of individual groups should not be overstressed, it seems that a general process of regroupment is now under way. Most important in this process is the beginning of the emergence of real forces breaking from a petty-bourgeois nationalist program. Joint action among the revolutionary groups is also on the agenda. The demand for such unity in action grows out of the real feeling of isolation and rejection of sectarian responses among Northern Irish Catholics who face possible attack from a reconstituted Orange statelet. In this situation, the question of regroupment is a critical one offering a way out of the short- and medium-term deadlock on perspectives for the anti-imperialist population.

The anniversary of Bloody Sunday (January 30, 1972, when thirteen people were shot dead by the British army during a civil rights demonstration) will refocus attention on the Irish question among the left outside Ireland. Even small-scale acts of solidarity will have an impact on the fighting spirit of the Northern Irish Catholic masses, and hopefully may well aid the regroupment process to take a Marxist direction. □

WIJEWEERA



SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT

By G. FONTAINE

The verdict has come down. On December 20, 1974, the Sri Lanka Criminal Justice Commission sentenced Rohana Wijeweera to life imprisonment and twenty-one other militants of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Peoples Liberation Front) to a total of 157 years in prison and six years suspended. Four defendants were acquitted; four others, reported to have disappeared, probably murdered in 1971, were not brought to trial.

The most important political trial in contemporary Ceylonese history thus ended with extremely heavy sentences. It had begun more than two years ago, in June 1972.

The forty-one defendants were accused of having conspired to "make war against the Queen" (the reference is to Elizabeth II of Britain!) and to "overthrow the Government of Ceylon by force." Among these defendants, fourteen were accused of having "made war against the Queen between April 4, 1971, and June 1, 1971"; the others were accused of complicity in the "unfolding of this war."

In its own way, in terms sufficiently hazy that the most complete arbitrariness might be in order at the

time of the verdict, the Ceylonese justice system listed in the indictment a series of political events that deserved to be recalled.

In June 1970, after winning the elections, the "United Front" came to power. This United Front was composed of the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP), the bourgeois party led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike; the pro-Moscow Communist party; and the Lanka Sama Samaja party (Ceylon Equal Society party), which took to class collaboration in 1964 and was then expelled from the Fourth International.

On May 12, 1970, during the electoral campaign, a certain Rohana Wijeweera had been arrested. The whole island was immediately covered with hand-painted posters demanding his release and at the same time revealing the existence of the JVP. In fact, until that time, the new organization, which had been formed at the beginning of 1966 by a nucleus of militants coming out of the pro-Peking CP (Wijeweera, Sanath Karunaratne, and Loku Athula) had neither name nor public presence.

This initial nucleus had first worked on delimiting its political bases by analyzing five main points: the crisis of the Ceylonese economy; the neocolonialism practiced by British imperialism; Indian expansionism in the subcontinent; the bankruptcy of the reformist parties; and the road to be taken by the Ceylonese revolution.

On this last point the founders of the organization affirmed the necessity of violently overthrowing the bourgeois state apparatus and of building a revolutionary party. Moreover, under the influence of the Cuban revolution and the writings of Che Guevara, they came to reject the Maoist schema of "people's democratic revolution" and to develop the idea that only the socialist revolution led by the proletariat could carry out the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois revolution, namely, achieving national independence and agrarian reform.

Starting at the end of 1967, a program of training schools dealing with these five themes were set up and recruitment began on that basis. The JVP then began to experience a spectacular development. By 1970 it already had several thousand members. The social crisis in the countryside was deep, and the movement recruited mainly among Sinhala youth of rural origin who were often unemployed. Further, at the same time the JVP's audience in the universities was already large.

Thus, for the first time in the political history of the country, there appeared a revolutionary organization having, apart from its programmatic qualities, a real influence among the poor peasantry traditionally dominated by Buddhism and under the electoral sway of the SLFP. Moreover, the JVP had the foresight to fill in the gap that usually appears in mass parties in the colonial countries between a leadership composed of brilliant intellectuals educated at Oxford and imbued with Western culture on the one hand and the mass of underpoliticized militants attached to other cultural traditions on the other hand. The movement was thus capable of speaking to the rural masses in a language they could understand and even of awakening within them a long-sleeping national consciousness.

An alarmist campaign in the press had already begun when Wijeweera was first arrested. According to reports originating with the police, the extremists of the "Che Guevara movement" (that is what they called the JVP) were supposedly going to try to prevent the holding of elections "by committing acts of violence." In reality, this was simply an electoral maneuver, a blackmail of chaos on the part of the United National party (UNP), the openly pro-imperialist party that had been in power up to that time.

The fact was that the JVP, foreseeing a United Front victory, feared that the UNP would refuse to cede power and would carry out a coup with the aid of the most reactionary wing of the army. It therefore axised its campaign on the necessity of the workers' preparing for struggle against a military dictatorship and in that context called for support to the United Front against the UNP.

The victory of the United Front in the elections did not result in Wijeweera's release from prison. He stayed there until July 9, 1970, and was freed without having been informed of any charges against him. A new slander campaign against the JVP had already begun. It was accused — especially in the press of the reformist parties (the CP and the LSSP), which were threatened by the development of the JVP — of being pro-UNP, pro-imperialist, and guided from top to bottom by agents of the CIA. The SLFP, also threatened in its electoral bastion, the Sinhala peasantry, did not remain passive.

Many militants of the movement were arrested beginning in August 1970. In order to defend itself and explain its positions, the JVP then undertook publication of a newspaper, *Janatha Vimukthi* (Peoples Liberation), whose circulation soon rose to 40,000 copies; a big campaign of public meetings was also launched. During a period of two months in most of the important towns of the country crowds of 15,000-25,000 people, mostly youth, attended meetings that often lasted six hours to listen to the arguments of Wijeweera and his comrades. The parties in power had frequently been incapable of assembling such crowds.

The police soon began doing everything they could to hinder the propaganda campaign of the movement. During 1970 a total of more than 500 militants were arrested and then released after identity checks without ever being brought to trial. A leader of the Communist party declared at a meeting that the repression of the JVP should not be left to the police. As for the leaders of the LSSP, they instructed their members to engage in physical attacks against members of the JVP. But the JVP continued to grow just as quickly, especially in the cities where its base had been weak up to that time, and it even began to acquire a small influence in the trade-union movement.

Nevertheless, the organization was still weak. It had no solid organizational structure. In particular, apart from district leaders, the leadership was composed solely of the nucleus that had founded the movement. In January 1971 a discussion was initiated aimed at holding a national conference and electing a central committee. But serious differences arose within the leadership. Moreover, the JVP, based essentially among the Sinhalese semiprole-

ariat of the rural areas and among the students, was isolated from two essential sectors of the Ceylonese revolution: the Tamil workers, brought to the island in massive numbers from the south of India by British imperialism in the nineteenth century to work on the tea plantations; and the urban proletariat, numerically weak but commanding glorious traditions of struggle.

For a long time the JVP overestimated the political backwardness and attachment to the expansionism of their mother country among the Tamil workers. In the case of the urban proletariat, the JVP at first overestimated the grip of the reformist leaders of the CP and the LSSP, before beginning to engage in united-front actions with the Ceylon Mercantile Union. The Bandaranaike government, conscious of the inadequacy of the repressive measures taken previously and desiring to exploit the weakness of the JVP as quickly as possible, then decided to move to the offensive and liquidate the movement. On February 27, 1971, during his last public meeting, Wijeweera denounced this plan. He explained that the government felt threatened because of its inability to fulfill its demagogic electoral promises. As far as he was concerned, while the JVP was not a conspiratorial movement, it would nevertheless not allow itself to be eliminated without defending itself. But the political differences and personal clashes in the central nucleus of the movement had already attained such a degree that no leadership was functioning. On March 1, 1971, a former police officer was named minister of national defense; his sole responsibility was "national security." The three branches of the armed forces and the police were placed on a state of alert to deal with "threats of violence by subversive elements." On March 6 the American embassy was attacked by a group called the Mao Youth Group, a completely unknown organization.

The government used this crude provocation as an excuse for arresting Wijeweera again (on March 13). Three days later a state of emergency was decreed.

Between March 16 and April 5, 1971, more than 4,000 people were arrested by the police and the army, who by virtue of the emergency laws could arrest any individual without warrant, place anyone in prison without trial, and dispose of people collected in any manner they chose, including execution.

Following this terror campaign, the JVP was completely disorganized. Its militants nevertheless tried to pass to the counteroffensive. On April 5, 1971, about a dozen police stations were attacked. In most cases, the assailants had only Molotov cocktails and hand-made bombs. The rare police stations that fell into their hands were soon retaken. The

government called for foreign aid to reestablish "order." One of the broadest counterrevolutionary alliances of contemporary history was then formed. Arms came in not only from Britain and the United States, but also from India and Pakistan, which were at the time making war preparations against each other, and even from Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and China. In the course of the alleged "insurrection" a total of 37 policemen and 19 soldiers were killed. On the other hand, more than 10,000 people were killed or disappeared among the militants and sympathizers of the JVP and, beyond the JVP, among all those who were arrested on the basis of simple denunciation. The police carried out many summary executions, and for several weeks bodies floated down the rivers of the country. More than 18,000 people were thrown into overcrowded prisons and improvised concentration camps. The JVP was liquidated.

On May 5, 1971, Minister of Justice Felix Dias Bandaranaike magnanimously announced that all those detained on account of the "insurrection" would be freed if they were innocent, would be brought to "appropriate trial and rehabilitation" if they were "moderately guilty," and would be "judged according to the laws in force" if they were "seriously guilty."

Several thousand prisoners were in fact released during the following year. But the press was forbidden to mention the activities of the police without prior authorization, and access to the prisons was denied even to members of parliament. The police officers of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), already sadly notorious in the country, were thus left to operate at will. Torture, death threats, and threats to imprison family members were commonly used in extracting confessions from suspects. Wijeweera himself was held in the most complete isolation for several months and tortured for an entire week in August 1971. Some of the imprisoned militants, demoralized by the defeat and the bloody repression, cracked and gave confessions.

A year after these events, more than 14,000 suspects remained imprisoned without having been tried. With the aim of getting rid of this embarrassing burden, Felix Banadaranaiké got parliament to vote a law creating the Criminal Justice Commission. According to this law, ordinary trial proceedings became inapplicable in cases of "offenses" linked to a rebellion, insurrection, or "generalized attack against law and order," or in cases of "total or partial destruction of factories or other public or private installations." All the cases were then handed over to the Criminal Justice Commission, composed of Supreme Court judges and holding the powers of both investigation and judgment. The law explained that this Commission could adopt

whatever procedure it deemed "best adapted to the search for the truth." It permitted testimony to be presented in writing, orally, or gathered by "anybody under any circumstances." In particular, confessions obtained "under pressure" could be utilized as evidence against a defendant and also against any person named by a defendant, even if the confession were later retracted. Moreover, this Commission pronounces definitive verdicts that cannot be appealed, but those who are acquitted and those who are convicted but have already served their terms are freed only if the secretariat of the Ministry of Justice decides to order their release. Finally, the president of the Commission has full power to limit the presence of the press and public in the trial room and to decide on closed-door hearings.

In June 1972, after having read the reports compiled by the three branches of the armed forces and the police, the CJC opened its first inquiry against forty-one suspects, among them Wijeweera and the main leaders of the JVP. Most of the defendants refused to plead guilty. Only four agreed to do so and thus became the first witnesses for the prosecution. Among the four were Loku Athula and Karunaratne, founders of the JVP, and T.D. Silva, who had been in charge of work in the trade unions; they had already opposed Wijeweera within the JVP leadership before April 1971.

The Commission, which had decided beforehand that it would rule that the "conspirators" had fomented an "insurrection," concentrated all its attention on two questions that were essential for it: Had instructions been given to the JVP militants who had been arrested in possession of arms before April 1971 and if so by whom? Was a decision to make an "insurrection" made and if so by whom? The CJC reached similar conclusions on these two points: The leadership of the movement, and Wijeweera especially, was responsible. To support this assertion the CJC based itself on the confessions torn from the suspects, on the declarations of some traitors, and on the reports of the police. Most of the defendants demonstrated the complete illegality of the procedure being conducted and the invalidity of confessions that had been torn from them by force. But the essential point for them was to prove that the JVP had never been a movement of conspirators and that it had simply responded in a fragmented manner to the liquidation attempt organized by the government. Toward this aim Wijeweera and Comrade Bala Tampoe, who was Wijeweera's legal counsellor and the lawyer for six other defendants, denounced all the repressive measures taken against the JVP before April 5, 1971, and even before the enactment of the state of emergency.

Although none of the statements made by the defendants before the Commission was allowed to fil-

ter through in the Ceylonese press, on two occasions (in November 1973 and later during his final deposition) Wijeweera transformed the prisoners' dock into a platform for the defense of the fundamental principles of Marxism; he explained the history and the liquidation of the JVP and reaffirmed his fidelity to the revolutionary road and his confidence in the socialist future of humanity.

On July 22, 1974, two years after his first speech before the CJC, Bala Tampoe began his final presentation. His goal was to show that the major charge in the indictment, that of "conspiracy," had not been established and then to demand that all the defendants be acquitted. Although the trial record ran to more than 10,000 pages of documents, Bala Tampoe was refused the right to take the time that he deemed necessary to develop his presentation. After an argument with the president of the Commission on this point, he was forced to stop. The session was interrupted and Bala Tampoe shortly learned that he would not be allowed to speak again. The following day Wijeweera and several of his comrades raised a strong protest and announced their refusal to attend the sessions of the CJC any more. These sessions ended a short time later.

The Ceylonese bourgeoisie has old accounts to settle with Bala Tampoe. The Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU), the trade union of which he is general secretary, was alone in the organized workers' movement in taking a position against the repression in April 1971. In October 1972 he organized along with some other unions a one-day hunger strike in defense of political prisoners. Thousands of political prisoners and their families participated in this hunger strike, as did half a million plantation workers and certain sectors of the urban working class.

In addition, Bala Tampoe was one of the founders of the Human and Democratic Rights Organization (HADRO), which offered legal assistance to the defendants and their families. But above all, he was one of the most fervent defenders of the militants of the JVP before the Criminal Justice Commission. For two years, deliberately reducing his activities as a trade-union leader, he devoted all his efforts to their cause and visited their prisons on a daily basis. In June 1973 the minister of justice referred in his own way to these efforts during a speech in parliament. At that time, 4,500 people remained in prison without having been tried. Felix Dias Bandaranaike then expressed the wish that the CJC utilize the possibility, presented to it by a new law, of handing out suspended sentences to all those who would plead guilty. In any case, he said he did not see how they would ever be finished if these 4,500 prisoners took Bala Tampoe for their

lawyer and "wanted to carry out counterinterrogations on all the points."

In December 1974, at the time the verdict was handed down against Wijeweera and his comrades, there were no more than 1,000 political prisoners. The majority of them had refused to plead guilty. The other prisoners, except in some rare cases in which the State Council had asked for severe penalties, had earlier been condemned to two years in prison (suspended) and were released but kept under judicial control. But most of them are politically demoralized, and those who are not must display extreme caution. A broad current of sympathy for the JVP still exists in a diffuse way among the youth, but for the moment this sympathy can find no political expression.

The radical currents of the Ceylonese workers movement, especially the CMU, have been able to loosen the vise of the repression. Despite the state of emergency, they have reconquered the rights of assembly and demonstration, which were in large part suppressed after April 1971, and they have waged an active campaign in favor of the political prisoners. But they have not been able to hold back the consequences of the defeat: demoralization and apathy run deep among the laboring masses and the youth.

Moreover, the campaign of international solidarity in defense of the JVP has not fully received the response it deserves. In spite of the work done in Britain by the Ceylon Solidarity Campaign and in Sweden and Japan, and in spite of the support extended to the campaign by the sections of the Fourth International, the Ceylon bourgeoisie has in large part succeeded in maintaining a blackout over the repression and the trials.

It is in this context that the sentences were handed down, the dispensers of justice revealing the most complete arbitrariness and cynicism.

The sixth defendant, Loku Athula, "whose confessions were of considerable aid to those conducting the investigation" and who "has now renounced the idea of using violence to accomplish the revolution," was sentenced to five years in prison, but will be able to benefit from executive clemency according to the recommendation of the judges. The twelfth defendant, T.D. Silva, "had no confidence in Wijeweera" and it is "improbable that in the future he will engage in revolutionary activities." He was consequently sentenced to two years in prison suspended.

On the other hand, in the cases of the three first suspects (Piyatileke, Lionel Bopage, and Uyangoda), who were all district secretaries of the JVP, the

court saw "no reason to be indulgent." They were thus sentenced to twelve years in prison each. The thirty-first and thirty-ninth defendants (Jayasiri, a trade-union leader, and Wijekulatilleke) "showed no sign of repenting." They were therefore sentenced to seven and eight years in prison respectively. Finally, for Wijeweera, who was already in prison at the time of the April 1971 events, the only consideration of the verdict was the following: The CJC "sees no alternative to a sentence of life imprisonment."

Wijeweera was not surprised. Upon arriving in the courtroom he first shook hands with Bala Tampoe and then, along with his comrades, sang the International. In his final declaration of the trial, he had already told his judges: "Whatever your verdict, whether it is for acquittal or imprisonment, I am sure that this government will keep me in custody. Even if I have to spend my life in prison, I have no regrets. . . . I am not ready to ask pardon for crimes that I did not commit." And he ended by saying: "The minorities in this country are in a worse situation than I am. To express my solidarity with their struggle I would like to end my statement with this maxim of the Tamil language: 'Injustice does not always triumph. Justice will triumph in the end.'"

The Ceylonese bourgeoisie could not permit a verdict of clemency. Unemployment is affecting a quarter of the population. Inflation is galloping. The sham agrarian reform undertaken by the government has not proven capable of furnishing land to the peasants or of increasing the production of foodstuffs. Food has to be imported in ever greater quantities and the balance of trade is in greater deficit than ever. Famine is spreading among the Tamil workers of the plantations. Discontent runs deep in the working class after the repeated attacks on its standard of living. The workers have managed to hold several demonstrations in spite of the ban on the right to strike and the threats of firings hanging over their heads.

In this critical context, the release in the near future of the best militants of the JVP would represent for the Ceylonese bourgeoisie the inevitable prelude to other developments:

- *The political and organizational linkup of the most courageous of the elements of this new revolutionary generation coming out of the poor peasantry with the vanguard sections of the working class;
- *The formation of a powerful revolutionary party capable of combining the radicalization of these two sectors and of making the proletariat of the plantations join in their struggle;
- *New revolutionary explosions having greater chances than ever before in the country of ending in victory.

The bourgeois regime is attempting to prevent all this at any price. But it is for the realization of these objectives that the revolutionary Marxists must unceasingly work.

- FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF WIJEWEERA AND HIS COMRADES!
- FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!
- FOR THE ABROGATION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY!



a letter from wijeweera

We have learnt that the Comrades of the Fourth International, at their tenth world congress held in the beginning of this year, have passed a resolution expressing their solidarity with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) of Sri Lanka and the members of the J.V.P. imprisoned by the Sirima Bandaranaike regime. Furthermore, we came to know through the literature of the Fourth International that the comrades of the Fourth International are engaged in building up a world-wide agitation to compel the capitalist and reactionary rulers of the countries such as Chile, India, Pakistan, Ireland, Sri Lanka, etc., to release all the political prisoners imprisoned and detained by them, unconditionally.

We think that, at this moment, our revolutionary gratitude should be extended to the Fourth International for its solidarity expressed with us.

It is essential to mention here the assistance given to us by Comrade Bala Tampoe (the General Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union and the Revolutionary Marxist Party of Sri Lanka) by defending several comrades before the Criminal Justice Commission.

At a time when we were attacked by the capitalist regime of Sri Lanka supported not only by the American and British imperialists, but also by the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies and by the so-called leftists in this country including the ex-Trotskyites of the L.S.S.P. and the various varieties of Stalinism, Comrade Bala came forward to defend the J.V.P. politically and its comrades legally, although we had political differences. The task performed by Comrade Bala by defending our comrades charged before the C.J.C. and by exposing the brutal repression of the capitalist state and the reactionary nature of the C.J.C. Act, before and outside of the C.J.C., will be remembered by the younger revolutionary generations with revolutionary gratitude.

It is our revolutionary wish to see the complete success of the movement that is being carried out by the Fourth International in order to get all the revolutionaries released who are imprisoned by the rulers whether they are of capitalist countries as in Chile and India or of degenerated bureaucratic countries as in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Long live the World Socialist Revolution!

/s/: Rohan Wijeweera
James Myangoda
Lionel Bapege

inprecor

international press correspondence

Special Issue

THE GENERALIZED RECESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAPITALIST ECONOMY



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fortnightly jan 16, 1975 n° 16-17 \$1.00, £0.40, fb50

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