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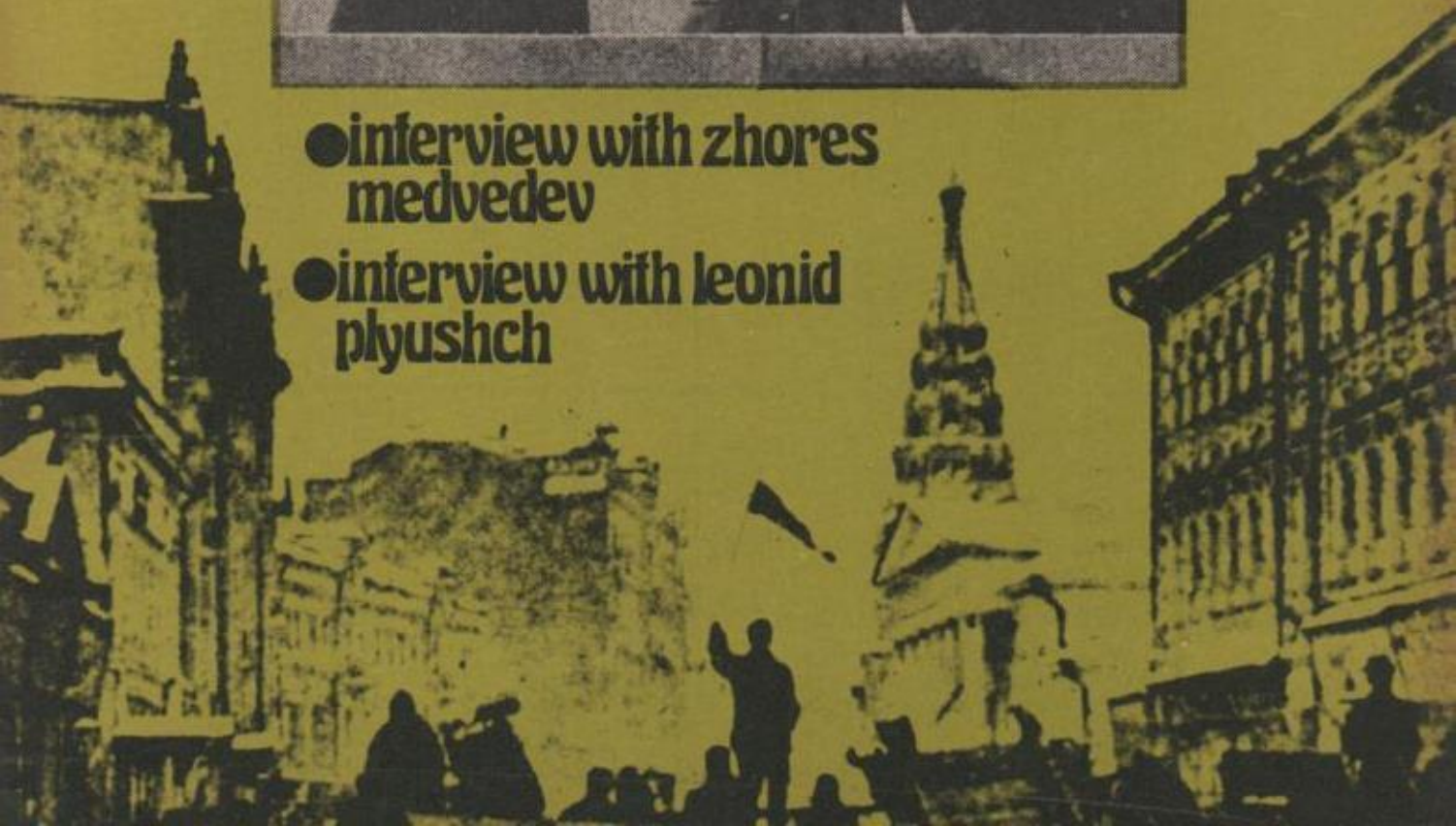
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## THE SOVIET UNION AFTER THE 25th PARTY CONGRESS



- interview with zhores medvedev
- interview with leonid plyushch





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# Spain

## THE ARIAS GOVERNMENT IN ITS DEATH AGONY

by A. MARTINEZ



The Arias government is in its death agony. It is choking in the blood of the workers of Vitoria. The formidable response of the toiling masses of Euzkadi — nearly one million strikers, the strongest work stoppage in Spain since 1937 — has mortally wounded this government. Its disappearance is now only a matter of weeks.

The reformists of the Communist party and the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español — Spanish Socialist Workers party, the Social Democracy) had deliberately put the brakes on the struggles of the workers after the death of Franco. They hoped in this way to convince the Spanish bourgeoisie that a gradual and calm transition from Francoism to bourgeois democracy was possible, while maintaining "social peace." Negotiation with "reformers of Francoism" like Fraga, the present minister of the interior, was on the agenda. The king himself was declared to be above the fray, even above any suspicion of betrayal of democracy.

The reformists quickly received their just desserts. No question of breaking the continuity of the Francoist institutions, proclaimed Fraga; reforms, yes, but in the framework of these institutions. No question of legalizing the CP, Fraga threw in. And he added: No amnesty for terrorists, no return of La Pasiónaria.

The hardliners, the "bunker" manned by those nostalgic for Francoism, bristles with vetos and bars. Solidly rooted in the well-known "institutions" — from the laughable Cortes (parliament) to the "National Council of the Movement" to the "Council of the Kingdom" — the "hardliners" are playing a useful role in post-Francoism in that they provide the excuse Arias and Fraga needed to justify the delays and foot dragging in granting the miserable mini-reforms that they were going to magnanimously hand down to the docile though somewhat impatient reformists.

Thus, everything was going to unfold according to the rules of Realpolitik. As for the matter of who

was taking whom for a ride in this poker game, history would later total up the gains and losses: Were the torturers serving the "liberals," the liberals serving the "reformists," and the "reformists" serving the "moderate" workers movement, or, on the contrary, was the respectful workers movement giving in before the liberals, who were themselves giving in before the "reformers of Francoism," allowing the torturers to remain in their posts under the watchful gaze of the king and his patron, big capital?

The Spanish working class upset all these learned calculations. The combative spirit of this class, unequalled in Europe today, is fueled by the economic crisis (nearly 1 million unemployed, 20 percent of the workers of Malaga without jobs), by the provocative wage freeze proclaimed by an inept minister, by the passion for liberty and the ardent desire to free their brothers and sisters from the jails of the dictatorship and to put an end to the repressive apparatus of the torturers once and for all, to end the game of duplicity.

Our comrades of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/Euzkadi ta Askatasuna-VI (Revolutionary Communist League/Basque Nation and Freedom-Sixth Congress) were correct to say that the dictatorship would fall only under the blows of a revolutionary general strike. Euzkadi following Vitoria — that is a first example of the revolutionary general strike, which, moreover, need not necessarily occur simultaneously in all regions. The collapse of the dictatorship has now become a tangible objective.

In face of the impetuous rise of workers struggles, the bourgeoisie understands that its great post-Francoist maneuvers were only a pitiful delaying operation. The present temporary situation, which is no longer Francoism but neither the reestablishment of bourgeois democracy, damages the bourgeoisie more than it serves it. The maintenance of the repressive apparatus no longer halts the mass movement. The use of this apparatus even stimulates brilliant responses.



At the same time, the maintenance of the reformist organizations, above all the CP, in semi-illegality prevents the bourgeoisie from taking full advantage of the braking role these organizations are prepared to play, facilitates their being outflanked, as was the case at the end of February and the beginning of March, and blocks any attempt to channel the upsurge of the proletariat into paths compatible with the maintenance of the capitalist system.

The army itself is perplexed and divided. Who benefits from clinging to Francoist institutions if these institutions cause disorder and revolt in the streets? Suddenly, after Vitoria, the isolation of the "bunker" is clearer than ever. Fraga himself is increasingly pressed by the bourgeoisie, which wants to terminate the comedy of post-Francoism, take the "perilous leap," move to a real constitutional monarchy, and prepare to deal with the revolutionary upsurge by using the reformist parties, playing on the democratic illusions of the masses, newly rediscovered after dark decades of dictatorship.

Let Fraga succeed Fraga, but let him surround himself only with "reformers"; after one last experience with Opus Dei, let him extend his hand to Ruiz Gimenez, who will be a stepping stone to the PSOE and even to the CP; let there be a brief interlude

with the Count of Motrico; nonetheless, Spain is now pointed toward the liquidation of the Francoist institutions. This is neither a freely granted liquidation nor a liquidation negotiated in the palace corridors. It is a liquidation extracted inch by inch by mass mobilizations and strikes, by a succession of political general strikes.

The fall of the dictatorship is the liquidation of its institutions, that is, the de facto legalization of all the workers organizations, the conquest of freedom of trade-union organization and of the free and unrestricted right to strike, the conquest of all democratic rights. The mass movement is in the process of carrying out this conquest day by day. It is enough to look at the unfolding of strikes, the workers contingents in the street, the meetings of workers in football stadiums, and the strike committees that emerge out of general assemblies of strikers and one can see that the avalanche has started. Let a Fraga or a Motrico legalize only the PSOE, and the CP and the revolutionary organizations will be on the streets within twenty-four hours after that decision. Immense crowds will assemble in front of the prisons to free their brothers and sisters. That is the probable march of events.

In demanding immediate elections to a constituent assembly in the Spanish state, as well as national assemblies of the oppressed nationalities in order to permit them to exercise their right of self-determination, our Spanish comrades are trying to lend a common and centralizing aim to the democratic thrust of millions of Spanish workers and youth. They are seeking to overturn all the maneuvers intended to allow the bourgeoisie, through provisional and "transitional" governments, to continue its arbitrary rule without permitting the working people to decide for themselves.

To generalize and unify the mass mobilizations and struggles in order to achieve the overthrow of the dictatorship also means to create the best conditions for avoiding any discontinuity between the overthrow of the dictatorship and the development of a powerful assault on the capitalist bastions.

A united and democratic trade union run by the workers themselves with full respect for the right of tendencies; a united front of all the workers organizations to commonly defend the new gains of the proletariat against the attempts of Spanish and international capital to erode them the day after they are won; a continual upswing of self-organization of the masses, that is, a surging forward of elected committees in the factories, offices, neighborhoods, universities, schools, shipyards, and villages — such are the main instruments for the transformation of the struggle of the masses against the dictatorship into a struggle of the masses against capitalism. The construction of a powerful revolutionary Marxist party is the precondition for the victory of that struggle. ■

# FORWARD TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE DICTATORSHIP!

The following declaration was issued March 11, 1976, by the Political Bureau of the Liga Comunista (Communist League), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Spain.

Since January 9, the workers of Forjas Alavesas, Mevosa, and many other factories of Vitoria have been waging a tough and exemplary strike for their just demands. Among these demands, along with the demand for wage increases, the basic points are re-admission of the comrades who have been laid off, release of those imprisoned, and the imposition of direct negotiations with the employers conducted by genuine representatives of the workers, representatives elected in assemblies, revocable by these assemblies, and completely separated from the rotten CNS (the state vertical "trade union"). The workers of Vitoria, consciously breaking with the vertical union, renounced the enlaces and jurados (delegates and functionaries of the CNS) of Forjas, Mevosa, and Areito, held factory assemblies to elect committees, and coordinated these committees. In this way they formed their Central Strike Committee, their Assembly of Representatives, which, along with the workers commissions and the students, led the struggle.

In face of the hardening of the employers and the authorities, the Assembly of Representatives called on the people of Vitoria to launch a general strike on March 3. The working class and the population of Vitoria responded to this call as one man, paralyzing production and organizing massive demonstrations from the factories and neighborhoods toward the center of the city. The response of Fraga's police (Fraga is the minister of the interior) was to commit a massacre, killing four comrades and wounding some 150 with gunshots.

But Vitoria was not intimidated. It responded with courage, engaging in a heroic general strike in open confrontation with the repressive forces. Shoulder to shoulder with the people of Alava, all Euzkadi was "on strike," taking to the streets on March 8 in a general strike, valiantly confronting police brutality. Throughout the country there were work stoppages and demonstrations, of uneven intensity, sometimes outstanding ones, as in Tarragon.

Repression claimed new victims in the course of these mobilizations. Two more comrades were shot dead and many others were wounded, some very gravely. The chain of murders was lengthened by the worker killed in Elda and the construction worker who died in Barcelona.

After these crimes, there is no more room for the demagogic "democratizers." The government cannot continue to wear its criminal mask much longer. For if the speeches and declarations of the Ariases, the Fragas, and the Areilzas are not enough, the economic measures, the militarization of striking workers, the savage repression, and the recent murders leave no room for doubt.

But these murders and the powerful response of the masses will only sharpen the rifts in the government even more gravely and will decisively accelerate the crisis of a dictatorship splattered with blood and marked by death.

The shaking of the CNS by workers struggles, the outflanking of the repressive apparatus by the direct action of the workers and the oppressed, the beginning of crisis within this apparatus and even within the army, the increase in explosive tensions among the various cliques of the regime — all these factors mark a culminating point in the bankruptcy of the Francoist monarchy.

But it is not only the government that is being unmasked before the workers. The bourgeois "democratic opposition," the Ruiz Gimenezes, the Tierno Galvans, the Pujols, who are "making their nests" in the Junta Democrática, the Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática, and other such bodies, are also revealing their true face.

In face of the offensive of the workers and the oppressed, they called on the workers to "stop putting pressure on the government through strikes," and "not to trouble the waters." Even after Arias presented his government's program to the Cortes (parliament), they continued to speak of the "democratizing will" of the Fragas. Time and time again they repeated their calls for reconciliation and applauded the police, the watchdogs of capital. And now, terrified by the advance of the workers and people's mobilization, they are joining the chorus of the government, the capitalists, and their press, launching a foul campaign against the direct action methods of the workers, against the flying squads and the self-defense of the masses against the police.

Reaching a peak of cynicism and shamelessness, the *Assemblea de Catalunya* (Assembly of Catalonia) openly opposed the mobilization after the murder of a worker in Tarragon. The Assembly called on the workers and people of Tarragon not to participate in the general strike that had been called, and told the people who attended the funeral not to gather together to hold any demonstration after the funeral ceremony, but instead to go directly back to work or to their homes. The Assembly argued that it was necessary "not to provoke greater disturbance."

In doing all this, these bourgeois "oppositionists" are revealing the real essence of the "democratic breakthrough" they propose. A "breakthrough" that is no more than a desperate attempt to maintain the fundamental features of the Francoist dictatorship so as not to endanger the property of the bankers and monopolists.

But the primary problem is not what this or that person may have done or said, for these people have no influence in the workers and people's movement. The main problem is that the parties of the working class with which they are allied, instead of exposing their maneuvers, are in fact becoming the spokesmen for their attitude within the workers movement.

The Communist party, for example, opposed pressing ahead with a decisive mobilization against the latest crimes, and instead of promoting strikes and demonstrations called for "moments of silence," or at most "symbolic" work stoppages. Instead of forcefully combatting the reactionary crusade against methods of direct action, the CP was the most vigorous defender of that crusade. Thus, in a declaration of its Executive Committee, the PSUC (United Socialist party of Catalonia, the Catalan branch of the Communist party), using the unsavory excuse of "the destruction of some telephone booths," openly opposed the hard struggle of the construction workers of Barcelona, criminally and traitorously denouncing the workers' pickets as "groups of fascists or provocateurs foreign to the workers movement." The same attitude was adopted in a communiqué published by the National Workers Commissions of Catalonia, which is under the control of the PSUC.

But in spite of everything, what has been made clear by the latest events is that every extra day in the life of the dictatorship represents a painful and intolerable burden for the working class and the people. We have been shown in blood that the only way forward against the continuation of the Juan Carlos monarchy is the overthrow of the dictatorship by the general strike. That the supposed "democratic breakthrough" is only a fraud aimed at deceiving the workers and paralyzing their struggle, an obstacle in this road.

And today the weakness of the dictatorship, along with the fact that all the exploited and oppressed are conscious of this weakness and of their own strength, makes it more than ever possible to advance

decisively toward the general strike. This requires that all the parties and organizations of the working class abandon such positions as those mentioned above and unite their forces for the general strike, strengthening the present offensive of the masses and incorporating the precious lessons of the most recent mobilizations.

#### FOR THE ROAD OF VITORIA AND EUZKADI!

For the most basic demands of the workers and in the first place against the Francoist crimes and in solidarity with the people of Vitoria. For the annulling of disciplinary measures and layoffs and for the release of those imprisoned. For the dissolution of the repressive bodies. For the extraction of responsibility for the Francoist crimes by tribunals freely elected by the people. We must take the road traced out by the gains we have already managed to win. Hold factory and branch assemblies. Elect strike committees as centers of organization and leadership of the struggle. Build central strike committees like the Assembly of Representatives of Vitoria. Force direct negotiation with the employers. Make the *enlaces* and *jurados* of the "united candidacies" resign, for in any case, they must not place attachment to their posts above the tasks posed by the struggle, above the demands they must respond to as fighters in whom the workers have placed their trust. Hold street demonstrations. Defend these demonstrations and all actions against repression through pickets organized by the workers commissions and strike committees. Throw the greatest possible forces into stimulating the present powerful movement for the rebuilding of the workers commissions. Force free assemblies in the headquarters of the CNS.

In order to follow this road, we must begin working for the preparation of a General Day of Struggle throughout the entire state, pressing for general actions by branch and sector, centralizing these actions on the local level and extending them on the level of each nationality. Holding this day of action would shake the government, would be fundamental in winning the demands and would represent a giant step toward the general strike that will bring down the hated dictatorship once and for all.

The plan we propose here is opposed from top to bottom by all the bourgeois and capitalist elements of the Junta, the *Convergencia*, and the Council. These elements, terrified by the advance of the workers, are waging a desperate battle to contain and paralyze that advance.

In the name of the present demands of the workers movement, the CP, the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español — Spanish Socialist Workers party, the Social Democracy), the workers commissions, and the rest of the parties and organizations of the working class must break with these bourgeois elements. Moreover, that is how we will be able to heal the divisions that are created by these bodies of collaboration with capital and to achieve the unity of the workers movement. ■



## PORTUGAL BEFORE THE ELECTIONS

The March 12, 1976, issue of the Lisbon afternoon daily *A Capital* ran a headline reading, "Strikes on the Rise." Analyzing the new upturn in the movement of struggle, the newspaper wrote: "The reopening of negotiations for labor contracts is being reflected in a wave of strikes spreading throughout the country. These are not simply strikes for economic demands; all the labor conflicts taken together express the exacerbation of the fight to maintain the conquests of the workers. At the same time, these clashes are revealing of a new will on the part of the employers. Many strikes are not aimed at improving living conditions, but simply at forcing the employers to respect accords that have already been signed."

As the campaign for the elections (to take place on April 25) is feverishly being prepared, the Portuguese workers are engaged in a tough defensive battle against the new claims of the employers. In 1974, for the first time in decades, the Portuguese working class endowed itself with instruments capable of giving independent expression to their interests: parties and trade unions. In a very short lapse of time, this working class underwent many experiences, combining an initial wave of unionization with the emergence of embryonic organs of dual power (workers commissions, tenants commissions). The rapidity of the upsurge and the lack of political and organizational traditions among the proletariat nevertheless implied a certain superficiality of this process, which was revealed, in a negative manner, by the subsequent ebb. Moreover, the political weakness of the "revolutionary left," like the orientation of the reformists, prevented the masses from assimilating the lessons of their actions and achievements.

Since November 25, 1975, the working class has been going through an apprenticeship in defensive struggle, while still commanding its own instruments of battle and even strengthening them. In fact, the present period is marked by a second wave

of unionization, which is developing within a context of broad discussion on the statutes and platforms of the unions. The themes discussed during the congress of 300 delegates of the textile unions in the wool and clothing industries (sectors that include 250,000 workers) — workers control, planning, worker-peasant unity, etc. — also indicate how the present strengthening of the unions is combining with the gains of the past.



On March 24 Vasco de Melo, the representative of the Confederation of Portuguese Industrialists (CIP), stated: "November 25 put an end to political vanguardism, but economically confidence has not been restored." (*A Capital*, March 25.) In addition, the CIP chief affirmed: "The Constitution endangers private initiative and the situation is serious. Since April 24, 1974, people in Portugal have been working less and getting paid more." As for the technocrats of the SEDES, they expressed themselves this way: "The situation is still marked by deep instability, for in spite of November 25, the relationship of forces has not changed in Portugal."

In reality, the overall relationship of forces has changed since that date, but it is true that any real upturn in investment, like any reinforcing of the positions of private capital in industry and agriculture, requires a qualitatively stronger attack on the masses. But the workers' responses to this new phase of the capitalist offensive have been manifold during these past weeks, and they have taken many forms, some of them new. There have been strikes with occupations (Transports Estefania, Tome Feiteira, the file factory in Vieira de Leira) and a strike with a picket squad and sequestration of the employers (Firestone). This reflects a certain link-up between past experience and the needs of the current defensive struggle. In Coimbra the public transport employees carried out a militant strike, while the pharmaceutical aides have rejected overtime work throughout the country. The hospital workers held a total strike and then went on an administrative strike in some hospitals. In addition, there have been mobilizations in decisive branches (metals, construction) and in sectors that had not engaged in important struggles up to now (municipal employees, public services). Finally, construction workers in Beja, Braga, and Setúbal have refused to accept trade-union directives. Instead of the tactic of one-hour-long work stoppages, they proclaimed the need for a harder and better organized strike in order to renegotiate their contracts; they have asserted that they will go on strike on April 1 in pursuit of this objective.



The convergence of this workers' response with the electoral campaign is generating great fear among the reformist leaderships. On March 26 Socialist party leader Mario Soares issued an appeal "to the Portuguese people": "For a special truce until the

elections." On the same date, the Political Committee of the Communist party declared: "It is in the context of this reactionary campaign that we must understand the utilization of the discontent, problems, and just demands of the masses to provoke a wave of strikes before the opening of the electoral campaign, a great disturbance of the essential services of the country." Presenting itself as the sole government party, the SP wants to affirm its role as a "responsible party" in order to prevent the PPD (Popular Democratic party) from eating into its vote. The CP — which is advancing the slogan, "With the CP for a left majority" — is also trying to consolidate its image as a "party of order." All this has not diminished its clashes with the PPD and is in fact stimulating internal tension. While the reformist leaderships are counterposing the "electoral battle" to the struggle against the capitalist attack, the bourgeoisie understands that the combat potential of the working class is far from exhausted and that it cannot press its advantage without running into trouble. It is well aware of the consequences this could have and the political crises that could flow from it, especially since the workers upsurge in Spain is coming on top of the factors of national instability. For the past two or three weeks, the bourgeoisie has been manifesting less optimism about the probable results of the elections. To such an extent that Eanes, the chief of the general staff, has openly asserted that if the elections do not produce conditions of stability, it seems to him that it would be difficult for an officer to accept the post of president. It would then be better for the officers to preserve their role as arbiters.

While the UDP (People's Democratic Union, Maoist) — which has been gaining in strength over past months — is campaigning around the theme: "Against poverty and fascism, unity of the whole people," and while the MES (Left Socialist Movement) is waging its campaign under the slogan "For the unity of the people against fascism, for people's power," the electoral campaign of the LCI, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, takes on special importance as an element of political clarification and response to the objective needs of the masses.

We are publishing below the accord reached between the LCI (Liga Comunista Internacionalista — Internationalist Communist League, Portuguese sympathizing organization of the Fourth International) and the PRT (Partido Revolucionário dos Trabalhadores — Revolutionary Workers party) before the legalization of the latter. After legalization, the PRT decided to run its own candidates and broke the accord. Essentially, the text represents the axis around which the militants of the LCI are now conducting their campaign. The LCI is presenting 330 candidates in all the districts of continental Portugal. Its electoral manifesto has just been published; a future issue of INPRECOR will publish extracts of it. The accord below appeared in the March 10 issue of the LCI's weekly, *Luta Proletária*.

# LCI/PRT ACCORD

The list of candidates presented by the LCI, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, for the legislative elections of April 25, 1976, will include candidates of the PRT.

These legislative elections are of particular importance. The pact defines the manner in which the bourgeoisie is seeking to impose consolidation of its state apparatus and its attack on the conquests of the workers (with the complicity of the reformist leaderships of the Communist and Socialist parties), selecting and then achieving the election of an all powerful president of the republic based on a loyal government and on collaboration with the Legislative Assembly.

In the context of the offensive launched by the bourgeoisie, the pact is a central feature which revolutionaries will denounce and combat with all their strength.

Conscious of their responsibilities to the workers at a time when the bourgeoisie, its parties, and its civilian and military institutions are preparing an offensive against the working masses;

— animated by the very will to uphold a real alternative worthy of the aspirations expressed by the toilers of the cities and the countryside in the innumerable and tough battles they have waged against capital and its state, especially during the past two years;

— convinced, together with an ever growing number of workers, that such an alternative cannot be provided by the leaderships of the SP and the CP (leaderships capable of the worst compromises with the civilian and military institutions of the bourgeoisie, which renounce the defense of the needs and interests of the workers, as they did in the pact between the Council of the Revolution and the parties);

The LCI and the PRT will jointly organize an electoral campaign; they call upon the workers to support the common revolutionary candidacy represented by the LCI list, the principal points of whose platform are as follows:

## I. AGAINST THE OFFENSIVE OF THE EMPLOYERS AND THE GOVERNMENT! FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKERS' RESPONSE!

The government and the Council of the Revolution, hand in hand with the employers, are attacking the rights and conquests of the workers. The buying power of the workers and their standard of living are being challenged by the galloping price increases,



while at the same time the attempts of the bourgeois state to interfere in the organization of the workers movement are mounting ceaselessly. The gains that have been extracted from the employers and large landowners by the strength of the popular mobilization, gains such as workers control, the nationalizations, and the Agrarian Reform, are in danger. The government and the Council of the Revolution are sending the GNR and the PSP (the two major police apparatuses) to open fire on the workers and their struggles, while at the same time they are protecting the saboteur employers. They are repressing the rights and organizations of the soldiers, while the leaders of the September 28, 1974, and March 11, 1975, attempted coups are regaining their posts in the officer corps. Antifascist militants and soldiers are being held in prison while the hangmen of the PIDE (the Salazarist secret police) and the main leaders of the Salazar-Caetano regime are being released.

Against this planned and concerted offensive of the bourgeoisie, in their campaign, the revolutionary candidates will defend the necessity for an Emergency Plan of Struggle, that is, a united platform embodying the response of the workers and their political and mass organizations (trade unions, workers commissions, collective production units, etc.).

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## II. FOR THE UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS! FOR PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY!

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In order to impose its austerity plan today and to try to attack the conquests and struggles of the working masses even more profoundly tomorrow, the bourgeoisie always comes to agreement, regardless of its apparent internal differences.

The workers and their organizations must unite against the bourgeoisie, regardless of their differences and regardless of the parties they support.

Up to now, regardless of the demagogy they indulge in, the leaderships of the SP and the CP have done everything possible to sabotage this indispensable unity.

Hence, the leadership of both the Communist party and the Socialist party have always lent priority to collaboration with the bourgeoisie, the MFA (Armed Forces Movement), and the bourgeois institutions in general; revealing examples of this are provided by their common participation in the various provisional governments.

The leadership of the CP, while chattering about the necessity of democracy and the unity of the workers, has used and is using the most shameful bureaucratic methods to assure its control over the workers movement, the workers organizations, and the Intersindical (the trade-union federation); the leadership of the SP, which cedes nothing to the CP in demagogic defense of unity and democracy, has sanctioned and still sanctions an openly antiworker and counter-

revolutionary policy within the sixth provisional government.

But significant sectors of workers are now struggling in their work places for the unity of their class. This is shown by the positions that have been taken by various unions, whether led by SP militants, CP militants, or militants of other political currents.

This unity, this Workers United Front, is thus both possible and necessary, but it requires absolute respect for the right of expression and organization of all tendencies in the workers movement, both inside and outside the workers organizations.

It is for this reason that the revolutionary candidates will be intransigent defenders of workers unity and proletarian democracy.

And it is thus that today, in order to aid in organizing the workers' response to the bourgeois offensive, the revolutionary candidates will call for the convocation of a Democratic Congress of all trade unions in which all proposals of struggle and differences of opinion can be freely expressed and which will approve an Emergency Plan of Workers Struggle and organize the mobilization of the trade unions and workers commissions in defense and application of that plan.

This is the first step that must be taken in the genuine construction of a United Central Trade-Union Federation of the Workers, an Intersindical in which the right to form tendencies will be recognized.

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## III. FOR A GOVERNMENT THAT DEFENDS THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS!

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The Portuguese workers already have a long and sufficient experience with governments of class collaboration (with bourgeois parties and the MFA), governments within which the workers parties, utilizing the confidence still extended to them by the majority of the workers, do nothing but safeguard the essential interests of the bourgeoisie.

In defending and extending their conquests, the Portuguese workers, peasants, and toilers can hope for nothing from collaboration with generals and bourgeois politicians. They need a government that, basing itself on and responsible to the democratic and national centralization of the trade-unions and bodies of struggle of the workers (the workers commissions), applies a program that responds to their aspirations and vital needs and provides the means with which to break the power of capital. This is the meaning of the struggle for a workers and peasants government, which is what the revolutionary candidates will defend in the electoral campaign.

Within this perspective, they will do all they can to denounce the policy of capitulation followed by the leaderships of the majority parties of the working class, which have saved the bourgeoisie from defeat in the most difficult moments.

Before all the workers, and especially those of the SP and the CP, they will denounce the signing by their leaderships of the pact between the Council of the Revolution and the parties, which is nothing but a weapon for the construction of a state entirely oriented toward defense of the interests of capital and toward silencing the workers, their struggles, and their organizations.

They will demand that the leaderships of the CP and the SP, as the majority organizations of the workers movement, break with the bourgeoisie, reject the institutions of the bourgeoisie, especially the Council of the Revolution, repudiate the pact, and assume their responsibilities in the constitution of a government without any civilian or military representatives of the bourgeoisie, a government that applies a program of anticapitalist struggle defined by the mass organizations of the workers (trade unions, workers commissions, collective production units, collective organizations in the countryside, etc.), a government that, in the present phase of the class struggle, would be directly responsible to a Democratic Congress of all the trade unions, the convocation of which must serve as an important step toward the later realization of a National Congress of workers commissions.

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#### IV. FOR SOCIALISM! FOR WORKERS' POWER!

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The Portuguese workers have placed the socialist revolution on the agenda in capitalist Europe in the present period.

In their struggles and mobilizations, in the combativity they have demonstrated over nearly two years, and, above all, in the forms of independent organization they have created for themselves in the course of their struggles against capital, the Portuguese working class and laboring masses have initiated a new cycle of workers struggles in Europe and have clearly pointed to the road to follow to take power: To create in each factory, in each work place, organs of proletarian democracy — the workers commissions — to organize the struggle of the exploited masses against the employers and their state.

It is these bodies, democratically elected in each factory, that can represent and assert the will of the workers to apply workers control, to struggle against the sabotage and arbitrary acts of the employers in the factories. And it will be then, on the basis of these bodies, of their reinforcement, generalization, and centralization, that the workers will be able to construct their future power, in complete opposition to the power of the bourgeoisie and its state.

The workers need to centralize their own will, just as the bourgeoisie has centralized its will in its state.

For this reason, the revolutionary candidates will defend the position that only democratic organization in the factories — in the workers commissions — and their coordination in a National Congress that cen-

tralizes workers control and initiates the planning of the economy in the service of the toilers — can provide a socialist response to the present crisis.

This is the meaning of the struggle for workers power, for socialism, a power that has nothing to do with the bureaucratized workers states like the USSR, China, and Albania.

It will be the workers who will exercise their own power. And this power will be able to exist only if the exploited and oppressed masses of the cities and the countryside, after destroying the regime of the bourgeoisie that exploits and oppresses them, take leadership of the economy, political life, and all social life into their own hands. This is the task of the workers councils, on which the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat rest.

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#### V. BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY! BUILD THE PORTUGUESE SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

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The central task facing revolutionaries in Portugal continues to be that of building a proletarian leadership of the mass struggle, a revolutionary party.

Consistently betrayed by the Stalinist leadership of the Communist party and the Social Democratic leadership of the Socialist party, which prefer to defend their posts in the ministries instead of the interests of the workers, the Portuguese working class has already demonstrated and will now continue to demonstrate that its struggle will not be waged through compromises and collaboration with the bourgeoisie, its parties, and its institutions.

The real leaders of the workers, those who in the future will lead the toiling masses in the seizure of power, will be forged and educated in the factory struggles, in the workers strikes and mobilizations.

Without the construction of a revolutionary party that organizes the most conscious workers, those capable of leading the revolutionary struggle of the workers, peasants, and soldiers, no victorious socialist revolution is possible. This is shown by the experience of dozens and dozens of years of struggle of the working class throughout the world.

The principal objective of all Portuguese revolutionaries is to develop all forces to accomplish this task. The unification of revolutionary Marxist forces is a decisive step in this direction.

The united campaign in the legislative elections organized by the LCI and the PRT constitutes a practical demonstration of the desire of the two organizations to commit themselves to a process of unification for the construction of the Portuguese section of the Fourth International in forms that will later be made public.

March 8, 1976



# LEBANON

The two articles we are publishing below were written before the latest outbreak of fighting in the Lebanese civil war. The first, an overall balance-sheet of the war, concludes by noting that the war is not over, that various sources of conflict remain. Two of these — the situation within the Palestinian Resistance and the feeling of frustration among the Lebanese left — are at the root of the current round of fighting, the most severe yet.

As of early March, when the intervention of the Syrian-based Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) brought a temporary end to the fighting, the government faced a series of crises. First, there was the army rebellion led by Ahmed el-Khatib, the officer who "deserted" and founded the Army of Arab Lebanon, to which nearly 70 percent of the army rank and file has since rallied. The regime was divided on how to respond to the rebellion. Muslim leader Rashid Karameh, the president of the Council of Ministers, favored attempting to coopt the rebellion through offering a general amnesty. Camille Chamoun, the right-wing Christian minister of the interior, demanded that the rebels be brought to trial before military tribunals. Khatib's revolt had the tacit but effective support of Fateh, which saw it as a means of countering the stepped-up Syrian control of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The problem of the army was compounded by the disastrous economic situation, the sharpening social tensions, and the political intransigence of the Maronite leadership, which continued to refuse to make political concessions.

The overall result was a vacuum of leadership. The field was relatively clear for an attempted Bonapartist

operation. That operation was set in motion on March 11 by General Azziz Ahdab, who mobilized the troops under his command in Beirut and demanded the resignation of Suleiman Franjeh, the Christian rightist president. By noon of the following day, March 12, Ahdab's pronouncement appeared to have gained great chance of success. A majority of the political forces in the country had rallied to his support; the Syrian leadership indicated its tacit agreement with the move. Even the majority of the Maronite right did not dare to oppose Ahdab openly.

But Ahdab insisted on carrying out his "coup" while remaining within the bounds of "legality." He made no attempt to oust Franjeh by force, but simply continued to demand that he resign; the parliament assembled and sixty-six deputies (a two-third majority) passed a resolution asking Franjeh to step down. Franjeh, however, refused, and Ahdab's temporizing gave the president time to prepare a response. The 2,000 troops under Franjeh's command mobilized to defend the presidential palace and Franjeh took to the airwaves to rally Christian public opinion in his support. This maneuver worked. Rejected by the Maronite right, Ahdab was compelled to move left, practically into the arms of Khatib, which further alienated the right. The Bonapartist operation thus collapsed and the stage was set for a new military confrontation: The Phalangists, the National Liberal party of Chamoun, and the pro-Franjeh elements of the army against the Palestinian Resistance, the Lebanese left, and the Khatib forces.

Once this new polarization set in, the Syrian regime found itself in a delicate position and had to change its line. Initially, Damascus had favored the Ahdab operation as a means of ending the army rebellion. The central axis of Syrian policy is to restore "order" in Lebanon as a means of gaining recognition from imperialism as the leading force in the region. The Syrian leaders thus feared any new confrontation. Moreover, they were concerned that a victory of the left in a new round of fighting would weaken their position. At the same time, because of the potential response of the Syrian masses themselves, the Syrian regime could not afford to move openly against the Lebanese left. Damascus was thus trapped.

On March 16 the Syrian leaders announced their opposition to Ahdab's initiative and proposed a compromise: the Karameh cabinet would be "reactivated"; the constitution would be amended to provide for an early election of a new president (Franjeh's term will expire in September), thus providing a face-saving means of getting Franjeh to step down; amnesty would be granted to the army rebels; the parliament would adopt the constitutional document drawn up by Syria to govern postwar Lebanon. Simultaneously, the Syrians sent the PLA to the South to counter Khatib; Saïqa, the Syrian-dominated Palestinian organization, intervened to try to prevent anti-Franjeh demonstrations in Naba'a, one of the major Muslim neighborhoods in Beirut.

But things had gone too far. The Lebanese left, under the mounting hegemony of Kemal Jumblatt, rejected the Syrian plan. On March 20 the anti-reactionary camp opened a military offensive. On March 21 the Phalangists were ousted from the Holiday Inn, a twenty-six story building from which the Phalangists had been able to direct sniper and mortar fire into Muslim communities at will ever since the beginning of the civil war. The following day Franjeh agreed to hold early presidential elections in parliament and accepted amnesty for the army rebels. But he still refused to step down. The anti-reactionary camp rejected the plan. On March 25 Franjeh was driven from the presidential palace and took refuge in Junieh, a Christian village north of Beirut.

The current round of fighting has already led to significant changes in the political lineup of the country. In the reactionary camp, the weight of the Phalangists has been strengthened, for Franjeh's withdrawal from the presidential palace has left Pierre Gemayel, commander of the Phalangists, as the central leader of the reactionary camp. In the anti-reactionary camp, Syria's prestige is declining rapidly. On March 22 the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine issued a communiqué demanding the expulsion of Saïqa from the PLO. And in fact, Saïqa is fast losing many of the Lebanese it had recruited dur-

ing the previous period. The 7,000-man force commanded by Jumblatt has entered the fighting on a large scale for the first time, increasing Jumblatt's already significant weight within the anti-reactionary camp. Jumblatt has stated that the present fighting will not end until the Phalangists are driven from the last of their strongholds in the hotel district. Meanwhile, the Syrians are continuing their mediation attempts.

It is unlikely, however, that the current military gains of the anti-reactionary camp will result in anything other than a shift in the relationship of forces in preparation for later negotiations with the reactionary camp, which will continue to occur under Syrian mediation. Neither Jumblatt nor the leaders of the PLO have any overall political or social perspective for basic change. In the absence of an alternative leadership, the current fighting will be only a prelude to the next round of negotiation and some minor political reforms.

But it remains true that the current Syrian role, along with the deepening division in the Palestinian Resistance, alters the relationship of forces to the detriment of the Syrian regime and provides increased opportunities for the revolutionary forces.

March 27 — **INPRECOR**

"Confessionalism" is the most adequate English translation of the Arabic *taa'ifiya*, which is derived from *taa'ifa*, meaning sect, denomination, or confession. (Other possible renderings — sectarianism, denominationalism — can be too easily confused with different political phenomena.) In the modern Lebanese context, confessionalism refers to the sharing out of posts in the state apparatus according to religious quotas. In 1943, when Lebanon became an independent state, a "National Pact" was arrived at which institutionalized confessionalism. At first, this meant that the seats in parliament (55 at the time) were divided between Christians and Muslims (the two major religious subdivisions) on the basis of 30 seats for the Christians and 25 for the Muslims (a 6-to-5 ratio). The proportion has been preserved ever since then, the number of seats in parliament always being a multiple of eleven. Later, however, the system was refined somewhat on the basis of the broad array of sects that exist, no one of which represents a majority of the population. The present parliament, with 99 seats, is divided as follows: 30 Maronites (Christians), 20 Sunni Muslims, 19 Shiite Muslims, 11 Greek Orthodox, 6 Greek Catholics, 6 Druzes, 4 Armenian Orthodox, 1 Armenian Catholic, 1 Protestant, and 1 "miscellaneous" seat, usually held by a Jew or by a member of yet another Christian sect. In addition, the president of the republic is always a Maronite; the president of the Council of Ministers is a Sunni; the president of the Chamber of Deputies is a Shiite, the vice-president of the Council is Greek Orthodox. The distribution of ministers is supposed to roughly follow the same confessional proportions as the parliament, and all posts in the state apparatus are alleged to do so as well.

By way of identification, it may be noted that the Maronites are a Catholic sect founded by a Syrian monk in the fifth century. Sunnis (from *sunna*, meaning "tradition") are the adherents of "orthodox" Islam. The Shiites (from *Shi'atu-Ali*, "faction of Ali") represent the largest minority grouping of the Muslim world, about 10 percent of all Muslims today (they are a majority in Iraq and Iran). The roots of the sect go back to the first major civil war in the Muslim world, in the middle of the 600s (Ali was the fourth Caliph, or "successor," of Muhammed.) The Druzes are a Muslim sect that arose in the early 1000s; they are concentrated exclusively in Lebanon.

It is hardly necessary to stress the reactionary and obscurantist character of the confessional system, the clearest proof of which is provided by the constant institutional and confessional crises and wars that have marked the history of the country.

# THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON

by S. JABER

Ten months of clashes; five months of virtually uninterrupted civil war; nearly 13,000 dead (one inhabitant of every 200); several dozen thousand wounded; property damages estimated at \$10,000 million, that is, about twice the yearly national income of the country; tens of thousands homeless; thousands of families deprived of all their property and resources; one-fourth of the population refugees outside the country. Those are some of the results of the civil war that has recently ended in Lebanon, undoubtedly one of the most atrocious wars of modern history. The violence of the Lebanese conflict, the irrational explosion of instincts of destruction and vengeance, the intensity of which no one had suspected, the exchanges of collective massacres, the summary executions, sometimes accompanied by indescribable atrocities costing the lives of human beings whose only "crime" in most cases was to have an identity card bearing a confessional designation different from that of the killers — all these facts show the depths human barbarism can reach in a capitalist society that is nevertheless one of the most "civilized" of the third world.

But beyond such considerations, a question is posed: What was the reason for this outbreak; or rather, what was the major reason emerging from the tangle of contradiction and confusion presented by the Lebanese civil war, which baffled so many observers?

On the most obvious and superficial level, the Lebanese civil war was a "war of religion," a confessional war. In any event, that is the favorite interpretation of the Zionist and pro-Zionist press, which saw in the events in Lebanon both a confirmation of the need for a Jewish state and the refutation of the possibility of peaceful coexistence among religious communities. And it is true, we may note in passing, that the references of Yassir Arafat, central leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to the "Lebanese model" have been rendered absurd by the civil war. But if the civil war proved the inanity of this model, it also showed, contrary to Zionist allegations, that confessional wars are actually not very religious in character.

The first major confessional war in Lebanon goes back to the nineteenth century. In 1860 there was a con-

flict between the Maronite Christians and the Muslim Druzes, two minority communities which took refuge in the Lebanese mountains. This conflict came just in the nick of time; it interrupted a process of democratic revolution that had been unleashed by an anti-feudal collectivist insurrection of Maronite peasants in 1858, an insurrection that had manifested a tendency to become generalized; in addition, it was used as a pretext for sending French troops of Napoleon III to Lebanon. By stirring up a conflict between two communities that had hitherto coexisted in harmony, the feudal Druzes and Maronites reaffirmed their authority; France found an excuse to bolster its influence in the region, setting itself up as a protector of the Catholic Maronites, while Britain was to cultivate the friendship of the Druzes.

Thus, from the very beginning, the instigation of confessional antagonisms appeared for what it really is: an application of the classical political watchword, "Divide and rule."

Following the first world war, France took over Syria, under the provisions of the Franco-British accords dividing the territories of the former Ottoman Empire. The French imperialists divided Syria into five states, one of which was Greater Lebanon, the basis of the division being confessional. The Lebanese state thus created, along with what France carved out of the other Syrian states, was concocted in such a way as to include a thin Christian majority that needed constant foreign protection in order to maintain its preponderant position in the politico-confessional system by which the state was ruled. The independence of Lebanon in 1943 was accompanied by a compromise (under British patronage) between Muslims and Christians — the former abandoning the demand for Syrian and Arab unity, which was supported by the Muslim masses and a section of the Christian masses, the latter declaring that they were placing themselves under foreign protection. The political system based on the confessional division of posts in the regime was confirmed for independent Lebanon.

This history of confessional conflict and compromise was to stabilize an ideology, confessionalism, which was henceforth to permeate the political evolution of Lebanon. In 1958 a civil war opposed a pro-imperialist faction of Christians to an anti-imperialist mass movement, which coincided with confessional divisions to a certain extent. The recent civil war falls within the same historical continuity.

There is no doubt that confessionalism was the major ideological motivation, one of the major combustible elements in the civil war in Lebanon. The role played by confessional hatred need not be demonstrated. But just as it is not ideology that makes history, confessionalism can in no way be considered the real cause of the Lebanese conflict. And just as weapons do not kill by themselves, confessional hatred does not explode spontaneously like thunder out of a clear sky.

Another interpretation, this one leftist, is that the Lebanese civil war was a class war. In support of this thesis, which claims to lay bare the underlying character of the confessional division in Lebanon, we have the fact that the Maronite faction of the Lebanese bourgeoisie holds a majority position within that class as a whole and that the poorest regions and layers of the country are Muslim in their majority, Shiite more precisely. Without doubt, this observation explains why the dynamic of the struggle in the Muslim camp is, in a very general manner, more progressive than that of the Christian camp. But this does not at all mean that these two camps constitute opposed class camps. While the class struggle is universal in all class societies, it is not always expressed in every conflict. There are also struggles among factions of the same class, not only at the level of the rank and file (in terms of the social origins of the fighters), which is obvious, but also at the top. This is the case in the Lebanese conflict, in which representatives of the bourgeoisie stood at the head of both camps.

The reactionary camp, the "Maronite" camp, was headed by two reactionary bourgeois parties, the Phalangists (Kataeb in Arabic), of semifascist and confessional origin, structure, and ideology, linked to the large comprador bourgeoisie and known for being in the pay of American imperialism, and the Parti National Libéral (PNL — National Liberal party), led by Camille Chamoun (former president of the republic from 1952 to 1958, the man who called in the U.S. Marines in 1958), the party of that section of the large comprador bourgeoisie linked to Anglo-Saxon imperialism and to some reactionary Arab regimes. Other forces were also active in this camp: a series of reactionary and ultra-reactionary groups and grouplets representing a reactionary plebeian petty-bourgeois current supported by the lower Maronite clergy, a current whose influence extends into the rank and file of the two large bourgeois parties. Geographically, the reactionary camp included the Christian neighborhoods of the capital (Beirut), which include bourgeois and petty-bourgeois neighborhoods as well as the popular suburbs inhabited by middle and poor petty bourgeoisie and wage-earners; outside Beirut, the reactionary camp extended to the rural Christian regions, some of which are inhabited by a well-off petty-bourgeois peasantry, others by a modest and poor peasantry with the presence of an agricultural proletariat.

The anti-reactionary camp is much more heterogeneous politically. The force that speaks in the name of this camp is a cartel of Muslim bourgeois elements and notables representing the Muslim section of the Lebanese bourgeoisie, both big and middle, which can be politically labeled as moderate and timidly reformist inasmuch as the Muslim bourgeoisie has an interest in modifying the confessional balance of the regime, which is presently unfavorable to the Muslims. This bloc is supported by a cartel of so-called progressive organizations including petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations that have a base among the

Sunni Muslim petty bourgeoisie of the coastal cities and whose nationalism is permeated with confession- alism, as well as the Stalinists of the Parti Communiste Libanais (PCL — Lebanese Communist party) and its ally, the Communist Action Organization of Lebanon (OACL), a group of centrist origin that has since stabilized on the line of the Communist party. The link between these two cartels is assured by the leader of the second, who is simultaneously a member of the first: Kemal Jumblatt, bourgeois reformist leader of the Parti Socialiste Progressiste (PSP — Progressive Socialist party); Jumblatt is also a former feudal landowner and a confessional leader of the Druze community, a minority within Islam in Lebanon. Geographically, this camp includes the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Muslim neighborhoods of the capital, the Muslim coastal cities (Tripoli and Sidon), the popular Shiite Muslim neighborhoods of the Beirut suburbs, the neighborhoods of poor petty-bourgeois and proletarian layers, which constitute the main field of action for the working-class left, and the rural regions inhabited by middle and poor layers, predominantly Shiite.

But this overview would be quite incomplete if we omitted the Palestinian Resistance, an essential component of the conflict whose predominant role is the clearest proof of the fact that beyond the Lebanese social or confessional antagonisms, the civil war in Lebanon is part and parcel of the conflict in the Middle East.

## Real nature of the conflict

The recent Lebanese civil war unfolded on a political terrain that had been profoundly modified since 1968 by the emergence and development of the Palestinian Resistance on Lebanese territory. This development came into contradiction with two categories of convergent interests: first, the interests of the Lebanese comprador bourgeoisie, since the power of the bourgeois state was counterbalanced by the emergence of a second center of power embodied in the armed organizations of the Resistance, and since in the long run the anti-imperialist dynamic of the Palestinian national struggle threatened the entire Lebanese socioeconomic edifice; second and most important, the interests of American imperialism and its Zionist bastion, since the development of the Palestinian Resistance was the major factor counteracting the Zionist-imperialist victory of June 1967. Thus, the Lebanese bourgeoisie (unanimous at the beginning), American imperialism, and the Zionist state all had an interest in crushing the Palestinian Resistance. After the battle of Karameh in Jordan in March 1968, it became obvious that the repression of the Palestinian Resistance would have to be carried out by Arab armies, because a Zionist intervention only stimulated the rise of the anti-imperialist mass movement. This task was accomplished with notorious success by the army of King Hussein in Jordan during 1970 and 1971. In Lebanon two similar attempts by the Lebanese army in 1969 had ended in flagrant failure, for two reasons: the weak-

ness of the Lebanese army (less than 15,000 soldiers) and the insurrection of the Lebanese Muslim masses, traditionally nationalist and anti-imperialist, in solidarity with the Palestinian Resistance (these masses feel that they are much better represented by the Palestinian Resistance than by the Lebanese army). The clashes concluded with the Cairo accords (signed at the beginning of 1970), which acknowledged the legitimacy of the Palestinian armed presence on Lebanese territory, while delineating the zones within which the fedayeen could act ("Fatehland," the Arkoub region of southern Lebanon).

Having acceded to power in 1970 as a representative of the bourgeoisie, President Suleiman Franjeh attempted to reconstruct a strong state by taking advantage of the decline of the Palestinian Resistance after its defeat in Jordan. In conjunction with Saeb Salam (a Sunni), then president of the council, Franjeh tried to restore the authority of the state, first of all against the Lebanese masses. This course was reflected in a brutal repression of social struggles, which caused victims among the ranks of workers and peasants. The strong state was progressively being imposed. But these efforts were interrupted by the operation carried out in Beirut in April 1973 by Zionist commandos, an operation that succeeded in murdering three leaders of the Palestinian Resistance. In reaction to the inaction of the state against this aggression, some 250,000 demonstrators accompanied the coffins of the three murdered Palestinians in an armed funeral procession with an extremely antigovernment character. Franjeh was cornered and had to act fast to prevent all his authoritarian efforts from being ruined.

In May 1973 the Lebanese army once again confronted the Palestinian Resistance, this time on a broader scale. This undertaking was a partial failure. Militarily, neither of the two forces won a clear victory; moreover, the Muslim masses threatened to mobilize to aid the Resistance. The Melkart accords (named after the hotel in which they were signed) put an end to the clashes, following the mediation of the Arab states. These accords limited the areas in which the fedayeen could move about, prohibiting them from carrying arms outside the Palestinian refugee camps, except in the regions on the Israeli border. The agreement also called for a count and regroupment of all heavy weapons in the refugee camps located near Lebanese villages. But these accords were not implemented, because the existing relationship of forces prevented the Lebanese regime from enforcing them.

Franjeh then changed his tactics. He tried to halt the rise of the movement of the masses by resorting to the collaboration of the reformists. After May 1973, ministers loyal to Jumblatt were added to the government. Concurrently, Franjeh fostered the training and arming of the militias of the Phalangist party, thus contributing to the creation of a genuine "Lebanese Resistance," a paramilitary counterweight to the Palestinian Resistance. Finally, the army was

strengthened and engaged in manhunt operations against outlaws, an attempt to polish up the army's image as the force restoring law and order.

Events moved rapidly during 1975. On the one hand, American imperialism had decided to strike a heavy blow, to take a decisive step toward the implementation of its version of a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The year 1975 was to be the year of the Sinai accord. This implied a new attempt to strangle the Palestinian Resistance on its principle field of action, Lebanon. In January 1975 Pierre Gemayel, the head of the Phalangists, began making belligerent declarations against the Palestinian Resistance, suddenly breaking the "friendly" relations that had prevailed during the preceding year.

On the other hand, the gravity of the situation was revealed by the insurrection in the city of Sidon. This town in southern Lebanon had been in turmoil because of a movement of solidarity with the fishermen of the city, who were struggling against the establishment of a capitalist monopoly on the fishing industry. As part of its operations to restore bourgeois law and order, the army was ordered to intervene. This resulted in victims among the demonstrators. The city then rose up: its armed inhabitants erected barricades along the various entryways to the town; rank-and-file militants of the Palestinian Resistance from a nearby refugee camp joined the insurrection. The state had to back down.

The hour had come to strike the great blow, both from the standpoint of the dominant reactionary faction of the Lebanese bourgeoisie and from the standpoint of American imperialism. The Phalangist party, instrument of these combined interests, intervened. The plan was rather simple: The Phalangists would intervene to provoke an armed conflict between Palestinians and Christian Lebanese; the army would then come forward as an arbiter, seizing the reins of power in order to attack the Palestinian Resistance and strangle it. Such was the aim of the Phalangist massacre of April 13, 1975.

It is only in the light of this historical and regional context that it is possible to understand the civil war in Lebanon. It was first and above all a clash between American imperialism on the one hand, acting through the vehicle of the reactionary Christian militias, and the Syrian-PLO axis on the other hand, to which was allied the Muslim bourgeoisie and all the Lebanese anti-imperialist organizations. The real stakes of the conflict went beyond Lebanese frontiers. What was involved was a struggle between two different formulas for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, the formula supported by imperialism and Zionism, which is to exclude the PLO from the settlement to the advantage of King Hussein of Jordan, and the formula advocated by Syria and the PLO, which insists on the necessity of PLO participation in the settlement as the representative of the Palestinians. And the civil war was temporarily ended by a compromise between American imperialism and Syria.

## The stages of the conflict

\* On April 13, 1975, in Beirut the reactionary militias ambushed a bus carrying Palestinians who were returning home from a meeting sponsored by the Rejection Front; twenty-seven people were murdered in cold blood. The clashes became generalized very quickly; militants of the Palestinian Resistance attacked headquarters and shops belonging to Phalangists. Already the fighting began to take a confessional turn: Palestinians against Christian Lebanese. The Phalangist ministers in the government demanded the institution of a state of emergency. Rashid Karamah, the head of the government and a reformist Sunni Muslim, refused to go along. A cease-fire was reached.

\* In May the government was forced to resign and the field became clear. Clashes, provoked by the reactionaries, broke out again and on the night of May 23 the formation of a military government implementing the reactionary plan was announced. The regime was counting on the fear of the population. In fact, a generalized insurrection broke out in the Muslim neighborhoods and regions around the slogan "No to military government!" The bourgeois Muslims, frightened by the insurrection, frightened that its dynamic would go in an anticapitalist direction because of the role being played in it by the left, held their first general meeting (in which Jumblatt participated). They demanded the resignation of the military government and designated Karamah, then leader of the bourgeois opposition, to form a new government. Franjeh gave in, for his plan had failed once again.

\* But he did not feel completely beaten. He set up a series of obstacles to the formation of the Karamah government. Tension mounted. In June clashes broke out again and the mobilization was general. Finally, a reconciliation summit of bourgeois Muslims and Maronites was held; the government that came out of this summit was clearly reactionary in composition. Chamoun, for example, held the post of minister of the interior. The truce lasted throughout the summer. This accord had been reached with the aid of a Syrian "mediation," which inaugurated the overt intervention of the Syrian leaders in the conflict in Lebanon.

\* The summer was a period of general preparation. All parties, tendencies, and groups were arming and training themselves. The number of available fighters in each camp multiplied. The reactionaries were intensely preparing to take the offensive again. In September the clashes broke out once again in a continuous escalation of confessional violence and hysteria. Between September 1975 and January 1976 the civil war was virtually uninterrupted. The reactionary offensive seemed to have opted for a prolonged war; the reactionaries made some small gains by getting the army to intervene in certain regions, but these were cautious interventions obtained at the price of a reform of the army aimed at satisfying the Muslim bourgeoisie (increased participation of Muslim officers in the leadership of the army) and of the

forced resignation of the former chief of the army, an arrant reactionary.

\* At the end of November a new cease-fire was suddenly proclaimed. Two messages calling for national reconciliation were broadcast, one from Franjeh, one from Karamah. The mediation of Couve de Murville, the emissary of French President Giscard d'Estaing, did not amount to much, despite appearances. (It seems that the Americans tried to cut the French intervention off.) In fact, it appears that an agreement was reached between the Americans and the Syrians on the main lines of a compromise: Within the framework of this agreement, Syria would commit itself to reestablishing a strong state in Lebanon, while the Americans would accept the principle of PLO participation in the Arab-Israeli settlement under certain conditions. This agreement was reflected in two facts: Damascus invited a Phalangist delegation to meet with Syrian leaders; more important, on November 30, 1975, the United States voted for the UN Security Council resolution linking extension of the UN forces' mandate in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the discussion of the Palestinian problem at the United Nations on January 12, 1976, with representatives of the PLO present. The Israeli government was furious.

\* But on December 6, the very day of the Phalangist visit to Damascus, the fighting broke out again, touched off by a huge massacre committed by reactionary militias. Behind the "spontaneity" of this new outburst of violence, under the pretext of reprisals for the murder of four Christians, lay a maneuver of the reactionaries: Given the inevitability of compromise, they were seeking to create conditions under which their opponents, their Lebanese opponents to begin with, would have to grant maximum concessions. There was one way of doing this: threaten to partition the country. The reactionary militias carried out a series of operations aimed at partitioning Lebanon. But this was not the real aim of the reactionary general staffs, for it would have meant the ruin of the Maronite comprador bourgeoisie, courtier of the West before the Arab countries. In reality, the point was to frighten the Muslim bourgeoisie, and the blackmail paid off: At the end of December a draft political reform worked out by Syria was announced. Only ridiculously insignificant reforms were involved: Essentially, the election of the president of the council by the parliament (previously, the post had been appointed by the president); equal division of parliamentary seats between Muslims and Christians (the previous balance had been six to five in favor of the Christians). The Muslim bourgeoisie and the left cartel were not happy about the draft, but they were unable to reject it.

\* Satisfied — at least relatively — about the inter-Lebanese settlement, the reactionaries moved to the second aspect of the settlement: the Palestinian Resistance. After proclaiming that their struggle was against the Palestinian Muslims and Christians, at the beginning of January the reactionaries organized



a blockade of the Palestinian refugee camp of Tell Zaatar. Fighting broke out again. The reactionary militias occupied another Palestinian camp, Dbayé, which was easy prey; it was a camp of Christian Palestinian refugees, which fact served as an after-the-fact explanation of the meaning of the reactionary declaration. Then it was the turn of the Qarantina neighborhood, inhabited by squatters, most of them from Syria. In response, the common forces of the Palestinian Resistance and the Lebanese organizations occupied the Christian village of Damour, acting in a manner virtually identical to that of the reactionaries.

\*At the end of January Kissinger went to Moscow. Manifestly, an agreement was reached between American imperialism and the Kremlin bureaucrats on the Middle East. The Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Lebanon. The PLA is composed of regular Palestinian forces stationed in Syria, theoretically dependent on the PLO but actually dependent on the Syrian army. Neither American imperialism nor the Zionist leaders protested: The PLA, in fact, did not intervene to support the anti-reactionary camp, but instead as a repressive force, manipulated by Syria, to impose "order" in the Muslim regions. The PLA intervened with the blessing of imperialism.

## The meaning of the accord

Franjeh's visit to Damascus last February 14 sealed the accord that had been reached. The main lines of this agreement and the channels by which it will be applied as they are taking shape right now may be summed up as follows:

\*Syria, acting through the PLA, will commit itself to gradually imposing a return to normal in the Muslim zones, which means a ban on the circulation of arms, dismantling of the barricades, suppression of looting, murders, and kidnapping. In doing this, Syria will permit the Lebanese bourgeois state to be reconstituted (the state apparatus had reached an almost total decomposition) and will aid in this process.

\*An insignificant political reform has been worked out; it is aimed at bolstering the foundations of the future strong state.

\*Syria, again through the vehicle of the PLA, as well as Saïqa, the Palestinian organization under Syrian hegemony, will take charge of imposing application of the Cairo accords of 1970 and the Melkart accords of 1973, which would represent an important step backward for the Palestinian Resistance in Lebanon. It is even possible that all the Palestinian armed forces will be integrated into the PLA.

\*Then, a Palestinian government "in exile" would be formed in which a strangled Palestinian Resistance would participate alongside notables loyal to Hussein. This government would be a member of a tripartite federation including Syria, Jordan, and the PLO, the structures of which are already being prepared:

Syria is in the process of unifying its diplomatic staff with Jordan's; in addition, a unified Syro-Palestinian command exists. This federation would negotiate with the Zionist state for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank of the Jordan River, which would give rise to a Palestinian rump state federated to Syria and Jordan and under their dual control.

In sum, what is involved is a Syro-American compromise concerning the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Lebanese reactionaries will see their desires fulfilled, the only difference being — and this is a rather big difference — that their objectives will be attained thanks to the Syrian regime. Thus, the future Lebanese strong state will rest on two pillars: American imperialism and the Syrian regime. Syria has already indicated some of the features it wants to lend the state that will be under its tutelage. Shortly after a statement by the Syrian minister of foreign affairs that there was "too much" freedom of the press in Lebanon, the headquarters of two anti-Syrian newspapers (more or less linked to Iraq) were attacked and burned by the Saïqa organization.

The Syrian regime has been the major beneficiary of the Lebanese civil war. This regime has now imposed itself on American imperialism as the privileged interlocutor in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict; it has imposed itself as the major guarantor of order in Lebanon; and, last but not least, it has imposed its tutelage over the PLO as never before.

Nonetheless, it cannot be said that the Lebanese civil war is over. Various sources of conflict remain: the American presidential elections this year may bring some surprises; the internal situation in Israel still does not permit the Zionist regime to participate in the planned settlement without problems; the situation within the Palestinian Resistance may still evolve. The Rejection Front is not at all coming to the fore right now, but on the other hand the Fateh apparatus has initiated a subterranean struggle against Syrian tutelage, which could redefine the alliances within the Resistance. The Lebanese Muslim bourgeoisie, as well as the left cartel, feels extremely frustrated; they are increasingly manifesting their discontent, compelling Syria to resort to means of persuasion. A struggle over who will be the next Lebanese president could well flare up. The agreement with Syria may well have entailed Syrian support for the candidate of the Franjeh group (Lucien Dahdah), to the great discontent of the opposition. Finally, the Lebanese masses may well block the reconstitution of the strong state; it will not be easy, for example, to disarm these masses.

The present task of the vanguard in Lebanon is precisely to give an impetus to an independent movement of the toiling masses in order to prevent the bourgeoisie of all stripes and the Syrian leaders from realizing their objectives at the expense of the thousands of workers and fighters who have fallen victim to confessional blindness.

March 5, 1976

# INTERVENTION OF THE LEFT IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

by S. JABER

The Zionist army is certainly a reactionary one, but it is a "popular" army nevertheless. The armies of the Arab regimes, on the other hand, are not. Without exaggerating too much, one can affirm that the same paradox existed in the Lebanese civil war: The popular mobilization in the reactionary camp was far more effective than the popular mobilization in the opposing camp. In itself, this fact is a reflection of the bankruptcy of the dominant forces in the anti-reactionary camp and, more particularly, of the forces of the Lebanese left.

The reactionary Lebanese militias are not mercenary armies, even though they do resort to the services of mercenaries for tasks of technical organization and training. It is impossible to deny the fact that the reactionary right in Lebanon was able to benefit from genuine mass support; this support may be explained, but it cannot be denied. The explanation for it lies in the deep ideological and even psychological motivation of the Maronite Christian masses; the sociological explanation is only partially correct.

The Maronite masses are deeply motivated by their confessionalism. It is not so much religious fanaticism as a pronounced particularism, a ghetto mentality, the sentiment of being a minority that lives in an environment that is perceived as foreign and hostile. Some far-right grouplets go so far as to call this particularism "nationalism," elaborating a theory of a so-called Lebanese nation, allegedly secular but actually based on confessionalism. Historically, Maronite confessionalism is combined with a pro-West attitude, but its intensity has not been constant. There have been ups and downs in consonance with the political evolution of Lebanon and the Arab region. One thing, however, is certain: Maronite confessionalism has been stimulated by the Maronite faction of the Lebanese comprador bourgeoisie every time social struggles in Lebanon or anti-imperialist national struggles in the Arab region have experienced an upsurge. This confessionalism, moreover, completely reveals its actual non-religious, politically reactionary character. For example, one of the great heroes of the Christian Maronites has always been King Hussein of Jordan, who is nevertheless a descendant of the family of the prophet of Islam. Today, Sadat has taken his place in the hierarchy of Maronite heroes.

From the sociological standpoint, confessionalism corresponds to the bourgeois interests mentioned above; but it also corresponds to the interests of some well-off petty-bourgeois layers frightened by the dynamic of social and national struggles, particularly by the agrarian reforms undertaken by the nationalist Arab regimes. For the rest, for the Maronite proletariat and poor petty-bourgeois layers, confessionalism is nothing but the ruling ideology, whose domination is facilitated by the opposite confessionalism of the Muslim masses and by the absence of a left movement capable of promoting genuine class consciousness, which is different from Stalinist ideological compromises.

Thus, Maronite confessionalism was considerably bolstered by the confessional turn of the reprisals taken by the Palestinian Resistance after the Phalangist massacre of April 13, 1975, the massacre that set the match to the powderkeg. This sort of reprisals, which made no distinction between Phalangists in particular and Christians in general, directly resulted in a rapid intensification of Phalangist influence among the Maronites, which mounted tenfold and more.

Taking advantage of the support of masses who were convinced that they were represented by the reactionary Maronite bourgeois parties, primarily the Phalangist party, these parties were perfectly able to organize and train this support. On the basis of confessionalist ideology, they were able to create the framework for an effective and efficient popular mobilization. They were able to transform the sympathy and solidarity of the Maronite masses with their reactionary battle into a genuine striking force; in very large measure, they were able to make use of their full potential support. In fact, the reactionary parties built up an important network of social services: aid to the needy, teaching, dispensaries and ambulances, a supply system, hygiene services, and so on. They organized intense ideological propaganda: leaflets, various kinds of publications, sound-truck brigades, explanatory meetings (most often held in church on Sunday, after mass), and so on. They broadly profited from the various forms

of assistance the population was prepared to furnish them: from plates of food for the combatants to the military participation of volunteers, both men and women.

In the anti-reactionary camp, the militarily dominant force was the Palestinian Resistance. Now, within the refugee camps themselves, the sort of relations the organizations of the Palestinian Resistance have established with the population are eminently bureaucratic, those of a bourgeois state apparatus under a nationalist regime in a colonial country, in this case a state apparatus in search of a territory. It follows that the relations established by the organizations of the Palestinian Resistance with the population of the Lebanese regions and neighborhoods were even more bureaucratic; these relations may even be characterized as substitutionist.

The organizations of the Palestinian Resistance did not really seek to organize mass contributions to the battle, on the one hand because of their "congenital" incapacity to stimulate genuine popular mobilization, but also, and this is deliberate, because they insist on their character as Palestinian organizations, attributing the task of organizing the Lebanese masses solely to the Lebanese organizations. In itself this indicates the conception the bureaucrats of the Palestinian Resistance have of their role in relation to the Arab masses. And this is true even though the Palestinian Resistance was not at all a minority force among the Lebanese combatants; on the contrary, it was the major military force of the anti-reactionary camp. Moreover, a great number of the fighters of the Palestinian Resistance had been recruited among Lebanese; in fact, the proportion of Lebanese militants within the Palestinian Resistance had increased during the final phase of the civil war, under the combined effects of forced unemployment and the attraction of the salaries paid by some of the organizations of the Palestinian Resistance. (Occasionally, the Palestinian organizations pay the Lebanese minimum wage for quite insignificant "jobs.")

This was the main type of relationship the Palestinian Resistance maintained with the Lebanese population, a relationship of recruitment, on a basis that was much more material than ideological. On the whole, the choice the Palestinian Resistance offered this population was this: either join the Palestinian organizations individually or stay home as a spectator of the ongoing combat in which the Resistance was charged with defending the Muslim regions. Those who joined the Resistance organizations lost their identity as inhabitants of a particular neighborhood or region; they were politically removed from their living places and dissolved into the "professional" mass of the Palestinian Resistance.

Obviously, the Muslim masses were nonetheless not indifferent to the battle. Just as the Maronite masses were motivated by confessionalism, this ideology also permeated the Muslim milieus, although with a

different political content. Here Arab nationalism generally corresponded to the aspirations of the popular and petty-bourgeois layers; hostility to the army and to the Maronite bourgeois government had obvious class origins, although this hostility was diverted in a confessional direction. Thus, these masses had no alternative but to support the Palestinian Resistance; but this support, warm and enthusiastic at the outset, gradually diminished in intensity to border on indifference or saturation in certain milieus toward the end of the civil war.

The most "popular" organizations, the circles with the greatest base in the anti-reactionary camp, were the petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations of the Sunni neighborhoods of the Lebanese cities ("Independent Nasserites," "October 24," etc.). The reason for this was that these organizations best reflected the dominant confessionalist ideology. The Stalinists, on the other hand, tried to straddle two chairs.

### **Stalinists: respect for tradition**

On the one hand, the Stalinists (the Lebanese Communist party and its satellite, the OACL) did not fully dissolve into the Muslim confessionalist current, for the very democratic ideology of the Stalinists compelled them to stress their secular outlook. On the other hand, however, they did not fundamentally distinguish themselves from the Muslim bourgeoisie. Completely tail-endist toward Kemal Jumblatt, the bourgeois reformist and confessional leader of the Muslim Druzes, they constituted the most important elements of a "leftist" chorus extending support to the Muslim big bourgeoisie, although it must be said that this support was timidly critical.

The one and only program put forward by the Stalinists during the civil war was the "program of national reform" of the entire "left," reformist, as the very name implies, but different from what one might assume it to be. In reality, within a generally democratic context, this program presented demands that actually represented only the interests of the Muslim bourgeoisie: election of the prime minister by parliament, national (that is, confessional) balance in the leadership of the army, etc. Trailing in Jumblatt's wake, the Stalinists gave support to Rashid Karamah, candidate of the Muslim bourgeois opposition for president of the council, and continued to support him after he was designated and even after he had formed one of the most reactionary governments in the history of Lebanon. All this was in the best tradition of the Stalinist "tactic" of supporting the "secondary contradiction."

This political attitude of the Stalinists, completely tail-endist toward the bourgeoisie, accounts for their behavior toward the masses; in fact it determined that behavior. Far from promoting forms of self-organization of the masses, far from creating channels for the expression of the initiative of the masses, the Stalinists, like the Resistance, maintained a

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quite bureaucratic relationship with the population; they had learned these relations in the school of the party and the trade unions.

There was no policy of arming the masses, but instead organizational recruitment; "popular committees" were set up to provide for supplies, but in reality these were structures isolated from the masses and maintaining bureaucratic relations with them, structures composed of party militants and designated notables. The Stalinists became sugar and rice merchants! They replaced the absent state apparatus, copying its method of functioning, not even improving that functioning in the interests of "efficiency." As for political agitation and the development of class consciousness, the Stalinists simply did not bother.

The result of this sort of action by the Palestinian Resistance and the Stalinists was that the popular neighborhoods in the suburbs of Beirut were emptied. The great majority of their inhabitants preferred to return to their villages of origin and wait for the clashes to end and economic life to start up again. Moreover, the CP militants were the most affected by the outcome of the civil war. Deluded by illusions about the democratic character of their struggle, they suddenly discovered that they had fought in order to allow the Syrian regime to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. And the Lebanese Communist party continues to hail the "Syrian mediation." Consequently, a good number of CP militants have preferred to walk out of the party.

## The revolutionary Marxist intervention

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), section of the Fourth International in Lebanon, shares the grouplet condition of the whole far left in Lebanon. (The broad vanguard in this country, previously represented by the OACL, has been reabsorbed by Stalinism during the past three years.) Nevertheless, in spite of its limited resources and forces in a politico-military field dominated by large apparatuses with no financial problems, the RCG, which stood out among the revolutionary left in Lebanon, intervened in the civil war in various ways.

\*Militarily, the RCG participated in the fighting in the anti-reactionary camp. Its participation in the fighting was dictated by the fact that it could not remain indifferent to the outcome of the conflict: Revolutionary Marxists had an interest — the interest of the toiling masses — in contributing to the defeat of the reactionary plan. The emergence of a strong state in the pay of American imperialism would have represented a disastrous defeat for the mass movement. But while participating in the fighting on the same side as some factions of the bourgeoisie, the RCG did not in any way extend political support to these factions (as the Stalinists did), but instead constantly explained that in a future that will not be long in

coming these same bourgeois factions will stand on the side of the reactionaries, opening fire against the toiling masses. Conscious of the real nature of the conflict and refusing to disguise it, the RCG chose to participate essentially in the task of defending the popular neighborhoods. It took charge of some of the advanced defense posts.

\*Politically, the RCG put forward a series of slogans adapted to the situation: against bourgeois wheeling and dealing, for the election of a constituent assembly on a non-confessional basis; against the bourgeois government and other calls for "national unity," the propagandist slogan of workers and peasants government; for the organization of logistical tasks in the popular neighborhoods; for the creation of a popular militia to which the inhabitants could contribute by rotation, etc. In addition, the RCG engaged in a campaign to denounce the settlement worked out by Syria, which consisted of political denunciation and concrete acts that have already created problems for the revolutionary Marxists with the Syrian forces. The sales of *Ma-l'amal* (What Is to Be Done), the fortnightly of the RCG, have more than doubled; in addition, the RCG distributes a weekly agitation sheet in one of the popular neighborhoods (2,000 copies a week).

\*Finally, socially, the RCG concretized certain of its slogans, on a reduced but exemplary scale. It stimulated the creation of an elected popular committee in a section of a popular neighborhood in order to distribute supplies that had been requisitioned; within the same framework, it stimulated the creation of a popular militia. It also operated an infirmary. One of the comrades, a medical student who was working in this infirmary, was murdered by the reactionary militias in the Qarantina neighborhood.

Obviously, these activities, modest in relation to the gravity of the situation, were able to modify that situation only slightly. But when the time comes to draw the balance-sheet — and this hour has already begun to sound — the revolutionary Marxists will find themselves in a much better position than the Stalinists. They have the advantage of never having lied to the masses, but of having told them the whole truth, of seeing their analyses fully confirmed by the course of events. The Trotskyists in Lebanon will have to make this political capital bear fruit.

The ground already seems to be fertile. The toiling masses, of all religions, feel frustrated by the leaderships that led them astray during this civil war. In the most recent period, this frustration has been expressed in a wave of robberies, which is also an expression of resentment against the bourgeoisie on the part of the poor. But a long struggle will be required before the slogan placed on the masthead of the RCG's weekly agitational sheet is realized in practice: Toilers of all confessions, unite!

March 6, 1976

dossier

# THE SOVIET UNION AFTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS



The twenty-fifth congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) began on February 24, the anniversary of Khrushchev's secret speech to the twentieth congress in 1956, and ended on March 5, the anniversary of the death of Stalin. Two crucial dates in the history of the bureaucracy. But they were not even referred to in the congress, and that is the least one can say. The congress was a dreary affair lacking any high points, in the image of the people involved. It was a stage of bureaucrats speaking to an audience of bureaucrats. Of the 4,900 delegates present, a maximum of 60 were workers in factories or collective farms, an absolutely ridiculous figure, even from the standpoint of window dressing.

It was a congress of self-satisfaction and bureaucratic good conscience. The activity of the party was justified at all levels. Economic difficulties? Brezhnev absolved the party of all responsibility, throwing all the blame onto the ministries, which allegedly had not applied the "correct line" and decisions of the preceding party congress.

It was a congress of stagnation. The only solutions put forward to deal with the economic difficulties were to go back to the previous policy, with a virtual stagnation in the standard of living of the Soviet masses.

It was a congress of immobilism. The composition of the new Politbureau is the most striking illustration of this. In spite of the canonical age of most of the members (Pelsh is 78, Suslov 75, the others close to 70), only one member was removed, and that was Polyansky, because someone had to be found to take the blame for the catastrophic situation of Soviet agriculture. Brezhnev's position was strengthened, and the praise he received from some of the delegates was an occasion for bits of flattery reminiscent of the Stalin period.

There was only one discordant note inside the congress: the open quarrel with the majority of the Western Communist parties, which dealt a sharp blow to the already badly shaken unity of the "international" Communist movement.

A second discordant note, this one from outside the congress, was the hunger strike of eighty political prisoners in the camps. Here again, the tranquility of the bureaucrats was not at all disturbed.

The dossier we are publishing below is composed of two parts. The first is devoted to a balance-

sheet of internal policy during the Brezhnev period. This balance-sheet seeks to analyze what lies beneath the still waters of the twenty-fifth congress. The proceedings of this congress constitute the last manifestation of the apparent stability that has characterized the Brezhnev period, unlike the preceding period, which was marked by many shakeups. Ever since 1964, the primary concern of the Brezhnev team has been to consolidate and maintain the monolithic power of the bureaucracy. This policy has paid off in the short run, but the price that has to be paid today is high, for this stability has been obtained only by postponing basic economic and political decisions, the various representatives of the bureaucracy being unable to reach a consensus on the basis of the lowest common denominator. The composition of the new Politbureau testifies to the degree of conflict among the various factions, at a time when the increasing age of the leading team objectively poses the problem of succession. This succession threatens to come up in a framework of a new and massive rise of discontent among the masses in face of the total inability of the bureaucracy to assure any rise in their living standard. From this standpoint, the twenty-fifth congress marks the opening of a period of transition, a period that threatens to be much more dangerous for the regime of the bureaucracy.

# A BALANCE SHEET OF



# BREZHNEVISM

by ERIC LAURENT

What does it mean to draw a balance-sheet of Brezhnevism, when at the twenty-fifth congress of the CPSU Brezhnev appeared as the "uncontested chief," a man of great merit, as the delegates recalled on so many occasions? Nevertheless, if one analyzes what has happened in the Soviet Union during the past ten years, the position of strength of the Brezhnev team seems paradoxical, for the real balance-sheet is far from positive. More precisely, if the balance-sheet of the period 1964-1976 is compared with that of the Khrushchev period, which ended in the ouster of Khrushchev, it becomes clear that the failures that served as the pretext for deposing Khrushchev still persist in large part and could just as well be used to justify sending Brezhnev into retirement.

The reasons for the ouster of Khrushchev are well known:

- \*the difficult economic situation, especially in agriculture, which had provoked growing social tensions;
- \*reverses in international policy, the Cuban missile crisis being the most striking event;
- \*the first fragmentation of the international Communist movement, with the consummation of the break with China.

On these three points, Brezhnev's performance has not been very different:

- \*important economic difficulties: many of the targets of the ninth five-year plan were not achieved, primarily in Sector B (consumer goods); as for agriculture, in spite of the considerable efforts made since 1965, particularly in investments, the agricultural system is now mired in one of its worst crises ever, with the catastrophic grain harvest of 1975;
- \*internationally, the situation is more complex. The victory of the MPLA in Angola has served to divert attention from some previous setbacks, in the Middle East for example;
- \*aggravation of the crisis in the international Communist movement. Relations with China have not

The second part of the dossier consists of two interviews. The first, with Zhores Medvedev, was taken in London on November 23, 1975, during a conference organized by the magazine Critique. The second, with Leonid Plyushch, was taken in Paris at the beginning of March; extracts of it were published in the first issue of *Le Quotidien Rouge*, the new daily newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International. These two interviews shed light, often from different points of view, on the problems and contradictions of present Soviet society. The different points of view expressed by Medvedev and Plyushch on the democratic opposition, the working class, and the national question testify to the debates going on in the left wing of the Soviet opposition, an opposition that is now going through a significant crisis, as both Medvedev and Plyushch agree. But Plyushch and Medvedev also agree on a basic point: the necessity and importance of the international workers movement's taking up the systematic defense of all political prisoners in the Soviet Union today. The release of Leonid Plyushch is a first victory won against the bureaucracy. Today it is important to develop a broad international campaign to demand the immediate release of all the oppositionists still held in the camps and special psychiatric hospitals, both in the USSR and in the other countries of the East.

been normalized, and relations with the big Western Communist parties have deteriorated rapidly. The conference of Communist parties, which originally was supposed to have been held before the twenty-fifth congress, is now scheduled for the vague and distant future.

But this quick balance-sheet does not allow us to account for Brezhnev's current position of strength, especially since Khrushchev had been deposed on the basis of a balance-sheet that was hardly any more negative.

In our view, the difference between the Khrushchev period and the Brezhnev period must be sought elsewhere, in the internal situation of the bureaucracy. In fact, the elimination of Khrushchev marked a final end to an especially turbulent period in the history of the bureaucracy. This period, which opened with the death of Stalin, was marked by a whole series of "turnabouts": the affair of the "antiparty" group, the twentieth congress and the dynamic it set in motion, a dynamic that very quickly went beyond the cautious limits the bureaucracy had wanted to maintain. In addition, the party reform of November 1962, with the division of the party into agricultural and industrial branches and the policy of "systematic renewal" of cadres, provoked profound discontent among middle-level bureaucrats, who saw the reform as a challenge to one of the things they hold dearest: job stability, with all the prerogatives and privileges it implies. To this were added Khrushchev's frequent public attacks on party leaders. All these factors stimulated deep discontent among the bureaucracy, which increasingly came to see Khrushchev, with all his disordered initiatives, as the sorcerer's apprentice of de-Stalinization. His ouster was a clear indication of the desire to reestablish a more collective and infallible regime of the bureaucracy and to avert any open crisis. Hence, the period 1964-76 appears as one of relative stability within the bureaucracy. (It is sufficient to recall that the first demonstrations in the leading group did not occur until 1972, and even then they took place "peacefully.")

It is important to examine the factors that permitted this stability, for the simple desires of the bureaucrats cannot explain it. The analysis of these various factors shows that this stability was obtained only thanks to a day-to-day policy, a policy of "stagnation" that has in no way resolved the basic contradictions of the regime but that on the contrary has exacerbated them. In addition, the various factors that have permitted this stability are now becoming exhausted. From this standpoint, the twenty-fifth congress, although it should not be considered a milestone, does open a transitional period that threatens to entail the sudden end of the stability-stagnation that has characterized the Brezhnev period.

## Internal political situation

Politically, there are three essential factors that account for the stability of the Brezhnev period:

- \* the blocking of de-Stalinization;
- \* the partial defeat of the democratic opposition movement;
- \* the passivity of the working class.

The desire to put an end to the internal crisis of the bureaucracy and to restore the party's monolithic facade, which is what governed the ouster of Khrushchev, was reflected in a number of measures. For example, the 1962 party reform was annulled and the middle-level bureaucrats regained the job security so dear to them. The increasingly open policy of rehabilitating Stalin, manifested very quickly after the fall of Khrushchev, reflected not so much the Soviet leaders' unbridled love for Stalin himself (in fact, most of them began their careers during the 1930s and feared for their lives at one time or another during the Stalin period) as the desire to halt a dynamic that appeared uncontrollable to them: They had clearly understood that continued criticism of Stalin would inevitably and rapidly lead to an even more radical criticism, this time of Stalin's heirs. The challenging of de-Stalinization was aimed above all at reaffirming the correctness of the line

of the party throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Reaffirming the infallible character of the party required clamping a heavy lid on a process whose antibureaucratic dynamic appeared increasingly obvious to the bureaucrats as the masses themselves began to grasp the problem.

This desire to reestablish bureaucratic order was also reflected in a strengthening of the policy of centralization at all levels — centralization in the policy toward non-Russian nationalities, for example, in which Khrushchev's mini-concessions were very quickly challenged. The policy under Brezhnev consisted of systematically regaining a grip on the national parties (Ukrainian, Georgian, Azerbaijani) in order to cut short any tendency toward autonomization. Beginning in 1965, this policy of stepped up control and Russification was accompanied by a very severe repression of the national movements, especially in the Ukraine. It is in this context that the ouster of Shelest and Myvanadze, respectively members of the Ukrainian and Georgian CPs, must be viewed.

Economically, the sovnarkhozes set up under Khrushchev were eliminated and the all-powerful authority of the federal ministers was reestablished. As we will see further on, the halting of the economic reform also reflected this policy of centralization to excess, which, in the eyes of the major leaders, appeared as the only measure capable of assuring their power.

The second aspect of this policy of stabilization of the bureaucracy was repression, first of all against the democratic opposition among the intelligentsia. This opposition had developed beginning with the twentieth congress and the illusions to which that congress gave rise: that there would be a real reform of the bureaucracy, which would allegedly be prepared to commit itself to the road of a gradual democratization of society. The partial failure of the democratic opposition movement (in other words, the movement of the intelligentsia), the reasons for which must not be sought solely in the policy of repression by the organs of the KGB (Committee on State Security, the secret police), is also one of the factors that has permitted the stability of the bureaucracy during the Brezhnev period.

To understand the reasons for this partial failure of the opposition and the evolution of an important number of dissenters toward increasingly open anti-communist positions, it is important to recall the social and political origins of the movement and the objectives it set for itself. As we have said, the movement for democratic rights was essentially a product of the intelligentsia. This fact heavily marked both the objectives and the modes of action of the movement. This movement had its origins in moral and individual revulsion against the return to systematic violation by the bureaucracy of its own legal system (new political trials, layoffs for reasons of opinion,



etc., and the manifest desire of the bureaucracy to whitewash Stalin and all his crimes) and in the reformist hopes that had been awakened by the twentieth party congress. By putting forward essentially demands for freedom of the press, speech, and assembly, the intelligentsia was in fact primarily defending its aspirations as a social layer seeking to win an improvement in its position within Soviet society. The point was to demand that "the best," "the most capable," really be allowed to participate in running society, against the bureaucracy, which was considered to be totally incapable. This "elitist" character of the intellectual opposition movement was reflected, among other ways, in the fact that other demands capable of rallying broader layers of the population to the movement (such as the demand for the right to strike) were not taken up by the intellectual opposition. Some passages of the interview with Zhores Medvedev published below concretely illustrate this chasm between the movement of the intelligentsia and the other layers of the population.

Everyone knows how the bureaucracy decided to respond to the demands for democratic rights: It considered these demands a direct attack on its monopoly of power. For the bureaucracy, any concession would introduce an uncontrollable dynamic, as the preceding period had shown. In addition, the bureaucracy moved very quickly from a policy of selective repression (the first year after the fall of Khrushchev was a relatively "liberal" year) to an increasingly intense and systematic repression, especially after the Czechoslovak events of 1968. The spread of the practice of internment of dissenters in special psychiatric hospitals testifies to this desire to break the movement at all costs. But as brutal as it has been, the repression does not suffice to explain the present crisis of the opposition. The absence of any mass movement during this period increased the isolation of the intelligentsia in its struggle against the bureaucracy. This isolation is both subjective and objective. Subjective in the sense that the intelligentsia has done





nothing to broaden the movement through the content of the demands advanced. "We have our problems, let them (the workers) resolve theirs, like the Polish workers did in 1970," one Soviet oppositionist was able to write. The weakness of the Marxist current in the democratic opposition movement, as Plyushch has stressed in various interviews, could only bolster this tendency. It is important to note that the most progressive elements of the opposition — Grigorenko, Yakimovich, Kosterin, Plyushch — have understood the importance of the movement's developing links to the masses and very early committed themselves to total support to the Crimean Tatar movement, which appeared as the only movement with a genuine mass scope during this whole period. This subjective isolation of the intellectual opposition is also the result of the theorization of the apparent passivity of the working class during the 1960s. Finally, it must be recalled that the whole policy of the bureaucracy consciously aims at setting the various layers of society against each other.

The internal political vacuum in which the movement of the intelligentsia developed explains why some of its members, confronted by the wall of repression erected by the bureaucracy, have cast their glance abroad in seeking the linkup that they do not see inside the USSR. This is what explains, at least partially, the appeals of a Sakharov and other dissidents to the American Congress to put pressure on the Soviet bureaucracy.

This analysis of the democratic opposition must not make us lose sight of the importance that this opposition has nonetheless. On the other hand, it is the first time since the crushing of the Left Opposition at the end of the 1920s that the struggle against bureaucratic arbitrariness has taken on such scope. Not only has the movement attained a certain cohesion, but also, through the samizdat (self-published) documents, it has permitted a broad exchange of ideas, confused as they may be, outside the ossified framework of of-

ficial bureaucratic thought. In itself, this process of repoliticization is an extremely important phenomenon. On the other hand, it is necessary to stress the importance of the struggle for democratic rights, which takes on a particularly explosive character in the Soviet Union. These demands are and will remain essential demands of the antibureaucratic struggle. More fundamentally, we have no intention here of weighing the merits and demerits of the opposition by comparing it to a structured revolutionary Marxist opposition (for such an opposition is still, alas, imaginary), but rather of understanding how the opposition, with its ideology, action, and present crisis, is a more or less direct reflection of the social and political reality of the USSR during the past fifteen years. The evolution of the opposition and the divisions that have emerged within it are not at all stable and definitive. They are above all the consequences of the freezing of the objective situation and of the intellectual opposition's inability to really get its teeth into social and political reality. The end of the passivity of the working class and the development of a broad antibureaucratic movement may provide an opportunity for a process of clarification and radicalization of at least an important part of the intelligentsia, as has been shown by the experiences in Hungary in 1956 and Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The passivity of the Soviet masses, the working class in the first place, is also the cause and consequence of the stability the Soviet bureaucracy has succeeded in enjoying. It is important to understand what we mean by passivity of the working class as well as the reasons for this passivity. In speaking of passivity, we do not deny the existence of deep discontent, which has sometimes taken the form of strikes and street demonstrations, as in Dnepropetrovsk and Dneprodzerzhinsk in 1972 and 1973. But this discontent is essentially reflected in forms of resistance, whether individual or collective, at the factory level: absenteeism, mobility, low productivity of labor. In other words, the working class has not yet reappeared on the political scene as a class. It seems that this passivity may be explained not only by permanent features of Soviet society under the reign of the bureaucracy — the systematic policy of depoliticization, atomization, and repression applied by the bureaucrats — but also by reasons that are partially conjunctural, that is, certain economic concessions the bureaucracy granted in the wake of the period of profound social tensions that had preceded the ouster of Khrushchev. These economic concessions were linked — especially during the years 1965-70 — to the relatively more rapid growth of Sector B of the economy (consumer goods), which was in large part linked to the initial effects of the economic reform. Concurrently, during these same years, wages rose relatively rapidly (up 26 percent between 1966 and 1970), while productivity increased only slowly. The bureaucracy's inability to guarantee that Sector B would continue to grow into the 1970s, combined with the clear slowdown in wage increases, is now

creating conditions for a new important rise in social tensions, which could lead to an open crisis. As we shall see below, the discrepancy between the needs of the Soviet masses and the bureaucracy's ability to satisfy these needs appears quite clearly in the results of the ninth five-year plan, which has just ended. Moreover, this discrepancy can only be aggravated in coming years, to judge by the objectives that have been set in the next five-year plan.

A reading of the table of the results and objectives of the three past five-years plans gives an initial idea of the economic difficulties the Kremlin leaders are facing today.

Results and Objectives of Soviet Five-Year Plans  
(percentages indicate growth rates  
over five-year periods)

	8th Plan (1966-1970)	9th Plan (1971-75)		10th Plan (1976-80)
	results	objectives	results	objectives
Sector A	51%	46%	46%	38-39%
Sector B	50%	49%	37%	26-28%
Productivity	32%	39%	34%	30-34%
Agriculture	23%	22%	13%	14-17%
Wages	26%	22%	20%	16-18%
Income per capita	33%	31%	24%	20-22%

Apart from the general slowdown in Soviet economic growth, this table indicates the major stumbling blocks and potential factors of crisis: agriculture and the consumer goods sector (Sector B), which has direct consequences on the standard of living of the Soviet masses.

The objectives of the ninth plan, which ended in 1975, testified to the bureaucracy's desire to assure priority development to Sector B over Sector A. That plan was the first one that broke with the traditional logic of lending priority to the development of the means of production sector (Sector A). The results indicate patent failure: 37 percent growth over the five year period instead of the 49 percent called for in the original plan. The reasons for this failure have been analyzed in several articles in INPRECOR (see "The Soviet Economy in 1974," in No. 26, May 22, 1975, and "The Crisis of Soviet Agriculture," in No. 37, November 6, 1975). Thus, here we will simply recall these reasons briefly:

\* The permanent crisis of agriculture, which has not been resolved by the considerable efforts undertaken since 1965 (investment, improvement of the standard of living of the collective farm members), as is indicated by the particularly catastrophic harvest of 1972 and 1975. Light industry, especially the food industry, directly suffers the side effects of the catastrophic agricultural situation.

\* The hypercentralization, which is the characteristic feature of bureaucratic management of the economy, tends to favor the development of Sector A.

\* The action of interest groups within the bureaucracy, which have been formed around the priority development of Sector A (the "steel eaters," as Khrushchev called them).

The problem of assuring sufficient growth of Sector B in order to guarantee a rise in the living standards of the Soviet masses has been a constant concern of the bureaucrats since the death of Stalin, for the bureaucrats understand that failure to guarantee such growth entails the risk of a rapid rise of discontent among the Soviet masses. But at the same time, the development of this sector implies choices that threaten to place a question mark over the bureaucracy's absolute control over the functioning of the economy. What happened with the economic reform of 1965 is significant in this regard: The elaboration of the reform, which implied the return to certain market mechanisms, was supposed to allow for more rapid progress in the consumer goods sector. And, as we have indicated above, this is what happened during the years 1968-70. But the minimum of decentralization of decision-making at the factory level very quickly emerged as a factor fueling centrifugal tendencies that were in contradiction with the absolute control the bureaucrats wanted to preserve over the economy. The response to this contradiction was to bury the reform. During the December 1969 plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist party Brezhnev reaffirmed the leading role of the party in the economy, against the so-called managerist tendency. The central problem was said to be to bolster labor discipline. The massive import of Western technology — combined with recipes provided by American psycho-sociology — constituted the second aspect of this policy. The appeals for discipline and efficiency were reflected primarily in a growing subordination of wage increases to rises in productivity. On the other hand, the economic effectiveness of the measures adopted was debatable at least, as is shown by the results of the latest plan. But this did not prevent Brezhnev from absolving the party of all responsibility for the current economic failures; in his report to the twenty-fifth congress he once again blamed the "managers," who had allegedly misapplied the correct line of the party.

The partial failure of the ninth five-year plan confronts the bureaucracy with certain choices:

\* Whether or not to continue the considerable effort that has been undertaken in agriculture;

\* Whether or not to continue the massive import of Western technology, which involves an increase in economic dependence on the world market; in addition, given the structure of East-West trade, the crisis in the West threatens to have serious consequences on the continuation of this trade;

\* Rapid development or not of the consumer goods sector.

Kosygin's report to the twenty-fifth congress, in which the principal objective of the next plan was presented, shows that there will be no break with the preceding plan on the first two points. The policy of massive investment in agriculture will be continued. As for relations with the world market, while a slowdown is envisaged, it does not seem that the Kremlin leaders have any possibility of challenging this dependence today. The most striking fact about the new plan — and it is difficult to assess this point of innovation — is the return to priority of development to Sector A, for which a relatively high growth rate has been set, between 38 and 39 percent. In addition, because of the consequences of the agricultural difficulties, the projected growth in Sector B seems to rest essentially on increases in the production of long lasting, or relatively long lasting, consumer goods: electrical appliances, televisions, automobiles, etc. On the other hand, it does not seem that significant progress will be registered in the food industry, in particular because of the extreme dependence on the agricultural situation. For example, meat production will remain at its 1975 level all the way through 1980, that is, about 15 million tons.

As for wages, the growth rate here will be in the image of that of the consumer goods sector, and possibly even lower, for the predicted growth is only 16-18 percent. Once again, the bureaucracy is seeking to resolve its economic difficulties on the backs of the workers.

## The end of stability?

This rapid balance-sheet of the policy applied by the Kremlin leaders during the past twelve years has tried to highlight the underlying reasons for the stability they have enjoyed. Brezhnev's position of strength at the twenty-fifth congress testifies to the fact that the man who represents the brains behind this policy has achieved relative success in the objectives he had set. But the underlying reasons for this stability now seem to be on the point of exhaustion, in spite of the outward image the bureaucracy is trying to present. In fact, as we have tried to demonstrate, the apparent stability masks an actual deep fragility, since the stability has been the result only of the evasion of the fundamental contradictions of bureaucratic society, an evasion effected with a certain zest, it must be admitted. This exhaustion of the underlying reasons for stability is being manifested on various levels:

\*The aging of the present leading team is symbolic here. Even though Brezhnev has apparently recovered from his illness, the extreme age of most of the leaders objectively poses the problem of succession, or even of their departure. The fact that the old men of the Politbureau (Pelsh, who is 78, and Suslov, who is 75) remain in their posts indicates the tension among the various currents in face of the problems raised by any renewal of the leading team. Succession problems generally lead to the crystalliza-

tion of factions and cliques, which is linked to a rebalancing of the various interest groups and fiefs within the bureaucracy. The "colonization" of the Ukrainian CP by bureaucrats loyal to Brezhnev after the ouster of Shelest is an example of this.

\*The bureaucracy has not responded to the demands for democratization coming from the intelligentsia except by resorting to repression. Such a response could be effective only in the short run. The problem cannot be solved by throwing those who raise it into camps or special psychiatric hospitals. In a somewhat paradoxical manner, the importance of the struggles now being waged in the camps around the question of the status of political prisoners and for a general amnesty indicate the permanence of the problem.

\*On the national question, the intensification of the policy of excessive centralization and Russification, combined with a very hard repression of the various national opposition movements, also achieved some results in the short run. In fact, however, this policy has only strengthened the national demands, which are now emerging as among the most explosive contradictions.

\*The bureaucratic management of the economy is clearly revealing its bankruptcy in the objectives of the next five-year plan, which once again goes back to the old Stalinist logic of lending priority to the development of Sector A over Sector B. The consequences of this policy on the standard of living of the masses, in which virtual stagnation is on the agenda for the coming five years, threatens to stimulate ever stronger social tensions and to lead to a sudden new rise of the movement of the masses.

All these factors stimulate the disequilibrium within the bureaucracy itself, for the problems of succession threaten to be posed in a period of intense social and national tensions. This could lead to the crystallization of increasingly intransigent factions and to an open struggle within the bureaucracy. The stability of the present leadership, which is both the cause and consequence of the absence of significant mass movements, threatens to come to an end rather sharply. The bureaucracy's capacity to preserve tranquility in the period now opening requires the maintenance of the present balance of social and political forces. It is likely to be a period of transition-stagnation, for one can only be skeptical about the bureaucracy's ability to lessen the contradictions, which have been building up for too long, simply through a calculated liberalization. In any event, there is no indication that the bureaucracy is prepared to commit itself to the road of liberalization, for experience has shown this to be dangerous.

Is it the end of the Brezhnev period then? To be sure. But it is still difficult to predict how quickly this will occur, for that depends primarily on a more or less short term rise of the mass movement, which will shake up all the factors in the situation. ■

The positions expressed by Zhores Medvedev in the following interview, taken at our request in London in November 1975, reflect the analyses and perspectives advanced by one current of the Soviet opposition, generally called "party democrats" (Medvedev also uses the term "liberal Marxists"), the principal inspirer of whom is Roy Medvedev, Zhores's brother. The label "party democrats" derives from the analysis of the various currents in the CPSU as developed by Roy Medvedev. Basically, he distinguishes three currents: the neo-Stalinists, the conservatives, and the liberals.

The present leading team, according to this analysis, is composed of a majority of conservatives (headed by Brezhnev) and neo-Stalinists (of whom Suslov is considered the major representative). As for the liberals, they are present only in the lower echelons of the apparatus; their weight is relatively small. For Medvedev, democratization requires the strengthening of the liberal current and the accession of members of this current to the leading posts. Thus, — and this is what distinguishes this current both from oppositionists like Sakharov and from communist currents represented by Grigorenko and Plyushch — the liberals direct their action essentially toward the party itself. These positions are expressed very clearly in the various recent documents and statements of Roy Medvedev. For example, in "Problems of Democratization and Détente" he wrote: "Any advance toward a more consistent democratization, toward greater tolerance of dissidents, toward a more flexible and reasonable internal policy is possible in the USSR today only as the result of certain initiatives 'coming from above' and 'supported from below.' The need for a broad democratization of Soviet society has been felt for a long time. It is, in fact, the most important condition for an acceleration of economic, political, social, and cultural development of our country. Only a genuine socialist democracy can give rise to the new motor forces that are needed to restore the health and life of the whole system of Soviet institutions and organizations. Nevertheless, the political passivity of the population 'from below' is equally obvious. People have learned to be so silent and are so subject to guilt that neither the oppositionists nor even certain small groups of oppositionists are capable of generating a mass movement capable of stimulating real political

**Q** In the 1960s, the various dissident groups exhibited a certain degree of unity. However, a process of differentiation has set in since that period and some of the best known leading figures have been forced to emigrate. In addition, violent disagreements have broken out among the different oppositional groups both within the Soviet Union and abroad. Do you think, therefore, that we would be justified in speaking of a crisis inside the opposition in the Soviet Union today? And, if so, for what reasons?

**A** Certainly we can say there is a crisis, one that has resulted in major disputes and profound disagreements among the different groups on the one hand, and in a decline in their influence inside the Soviet Union, and in some ways in their popularity abroad, on the other hand. Several factors account for this crisis. First, obviously, there are the energetic measures taken by the authorities against the movement. This became brutally clear in 1973 with the trial of Yakir and Krassin, who had enjoyed substantial reputations as leaders both inside the USSR and abroad. But they cooperated completely with the KGB\* during the investigations leading up to the trial; they admitted their mistakes, recanted everything, and compromised a great many people. More than 200 witnesses were called in for questioning at the time of the Yakir-Krassin affair, including nearly all the active members of the different groups. So, the Yakir-Krassin affair did discredit the

\*KGB: Committee of State Security, the Soviet secret police.

# an interview with Zhores Medvedev

changes. The masses will be able to go into motion only in a situation of serious economic, political, or social crisis. Such a perspective is neither probable nor desirable."

The practical conclusions that flow from this analysis imply lending priority to propagandist activity essentially directed toward party members and the intelligentsia. In this regard, it is necessary to stress the importance and interest of two works of Roy Medvedev that have been published in French — "Stalinism" and "On Socialist Democracy" — which constitute significant contributions to knowledge and analysis of the USSR. In reading these works, one is struck by the chasm that exists between the analysis of Soviet society and the action perspectives developed.

We certainly do not share some of the analyses made by Roy and Zhores Medvedev, in particular on the role of the various social forces in the antibureaucratic struggle. But we believe that the opening of a broad debate between revolutionary Marxists and this important current of the Soviet opposition is urgent and necessary. The publication of this interview is a first step in this direction.



Zhores Medvedev was born in 1925 in Tbilisi, Georgia. His father, a philosopher and party member, was arrested and deported in 1937. He died in a camp in 1941. A world renowned geneticist and biochemist, Zhores participated in the struggle against the rehabilitation of Stalin. In May 1970 he was interned in a psychiatric hospital on the pretext that a medical examination was necessary. He was released several months later as a result of a broad mobilization of the international and Soviet scientific intelligentsia. He now lives in London and has published such works as *The Rise and Fall of Lysenko*, *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovich*, and *A Question of Madness* (on his internment in a psychiatric hospital), the latter in collaboration with his brother Roy.



Zhores & Roy Medvedev

movement to some extent. Not only did they cooperate entirely with the KGB, but they also perjured themselves. They gave a full account of everything that was going on and how it was going on, as well as speaking about their connections with emigré groups — with the NTS\* in particular — and about money they had received. But, in the course of their trial and at a press conference, they also made a number of totally false statements. They said that absolutely no one was persecuted, that the stories about the psychiatric hospitals and documents such as the *Chronicle of Current Events\*\** were all fabrications, etc. They really behaved like provocateurs. And this affair, with one of the best known groups abroad playing a role of this kind, had a highly demoralizing impact.

On top of this, the affair coincided with a bitter campaign against Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn in connection with the publication of *The Gulag Archipel-*

\*NTS: People-Workers' Alliance, an extremist right-wing emigré organization created in 1930 in France and Germany. The NTS cooperated with the Nazi forces during the war in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. After the war, the NTS supported terrorist activities, but was later transformed into an anti-Soviet propaganda group with a base in Frankfurt, West Germany, and with branches in other countries. The NTS is considered as criminal according to Soviet laws.

\*\*Chronical of Current Events: One of the leading samizdat (self-published) publications of the Soviet opposition, produced roughly regularly for several years despite bureaucratic repression.

ago, culminating in the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn. By this time, Sakharov had slowed down on using his authority to intervene in economic and political problems from socialist-liberal positions, on questions such as civil rights and freedom of the press, etc., as he had been doing up until then. He switched to an antisocialist position and began to limit his demands mainly to questions such as emigration and the Jackson amendment.\* He called on the American Congress and Senate to vote for the Jackson amendment, thinking that this would force the Soviet government to make concessions. But this was a mistake, for anyone who has any knowledge of the history of the Soviet Union would have grasped that the Soviet government would not make any concessions under pressure from the Jackson amendment but that, on the contrary, this amendment would have negative consequences.

Solzhenitsyn had enjoyed a great deal of popularity as a writer and as a moral leader who had suffered in the camps. But on his arrival in the West he published his Letter to the Soviet Leaders, in which he virtually called for a return to monarchy. He invited the Soviet leadership to remain at the head of the state, but to abandon their ideology, i.e., to govern the country by authoritarian methods. In short, he wanted them to become dictators and to stop being leaders of the party. They were supposed to govern according to the principles of an enlightened dictatorship and no longer through the party. All of this is quite unacceptable and positively strange, especially coming from Solzhenitsyn, since any dictatorship is likely to become bloody and totalitarian. Furthermore, he says that all political parties and groups should be prohibited; only religious associations ought to be tolerated. In the first version of his letter the only political movement that would be allowed to continue to exist would be the Komsomol.\*\* But then in his second version he even wants to get rid of that. What he is proposing is a program in which society would continue to be governed by the present leaders because, he believes, they are now governing because they are power hungry and because society would become disorganized if they were deprived of this power. Political parties and political freedom are not regarded as being necessary; only religious freedom is. These views have caused some disappointment among the intelligentsia, scientists, and other forces that, in general, are not religious but are chiefly mobilized by the question of political freedom.

\* Jackson amendment: An amendment proposed by Senator Henry Jackson to the U.S.-Soviet trade bill requiring that the Soviet government allow a certain number of Jews to leave the Soviet Union each year in exchange for the United States' granting the Soviet Union "most-favored-nation" status.

\*\*Komsomol: Communist Youth League

**Q** So, you think that the crisis can be attributed to the mistakes of certain individuals and not to any underlying ideological weakness on the part of the majority of the dissident groups?

**A** It is the outcome of an inadequate knowledge of history and of political work. For example, Solzhenitsyn has come out against Marx. At a press conference in Stockholm he cited Marx, taking his quotations from the correspondence between Marx and Engels. But that doesn't mean to say he's actually read Marx. Someone must have given him the quotations or extracts out of context. Similarly, Shafarevich also claims to be quoting Marx. But, as anyone can easily check, some of the extracts and quotations he gives as coming from Marx in fact come from other authors — those cited by Marx in order to criticize them. "Marx, volume whatever, page such-and-such" frequently yields utterly absurd quotations. He thinks he's quoting Marx, but in fact he's not quoting Marx at all but Dühring or someone else. This comes from poor philosophical education and from a poor understanding of these disciplines. Anyone who reads Shafarevich's article in the anthology *Voices From Under the Rubble* will soon see what I'm talking about. This article about socialism shows the author knows absolutely nothing about it. It's a completely absurd article; he assimilates socialist society with the Incas, and lumps that together with all the shortcomings of ancient Greece and a whole lot more besides. He attacks every kind of socialist idea, going right back to Plato. In his contribution, Solzhenitsyn criticizes all ideas of revolution, starting with the French Revolution and Marat, even though all this has absolutely no direct connection with the problems of today and thus there is no justification for this kind of analogy. As a result, these extremely infantile and primitive political outbursts, with their utter ignorance of the real causes of events, have led to deep disenchantment with respect to these personalities, who occupied a predominant position both in the Soviet Union and in the eyes of the foreign press. And this had had a demoralizing impact.

The Gulag Archipelago could have had a tremendous impact, if only Solzhenitsyn hadn't then gone on to publish his Letter to the Soviet Leaders and if he hadn't exaggerated the figures. Recently, he stated that 66 million people perished in the camps, and that 44 million people had died in camps during the war. This makes a total of 110 million people dead, which is an exaggeration, to say the least; but it does raise the problem of the liberties that Solzhenitsyn is prepared to take with the facts. Similarly, he has stated recently that it was Shliapnikov who was the main leader of the October Revolution, and that Lenin was not the founder of the Bolshevik party. These and other similar statements show just how unfit he is to speak about these matters. Others, Maksimov for example, have found themselves in the same situation.

However, things are a little different with Sakharov. While he does make good many mistakes and inaccurate statements, he has managed to preserve his popularity because he's a much more tolerant and far more modest man. He doesn't make utterances like a prophet; all he does is express his personal opinion. He doesn't pose as some messiah; he doesn't pretend to be an absolute moral leader calling upon people to repent their ways or to do this or that. So, when he does express an idea or make a mistake, people do realize that these are his own mistakes and that this is simply because he isn't sufficiently well informed. This is obviously not a very good thing, but at least it's understandable; one can't be expected to know everything. The fact that he was always ready to defend political rights and minorities earned him a great deal of sympathy on the part of people living inside the USSR and abroad. He has a great many personal qualities, and that's why people are more ready to forgive him.



SAKHAROV

But it would do Sakharov a great deal of harm if he were to allow his head to be turned by his growing reputation and to start making statements of a more general nature. I hope that he has the wisdom to steer clear of this. In his latest book, *About My Country and the World*, Sakharov comes to a great many wrong conclusions. He even goes so far as to criticize the Americans for not having won the Vietnam war and for having withdrawn, which is proof of weakness in his eyes. He takes the side of the Americans, criticizing them for leaving Vietnam and abandoning their allies instead of sending a powerful expeditionary force. But this is ridiculous, and it results from a lack of understanding of what actually happened in Vietnam and of what is happening at the present time. A powerful expeditionary force would have changed nothing; the only way the Americans could have established their domination in Vietnam would have been by committing wholesale genocide. In 1968 and 1970, however, Sakharov strongly condemned the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

**Q** What do you think of Grigorenko's view, and particularly his views on the degeneration of the Soviet state?

**A** Grigorenko is saying very little at the present time. After many years in a psychiatric hospital, he's now an old man and his political activities are much diminished. For the most part, those of his earlier works that we know of are extremely brilliant; they are distinguished by a great deal of interior enthusiasm and conviction. He is a good deal more correct on a great many points; he had a much better understanding of the bureaucratic machine and the way it worked. In some ways he was closer to it than we are, because he had been a general and a professor at the Academy, which means he knew this system from the inside. So, there is no question about it; when he speaks about bureaucratic degeneration and about the defeat during the war, he's right.

On other points, however, Grigorenko has rather overestimated his possibilities. He failed to understand that, under conditions in which he was acting, it was impossible to create a powerful, active organization capable of influencing events. He was convinced that it was possible to build up a highly disciplined opposition movement. He was still suffering a little from his general's complex. It was very difficult to discuss things with him, since he was always trying to impose his views on people. And this drove away a good many people who sympathized with him and who might otherwise have worked with him. His own personality and his ambitions for rapid change meant that he failed to attract people to him. His desire to bring about a rapid victory and the strategy he laid out in light of this perspective prevented him from calmly undertaking cautious political work. He was after a rapid solution; he was highly impatient and imprudent. And it was this that helped lead him into a trap; he was misled and lured to Uzbekistan, where he was arrested — something they would never have dared to do in Moscow. He should have been more prudent and persevering.

Politically speaking, Grigorenko is one of the purest figures in the opposition. You can sense the full mea-



Grigorenko with Ivan Yakimovich

sure of his sincerity and his purity when you read his works; you can feel that he acted in accordance with his deepest ideological convictions, without ever bothering to consider the risks he was running. Some of the others are occasionally slightly hypocritical; you get the impression that they are too concerned with expressing ideas likely to be picked up as widely as possible abroad in order to enjoy attention and support from the international press. You get the feeling they're out to create some sensation. But you find none of that with Grigorenko. He never seeks to stir up attention; he has always sought to mobilize forces inside the country and not outside it, and that is where his great merit lies.

**Q** You raised the question of tactics while speaking of Grigorenko. What needs to be done? And how should it be done? During the round table,\* if I understood you correctly, you said that it was important to say and do only those things that could be taken up by people who do not enjoy the protection of international opinion. Is this a tactical problem, or do you think one should remain within the narrow limits of Soviet legality as it is understood by the present Soviet leadership? In other words, should one play the game according to the rules laid down by the Soviet leaders in order to change the Soviet society? Is this just a question of tactics, a way to avoid provoking repression, or do you think that the only correct line is to avoid entering into open conflict with those in power?

**A** I don't think we should separate problems of tactics from the problem of results, because the choice of a correct tactic implies that one obtains some results from one's actions. In any case, this is never an individual problem. On reading Solzhenitsyn's autobiographical book, *The Calf Butted the Oak*, it becomes very clear that he thought he could change the nature of Soviet society single-handedly, that all he had to do was to publish and the regime would collapse. He thought that his book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, which is undoubtedly a powerful book, would suffice to bring the entire regime crashing down. It was perfectly utopian to think that he could destroy the regime unaided.

I think we can say that anyone wanting to bring about some change needs to win over not just one or two people, but a much more sizable group, which is sensitive to the need for change. The people at the top of the apparatus are not the only ones involved in the decision-making process. The intermediate layer of the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia wield a fair amount of power. Certainly, they

\*The reference is to the round table on the opposition in the USSR which was held during the conference organized in London on November 22 and 23, 1975, by the magazine *Critique*. It was during this conference that this interview was conducted — IN-PRECOR.

don't do so in a synchronized manner; nonetheless, this power makes itself felt in the end. After all, these are the people who prepare drafts and plans; they are the ones who write Brezhnev's speeches. All these people, who participate directly in the preparation of projects and sit on various committees, do manage to bring about certain changes. For example, this year there has been talk of increased repression. And yet, if you look at the most recent literary awards you will see that the two authors who have received prizes this year, Feodor Abramov and Troepolsky, are both *Novy Mir* authors who worked with Tvardovsky and who were persecuted and have had a great deal of difficulty getting their work known in the past. Abramov had a great deal of difficulty getting his work published, and the authorities created all sorts of obstacles for him. Troepolsky also had trouble finding a publisher for the book that eventually won him his prize. It's a book about a dog, although in reality it's a social novel. He finally managed to get it printed as a book about an animal in the magazine *Science and Life*; that was the only way he could slip through the censorship. He would never have been able to get it printed in any literary magazine. And yet, now his book has won a major prize.

There has been progress in the field of literature. Attention is now paid to the quality of a work and to reader interest in it. If a book arouses interest, if it manages to attract a broad response among readers, then this is regarded as a quality. The ideological aspects of a book are no longer the only ones to be taken into consideration.

So, this layer of society already enjoys a great deal of importance in the Soviet Union. It is most important to remain in touch with this layer — with scientific circles and with the creative intelligentsia — if we are to envisage any kind of oppositional activity. It is highly important for someone like Roy Medvedev that his book has been read, even by party members — people working inside the party apparatus — so that these people can see that he is describing real political, economic, and perhaps historical shortcomings. It is important that these people grasp the fact that what he says is correct and that his recommendations are consequently useful. This is a tactical problem, but one that is connected with more general conditions. But suppose Roy Medvedev suddenly started writing that the economy should be denationalized, or when someone arrives with a program such as that put forward by the "Program of the Democratic Movement" — whose author remains unknown — which states that the capitalist system has proved its vitality and the socialist system has proved its lack of vitality, then one automatically deprives oneself of all possibility of making or maintaining contact with people who may think the same way but who would never dream of saying so openly. Anyway, the more serious among them are perfectly well aware that a great many social changes are inevitable. They understand that certain avenues of



development are closed to the Soviet Union and that one must choose the best possible from among those that remain open.

Roy Medvedev published his Political Diary in 1964-1970, and the two volumes are currently available. In the first volume, there is an article on foreign policy in which he openly criticized Soviet policy in the Middle East. He wrote that Nasser was the sole guarantor of the stability of Soviet policy in Egypt, its only advocate and the sole basis for cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Arabs. Nasser maintained friendly relations and determined this policy, and that was all. Take Nasser away, and there was nothing solid uniting the interests of the Soviet Union with those of Egypt. He criticized the fact that this policy was founded on a single man and predicted that the union between the USSR and Egypt would collapse the day that Nasser disappeared, because the social structures of the two countries were so different. And that is what happened. Following Nasser's death, Sadat changed the orientation of Egypt's policy, and today I think he is primarily under American influence. I think he is far more dependent on American policy than on Soviet policy. Roy's analysis turned out to be perfectly correct on this point.

**Q** You mentioned experts and the need to influence them. But a good many Marxists, at least in the West, hold the view that the interests of the experts are closely bound up with those of the bureaucracy. In view of this, do you think that any policy liable to jeopardize the interests of the bureaucracy would be capable of winning the support of the experts?

**A** Certainly, these interests are connected. But it should not be forgotten that power is in the hands of the governing elite. For their part, the experts enjoy intellectual, moral, and material privileges, which is another thing entirely. Consequently, anyone who sees himself as an expert — assuming we can call it that — is concerned with certain democratic freedoms, freedom to move around and to travel, as well as a fine dacha and his job. Those are his centers of interest. He wants to be able to go abroad, to visit Rome, Paris. He wants to be able to form friendships with his colleagues abroad, whether it be the director of an institute in the United States, a sociologist, or whatever. He wants to be able to keep in touch with other specialists. His interests are not only bound up with government service, but also with freedom and a certain kind of security: freedom from arrest, freedom from arbitrary dismissal from his job for having expressed some idea running counter to official dogma. Their interests are the same as those of other people.

**Q** Quite so, but how do you think they would react to the emergence of workers councils in the Soviet Union? This might seem to be a purely theoretical question in the context of the

USSR today, but it may not necessarily be so sometime in the future. I ask this not from considerations of dogma, but because history has shown that wherever major conflicts have arisen — Hungary in 1956, Poland in the same year, Czechoslovakia in 1968, partially in Poland at the end of 1970 — workers councils have made their appearance. Don't you think that on these occasions, at times when the social and political conflict reaches an extremely acute point, that the experts are more likely to end up on the other side, on the side of the regime and the bureaucracy?

**A** The reactions will be differentiated, and we should beware of generalizing. As I have already said, there is a group of liberal Marxists, whom we might classify as experts, which has formulated a number of liberal ideas. This group could line up behind the workers councils. But workers councils cannot arise spontaneously in the Soviet Union the way they did in Poland or in other countries lacking the same historical traditions as the Soviet Union. Furthermore, industry is much more important in the Soviet Union, and can be compared only with difficulty to Hungarian or Rumanian industry. I fear that if workers councils were to develop they would most likely be turned into auxiliary, consultative organs of the trade unions for the purpose of resolving questions of norms and wages. The growing complexity of industry has seen the emergence of a great many problems that cannot be dealt with administratively, but which need to be correctly resolved with the participation of the workers — questions of production norms, wages, the distribution of bonuses, and a good many other problems that are difficult to resolve administratively in large enterprises. Workers councils may appear, but they will not be able to settle problems of production, but more likely questions of everyday life, the material and economic problems of workers' families.

**Q** When you speak of the specific traditions of the Soviet working class, you are not referring to the traditions of 1917, but to more recent traditions. This raises the problem of the apparent passivity of the Soviet working class today. Indeed, seen from abroad, Soviet society is notably silent; very few people express their views, and the working class even less than the rest of society. What are your views on the current situation, how do you account for this, and what is the outlook for the future?

**A** One cannot really say that the working class is passive, at least not within the meaning of that term as it is used in the Soviet Union. One can speak of the passivity of the working class in the sense that it is not producing new political ideas or currents within the USSR. And it would be difficult to create a workers group or a new workers party. Only in this sense can it be said that the work-



ing class is passive. But it is far from being passive or downtrodden in the sense in which we understand the term in the Soviet Union. A good many foreign journalists have sought permission to attend trade-union meetings, but this has been refused. During union or party meetings, the workers often vigorously criticize the local and central administration, the regional organs such as the *obkom* and the *gorkom*, the factory management. If there is an active and well-prepared group of workers inside the factory, they can play a role in the regular meetings of the union or the party if they are party members. This generally takes the form of forceful criticisms of shortcomings in the sphere of production or in the economic and political spheres. This creates an atmosphere of political activity. As a result, no factory worker will ever admit that he is passive. Because they are not particularly well educated in the political or cultural spheres, for example, the bulk of their activity is concentrated on economic questions. In addition, it is easy to mobilize the workers to form teams of volunteers (*druvziny*) to combat hooliganism, etc. Often enough during trials of dissidents, the courtroom is packed with *druzinniki* — representatives of factories and the Komsomol — who can be expected to react in accordance with the wishes of the administration. These are the forms taken by the activity of the workers. Seen from the West, it may look a little like passivity.

**Q** How do you account for this contradiction between the dissidents and the working class or, to be more precise, certain representatives of the working class? How is it that the dissidents have failed to arouse the interest of the working class and thus break out of their isolated situation?

**A** There is no way they can communicate with each other. Personally — and I think my brother would agree with me on this — I do not consider the freedom to emigrate, that is, to leave the country freely and return freely, to be the chief democratic freedom. I think the most important one is freedom of the press. Freedom of the press makes it possible for different social groups to communicate among themselves through publications,

tracts, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets. If there was genuine freedom of the press in the Soviet Union as there is in England, then it would be possible to establish contact between intellectuals and workers, office workers, or even other groups of intellectuals. A dissident intellectual can't go into a factory and deliver a speech to the workers. For one thing, he wouldn't be allowed through the factory gates; second, no one would listen to him. In addition, it is not possible to operate with a large number of people under the present circumstances.

**Q** In his book *On Socialist Democracy* Roy Medvedev quotes a dissident who says that up until now those members of the intelligentsia involved in the opposition movement have fought only for their own rights as members of a social stratum and that the intelligentsia has failed to develop a broader program capable of reaching not only the intelligentsia but also other social strata, the working class in particular. Roy would seem to agree with this. What do you think about it yourself?

**A** One can agree with that, and Roy agreed with it. The problem of emigration is perfectly secondary for a worker or a peasant, and he would never take the risks involved in giving his backing to demands of this kind. A good many of the intelligentsia's demands strike him as being very distant, and they do not affect him directly. Conversely, you will not find the intelligentsia mobilizing around the question of wages or the unjust distribution of the national product. There have been several cases of mass mobilizations in this country over the question of unjust economic distribution that have not received any backing from the intelligentsia, which, on the other hand, is capable of reacting very strongly with hundreds of signatures in protest against the trial of X or Y. Of course, they are perfectly right to protest against these trials, but it's not enough. For example, when special bonuses for arduous work in the Far East and in the Great North were abolished, this was a big blow to large strata of the working class of these regions. No one opposed this measure at the time; no one protested. It was only when this measure resulted in the exodus of a large number of people who reckoned that they were underpaid for the job — Siberia lost roughly a million inhabitants between the 1959 and 1970 censuses — that people began to analyze the reasons for this exodus and began to realize that the main reason for it was to be found in these unwise economic decisions. This was clearly established, but at the top. Intellectuals and economists could have forecast this result perfectly well and could have criticized these measures while there was still time. In that way they could have protected a great many workers who instead suddenly found themselves thrust into far worse conditions.

There have been a good many declarations and protests over questions of rights, such as the fact that

members of *kolkhozi* (collective farms) are not allowed to hold internal passports. But people protest a lot less when it's a question of economics. For example, the liquidation of the MTS\* profoundly disorganized our agriculture from an economic point of view, and its consequences were thoroughly negative. No one protested, even though this caused massive upheavals among MTS workers: hundreds of thousands, perhaps even a million, people were forced to seek work elsewhere because they refused to join the *kolkhozi*, as this would have entailed a loss of privileges they had enjoyed as workers, especially pension rights and other material advantages. Yet no one protested. This was also bound up with the absence of freedom of the press. Of course, it was possible to raise purely individual protests, but it would have been impossible to get an article published in *Pravda* or to hand out a printed leaflet. Consequently, those who did not agree with the measure asked themselves: what's the point of protesting over this question, especially as my protest will attract no attention abroad since no one is interested in this question.

**Q** I'd like to ask you something about the national question in the USSR. Do you think that assimilation, by which I mean general Russification, is an inevitable phenomenon, bound up with the socially neutral industrial progress that the national movements are protesting against? What is the outlook for the national movement in the Soviet Union, and what are your views on the rights of a non-Russian republic to secede from the Union?

**A** As with most national questions, there are two currents. I don't know much about the situation in Central Asia. I know the situation in Georgia — where I was born — and in the Ukraine and the Baltic lands rather better. The problem is most acute in the Baltic lands, where national cultural traditions are the oldest and where there is a long tradition of fighting for independence not only against the Russians but also against Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. This results from a general shortcoming of the central government, which is incapable of formulating a specific policy for each nation or of taking into consideration the culture,

\* Medvedev is referring to a reform of Soviet agriculture carried out under Khrushchev in 1958. The main element of this reform was the sale to the *kolkhozi* of agricultural machinery and tractors that had previously been rented to the *kolkhozi* by the State Tractor and Agricultural Machines Stations (the MTS mentioned by Medvedev). The sale of tractors and agricultural machinery to the *kolkhozi* meant the passage of these means of production from the nationalized sector of the economy to the non-state sector. The elimination of the MTS posed serious problems for the workers who had been employed there; many refused to be integrated into the *kolkhozi* because of the living conditions of the *kolkhozi* members at the time — INPRECOR.

history, and national sentiment of each of the different peoples under its sway. It has developed rather a global approach. However, you can't take the same attitude toward the Estonians and the Bashkirs, even though there are more Bashkirs than Estonians. The Estonians want to preserve their national culture and are fighting for the restoration of Estonian schools and for Estonian-language classes. This is not the case with the Bashkirs. A Bashkir will do everything in his power to give his child a Russian education rather than a Bashkir one. He knows very well that Bashkir culture is weak and that it has no long-standing traditions. The Bashkir language doesn't open up any very exciting possibilities, and it has even come to look rather artificial these days. So the Bashkir makes every effort to give his children a Russian education.

To some extent, these nations are doomed to assimilation, and in fact a good many of them are already assimilated: the Bashkirs, the Mordovians, the different peoples of Siberia. This is the case for several dozen already. The situation is different for Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Estonia, among others, all of which have more ancient cultures and wish to preserve their traditions. At the present time, there is no individual approach to each of these nations. However, education is available in Estonian, Ukrainian, etc. But getting an education in the national language may well constitute a handicap for the child if he ever wants to enter Moscow or Leningrad universities, or in other domains. The education given in the national languages is less complete than that in Russian, and the textbooks and the teaching are not as good. As a result, assimilation in the Baltic lands and in the Ukraine is inevitable to some extent. This is clear in the scientific world. After the war, greater attention was paid to national traditions, and the Armenian Academy of Science started publishing scientific works in Armenian, the Ukrainians in Ukrainian, the Belorussians in Belorussian, etc. This meant — and I can refer to my own personal experience here — that I was unable to read articles published in the Ukrainian-language biochemistry review. On the other hand, I had no difficulty reading the biochemistry publications coming from Britain



Tatar families dumped on Central Asian railway platform after 1944 expulsion from Crimea.

or the United States. Today, the Poles publish a biochemistry review in English, as do the Hungarians, the Rumanians, the Swedes, etc. Conversely, the Ukrainians still bring out their review in Ukrainian, and I can understand only very little of it. Similarly, I don't know any Armenian, so I can't read an article published in Armenian, no matter how important it is. To my way of thinking, a scientific work published in Armenian constitutes a great loss in terms of Soviet culture.

Similarly, it is inevitable that one language will be dominant at the state level. When Khrushchev came to power, he instituted a greater degree of freedom in the use of national languages in the administration. But this raised a great many problems. Roy has told me of the following case. The Tajik Institute of Educational Sciences sent a letter in Tajik to the Ukraine Institute of Educational Sciences. It thus became necessary to find a translator capable of translating from Tajik into Ukrainian. The reply was to be sent in Ukrainian. The situation becomes even more absurd for correspondence between an Armenian institute and a Tajik institute. We need a common language for administrative purposes; it makes communication so much easier.

**Q** Suppose the state provided for the right of secession, and suppose there are nationalities that have suffered, or consider they have suffered, from national oppression. In some ways, this could amount to an incitement to secession.

**A** Yes, it could. Indeed, the national question is the basic problem holding up the promulgation of the new constitution. There are plenty of other problems, but the national problem is the central one. The recognition of the right of nations to secede, coupled with the total absence of any procedure permitting nations to exercise this right, was the chief shortcoming of the 1936 constitution. In fact, the first Soviet constitution took the form of a declaration. If it is going to provide for certain rights, the constitution must, as a fundamental law, also provide for a definite procedure whereby these rights can be exercised. This is where the main difficulty resides, if the constitution is to stand as a fundamental law and not just as a simple declaration. It should also guarantee the rights of citizenship. The old constitution said nothing about citizenship — who is entitled to be a citizen of the USSR, how to acquire or lose Soviet citizenship. All it says is that problems concerning citizenship are to be settled by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which decides as it sees fit. There are no institutional means by which citizens can lodge a complaint. They can only complain to this same Presidium, but to no one else. The fact that this is a declaration and not a legal document creates tremendous difficulties regarding the adoption of the new constitution. If the constitution grants the right of secession, it is perfectly normal that it should also guaran-

tee certain mechanisms. Whether these mechanisms function properly or not is another matter. Perhaps a referendum would fail to give a majority in favor of, say, the secession of Bielorussia from the Soviet Union. But it should be for the referendum to decide a question like this; we cannot leave the job of deciding on the secession of the Bielorussian Republic to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. A referendum should be held. It's as simple as that.

**Q** How would you describe the political situation in the USSR on the eve of the twenty-fifth congress? Do you think that we will see a neo-Stalinist type reaction after Brezhnev, as many Soviet intellectuals fear?

**A** Intellectuals fear it, but it is difficult to predict what will happen after the twenty-fifth congress. Suslov, Pelshe, and Grechko will almost certainly be retired after the twenty-fifth congress, since they will be 77, 74, and 73 years of age respectively. People of this age are supposed to resign from the Politbureau; indeed, when Mikoyan was asked to resign from the Politbureau it was decided to set the age limit for membership on the Politbureau at 70. So, the oldest group should therefore bow out, and it so happens that this is the most conservative group. In the event that Brezhnev retires for health reasons alone, I don't think that Kirilenko will be the man to take his place. Kirilenko is not a man of very high calibre nor of any very great independence, and his length of tenure as principal leader would necessarily be short because of his age. The Soviet system requires a long period of stability at the top; someone can't be appointed for a year or so, only to take a fresh look at the problem after so short a time. So the successor has to be sought among men with a reasonable prospect of being able to govern the country for a longer period.

If Brezhnev is in good health, and if the rumors concerning his illness are unfounded, then I expect he will remain at his post for the reason that there is no obvious replacement for the time being. On the other hand, if Brezhnev does put in a request for an honorable retirement for medical reasons and, consequently, a younger group does come to the fore, I don't really see who the eventual successor could be — Grishin, Mazurov, Andropov? As for Shelepin, the most conservative of the "young," he has already been ousted from the Politbureau. Grishin, who is one of the relatively young members of the Politbureau, is highly reactionary and not very intelligent, as far as I know. Andropov is the best educated, but people are nervous about him because he is the head of the KGB. And the association of ideas around this function is always bad. It's hard to forecast. A man can manifest certain character traits in one job, and other traits in another job. When Andropov was secretary of the Central Committee he was thought of as a liberal, or at least as more liberal than others. When

he moved to the KGB he immediately acquired a reputation as a conservative. It's hard to say to what extent this reputation is justified, because we know nothing about these people, their political views, their ambitions, or their plans. Assuming a younger group is due for promotion, my impression is that it is more likely to be found among this stratum of leaders, that is, the group that has most to gain from the broadening of international relations and from a lessening of the Soviet Union's isolation, and which is convinced that the country can no longer be governed by purely repressive methods.

I don't think that there will be a resurgence of repression. As with any hand-over of power, the new leader never feels quite sure of himself at first and thus tends to use tougher methods. That's what happened with Brezhnev up until the Czechoslovakia affair. He has become more liberal in recent years. You can see this in his policies. He has come to feel more in control of his power and thus to feel that his room for maneuver is greater. Until 1968 he was an uncertain figure and he was challenged by a number of people; Shelest, Shelepin, Egorychev, and others openly criticized his methods and his political decisions. He was aware of his own instability, making concessions and taking a number of highly unpopular decisions. He hesitated enormously over Czechoslovakia. His attitude was very hesitant in comparison to the "hardliners," who were calling for rapid action. Even after the occupation he was beset by indecision. Dubcek remained secretary of the Czech CP for months after the occupation, which is evidence of hesitation within the Soviet leadership. Khrushchev's methods in Hungary were far more brutal.

**Q** What role do you think international solidarity can play with respect to the opposition in the USSR? In particular, what are the tasks of the left and the extreme left?

**A** Roy Medvedev has written that when oppositionists in the Soviet Union call for outside support, they should call more on the left than on the right, because the left is more desirous of seeing a real improvement in the economic and political situation and in the general climate inside the Soviet Union than the right. For the right, any political difficulties, repression, etc., inside the USSR are merely seen as propaganda material for use against the Soviet Union. I think this view is partly correct, but also partly inadequate. For one thing, support given by certain governmental circles in the West to oppositionists does have a certain importance, objectively speaking. To some extent, the Soviet government is obliged to take into consideration support coming from certain "influential circles," to use their expression. But these "influential circles" are highly selective in their defense of oppositionists. It is noteworthy that whenever someone is fired for having submitted a request for permission to emigrate to Israel, then this case of repression is immediately

accorded wide publicity in the West, arousing a wave of protests and evoking an article in the Times. On the other hand, if someone loses his job because of his convictions — for example, because he said that the policy of the leadership is not authentically socialist, or because he has expressed an opinion that is not orthodox, criticizing the Soviet government's interference in the internal affairs of another country — in other words, if someone with distinctly left-wing ideas is fired, then he will find himself isolated with no hope of gaining any attention in the West. It's a slightly paradoxical situation.



Thus, while it is certainly correct to say that we should support everyone, it is at the same time necessary to introduce a certain balance into this support. It is correct to support those who will in any case enjoy a wide measure of support, even if our voice has little hope of making itself heard through the chorus of protests. But it is even more necessary to defend those who do not enjoy wide publicity and who suffer for correct ideas, even if these ideas are not thought of as correct in the West. So, the Western left ought to intervene to defend the right of everyone to express their own ideas, and to defend all those who are victims of repression because of their ideas, their writings, or their public statements. But it can only express solidarity with those whose ideas it shares; the left-wing press should back the socialist currents within the opposition in the USSR, offering them a chance to express themselves by affording them the freedom of the press that they do not enjoy in the Soviet Union. A certain process of differentiation is inevitable in this respect. ■

# an interview with



## Leonid Plyushch

**Q** What do you think of the reactions of the Soviet bureaucracy after your release, the reactions manifested in the form of allusions made by some speakers at the twenty-fifth party congress?

**A** I know almost nothing about these reactions, but it's easy enough to predict what they are saying and will continue to say: Plyushch is a schizophrenic who has sold out to the CIA, the Zionists, and the Russian and Ukrainian fascists.

**Q** What do you think should be done to win the release of the political prisoners in the Soviet Union and the other countries of East Europe?

**A** Western public opinion can do a lot for the release of political prisoners if a systematic and broad campaign is developed. But to do this you have to

wage the struggle for the release of political prisoners on the basis of moral positions. This will help in drawing in people of the most varied convictions and in going beyond quarrels among organizations. Western public opinion understands that the repression against dissidents in the USSR and Chile is a potential threat to freedom of opinion in all countries.

Many of the paragraphs of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can serve as slogans. To these we ought to add the following slogans:

a. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights must have the status of law in all member countries of the United Nations.

b. The political prisoners must be released in all countries. As for terrorists and saboteurs, to demand their release is contradictory juridically: Such a demand amounts to demanding that governments withdraw. But it is possible and necessary to struggle against the inhuman treatment meted out to terrorists and saboteurs and against the application of the death penalty against anyone.

There are many organizations today that are struggling against the persecution of dissidents. But only Amnesty International is struggling for amnesty for political prisoners in all countries. But Amnesty International does so on the basis of moral and juridical positions. We need an international organization that struggles for the democratization of all countries, for the concrete realization of the rights of man to political, religious, economic, and national liberty. During the March 6 and 7 meeting in the Mutualité,\* there was a proposal to create such an organization. This proposal was supported by the thousands of people who attended this meeting. A

\*The reference is to the "days of study" organized by the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (Internationalist Communist Organization) devoted to the situation in the countries of the East. After these days, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International, published the following statement: "On the occasion of the days of study of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, the formation of a committee to defend political prisoners in the countries of the East and West was projected. Among the initial signers of the call for the formation of this committee are Plyushch, Jiri Pelikan, and James Marangé. The platform of the committee constitutes a basis for discussion for the democratic defense of political prisoners. The presence of Plyushch and Pelikan offers a guarantee that such a committee will be broadened to include all components of the workers movement desiring to participate in the mobilization against repression in the USSR and in the people's democracies. The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire commits itself to the collection of signatures for the launching of the committee, which, as has been shown by the action of the committee of mathematicians, could be very broad, non-exclusive, and as representative as possible."

broad international campaign has to be developed for the creation of such an organization.

**Q** What are the major opposition currents in the Soviet Union? Are there Marxist currents? What do you think of the positions of Roy Medvedev?

**A** The principal division of the opposition in the Soviet Union is the division between the democratic movement and the antidemocratic movement. The chauvinists of all stripes (up to and including the fascists) and certain far-right Christian currents constitute the antidemocratic movement. But it must be noted that numerically these groups constitute only a very small fraction of the opposition.

As far as the democratic movement is concerned, it includes democrats who are fighting simply for respect for Soviet law on individual freedom, religious currents that demand freedom of conscience, patriotic currents of the various nationalities, and neo-Marxists, the socialist currents, which are still not very numerous. But it is necessary to stress the much too general and conventional character of these labels.

The neo-Marxists are trying to analyze the causes of the defeat of the October Revolution and the other socialist revolutions, to analyze the changes that have occurred in the world since the death of Lenin, and to work out a new action program for Marxists in the USSR. Nevertheless, I have not read any serious Marxist programmatic document in the samizdat (self-published) publications. When I was in the USSR I believed, on the basis of what I was able to read, that the Medvedev brothers were honest and consistent Khrushchevists, that is, that they remained fixed on the positions of the twentieth and twenty-second congresses of the CPSU. I have not yet read their recent works, so I don't know about the evolution of their positions.

**Q** Do you think it is possible to speak of a crisis of the opposition, and if so, what are the reasons for the crisis?

**A** In fact, there are certain signs of a crisis of the opposition. I see two reasons for it. First, the very severe repression of the opposition by the KGB, a repression that began in 1968 and was stepped up considerably in 1972. Today the Ukrainian resistance has in fact been crushed, but I don't think it will remain so for very long. The second reason is the gap that exists between certain currents and the workers and peasants. Nevertheless, I think that this situation will change for the better relatively soon.

**Q** What has been and what is the attitude of the democratic opposition toward the working class? Can one speak of a gap between the opposition and the working class? In your view, what are the prospects for the opposition?

**A** As a whole, the democratic opposition is conscious of the need to improve the material situation of the workers and peasants and to eliminate the privileges of the bureaucracy. But in the democratic samizdat the main emphasis is placed on demands relating to respect for legality and individual liberty, in a manner that is not justified proportionally. It is an essential insufficiency of the movement, although it is quite correct to think that democratization of the country is the principal task.

The majority of democrats, with the exception of the neo-Marxists, ridicule belief in the leading role of the working class. It is difficult to talk about perspectives, and still more difficult to judge the future of this or that political current. I don't want to get involved in the unrewarding task of being a prophet. Those who want to do so can go ahead.

**Q** Can one speak of social and political passivity of the working class? If so, why? Isn't this contradictory with the news we have about strikes and clashes with the police that sometime comes out of the USSR?

**A** Yes, the working class in the USSR is very passive. There are many reasons for this. The main one is the absence of organizations expressing the interests and consciousness of the class of workers. The second reason is the absence of traditions of struggle for their interests. The third is common to all classes in the USSR, and that is fear for one's family, fear of losing a good job, fear of the prisons and the camps. The fourth reason is a deep distrust of all propaganda and all agitation.

Workers strikes and demonstrations in the USSR are very rare. They are evidence only of discontent against the regime and not of activity on the part of the workers.

**Q** In the West the youth are in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement. How do you see the present situation of Soviet youth, both workers and students? What is the attitude of youth toward the bureaucratic regime?

**A** The youth constitute an important part of the religious and national movements. Unfortunately, this is also true of the fascist currents (pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet). Also unfortunately, there are not very many youth in the democratic movement properly so called. This is explained by the fact that the religious and national movements are in large measure emotional movements. Disgust for official ideology rebounds on ideologies that imply not emotions but a logic, an analysis, and programs.

The attitude of the greatest part of the youth toward the bureaucratic regime is either an attitude of disgust (conscious or unconscious) or indifference.

**Q** Socialism also means the liberation of women. Can one speak of liberation of women in the USSR? Can one speak of specific forms of oppression of women?

**A** As far as the specific features of the exploitation of women in the USSR are concerned, there is an absolutely remarkable article by a Ukrainian patriot, Evgeny Sverstiuk, called "For the Celebration of Woman." (E. Sverstiuk is presently in a camp in Mordovia.) I can offer you my opinion on the subject briefly.

In the work place, women are equal to men. They get equal wages and have full possibilities for promotion on the job. Among the highest bureaucrats, men predominate. Unfortunately, equality on the job has an opposite side. Women are also employed for hard physical labor. Daily problems and children take up almost all the free time women have. So the formal equality of opportunity for intellectual training turns out to be inequality in practice. So from this standpoint, women are discriminated against.

**Q** One gets the impression that the national question is one of the major contradictions of bureaucratic society today. What do you think of this? What are the reasons for it? What perspectives do you see? What is the link, in your view, between the national question and the struggle against the bureaucracy?

**A** The national question is one of the most complex problems in the USSR. You have to make a distinction between spiritual oppression and material oppression of nationalities.

Spiritually, one can say that the Soviet government consciously and unconsciously pursues the policy of Tsarism. The Russification of culture and the falsification of the history of all peoples (including the Russian people) are some of the aspects of this policy. Behind verbal internationalism lurks great Russian chauvinism. One of the most repugnant manifestations of this chauvinism is anti-Semitism, which is applied under the pretext of anti-Zionism (under Stalin it was called the "struggle against cosmopolitanism"), but also the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, the Meskhets, and the Black Sea Greeks, deportations which Stalin carried out by accusing these peoples of "treason to the fatherland." Can a whole people be traitors? Traitors to whom? To the Russian people?

Materially, it does not seem to me that there has been specific national oppression, with the exception of the Jews, who have difficulty getting into institutions of higher education and to posts of responsibility. On the contrary, certain peoples live better than the Russian people. The reasons for bureaucratic great-power chauvinism are complex, and it is not possible to analyze them in an interview. Lenin had already denounced the germs of this chauvinism.

The bureaucracy is the essential source of this great-power chauvinism. The nationalism and chauvinism of the non-Russian peoples is a reaction to this. The role of the bureaucracy in this chauvinist policy is more and more understood by non-Russian patriots. Also, it seems to me that the struggle of nations for their self-determination will take on an increasingly antibureaucratic character, fusing with the democratic movement.

I would like to add one more thing. Bureaucratic nationalism is reflected in the consciousness of the popular masses. Contempt and hatred for other peoples is developing. One of the arguments of narrow Soviet nationalism is this: "We feed them all, we defend them all, but they're a bunch of ingrates." This is one of the reasons why many people hailed the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The belief that "we are the best" is repugnant and leads to national messianism.

**Q** How will the new five-year plan affect the standard of living of the popular masses?

**A** I think that the difficulties of bureaucratic management of the economy will increase, and this will obviously have consequences on the standard of living of the popular masses.

**Q** How would you envisage relations among people in the future socialist society?

**A** I am not a great believer in futurology, although it appears to be a necessary science. It is difficult and risky to predict what the future society will be like. The best evocation of communist society is found in Marx, in the Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts of 1844. But the description is simultaneously complicated and brief. Socialist society will be something in between capitalism and communism. Thus, human relationships in this society will have both features of the new society and features of the old, inhuman society.

**Q** Do you think a gradual democratization of Soviet society is possible?

**A** I hope so.

**Q** Do you think that a wing of the Soviet bureaucracy is favorable to a democratization of Soviet society and is capable of carrying this out?

**A** No, I don't think so.

**Q** Do you think that the twenty-fifth party congress means a strengthening of the present leading team?

**A** I don't know. ■



# URUGUAY: FIERCE REPRESSION

by **PABLO RAMIREZ**

Pablo Ramírez is the editor of the monthly *Revista de Americas*.

**Bordaberry**



The old Uruguay died for good with the defeat of the general strike of July 1973. In the old Uruguay they added up cows and votes to create a bourgeois democracy supported by a broad mass base. Today the cows are still around, but there is nobody to buy them any more. The ballot box has been replaced by boots, bankers, and Bordaberry. The crisis has eaten away the value of both cows and votes and has impelled the exploiters to attack the gains of the workers, primarily their wages and the democratic rights that made it easier for them to struggle in defense of their interests. The change was big. The leap from bourgeois democracy to a particularly anti-working-class and repressive Bonapartism constituted the epilogue of a war waged by the workers against the bourgeois offensive for about a decade. The outcome of the final battle, the two weeks of general strike against the coup, tipped the scales decisively. The employers won this war, defeated the workers, and prepared themselves to take maximum advantage of their supremacy.

The aim of this article is to analyze this reality in order to help to transform it. The magnitude of the defeat of the Uruguayan workers requires of us, particularly as Trotskyists, that our analysis be sharply critical — even self-critical — for that is the only point of departure that can define a correct policy, which is needed to reorganize the proletariat, overthrow the dictatorship, and develop the revolutionary party.

The basic causes of the coup were the danger of the rise of the workers struggles and the inability of a divided bourgeoisie to hold back those struggles by means of its democratic institutions. The putschists intervened into this social and institutional panorama in a preventive manner, moving before the aggravation of these two elements (especially the first) could make the operation much more dangerous. This, then, was the first objective of the putschists: crush the workers in order to defend capitalism, which was confronted by an economic, social, political, and institutional crisis. Further on we will examine their plans in more detail.

The task of the putschists was made easier by the policy of the *Convención Nacional de Trabajadores* (CNT — National Workers Confederation), which was led by the Communist party, the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front, an interclass bloc), and the majority of the left, which had unanimously expressed confidence in the good intentions of the supposedly "Peruvian-style" officers who had burst onto the political scene with the semi-coup of February 1973. The same policy of betrayal of the workers that allowed the putschists to advance without meeting resistance was later to lead to the defeat of the general strike through which the masses responded spontaneously when the coup became a reality. At first, the Stalinists and their allies tried to negotiate with the government, and later with a sector of the military that was counted on for a countercoup. The strike was given a defensive coloration so as not to frighten potential bourgeois allies.

Neither the CP nor the ultraleftists, who made a bloc with the CP about two days before the end of the strike, called for going over to the offensive, for organizing the population around the occupied factories, for establishing workers control in these factories, for mobilizing and taking the streets, for forming armed self-defense pickets, and for working out a tactic aimed at dividing the armed forces. All this awaited the decision of a "progressive" sector of the employers. The result is well known. Only the Trotskyists of the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Uruguay* (PRTU — Uruguay Revolutionary Workers party) posed this offensive and revolutionary orientation for the strike, although with errors and imprecisions. But our party lacked the strength to modify the course of the struggle. The betrayal of the Stalinists paved the way for the end of a prerevolutionary stage which, during the final two days of the strike, had taken on revolutionary characteristics. A counterrevolutionary stage then opened up. A stage we are still living through today.

Once they had defeated the strike, the putschists consolidated their power. Not because they were able to resolve the economic crisis or because they had won the bulk of the bourgeoisie to their cause,

and still less because they were able to develop a petty-bourgeois base of support. The fundamental cause of the dictatorship's relative stability — within which crises may break out periodically — was the magnitude of the defeat of the workers. The national bourgeoisie can have — and does have — some spats with the proimperialist dictatorship. What it lacks is sufficient strength to overturn it. The decisive forces are imperialism and the proletariat. The dictatorship consolidated itself on the basis of the historic defeat of the proletariat.

Why do we characterize the defeat this way, even though there was no civil war in which the proletariat exhausted all of its forces? We do so for two fundamental reasons that are, to a certain extent, peculiar to the Uruguayan process.

In the first place, the coup that took place in Uruguay differed from the Chilean coup and similar ultra-reactionary coups in that these coups began with an ultra-repressive "explosion" — made possible by a certain mass social base — in order later to move to more "normal" forms of repression. This did not happen in Uruguay, for two basic reasons: The putschists never had a mass social base on which to carry it out, and they did not have to confront an armed resistance that would have compelled them to do so nevertheless. But the repression did take on a systematic and persistent character determined by the fact that the dictatorship lacked mass social roots, which forced it to govern as though it were occupying the country against the will of the overwhelming majority of the population. For the dictatorship, easing the repression would have meant beginning to weave the rope with which the regime itself would have been hanged.

Let us take a look at some facts that confirm this. The number of comrades murdered during the strike is insignificant when compared to the number murdered by torture after the consolidation of the dictatorship. During the height of repression, in the midst of the strike, about 2,000 prisoners were taken (who were added to the 3,000 or 4,000 who had already been imprisoned before the coup.) Two and a half years later, a raid against the CP netted 1,400 prisoners — and this without any social struggle. The new prisoners were added to the approximately 8,000 people already in jail. What would we say if three years after a defeat of the French workers there were 200,000 political prisoners, or 1 million prisoners in North America? How could we avoid noting that what we would be dealing with would be a defeat of historic proportions? But those are the figures that are equivalent to the number of political prisoners now being held in Uruguay.

Although the number of prisoners is a very important index of the magnitude of the defeat of the workers, it does not seem to us that this is the decisive factor preventing a recovery of the workers. We believe that the second element is even more important:

The emigration of hundreds of thousands of young workers from the country. It is impossible to nail down the exact figure, but estimates range between 400,000 and 500,000, that is, about 15 or 20 percent of the population.

The emigration of such a large portion of the population takes on a qualitative significance. This is not a peasant migration, but an urban one; it includes a section of the most active and resolute layers, educated people and rebels, particularly among the youth, as well as elements of the industrial proletariat and the radicalized middle class.

The emigration, the economic crisis, the repression, and the lack of a revolutionary leadership with any real weight among the masses have combined to make it extremely difficult to reorganize the workers; these factors thus aid indirectly in the consolidation of the dictatorship. Only an important change in the relationship of class forces in the neighboring countries or in the world revolution as a whole can modify the present trend, which points to a rather prolonged period for the recovery of the Uruguayan workers.

## How to characterize the dictatorship

Uruguay is now living through a counterrevolutionary period in which the relationship of forces is quite favorable to the bourgeoisie, while the proletariat has been unable to recover from the historic defeat it suffered at the hands of the armed forces and Bordaberry.

These two sectors, each with a different weight, constitute the government. It is a government that has been consolidated through the defeat of the workers movement and that draws its main support from the politico-military apparatus, Yankee imperialism, and the "axis" made up of the financial bourgeoisie, the owners of the meat industry, and the export industries. It is a government that must be defined as Bonapartist and ultra-reactionary, but not fascist, for to be fascist it would have to rely on, or to have previously relied on, the active support of some important sector of the petty bourgeoisie, which is precisely the opposite of what has occurred.

The main pillar of the government is its own armed forces. The totally secondary character of the role played by the army in the political and economic life of the country until only a few years ago leads us to believe that it is not likely that the army could have established itself as a sharply distinct caste within the space of four or five years, and more particularly since the coup. But there is no doubt that such a process is under way. The basis of the army's privileges lies in the fact that the military budget represents 55 percent of the total national budget. And in evaluating the significance of

this sum, it must be remembered that these are armed forces of internal repression; only a tiny amount is spent on heavy and sophisticated weaponry, which is expensive.

The army's growing intervention in all the organs of the state apparatus is considerably broadening its field of economic opportunities, which are seized upon through wheeling and dealing, bribes, and graft of all varieties.

The two sectors that, along with the military, appropriate the lion's share of the national income are Yankee imperialism and the previously mentioned "axis." The first acts mainly through its loans, finance capital, the Chevron (Standard Oil) petroleum concession, and the totality of activities it carries out jointly with the financial oligarchy and the export industries (and also, of course, with the landowners). The second is made up of an oligarchy whose structural base lies in the sectors mentioned above, but which constantly directs its capital toward conjuncturally more profitable areas of the economy, from currency speculation to industry to cattle rustling.

From this description it follows that there is an accumulation of interbourgeois contradictions: between imperialism, which wants a reduction in military spending, and the officers, who defend their privileges; between the officers who, basing themselves on the state apparatus, are attempting to transform themselves into partners and competitors of the oligarchy, and the imperialists, who are in turn their partners and competitors. More generally, a contradiction is developing between those who hold power and are thus the main beneficiaries of the division of surplus value and the bulk of the remaining bourgeoisie. More precisely, with all the bourgeois sectors that have been unable to get their piece of the plunder of the country in one form or another, particularly a growing number of ranchers not linked to the meat distribution and export industry and the banks. The strong contraction of the world meat market makes it difficult for them to run their ranches profitably; this makes them even more vulnerable to the greedy policy of the meat packers and exporters, but does not exempt them from the rather high taxes. The clashes of this sector with the government have even led to the imprisonment of the president of the Rural Federation and of other leaders of that organization.

## Plans of the government

The government's programs respond to a specific objective: to win maximum benefits for imperialism and its lesser indigenous partners. To do this it is necessary to reconstruct the Uruguayan economy, to partially modify the role of exporter of meat and wool assigned to it by the world division of labor, and to adapt the state apparatus to its new functions and opportunities.

The central objective of the Yankee bankers, for whom Vegh Villegas was a functionary before he took over the post of minister of economics, is to transform the city of Montevideo into the financial center of their activities throughout the "southern cone." They want a sort of Bahamas or Hong Kong, but one that also has cows and can thus be used to establish subsidiary industries complementary to or distinct from those the Yankee octopus already possesses in Argentina or Brazil.

In order to accomplish this, they had not only to crush the workers movement, but also to take two initial decisive measures: the establishment of free exchange, which meant the abolition of trade controls, and the passage of an investment law that would open the country up to imperialism.

One of the main objectives of the plan is the development of the export industries in an attempt to channel the majority of them into becoming complementary to the export industries of the Cuenca del Plata. This policy is based on the one hand on the insignificance of the domestic Uruguayan market and on the other hand on the large profits the ruling monopolies could make if they managed to centralize their production or diversify it on the basis of lower operating costs. In addition, this policy is in the interests not only of imperialism but also of some sectors of the national bourgeoisie in the various countries. Uruguay has two advantages in implementing this policy: its geographical location in the Cuenca del Plata and its wages (although the Argentine crisis has reduced this latter advantage considerably). But it has one great disadvantage: its very poor natural resources (almost complete lack of minerals and, at least so far, hydrocarbons).

So far, the development of new industrial sectors is only incipient. The two main new industries, fishing and oil, began operating recently. Fish exports did not exceed \$4 million last year, and the oil industry, which has just now been set up, will require considerable time before it becomes profitable (this also depends on whether prospecting results are positive).

The two other big problems the government plan intends to deal with are inflation and the national budget deficit, which is caused by the extremely high cost of the bureaucratic-military state machine (80 percent of the budget goes to pay salaries).

The part of the plan whose realization is most advanced is the conversion of Montevideo into a financial hub, a center of usury and speculation for the "southern cone." As partial but illustrative data, we may mention that foreign deposits in private banks have increased 600 percent and that the state has doubled its planned sales of treasury bonds in foreign currencies (without altering deposits in national currency). This, in addition to the opening of

new branches of foreign banks, is only the most visible and modest aspect of the program.

The investment law, which the imperialist press described as "particularly attractive," has encouraged the entry of some foreign capital from various sources (Yankee, Japanese, and Italian, among others). In general, this capital has been used to buy old plants in order to renovate them and adapt them to new uses.

As for the plans for industrial development, their application has been slow and difficult. For example, sales to Argentina have amounted to only 10 percent of the export value that had been approved by the Uruguayan government. The explanation for this is simple. Although this policy favors the imperialist monopolies and a sector of the national bourgeoisie, it simultaneously injures another sector, which thus resists and erects obstacles. On the basis of this general characterization — the inability of the bourgeoisie in the region to bring their interests into a more or less profound harmony — it is important to analyze whether the slow pace of application of the plans will continue, as appears to be the case, or whether there will be some acceleration.

On the problem of inflation, the government managed to achieve considerable success, diminishing the rate of inflation from 107.26 percent in 1974 to 66.84 percent in 1975 (20 percent higher than initially expected). This was accomplished not on the basis of a substantial increase in production, but instead through the contraction of the domestic market through the dual effects of emigration and low wages, which permitted the amount of money in circulation to be reduced.

On the question of the budget, the results were quite different. We lack the year-end figures, but for the third quarter the deficit was 27.1 percent instead of the predicted 14 percent; moreover, the tendency was toward further increases, so it is likely that the total deficit for the year will be three times higher than had been expected. The explanation for this is clear: The officers would not accept cuts in their budget, and the government cannot make reductions in the rest of the budget without moving to massive layoffs of functionaries. To resort to this measure with a private sector that is incapable of absorbing even the present reserve army of labor would be to create a dangerous focus of social tension, which the regime appears to want to avoid for the moment.

It seems to us, contrary to the opinion of the entire left, that the regime is beginning to achieve a certain economic respite. For the present, all this means is that the depth of the crisis has eased slightly, not that it has been resolved or is even on the road to being solved. The accentuation of the deformed and dependent character of the economy,

the superexploitation of the workers, the expulsion of nearly a fifth of the population, and the total surrender to imperialism constitute the price that has been paid for this respite.

This year will be decisive in determining the general trend of the economy. And here once again, as during the period of Vegg Villegas, the decisive point will be whether or not it is possible to sell meat and wool at favorable prices.

## The workers and students movements

Earlier we mentioned the basic factors making a recovery of the workers difficult (defeat, economic crisis, emigration, repression). To this we must add another factor, this one subjective: a skepticism based on a confused and embryonic consciousness that the struggle was not waged as it should have been at the right time and that now the consequences are being paid. As far back as 1964 the workers had voted to launch a general strike in the event of a coup; they reiterated this resolution time and time again; they heard their Stalinist leaders respond to those who demanded that this strike be prepared by claiming that everything was ready, that the strike would be "insurreccional," that the party had all the weapons it needed. Hence, the workers can only feel disoriented, demobilized, and defeated, especially since a great number of them believed the lies of the Stalinists.

The policy of the CP after the end of the strike only complicated the problem still further. Incapable of telling the masses the truth and of properly labeling the defeat the workers had suffered, the CP decided to continue lying, to claim that the workers movement had not been defeated, that the leadership of the CNT had simply acted like the Vietnamese, ordering a tactical retreat in order to weaken the enemy and then return to the offensive (this was the official balance-sheet of the strike drawn by the CNT leadership).

During 1974 the Portuguese revolution allowed the Stalinists more propitious propagandist conditions for presenting their old aspiration of bringing "progressive" officers to power. Montevideo was covered with CP posters bearing such slogans as "Do as in





Portugal! For a democratic and patriotic government!"

But the CP did not limit itself to propaganda. It resolved to call upon the workers to make new sacrifices. In August 1974 the CP launched one of the strongest and most combative unions, one which had remained intact, into struggle alone. The construction workers were brutally repressed. Military patrols went from work site to work site with a list of activists to arrest. Totally without leadership, the workers were nonetheless able to strike for twenty-four hours. The price of the CP's adventure was that the trade-union organization in the construction industry was broken and the possibility of this union's emerging as one of the linchpins in the process of the recovery and reorganization of the working class was eliminated.

At present, the workers movement continues to be passive and disorganized, with the exception of a few isolated clashes. There is still some activism in some unions, largely based on CP members, but the latest wave of repression has had considerable effect on these embryonic forms of organization.

The workers movement is defeated and demoralized, headed by a CP — or what's left of it — that lacks any program and policy capable of offering the workers a clear way forward. As long and difficult as the struggle may be, the central task of revolutionaries can only be to fight to modify this situation, to present clear proposals to the workers, to press for their reorganization, gaining their respect and confidence and taking the lead in all their struggles, no matter how small and partial they may be.

The student movement, particularly the university sector, has been slightly more active than the workers during the past year. Nonetheless, here again

similar problems of leadership are posed. The most advanced sectors, like the medical students, have launched isolated, ill conceived, and badly organized actions, one of which ended in the arrest of 300 comrades.

The CP, with its ultraleftist-opportunist policy, had dragged along the majority of the other currents, thus aiding in the decapitation of all the sectors of the vanguard that remained or were re-emerging. Stalinism in Uruguay will not take the initiative in a long defensive struggle in which every position, no matter how small, must be carefully defended and transformed into a springboard for new small advances, thus gradually moving toward the development of the strength and independent organization of the workers. But that is the only thing that can allow us to seriously face the struggles, as difficult as they may be. A fight led in this manner, even if it is defeated, can show the way forward. It is an irony of history that anarchist-style spontanéism was applied in Uruguay by Stalinism.

But the old pundits of the CP are not applying this policy out of ignorance. They launch isolated battles and send the best elements into slaughters as part of a deliberate policy: to bring pressure to bear and knock at the gates of the barracks in an attempt to rouse the "progressive" officers from their long slumber.

## Situation within the left

The repercussions of the defeat on the different organizations and militants of the workers movement has been varied. It appears to us that, even simplifying reality, we can distinguish four phenomena within the organized workers movement:

\* The very broad milieu of militants and sympathizers of nearly all the left groups — especially the CP and the guerrillas — have become demoralized and have abandoned political struggle.

\* As the organization with the greatest links to the proletariat, the CP had a strong internal cohesion and was the only force having significant weight in Uruguay; it was one of the few organizations that — up to the time of the coup — did not undergo a process of internal discussion and political struggle, or at least so it appeared from the outside.

\* In the guerrilla and ultraleftist organizations, the discussion not only led to splits, as in the case of the MLN (National Liberation Movement), but also to a serious self-criticism of their terrorist past, which instead of bringing them to Marxism — in deeds and not just in words — led them to popular-front-type class collaborationist positions; to a certain extent, they returned to their original starting points, the national liberation movement or front.

\* On a much smaller numerical level, small groups or factions within larger currents are trying to draw the fundamental conclusions of the experiences through which they have lived.

Here we would like to especially look at the problem of popular frontism. The importance of this question derives not only from the fact that the Tupamaros and other smaller parties and groups held such a strategy, but also from the fact that this was the common heritage of the entire left, with the exception of the Trotskyists.

This entire policy is aimed — whether consciously or not is of little importance — at preparing an alliance with the bourgeois oppositionists (or their "shadows" or petty-bourgeois agents). It is the democratic noose that tightens around the neck of the proletariat once it has destroyed the dictatorship through its struggle. The bourgeoisie makes enormous efforts to prevent a Portuguese-style situation from developing after the fall of the dictatorship. In any event, the cost is small. They will even sign some declarations calling for the overthrow of the dictatorship, promise "structural" changes, issue some publications, while waiting for the masses to bring down the dictatorship so that the bourgeois oppositionists can take its place by virtue of their alliance or excellent diplomatic relations with the "left."

It is clear that these "fronts" are much more symbolic than real, since today it is impossible to form a front of any real weight without the participation of the CP and some figures representing the bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, in the UAL (Unión Artigista de Liberación), for example, ultraleftist and centrist groups participate alongside bourgeois figures, certainly ill-regarded by most of the bourgeoisie, like Michellini and Erro.

This policy of fronts with the bourgeoisie in which nearly all the left is engaged is the best service they could render capitalism. It means to prepare and oil the alternative bourgeois mechanism in case the dictatorship falls or is liquidated by the masses.

The differences that now exist between the CP and the majority of the ultraleftists on how to apply this policy are not differences in content; rather, they are differences over which sectors the alliances should aim at involving. At the moment, the CP holds that the only solution can come from the armed forces, and it is here that the efforts should be concentrated (without, of course, neglecting the civilians entirely). The majority of the ultraleftists and centrists — correctly — cannot forget that the "progressive" officers were the ones doing the torturing and killing, the ones who viciously destroyed the guerrillas and ferociously repressed the workers. They thus orient toward the civilian bourgeois oppositionists.

Are we Trotskyists then crazy for not realizing that we must all join forces today to destroy our main enemy, the dictatorship? No, we are not crazy. We propose the formation of a workers united front to reorganize the workers and fight the dictatorship.

We are not willing to join any front with the bourgeoisie, nor to sign any common program with the "democratic" exploiters, but we are the most insistent defenders of the need to struggle together in common action in practice (for example, a demonstration for freedom of the press or assembly or for the release of political prisoners). We want to tear off the dictatorial mask of the bourgeoisie, but not in order to replace it with a democratic mask. We want to and must make use of the contradictions of our class enemy, but in the service of the struggle for workers power. For this reason, even if they agree to carry out common actions with the workers, we will not cease our criticisms and attacks on the bourgeois oppositionists, for they remain our enemies.

## The tasks of Trotskyism

Uruguay provides one of the most complete tests of where the guerrilla conception leads; likewise, it shows the results of CP leadership of the trade-union movement. Obviously, various ultraleftist and opportunist currents can still play an important role. But this does not invalidate the most important conclusion that flows from the preceding analysis: There are great subjective possibilities for the development of Trotskyism. But for this development to take place to its full extent, the relationship of class forces has to be shifted, and the Trotskyists must play an important role in this, standing in the front lines of the reorganization of the workers movement on the basis of a class policy.

The present regression makes it difficult for the experience of the Tupamaros or the CP (especially the CP) to be understood in depth or for the small number of activists now coming forward to be able to judge the positions of the revolutionary Marxists against those of the Stalinists or ultraleftists in practice. It will be in the struggle to reorganize the workers movement and bring down the dictatorship that the Trotskyists will have to develop as an alternative leadership.

To achieve these objectives — which in general terms relate to leading the proletariat to power — we Trotskyists must draw all the conclusions of the process, including that undergone by our own organization. We must draw the lessons of reality and of our own errors, on the basis of the Leninist principle that "the attitude of a party toward its own mistakes is one of the most important and reliable ways of judging the seriousness of this party and how it fulfills its duties toward its class and toward the toilers." This is the criterion we intend to apply in analyzing the blow repression dealt to our party in March-April 1975 and to our whole policy.

The program and tasks facing the Uruguayan Trotskyists must, we believe, revolve around this axis: reorganize the workers movement on the basis of struggles for its elementary demands and for the overthrow

of the dictatorship, preparing the workers' road to power through these struggles.

In pursuing these objectives we believe it is necessary to work out a program that at the present time can be used only in the propagandist explanation of our positions and to recruit to our party by ones and twos. In the future, however, this program will be able to serve as a guide for the workers when they begin to struggle again. The program that follows is of a very general character; many of its slogans will have to be modified according to the exigencies of reality. Likewise, it does not include many slogans that are indispensable in a prerevolutionary period or during a struggle for power. It is a defensive program that also contains two slogans (on the party and the regime) which we believe we must insist on, even under the present conditions in our country, for reasons of political education. We also include a general anti-imperialist slogan, which will have to be rounded out and complemented by the demand for workers control:

\* For general wage increases to lift buying power back to the level of January 1967. For automatic adjustments to increases in the cost of living. Against unemployment; for the division of working hours without reduction in pay; for the nationalization of factories threatened by closure. For the abrogation of the decree permitting layoffs without compensation. For guaranteed jobs for all emigrants who wish to return to the country. For respect for the right

of unionization on the factory, industrial, and national level. For the legalization of the CNT and the proscribed unions. For the utilization of every scrap of legality that aids in the reorganization of the workers movement.

\* For freedom of the press and assembly. For the legalization of all political parties and the elimination of the bans. Immediate release of all political prisoners. Unconditional amnesty to permit the return of all exiles. For the overthrow of the dictatorship and the organization of free elections without restrictions or political prisoners.

\* For the expulsion of imperialism from the country and the expropriation of its property.

\* For the workers united front to reorganize the workers and bring down the dictatorship. Against any popular or democratic front. For the unity in action of all those prepared to carry out actions on points in defense of the workers.

\* For the construction of a Trotskyist party capable of leading the proletariat to power.

\* For a workers and people's government that expropriates and destroys the dictatorship of the exploiters through revolutionary means. For the Latin American Socialist Federation.

February 23, 1976

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# FREE Sabin Arana!

Our comrade Sabin Arana, who has had tuberculosis for more than fourteen years, has, during the last several years of his detention in Francoist prisons, begun to suffer from a serious kidney disease.



First diagnosed as renal tuberculosis by a prison "doctor," the malady was recognized as kidney stones after a year and a half of treatment. (This means that for eighteen long months, Sabin was treated with products that actually worsened his illness.)

Since the end of December, Sabin has been in the prison hospital of Carabanchel, where he arrived after many years as an exemplary militant: arrested three times, tortured for a total of nearly eighteen days, imprisoned since March 9, 1968, that is, for the past eight years. During this time he has participated in eight hunger strikes and has been condemned to punishments that have totaled more than 300 days in solitary confinement and the loss of sixteen years suspended sentences. Condemned by the Tribunal of Public Order and by military tribunals to a total of thirty-two years in prison, he has been in the prisons of San Sebastian, Madrid, Santander, Burgos, and Segovia; on August 28, 1975 (the day the trial of Garmendia and Otaegui opened)

he was suddenly transferred to Puerto de Santa Maria, although he had been in the midst of a hunger strike, along with eleven of his comrades.

He was later brought to Madrid under terrible conditions: Although he was urinating blood, he traveled from Puerto de Santa Maria bound hand and foot, folded into a ball, and was thrown into a dungeon cell for nearly twelve hours. He arrived exhausted. Shortly thereafter, he stopped urinating blood — because he stopped urinating altogether. A probe had to be introduced.

Now (March 1), the doctors have decided to operate. Above all, we must impose indispensable medical guarantees, Arana's right to choose a non-prison hospital for his operation and recovery. An international campaign has begun. Sabin Arana, who has been a militant for sixteen years (first in the old ETA before 1969, then in the ETA-VI, then in the LCR/ETA-VII), is one of the most respected and esteemed comrades among a whole generation of militants of all organizations who have lived with him in the six or seven prisons in which he has spent the last seven or eight years. We must win his liberation, save him so he may continue the struggle to which he has devoted his life.

And along with him, J. Antonio Garmendia, Antonio Durán, and Horacio Fernandez Inguanzo, all three of them ill, must be released immediately! **MEDICAL GUARANTEES FOR THE POLITICAL PRISONERS! FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!**

At a Chrysler factory, freedom for Antonio Durán was included among the workers demands, and on February 28 an assembly of miners in Mieres demanded the release of Horacio Fernandez Inguanzo.

That is the road that must be followed!

(From Combate, central organ of the LCR/ETA-VI.)