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ARGENTINA the military coup





contents

ARGENTINA

The Military Takes Over —by V. Lopez 3

PORTUGAL

Stability Is Not at Hand —by A. Udry & C. Michaloux 7

SPAIN

On the Coordinación Democrática 14

Declaration of the Coordinación Democrática 14

Communiqué of the LCR/ETA-VI 15

FRANCE

After the Cantonal Elections —Resolution of the Central Committee
of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire 17

SRI LANKA

February 20: General Strike 23

ISRAEL

Behind the Revolt of the Arabs —by Jon Rothschild 25

ITALY

Ettore Salvi, 1938-1976 32

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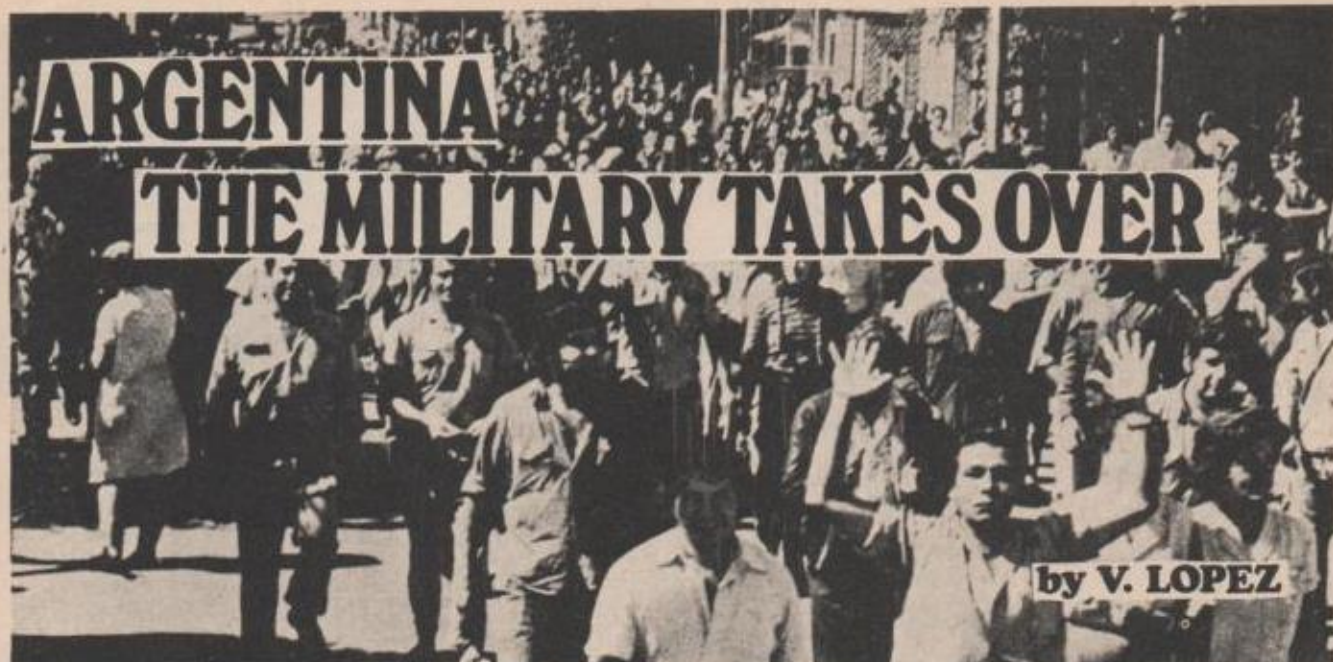
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The coup d'état of General Videla (behind whom lurks the silhouette of General Lanusse) resulted from four tendencies that dominate Argentine social, economic, and political reality today:

*the failure of the Peronist project of containing the combativity of the workers within a framework of "national unity" and class collaboration, under the aegis of a charismatic Bonaparte supported by a trade-union bureaucracy that still held hegemony within the working class;

*the loss of control by this bureaucracy over growing sectors of the masses, graphically demonstrated by the victorious general strike of June 1975 against the plan of Minister of Economics Rodrigo and by the subsequent emergence of new organs of workers self-organization: the regional coordinating bodies;

*the crisis of leadership of the bourgeoisie, which led first to the division of the Peronist movement into factions and then to the failure of the attempts by Radical party leader Balbín to replace the government of Isabelita with another government of "constitutional national union" built around himself;

*the worsening of the economic crisis, from which there was no way out within the framework of the capitalist system apart from the repression of workers combativity, and the growing imperialist pressure to force such a repression.

Historically, the second experiment with Peronism in power failed for reasons similar to those that accounted for the failure of the first: the impossibility of reconciling the exigencies of a capitalist economy with the demands of a highly organized and extremely combative working class from the moment that the downturn in the economic situation deprived the Argentine bourgeoisie of the maneuvering room needed to grant reforms to the workers without threatening the profitability of industry.

The concrete role that had been played in the mid-1950s by the exhaustion of the currency reserves accumulated

during and immediately after the second world war was played this time by the sharp curbing of imports of Argentine agricultural products by the Common Market countries and by the negative repercussions on the Argentine economy of the generalized recession of the world capitalist economy. Perón's cherished hope for a massive flow of European and Japanese capital into Argentina was thwarted both by the unfavorable evolution of the balance of payments in capitalist Europe and Japan during 1974-75 and by international capital's fear that the powerful combativity of the Argentine workers would not be able to be reined in.

But the second Peronist regime ended in a political and social climate appreciably different from that brought about by the "liberating revolution" of 1955. At that time, the anti-Peronist coup occurred before the working class had actually felt the negative effects of the class-collaborationist policy of the Peronist bureaucracy of the CGT (Confederación General del Trabajo — General Confederation of Labor) on its standard of living, before these effects had been taken out of the hides of the workers. The sharp decline in the standard of living came after the conquests of the workers during the Peronist period. Thus, the illusions in Peronism remained intact. In fact, in light of the poverty brought about by the post-Peronist regimes, the living and working conditions under Perón appeared idyllic in retrospect. The growing discontent that had accompanied the end of first-edition Peronism was quickly forgotten.

This time, the sharp decline in the standard of living of the workers preceded the fall of second-edition Peronism. The disenchantment was sudden and deep. The central bureaucracy of the CGT, implicated in innumerable corruption scandals and partially responsible for the murderous gangsterism of López Rega and the AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina — Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance), was so profoundly discredited that during the great workers struggles against the Mondelli plan many workers assemblies demanded the resignation



of the CGT leadership simultaneous with the resignation of the government. This time, the crisis of Peronism seems quite definitive.

The defeat of the Mondelli plan

After defeating the Rodrigo plan, known as the "famine plan," through a thunderous general strike in June 1975, a strike that completely outflanked the Peronist trade-union leadership, the Argentine working class in fact triggered a crisis of the system in the country. During the nine months that followed the victorious general strike against the Rodrigo plan, this crisis increasingly caused the paralysis and advanced decomposition of the bourgeois regime. The plans of successive ministers of the economy — Bonanni, Cafiero, and Mondelli — were defeated; López Rega, Isabelita Perón's "gray eminence," had to flee the country; a chain of corruption scandals was uncovered, along with proof of the complicity of the police and the government in the murders committed by the AAA; the disorganization of the economy became increasingly pronounced, with the simultaneous appearance of galloping inflation (a 423 percent rise in prices in twelve months), high unemployment, and growing shortages in a whole series of basic necessary goods (meat, eggs, groceries); there was a vertical fissure in the Peronist apparatus, first politically and then in the trade unions. The coup appeared as the only way to reestablish a bourgeois regime with the slightest unity and effectiveness.

Although the combativity of the workers defeated the successive plans to "prune" the economy at the expense of the toiling masses, thus dealing death blows to the hegemony of the Peronist bureaucracy within the working class, the emergence of an alternative workers leadership proceeded much more slowly than the erosion of Peronist control. That was the dangerous feature of the development of the situation, as was clearly seen by revolutionaries; the project of the officers was able to slip in through this "gap." This was clearly seen during the mobilizations that defeated the Mondelli plan.

This was the sixth plan of "economic pruning" since the Peronist return to power. It was blocked by the working class even more rapidly than the preceding plans. It would have limited salary increases for all categories of workers first to 12 percent, then to 20 percent, while the cost of living had risen more than 400 percent (some

latitude was allowed for additional raises, but more strongly limited, in certain branches). The "pruning" of public finances was to be accomplished by the lay-off of 500,000-700,000 public service employees. The CGT bureaucracy had agreed to the application of the Mondelli plan. The reaction of the working class was rapid and powerful: total rejection, the launching of spontaneous strikes, the removal of those delegates and "internal commissions" that had followed the central bureaucracy in supporting the plan and their replacement by provisional commissions, the designation of delegates mandated to call for a general strike in trade-union assemblies.

But after first supporting the mobilizations, the leaders of the major trade unions, especially the UOM (the metalworkers union) and the SMATA (autoworkers union), did an about-face at the last minute. They proposed not to engage in a general strike, in order not to encourage a military coup. "The general strike is the last resort against the coup d'état," they said.

The result was determined in advance. Divided and disoriented, the working class struggled in a fragmented manner against the anti-worker economic measures; under these conditions, the workers were little prepared to follow a general strike call against the March 24 coup, a general strike to which the leaders of the CGT gave lip service.

In the course of the preceding nine months, new forms of self-organization of the working class, the regional coordinating bodies, had arisen in many places: in Córdoba in the north, La Plata in the western suburbs of Buenos Aires, in the zones of San Martín and Vicente López in greater Buenos Aires, and so on. These coordinating bodies played a growing role in organizing the resistance of the workers to the poverty plans of the successive Peronist governments. Against Mondelli, they managed to organize powerful mobilizations, going so far as demonstrations of 30,000 people and more.

But to overthrow the government and the leadership of the CGT and make an alternative solution to the political, social, and economic crisis credible, it would have been necessary to move toward a centralization of these coordinating bodies on a national scale; that would have been the only way to organize a general strike. This national workers congress, or workers and people's congress, or national coordinating body, never



saw the light of day. The workers' spontaneity and the regional coordinating bodies were sufficient to paralyze the Peronist regime. But they were insufficient to impose the triumph of a working-class, anticapitalist, socialist solution to the crisis. It was in these conditions of total power vacuum that the army was able to strike with impunity without meeting massive or organized resistance.

Military maneuvers and Peronist divisions

In addition, the military chiefs maneuvered cleverly, permitting the Peronist regime to discredit itself completely. Postponing the coup in spite of the growing impatience of the far-right officers and imperialism, they drew the CGT bureaucracy into the trap of supporting the Mondelli plan, which crushed in the egg any hope of resistance around the CGT to the imminent coup. In the meantime, they centralized the whole repressive apparatus, both federal and provincial, in their own hands and got the chief of the Army Second Command appointed head of the federal police, thus setting up the apparatus of a victorious coup calmly, openly, and legally.

Furthermore, taking advantage of the increasingly deep divisions rending the Peronist bureaucracy, both within the Justicialist party and within the trade unions, they sharpened the confusion by engaging in semi-public negotiations with a not negligible fraction of the Peronist apparatus. Thus, about forty trade unions refused to join in the call for the general strike against the coup that was issued by the sixty-two organizations of the CGT led by the head of the metalworkers, Miguel Calabro, the governor of Buenos Aires, who appeared in the demagogic role of a "left Peronist" during the months preceding the coup and opposed the Mondelli plan violently at first, did a sensational about-face and played the role of overt accomplice of the officers.

While the divisions within Peronism dealt the coup de grâce to this movement, they also sowed much disarray among the toiling masses. Alongside the attempts to begin the populist adventure all over again, there are now some subterranean "classical" (class struggle) currents within the trade unions as well as a Peronist Youth

engaged in a orientation breaking with class collaboration (although this may not be definitive).

The very form taken by the coup and the first measures of the Videla-Masera-Agosti junta confirm the political astuteness of the officers now in power. The junta clearly refrained from rushing into a head-on confrontation with the entire workers movement. For the moment, it is practicing selective repression. Only six revolutionary organizations adhering to Maoism or Trotskyism, including the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers party), sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, have been definitively outlawed. The Montaneros had already been outlawed under the Isabelita government. As for the other workers organizations, like the Argentine Communist party, they have not been banned for the moment. Likewise, Peronism itself has not been officially hit.

Only the trade-union bureaucrats who had called for the general strike against the coup were arrested (without having been maltreated up to now). The others have been left alone for the time being. Thus, it is not at all a Pinochet regime. At least not yet.

The junta's dilemma remains fundamentally the same as that of the Peronist regime. It is one thing to try to divide the working class and paralyze it temporarily. It is another thing to disarm its combat potential over the longer term. Now, without breaking this combativity, the economic plan of the junta consists of combatting economic stagnation through a return to "free enterprise," foreign investment in the petroleum sector, and reestablishment of the rate of profit. And this threatens to fail just as the plans of Gelbard, Rodrigo, and Mondelli failed.

That is why the right to strike has already been suspended. That is why a "silent" purge against the most militant workers has begun in the big factories. Seventy trade-union delegates in the Astarea steel works, a good number of the union delegates at Ford, many delegates of Mercedes Benz and General Motors, the majority of the members of the "internal commission" of Terrabuai, etc. have been arrested. That is why on April 6, for the first time, a number of trade-union delegates were sentenced to very high prison terms for allegedly possessing arms. That is why the terror against presumed sympathizers of the guerrillas has been unleashed with greater ferocity than ever.

If to this repression we add the arrests that had been carried out under the reign of Isabelita (among them the arrest of our comrade José Paez, former leader of SITRAM-SIRAC, one of the major trade unions, and former PST candidate for vice-president) as well as the hundreds of worker militants murdered by the AAA, we can understand why the emergence of an alternative leadership of the working class on a national scale is a slow and difficult process.

The reactionary and anti-worker character of the economic policy of the junta is obvious: indefinite postponement of the parity commissions that the Peronist government had convoked for the month of April to discuss working conditions; maintenance of a 20 percent limit on wage increases; promise to the employers that the



Law on Labor Contracts, which prevented layoffs, will be repealed. The personality of the new minister of economics, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, is also significant. He had already occupied the same post during the military coup of 1962. He sits on the board of directors of several large capitalist firms and is the president of the Consejo Comercial Argentino (Argentine Trade Council), one of the country's employers' associations. His links with the sector of the landed proprietor oligarchy and with sectors of the export industries are well known.

Will the junta be able to maintain an unstable equilibrium between selective repression and an attempt to maneuver with certain sectors of the workers movement? Only on the condition that the working class remains passive. But the deterioration of living standards is such that this passivity is more doubtful than ever, especially since the margins for action of the class, which have not been violently repressed, persist. Thus, as in Uruguay, the risk is that there will be a gradual move from a selective repression to a generalized one if a massive response of the workers does not break the strength of the officers in time.

Imperialist pressure

The coup was clearly encouraged by imperialist pressure. Imperialism had opted for Perón so long as he appeared capable of channeling workers combativity to-

ward objectives compatible with the maintenance of the capitalist system. When the outflanking of Peronism seemed irreversible, this movement lost all utility in the eyes of international capital. Hence the sudden refusal of credits from the International Monetary Fund to the last Peronist cabinet. Hence also the granting of a \$127.6 million credit twenty-four hours after the victory of the military coup and the promise of a stand-by credit of \$300 million.

The asphyxiated financial state to which the Peronist regime had led greatly contributed to the effectiveness of the imperialist pressure. A few days before the coup, the Argentine treasury was unable to repay a modest loan of \$30 million to the Chase Manhattan Bank that had fallen due; the loan had to be extended at the last minute.

For imperialism, the establishment of a military dictatorship in Argentina completes the "pacification" of the southern cone of the South American continent. This is intended to permit a unification of the political regimes of this southern cone around the Brazilian military dictatorship in order to create a powerful pro-imperialist relay not only on the continent but also in the South Atlantic Ocean, where the victory of the MPLA in Angola has created the threat of Soviet military bases on the African coast.

In spite of the rivalry between Argentina and Brazil — a rivalry that persists and has obvious bourgeois economic roots independent of the forms of bourgeois government prevailing in Brasilia and Buenos Aires — this alliance is more likely to be forged under Videla than under Cámpora or Perón. It is also possible that the "liberal" economic and trade policy of the junta, which corresponds to the wishes of imperialism and the oligarchy, will lead the junta to take some distance from the project of the "Andean plan," which strongly interfered with the hegemony of Brazilian capitalism in many South American countries.

Moreover, the historic bankruptcy of Peronism seems to close the cycle of rise and decline in South America of nationalist populism with bourgeois leadership, a working-class rank and file, and an anti-imperialist ideology. It closes the cycle under negative conditions, since the workers struggle will be more difficult under the junta than under the Peronist regime. But it closes it without a crushing defeat of the working class. The possibility of a new rise by stages — of the type that is now occurring in Bolivia — thus remains, provided a crushing defeat in the meantime can be averted.

Hence, this new rise could occur under the sign of a conquest of political independence by the Argentine working class. In view of the numerical and organizational strength of the class and in view of its exceptional level of combativity, this political independence would radically modify the situation not only in Argentina, but throughout South America as well.

April 7, 1976



PORTUGAL & the coming elections

STABILITY IS NOT AT HAND

by A. UDRY & C. MICHALOUX

March 11, 1975, had been the first act in the elections of April 25 of that same year. The electoral campaign that officially opened on April 4, 1976, was introduced by November 25, 1975. The Constituent Assembly that resulted from the April 25, 1975, elections, with its majority of workers parties, reflected the rise of struggles that had taken place since December 1974; in a certain sense, it heralded the upsurge of mobilizations that were to attain their peak in November 1975.

This time, the bourgeoisie is seeking to place an electoral seal on the advantages it gained through its military operations of November 25, 1975, in order to develop a new lever for depriving the workers movement of its gains. Nevertheless, as of mid-March the bourgeoisie began to realize that even in the event that the rightist parties win a majority in the coming elections, these elections will not represent the conclusion of the process launched on November 25. Stability is not at hand; the procrastination in the bourgeois camp testifies to this, as do the putschist inclinations of various sectors of the military.

The working class marks time

The period of semi-spontaneous and semi-conscious rise of the mass movement came to an end with November 1975. Confronted by the dilemma "restoration of the authority of the institutions of the bourgeois state or strengthening of the 'parallel power of the workers,'" the bourgeoisie drew together and manifested a unity of decision and command that was unprecedented, at least since September 1974.

Materially, the Amadora commandos defeated only the vanguard of soldiers of the Lisbon military region. But the essential point about the demonstration of the bourgeoisie was the sudden and striking appearance of its centralized will. With all the limits of the analogy, November 25 may be compared to the function of de Gaulle's speech of May 31, 1968, rather than to a simply military blow of force.

In face of this bourgeois will, the fundamental fragility of the Portuguese working class, engendered by forty-eight years of the corporatist regime, was brought to light: the lack of experience and of independent capacity for intervention on the political field, even though important progress had been made during the preceding two years. The crisis of the state apparatus — under the combined hammer blows of the colonial revolution, the workers upsurge, and the disintegration of the army — had masked this weakness. Thus, the objective maturity of the situation in autumn — which contained within it political exigencies leading toward the effective centralization of the embryonic organs of proletarian power — only threw an even harsher light on the insufficiency of the subjective factor in a twofold sense: the relatively low level of consciousness of the masses and the lack of existence of a revolutionary party.

Thus it was that on the night of November 25 the illusions in the MFA (Armed Forces Movement), fueled by this lack of tradition of political independence of the working class (illusions that in turn contributed to perpetuating that lack of tradition) entailed the heaviest costs. Speaking on television, Carvalho lent his sanc-

tion to a Costa Gomes who was imposing a state of emergency that has been prepared in the streets by the troops of Jaimes Neves.

Disoriented by this sudden change in the political context and in the framework in which it was able to launch its mobilizations and left without an alternative by the reformist parties, which either called for the intervention of the commandos (the Socialist party) or bowed before the decisions of the officers (the Communist party), the working class marked time.

In a political field whose contours had been sharply modified, the workers then found themselves compelled to reorganize and strengthen the instruments of struggle (especially the trade unions) with which they had endowed themselves less than two years previously. But they were unable to refer to any long-standing experience of defensive struggle waged by well-structured trade-union organizations unifying broad sectors of the masses and recognized by the masses. A second stage in the post April 25, 1974, history of the Portuguese workers movement had opened. In the course of this stage, the Portuguese proletariat had both to forge the iron links of trade-union organization and at the same time, in order to defend its conquests, integrate into that organization the forms of organization and demands of the preceding period, which were the fruit of the revolutionary upsurge (planning and workers control, workers commissions, sovereign general assemblies, and so on). This reorientation required time. Moreover, the combination between the elements of the immediate past and the exigencies of the present cannot be automatic. Of course, the terrain is favorable, for a portion of the experiences have taken root in the memory of the workers movement, but the political weakness of the vanguard, as well as its precarious structure, did not permit these elements to bear fruit. Three months were to elapse before the workers engaged in an initial response, still largely fragmented, to the employers' attacks.

The employers and the "social November 25"

The employers hoped that the suspension of labor contracts, decreed on November 25, would permit them to challenge the very nature of the collective contracts that had been won by the workers between September and November 1975. In fact, these contracts covered entire sectors and thus unified the most advanced demands. The central axis of the attack of the employers and the government was thus directed toward eliminating a series of clauses of these contracts in order to throw them back into direct negotiations on the factory level so as to take advantage of the more favorable relationship of forces prevailing there.

Thus, after the nationalization of the most important factories, the attempt was made to offer the employers of the middle-sized, and especially the small, factories, whose situation was most fragile, the opportunity to

deal a very hard blow to the workers, to eliminate the gains codified in the contracts by making widespread use of the tactic of threatening bankruptcy. Once the conquests of the workers were broken in these factories — especially in the northern part of the country — capital and the government counted on transferring their victory to the nationalized sector. In addition, this tactic could create the conditions for a greater fragmentation of the movement for workers demands even on the branch level and could ward off the resurgence of mobilizations by whole sectors, which had been characteristic of the autumn of 1975. This attempt by the employers was concentrated with the greatest determination in the metal industries and in machinery, construction, and transport.

Now, since the expiration of the period of suspension of contracts (March 1), the workers have begun to manifest their opposition to the sharp attacks on their previous conquests.

General assemblies and work stoppages have occurred in construction and transport; there have been strike threats in entire industries (metals). In addition, this has been combined with the emergence of movements for demands in sectors that had hitherto remained on the fringes of the mobilizations (hospital workers, pharmaceutical aides, public services), and, on the other hand, with advanced struggles against factory shutdowns and the failure to apply contracts (examples: the Fritz Meyer factories, where the workers occupied the plant and demanded a public administrator; Firestone, where there was an occupation with the sequestration of the managers; Timex, where the 2,000 workers planned on an occupation and demonstrated at São Bento).

...the workers have begun to manifest their opposition to the sharp attacks on their previous conquests.

Concurrently, the Portuguese toiling masses initiated the second wave in their unionization, a process that has entailed the extension of the number of union members in already organized sectors, trade-union penetration into professions that had remained aside during the first wave of unionization, and, finally, the transformation of the unions into branch-wide organizations ("verticalization," according to the Portuguese vocabulary). The congress of the textile, wool, and clothing workers symbolizes the various facets of this process. This congress marked both the strengthening of trade-union organization in a branch that includes 250,000 workers dispersed in a multitude of small factories and the process of the emergence of a real branch-wide union. Moreover, the composition of the leadership that was elected (SP-CP, far left) expressed the unitary and democratic aspirations of the working men and women. Finally, the union's platform of demands reflected the

nascent combination between the second wave of unionization and the integration of the experiences of workers control and self-organization. Thus, the document issued by this first congress affirms: "The workers will continue to struggle for the improvement of living and working conditions, while nonetheless realizing that only a socialist reconversion will be able to allow them to bring the sector out of the crisis in which it now finds itself and to assure a lasting and real improvement in the standard of living and in working conditions. . . . Only the construction of socialism can permit the elimination of unemployment and a socialist reconversion of the economy." To the proposals for self-management under the capitalist system, the workers counterposed "effective workers control by the toilers over the overall functioning of the factories." In addition, as far as workers control is concerned, they pointed to "the necessity of subordinating the struggle on the economic field to the struggle for the end of exploitation." As for trade-union reorganization, they explained that it is necessary to struggle "for strong and militant trade unions controlled by all the toilers . . . organizing themselves around a line of independence of the political parties, the state, and the religious bodies, firmly anticapitalist and anti-imperialist, effectively democratic in their functioning, and intransigently defending unity." Finally, "the trade unions must participate in, support, and stimulate the discussion among the workers, mobilizing them in the neighborhoods and the countryside, thus contributing to strengthening unity between workers and peasants and to the development of the agrarian reform." (A Capital, March 22, 1976.)

The plan of the CIP

Confronted by this revival of activity on the part of the toiling masses, the employers noted that the terrain that was supposed to have been prepared by the government counterattack of November 25 and the subsequent measures had already been undermined. The employers had counted on the absence of a workers' response, assuming that this absence, combined with an electoral victory, would permit not only a prolongation of the suspension of the contracts but also the assembling of the conditions needed for a genuine upturn in private investment. This is what was clearly explained recently by the CIP (Confederation of Portuguese Industry), indicating what the logical continuation of November 25 ought to be for capital. Vasco de Melo, boss of the CIP and now a declared member of the CDS (Centro Democrático Social — Democratic Social Center, a right-wing bourgeois party), summarized the main lines of the program of the exploiters: wage freeze and then lowering of wages; extension of the work day; restriction of the right to strike and of trade-union freedoms; elimination of legislation allowing public intervention in the factories; accelerated indemnification for stockholders of nationalized enterprises; nomination of former employers to head public enterprises; reprivatization of profitable enterprises in the presently nationalized sector within two or three years.

This plan indicates the sort of deep modifications in the relationship of social forces that are necessary if there is to be motion toward realization of an effective and realistic project for capitalist restabilization. In the final analysis, the rage that fills the declarations of the CDS or the CIP, the rightward shift of the PPD (Partido Popular Democrático — Popular Democratic party, the largest bourgeois party), like the hesitations and divisions among the employers themselves and within the military hierarchy, all reflect the difficulty the bourgeoisie feels it will face in carrying out this turnabout in the relationship of forces.

The simple fact that the theme of the struggle against "capitalist recovery" is found in the majority of the platforms of workers demands also indicates that on the side of the proletariat consciousness of the present stakes is slowly sharpening. Moreover, the development of discussion around the necessity of strikes and mobilizations on a sector-wide basis reveals the initial concretization of this comprehension on the level of the organization of defensive struggles. The discussion around the convocation of a democratic congress of all the unions takes on growing importance in the present phase for the orientation of the consciousness of workers toward the need for unification and centralization of the mobilizations, especially since in view of the structural crisis of Portuguese capitalism, many mobilizations immediately raise the problem of the survival of the factory, the reconversion of the industrial branch, and so on. To this have been added the objective effects of the nationalizations, which result in the Ministry of Labor, the government, becoming the direct interlocutor both for the workers of Timex or Firestone (where the question of nationalization is objectively posed) and for those of the metal and construction industries.

Nevertheless, the response still remains fragmented, in face of an offensive of the employers and the government that is tending to sharpen. The grip and policy of the reformists, the division that they maintain, go hand in hand with the inexperience of the movement as a whole: There has never been a general strike in Portugal. Hence, a central outlet for the present struggles is unlikely in the short run (apart from the possibility of a response to a major provocation by the bourgeoisie), and this constitutes a decisive element reducing the impact of the defensive struggles. But it does not follow from this that it is possible for capital to gradually impose all its own solutions, for the organizational strengthening, the defensive capacity (even fragmented), and the combativity of the workers constitute obstacles that cannot be easily overcome but must be violently swept away. In this context, the result of the elections to the Assembly of the Republic (the legislature) not only appears uncertain for the bourgeoisie, but even strongly threatens to fail to become the second wing of the project initiated on November 25.

Counting on the voluntary collaboration of the SP, on the CP's policy of being a "respectable party," on the passivity of the masses up through the elections, and on the possibility of its partial victories' being clearly

reflected in the electoral results, the bourgeoisie worked out the following plan after November 25:

The "pact" between the Council of the Revolution and the political parties was supposed to permit a framework to be traced out by April 25, 1976, within which the electoral results could be rendered operative.

On the basis of the restoration of the state institutions, of a consolidation of the repressive apparatus, a president of the republic was supposed to be installed, a candidate of national unity designated by the officers and then approved in a plebiscite thanks to the support of the major workers and bourgeois parties. This presidential system was supposed to rest on the increased political assertion of a petty bourgeoisie that would act as a counterweight to the working class and on a channeling of the workers movement, which would be compelled to limit its field of activity to economic demands. A body of antistrike laws and laws against occupations was supposed to limit the workers' sphere of initiative. At bottom, the essential part of the Spinalist project was being raised once again, in a different context. Economic aid from imperialism, especially from the European bourgeoisies, was supposed to permit the pump of "capitalist recovery" to be primed again.

The centerpiece of such a construction was none other than the inaction of the working class and the consequently easier agreement of the reformist parties. But since the middle of March, this centerpiece has crumbled. The unanimity that reigned in the ranks of the bourgeoisie on November 25 once again gave way to divisions, to procrastination. Thus, these divisions reasserted themselves over what could have appeared as the point of agreement of diverse bourgeois currents: the nomination of an officer to the post of president, more precisely, the nomination of Ramalho Eanes, the chief of the general staff. These differences were not solely a product of uncertainty about the results of the elections, about the degree to which there would be a shift in the vote, but above all of the understanding that any bourgeois "solution" to the present crisis implies a confrontation with the working class, the outcome of which is doubtful, since the wait-and-see attitude of the workers during the first few weeks after November 25 did not turn into deep demoralization or apathy.

Paradoxically, it is in the bourgeois ranks that a certain wait-and-see attitude is being manifested today. While the overall project of capital has been maintained, the means acquired on November 25 still seem inadequate when compared with the tasks at hand. The crisis of bourgeois leadership is continuing, especially since the erroneous predictions about the scope of the mass movement's capacity to react had cost the bourgeoisie dearly in September 1974 and March 1975. This can only increase the hesitations. While there are advocates of a coup attempt in the upper circles of the military command, their capacity to close ranks, as they did temporarily on November 25, is undoubtedly more limited.

The discussion around the constitution — namely, the right of the legislative assembly to revise the constitution — synthesizes the gap that exists between the hopes and projects explicitly expressed and the bourgeoisie's immediate possibilities of concretizing them. After defending the Constituent Assembly against the "parallel power of the workers commissions," the ruling class placed a question mark over the very activity of that body when it threw down the gauntlet on November 25. The dynamic of the "democratic counterrevolution" is clearly revealed. But the basic relationship of forces inherited from autumn 1975, its reflection in the relations among the political parties (and within the linchpin, the SP), and its expression in the conflicts that continue to run through the military hierarchy all combined to defeat this last-minute maneuver. The social mobilizations of the past two years, expressed in a certain form in the central articles of the Constitution, have not ebbed to the point that their reflection can already be erased from what should constitute a prop for bourgeois rule during the coming years.

In this context, the CDS is taking shape as the advocate of an effective program for the bourgeois class, even if this program cannot become a reality in the present conjuncture. And the design of the CDS is not limited to the programmatic realm. It rests on the formation of a team of political personnel that is linked to imperialism (the CDU-CSU in West Germany, the Giscardians in France, the Republican party in the United States) and is capable of embodying imperialism. The CDS bases itself on the organization of social forces whose two pillars are the CAP (Confederation of Farmers of Portugal), the advance guard of the struggle of the landed proprietors against the agrarian reform, and the CIP, genuine organ of political and economic expression of the Portuguese employers.

As for the PPD, it remains at the intersection of the contradictions within the bourgeoisie and, moreover, is subject to the centrifugal pressures of the urban petty bourgeoisie, a product of the relative expansion of the 1960s, and of a fraction of the traditional rural petty bourgeoisie. In this sense, whatever may be the pretensions of the PPD's national leader, Francisco Sá Carneiro, as a party the PPD reflects the crisis of leadership of the bourgeoisie and is asserting itself less and less as a potential agent for putting the bourgeoisie's house in order again (regardless of its electoral strength). It remains the bourgeois party of social instability and political crisis.

The workers parties

The current conception within the Socialist party was expressed by party secretary Mario Soares: "November 25 saved the revolution. . . . In one blow November 25 wiped out the suicidal inclinations of the far left and cut the ground out from under the far right. . . . Democracy emerged from the test victorious and strengthened. . . . (The suspension of contracts) was the only realistic policy for dealing with the chaos that was threatening.(1) Soares, like his spiritual fathers of the Social Democ-



racy, believes to have "saved the revolution" and "safeguarded bourgeois democracy," when in fact he has opened the doors to counterrevolution. The attacks of the CAP, CDS, and PPD against the agrarian reform and against the Socialist minister of agriculture, Lopes Cardoso, as well as the declarations of the CIP and the offensive against the Constitution prove ten times over that for capital "safeguarding democracy" is but a smoke-screen for initiating the process of dismantling the forces of the workers movement. The hatred of the employers does not stop at the workers of the Communist party or the far left, it goes on to include the workers of the SP.

Thus, the SP leadership, which nurtured the hope of presenting itself in the elections as the natural guarantor of order on the basis of the political and social stability it had helped to construct now finds itself confronting the consistent defenders of the only real capitalist order. And now, in some of his speeches Soares has taken to calling for saving the SP!

Concurrently, the reanimation of activity among the workers, poor peasants, and agricultural workers is introducing contradictions into a party that proclaims, "This is the situation: We are facing a certain reality and we have to decide how to divide the national pie. Whatever we do at this moment, we cannot expand this national pie. The Portuguese people must realize this" (report of Soares press conference in Portugal Socialista, weekly of the SP, March 30, 1976). The trade-union militants of the SP, meeting in Aveiro in January 1976, thought it was possible not only to divide this pie in another way, but even to produce it so as to be pleasing to the taste of the workers. More than one SP worker has come to share this sentiment since then.

Under this double pressure, the SP is being led to accentuate its image as a government party, the only government party, in an illusory attempt to escape this contradiction by apparently placing itself above it. Before the workers, the SP puts the emphasis on its independence of the PPD and CDS. Before the bourgeois camp, it stresses its refusal to make a coalition with the CP, which is intended as the proof of its desire to guarantee stability.

Not only does this project require a high electoral score, but above all it presents no strategic interest for the bourgeoisie, which pays greater attention to the role played by the trade unions under SP leadership in the recent struggles (banks, public services) than to the statements of Soares. A government with the SP as the backbone is temporarily useful for the bourgeoisie in a certain conjuncture, but the bourgeoisie understands where the real center of gravity of the permanence of the present crisis lies: in the nature of the relationship of social forces. Modifying this relationship in its favor implies, at least during the initial period, an attack on the unions, including those led by the SP, and then a battle against the SP itself.

After the operation of the Amadora commandos, the Communist party, shifting its project of alliances a notch to the right, sought to obtain the support of the Melo Antuneses and the Charaises (those they call "democratic officers") by offering to support their troops. The few mobilizations organized by the CP (assemblies of the Intersindical, the trade-union federation, on January 17 and February 27) were aimed exclusively at this, which implied a certain show of force.

But the rapid conquest of key posts in the army by the Spinoists and the traditional hierarchy strongly limited the maneuvering room of these "democratic officers." Moreover, what they wanted most of all was to see the weight of the CP added to that of the SP in order to counterbalance the tendency of the "operating troops" to get out of hand in the manner of Jaimes Neves. They were not looking for privileged links with the CP. So the range of the party leadership was a bit too short!

With the upturn of the movement for demands in March there was an increase in the blackmailing pressure of the bourgeoisie and the officers who, on the basis of the results of November 25, were forging a weapon for eliminating any CP footholds in the state apparatus. Concurrently, the opening of the Cunhal leadership toward the SP required that the CP make a number of gestures of goodwill. In any event, that has been the direction taken by the CP's electoral propaganda for a "left majority," that is, in reality, an SP government supported by the CP.

Trapped in this vise and worried about winning an electoral score that would not result in its being thrust too far to the sidelines, the CP declared itself in favor of a "social truce" and shelved its professions of faith in the "socialist revolution." The editorial in Avante, the CP newspaper, does not camouflage the fundamental

line: "To prevent the social and political stabilization of a revolutionary situation (sic!) is thus one of the major objectives of the counterrevolution in its efforts to reconquer power. . . . The Portuguese CP completely agrees on the fact that social conflicts must not be sharpened, for they might then create a climate of instability and disorder in the country, which would be favorable only to the designs of reaction. . . . Once again, we must repeat that the just struggle for demands must be subordinated to these basic objectives, as the workers in civil construction have been able to understand." (Avante, April 1, 1976.)

All these capitulations have nonetheless not prevented the bourgeoisie, still shaken by the events of autumn 1975, from placing elimination of the CP from the state apparatus in the center of its electoral objectives. On the other hand, these capitulations are beginning to run into hostility from sectors of the working class. Although on the whole the CP (through the Intersindical) has been able to keep control over the mobilizations of the most important branches (metals, construction), local instances of the CP's being outflanked have already occurred. In addition, the agricultural workers of the Alentejo are not prepared to tailor their method of struggle in the material defense of the land they have occupied to these declarations of appeasement.



Thus, what we are seeing is the structural difficulty of the strategy of the CP, which is aimed at stabilizing instability and hence puts the brakes on any dynamic toward the unification and centralization of the defensive struggle.

“Against the fascist threat”

If only because of the opportunities (radio, television, the press) it presents to the organizations of the so-called revolutionary left, the present electoral campaign(2) could be an exceptional occasion for stimulating the assimilation of the many experiences that have

been undergone by the masses over the past two years, of generating responses permitting the broadening of defensive struggles and of indicating a central political outlet.

But the formations of the far left, like the MES (Movimento de Esquerda Socialista — Left Socialist Movement) and the PCP-R (Partido Comunista Português-Reconstruído — Portuguese Communist party-Reconstructed), on the basis of an analysis centering all characterization of the period on the threat of fascism, logically develop a campaign the backbone of which is formed by the themes of the “antifascist struggle,” even though there are still important political differences among these organizations.

Thus, the MES writes in an editorial in its newspaper, Poder Popular: “The basic combat front against fascism is the front of the masses, the organization and unity of the people for the resistance that makes possible a new rise in popular initiative. . . . The fascist threat is not holding back; it is fighting! Against the maneuvers of the fascists and the imperialists — unity, action, and struggle! Unity of the people against fascism, for people’s power.” (April 5, 1976.) In addition, the MES does not put forward any concrete perspective capable of acting as a mediation toward an initial centralization of the response to the offensive of the employers. It maintains silence about the necessity of a democratic congress of the trade unions. It is opposed to tendency rights in the trade unions, with all the implications this entails both for the unification of the ranks of the workers and for breaking the bureaucratic policy of the CP within the Intersindical. This “hostility” to the right of tendency may be linked to its conception of the relationship between the political parties and the “organs of popular power.” Finally, the MES avoids the question of a government slogan that takes account of the attachment of the masses to the reformist parties, the relationship of forces between the workers parties and the bourgeoisie, the necessity of unifying the ranks of the proletariat, and the demands and needs of the toilers. Thus, the MES gives no clear answer to a question that is being debated constantly during the electoral campaign.

The PCP-R, which has gained strength organizationally during the latest period, and its front, the UDP (União Democrática Popular — Popular Democratic Union), attributes the following role to the electoral campaign: “The electoral campaign must be transformed into a high point in the struggle of the Portuguese people for Freedom, Bread, Land, and National Independence, against the two superpowers and European imperialism. . . . It is essential to center the electoral campaign against the fascist threat and against poverty.” (Resolution of the PCP-R Central Committee, Bandeira Vermelha, April 1, 1976.) For the PCP-R, the essential thing seems to be the development of its front, the UDP; thus, the second wave of unionization and all the related problems cannot be taken into consideration as central concerns. In the rather long Central Committee resolution, there is not even any mention of the trade-union question.

Nevertheless, the PCP-R, in the heat of its electoral campaign "against the fascist threat," does put forward a governmental slogan: "An antifascist and patriotic government that guarantees the people's conquests, that firmly opposes fascism and respects the liberty of the people, a government of national independence that breaks the imperialist alliances and transforms Portugal into a country independent of the superpowers, nonaligned, with close relations with the third world."

From March to November 1975 the maturation of the political situation confronted these organizations with a multitude of complex political problems. The political origin of these organizations is recent and they have taken root in a workers movement with limited Marxist and communist traditions, one rarely affected by strategic debates (apart from those related to the "Sino-Soviet conflict"). Thus, a process of maturation on various questions, which was forcefully posed by reality (workers control, self-organization), was combined with ultraleftist competition traced out by the effects of the rapid revolutionary upsurge on organizations with short political histories. This latter aspect was revealed above all in the orientation toward the reformists (characterization of the SP, united front), but also in their understanding of the nature of the revolutionary upsurge, dual power, etc.

The retreat provoked by November 25 intervened in the political development of these organizations. It is now pushing them onto the "reassuring" terrain of "antifascism" and is slowing down the critical assimilation of the previous experiences, even though an interesting discussion (too often suddenly halted by the leadership) has marginally arisen in their ranks.

A latent crisis

Although November 25 will certainly find expression in the electoral results, its reflection threatens to be quite hazy. A shift to the right (after the 58.7 percent of the vote won by the reformist workers parties and the far-left organizations in the elections a year ago) would have to be massive for the electoral results to become a direct lever in the accentuation of the attack of the employers and the government aimed at allotting new political territory to the bourgeoisie.

Not only is a very clear shift in the vote (reducing the share of the workers parties to less than 45 percent) far from assured, but also and above all, even an important shift could lead to an electoral relationship of forces relatively divorced from the relationship of social forces, as is indicated by the initial new rise in the workers response. To then form a PPD-CDS government and throw the SP and CP jointly into the opposition would imply opting for a short-term test of social and political strength. This possibility is certainly not regarded with equal serenity by all the currents of the ruling class. Even if it was arithmetically possible, the risk that would be entailed in such a choice is obvious, especially given the country's proximity to Spain, where the workers

have already defeated the reformist projects of Francoism.

These elections will also test the balance of forces within the bourgeois camp, with the function of disengaging an alternative for a subsequent phase. In this sense, an electoral boost in the strength of the CDS compared with last year (a strengthening tied to the modification of the attitude of sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and to their organization) would suggest the party of Freito do Amaral as the political axis of the counterrevolution, with consequent ramifications in the military camp.



Freito do Amaral addressing a conference of the CDS.

Behind the reassuring electoral declarations, the feeling that these elections "will settle nothing" is predominant in the Portuguese bourgeois press today. This crisis of leadership will certainly be manifested in the discussion that will take place around the choice of one or several presidential candidates. An SP government, in consonance with the wishes of Soares but contrary to his illusions, would be only a government of crisis. Likewise, after a period of a vacuum of power, there could be a restoration of the governmental status quo (an SP-PPD coalition government, presented as a "government of national salvation") in order to get the rank and file of the parties to accept it more easily. A "national salvation" that certain officers would like to be different.

April 8, 1976

FOOTNOTES:

1. Mario Soares, Portugal, quelle révolution? (interviews with D. Pouchin-Calmann Levy).

2. For the positions of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI - Internationalist Communist League), sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, see INPRECOR, No. 47/48, April 1, 1976. In our next issue we will publish an extract from the LCI's electoral platform.

Spain ON THE COORDINACION DEMOCRATICA

On March 26 a new organization, the Coordinación Democrática (Democratic Coordination) was founded in Madrid. The new body assembles two opposition bodies that have existed in Spain for several years: The Junta Democrática (Democratic Council) and the Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática (Platform of Democratic Convergence). These two organizations have been joined by the Christian Democracy of Ruy Giménez, who signed for the Democratic Left pending ratification of the accord by the congress of this organization.

The Junta Democrática had been founded on July 30, 1974, in Paris. Initiated by the Communist party, it included the Carlist party and the Popular Socialist party. It called for the utilization of peaceful means to wage "national democratic action" "at the opportune political time."

The Plataforma was created a year later, in the summer of 1975. Initiated by the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers party, the Social Democracy), it included the Basque Nationalist party, the Democratic Left, the MCE (Communist Movement of Spain), the ORT (Revolutionary Workers Organization), the Carlist party, and the Spanish Social Democratic Union. It called for the "opening of a constituent period" leading to a "negotiated break."

Below we are publishing the text of the founding declaration of the Coordinación Democrática. In addition, we are publishing a communiqué on the Coordinación issued March 31 by the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/Euzkadí ta Askatasuna-VI (LCR/ETA-VI — Revolutionary Communist League/Basque Nation and Freedom-Sixth Congress), sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Spain.

● Declaration of the ● Coordinación Democrática

In face of the general crisis of the government and the regime and the absence of just and effective solutions to the grave problems of the country, fully conscious of the historic responsibility incumbent upon the democratic opposition before the peoples of Spain, the Junta Democrática de España and the Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática have decided, effective today, to dissolve and to simultaneously constitute a single opposition organ, called Coordinación Democrática, as the indispensable means of offering Spanish society a real alternative power capable of transforming the present state into a democratic state by the peaceful road.

Coordinación Democrática opposes the continuation of a regime that is making it impossible for all citizens to enjoy democratic rights, whether in the form in which it has established itself by virtue of the Fundamental Laws or in any form of government or state that attempts

to impose itself on the people without the necessary prior consultation, with full guarantees of political freedom and impartiality in which equality in the use of state means of mass communication is assured.

Consequently, Coordinación Democrática denounces as contrary to peaceful coexistence the attempt of the government to maintain itself in power through its so-called reformist policy, combining democratic promises with repressive measures and attempting to divide the most responsible trade-union and political forces by means of arbitrary discrimination and exclusions. The draft political reform laws approved by the government and sent to the Cortes (parliament) are not acceptable to the opposition because although from a formal point of view they modify the previous state of affairs, they do not grant democratic liberties to all the citizens of the state.

Coordinación Democrática announces its decision to undertake adequate political measures to achieve the following objectives:

* Immediate release of political prisoners and trade-union prisoners without exception, the return of all exiles, and an amnesty that restores full rights to those who have been deprived of them for political or trade-union reasons.

* The effective and full exercise of the human rights and political liberties consacrated in international juridical documents, especially for all political parties, without any exception.

* The immediate and full recognition of trade-union liberty and the elimination of the present state union.

* The full, immediate, and effective exercise of the rights and political liberties of the various nationalities and regions of the Spanish state.

* The functioning of a single and independent judicial power according to the requirements of a democratic society.

* The realization of the break or democratic alternative by means of the opening of a constituent period that leads, through a popular consultation based on universal suffrage, to a decision about the form of the state and government, as well as the defense of political liberties and rights during this period.

Coordinación Democrática invites:

* The existing opposition bodies among the nationalities and regions to join with this body into the democratic alternative on the scale of the Spanish state;

* The political parties and trade-union organizations throughout the state that were not part of the Plataforma or the Junta to integrate themselves into the Coordinación Democrática;

* The economic, professional, and cultural sectors and the public administration, as well as the church, military, and judicial institutions to open up a dialogue, in the name of the higher interests of the fatherland, that leads to the realization of the peaceful alternative defined here;

* All the democratic, political, trade-union, and social forces and all the citizens of the peoples of the Spanish state to participate in the peaceful actions and mobilizations needed for the real conquest of fundamental rights and liberties and for the establishment,

at the time of the break, of broad coalition organs of executive power, nonexclusive and nonobligatory, that guarantee full exercise of democratic liberties and rights and the opening and development of the constituent process toward the transference of power to the organs of executive power or government that are constitutionally elected.

Coordinación Democrática believes that the accomplishment of its political purpose as a democratic alternative requires that it last until general elections are convoked, without prejudice to the freedom of each party in the constitutional debate; after the democratic break, it will reconsider whether its continuation as a united body is opportune.

The signers of Coordinación Democrática declare their profound conviction that in signing they all concur with the desire to overcome the conflicts of the past and that they will respect the results of the constituent process and the corresponding democratic elections.

Coordinación Democrática expresses its total conviction that this program constitutes the only peaceful alternative leading to democracy. Its realization is thus not the exclusive task of the opposition, but must be the primordial task of all Spaniards.

Madrid, March 26, 1976

Signers:

Comisiones Obreras (Workers Commissions), Grupo Independiente (Independent Group), Movimiento Comunista (Communist Movement), Partido Carlista (Carlist party), Partido Comunista de España (Communist party of Spain), Partido Demócrata Popular (Popular Democratic party), Partido Social-Demócrata (Social Democratic party), Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers party), Partido Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist party), Partido del Trabajo de España (Labor party of Spain), Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers Union), Unión Social-Demócrata Española (Spanish Social Democratic Union), Izquierda Democrática (Democratic Left), pending ratification at its next congress.



JOAN RAVENTÓS (Convergencia), ANTONIO GUTIERREZ (P. S. U. C.), PEDRO ARDIAGA (P. S. U.), AMADEO CUITO (Reagrupament), PALLACH (Reagrupament Socialista), HERIBERT BARRERA (Esquerra Republicana), FRANCESC GORDO (Cooperación Democrática), ARAGAY (Unión Democrática), BADIA (Partit Carlist), COLOMINAS, Jr. (Front Nacional) y J. CORRUDELLA (Front Nacional).

● Communiqué of the LCR/ETA-VI ●

1. In the first place, in view of the arrest of several members of Coordinación Democrática (CD) and the prosecution of four of them, including three leaders of

workers organizations, we express our solidarity against Francoist repression and we commit ourselves to the struggle for their release, together with all political

prisoners, thus strengthening and extending the battle for amnesty.

2. On the CD declaration of March 26, 1976, our position is as follows:

a. The fundamental meaning of the constitution of CD consists of offering a political pact to the so-called reformist sectors of the government and of Francoism in general. This has been explained in various versions by leaders of the bourgeois and workers groups that have signed the declaration.

b. The political logic of this pact in reality is not a response to "the crisis of the government and the regime and the absence of just and effective solutions to the grave problems of the country." It is essentially a response to the relationship of forces that exists in the country between the two fundamental classes of society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This relationship of forces has been expressed in an offensive of mass action of unprecedented combativity, scope, and organization, especially since last January. This offensive has not only "burned" the first government of the Francoist monarchy in three months and revealed the unviability of any project of "reform" of the dictatorship, but has also begun to place a question mark over any possibility of establishing a bourgeois regime in Spain.

Thus, the desire of the workers to win their demands, their right to work, their own organization based on the sovereignty of their assemblies and on the election in these assemblies of various types of direct representatives (delegates, representative commissions, etc.); the deep consciousness of solidarity between the working class and the other popular layers exploited and oppressed nationally and socially; the extension of the struggle for amnesty and the inclusion of "labor amnesty" within that struggle; the extension of the struggle for the dissolution of the repressive corps and for extraction of responsibility for the crimes of Francoism, in all, the struggle for the complete liquidation of the dictatorship — all these things already indicate that the objective dynamic of the mobilization of the masses after the conquest of liberty will clash with any attempt to restrain it within the limits of a "truncated democracy" concocted according to the recipes of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

The pact that is offered by the CD to the "reformers" of Francoism has Spanish big capital, the military hierarchy, and imperialism as its real interlocutor and has the essential objective of holding back this mass dynamic, reducing it to limits compatible with the establishment of a bourgeois "democratic" state in Spain.

c. On this basis, it is possible to explain why the CD declaration does not pose opposition to the Francoist monarchy in a clear and explicit fashion; it does not clearly and explicitly pose the free exercise of the right of self-determination of all the peoples oppressed under the Spanish state; it does not even allude to the necessity of dissolving the Francoist repressive apparatus; it does not even allude to the economic and social de-

mands of the workers. The constituent elections are posed for an indefinite future; in the meantime some "broad coalition organs of executive power" (in which the Francoist "reformers" would be included and at whose head would stand Juan Carlos) will "guarantee" the defense of political liberties and rights.

3. Consequently, the LCR/ETA-VI totally opposes the political alternative of the CD. We deny that the "negotiated break" (ruptura pactada) is the road to the overthrow of the dictatorship; that road passes only through the development of the independent action of the working class and the people for their demands and slogans, without any "shortcuts," through their own methods of struggle, their own forms of organization. It is only this mass action that will guarantee the liquidation of the dictatorship and the exercise of fundamental democratic liberties and rights.

Now is the time to organize the final assault of the working class and the people against Francoism, to prepare the general strike that will bring down the dictatorship.

No "provisional coalition government" has the slightest right to exercise power after the overthrow of the dictatorship. The convocation of elections to a constituent assembly by universal suffrage with the right to vote at sixteen years of age must be immediate.

4. In face of the desperate maneuvers of the bourgeoisie in its various political factions in the attempt to resolve its crisis of power, the working class must maintain complete political and organizational independence. Our people have paid and are still paying much too high a price for their liberty (Vitoria!) to receive in exchange a "negotiated caricature" of their rights and demands.

The unity of the workers and people's movement is certainly more necessary than ever. This unity is being built in struggle, in the assemblies, by the delegates, the strike committees. This unity requires the common efforts of all workers political parties and groups to extend, strengthen, and centralize the united organizations of the mass movement and its vanguard, in the factories, the workshops, the neighborhoods, the educational institutions, and so on. This unity requires the unconditional defense of the objectives of the workers against the dictatorship and the employers. It is for this unity that we are fighting.

That the workers commissions, the Movimiento Comunista, the Communist party, the PSOE, the PTE, and the UGT appear as signers of the declaration of the CD is an obstacle and not at all a stimulus to the unity of the working class and the people.

We call on all these workers organizations as well as the other workers organizations and parties and the revolutionary nationalist organizations to construct a united front against the dictatorship. Down with the Francoist monarchy! □



after the cantonal elections

The following resolution was adopted by the Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR — Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International, at its meeting of April 3-4, 1976. The meeting took place less than one month after the mid-March voting in the cantonal elections. These elections are held to determine the composition of the conseils généraux (general councils), which are county-based bodies that later elect the Senate. The elections are held in two rounds; in cases in which no candidate receives a majority of the vote in the first round, a second round is held. The cantonal elections are traditionally not of great significance. This time, however, the Communist and Socialist parties made massive gains, picking up 269 seats; the SP vote was the largest of any single party. The elections thus represented a political defeat for the current parliamentary majority. Virtually simultaneous with the cantonal elections, a poll was taken the results of which showed that if legislative elections were held today, 54 percent would vote for the left parties. The LCR resolution examines the new political situation in France after the cantonal vote. We have added the titles and subtitles. — INPRECOR

Fragility of the "upturn"

The economic crisis had already dealt a hard blow to President Giscard d'Estaing's reputation, built on the basis of his alleged qualities as a manager, an economic technician. Thus, his credibility had been badly damaged by the impression, very widespread among the masses, that the regime was not at all in control of the evolution of the economic situation, that the regime's predictions had been systematically belied by reality.

The upturn, which could have been a major trump card against the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left, the Socialist party-Communist party electoral bloc), remains fragile. (Between September and February industrial production increased 7 percent, but it is still 5.5 percent lower than its January 1974 level.) This upturn is fueled essentially by the re-stocking operations of companies (whose inventories in any case remain lower than they

were in 1974) through the utilization of conjunctural financial facilities accorded by the regime in the framework of the various pump-priming plans and through the upturn in consumption linked in part to the easing of credit (Fourcade, the minister of finance, has just decided to tighten credit again and to raise the prime interest rate).

The fragility of this upturn may be measured by certain important indices:

*The new uptick in inflation (from -1.1 percent in January to +0.7 percent in February, 1.2 percent according to the CGT, the country's largest trade-union federation) will be further primed by the authorizations for price increases granted to industrialists, who are making this freedom of prices a condition for an upturn in investment; this is true to such an extent that the curve for the first half of 1976 points to an 11-12 percent annual inflation rate.

*The accentuated deficit in the trade balance (less than 95 percent of the covering rate of January 1976) will continue to be aggravated under the effects of the de facto devaluation of the franc, which entails price increases for energy without improving the competitive position of French products on foreign markets.

*The maintenance of a very significant rate of unemployment, which will not be able to be reduced in the medium term, even though short-time work is tending to diminish with the upturn in industrial activity.

*Finally, the rate of investment remains quite low and testifies to the defiance of the employers in face of a regime they consider incapable of guaranteeing social peace. (In 1975 the volume of investment declined 10 percent compared with 1974; in 1976 it is expected to remain at the 1975 level.)

To these factors it is appropriate to add some elements that relate to more structural phenomena of the French economy and that also constitute obstacles to the upturn:

*The very significant corporate debt considerably reduces the possibilities of self-financing and makes the companies very dependent on financial markets;

*The crisis, while it has contributed to accelerating the trend toward concentration of the productive apparatus by liquidating sectors considered unprofitable (considerable increase in the number of bankruptcies), has been neither sufficiently lasting nor deep to really "prune down" this apparatus. Hence, the bourgeoisie has to pay the price for maintaining a productive apparatus that remains archaic in certain sectors. In addition, discontent is developing among some layers (artisans, shopkeepers, small and medium-sized companies) whose interests have been harmed; at the same time, it is precisely these layers that constitute the most solid pillars of support for the regime.

On the other hand, the crisis has extensively contributed to a virtually complete paralysis of the European Community. The devaluation of the French franc (which

has cost 33 percent of the country's gold and currency reserves) and the fall of the lira and the pound sterling render the project of European monetary union null and void and threaten to accelerate protectionist tendencies in the various member states, thus further diminishing the already low level of international trade. The agricultural Common Market has also been hard hit by the crisis. It is the peasants who have borne the brunt of this crisis, with a decline in purchasing power over the past two years, while the problems of milk and wine (sectors in which small plots predominate) are becoming explosive.

Erosion of the regime's social base

The political consequences have been especially important in that the regime had generally based its reputation on its economic capacities; hence the questioning of this regime by a section of the bourgeoisie:

*Economically, Giscard's failure may be measured by the loss of confidence of a section of the employers, who henceforth refuse to accept any reform promulgated by a regime they consider little effective.

*The European project, which was supposed to be the grand idea of "Giscardism," the Paris-Bonn alliance, has been postponed indefinitely and the problem of the election of a European parliament is losing its function as a bone of contention within the Union de la Gauche.

*Finally, internationally, the prospect of the victory of the Union de la Gauche is contributing to discrediting the existing regime. The international bourgeoisie, the U.S. bourgeoisie in the first place, is asking itself about the consequences of a left victory and is preparing to work out what tactic to follow in the event that it takes place.

The social base of the regime is continuing to erode. This is a consequence both of the social and economic situation of the country (restructuring, liquidation of archaic sectors, etc.) and of the political and social crisis shaking various institutions (evolution in the church, for example). But this is not compensated for by any gain of influence among new layers, contrary to Giscard's hopes. Moreover, entire sectors of the traditional petty bourgeoisie are entering into direct opposition to the regime in an especially violent fashion since whole regions are now experiencing all the consequences of the policy of the strong state, particularly in the destruction of the classical relations of bought-and-bartered interests. Regional aspirations are thus crystallizing among homogeneous regional entities, leading to defiance of the Giscard regime on the part of various social layers. This defiance and these aspirations may take on a lasting anticapitalist character under the influence of two factors:

*the massive radicalization of an exploited peasantry in face of stepped-up bourgeois projects aimed at liquidating agrarian structures that are not adapted to the penetration of capital;

*the alliance of this peasantry, through local structures of struggle or regionalist currents, with the organized workers movement.

Although Giscard's project — win over some of these layers, born of the development of capitalism, in order to compensate for the disappearance of traditional points of support among the bourgeoisie — emerged from a lucid consciousness of the continuing erosion of the social base of the regime from De Gaulle to Pompidou, the failure of all modernist and reformist demagogy in face of a Socialist party that is fully benefiting from the development of these layers confines Giscard to the narrow social base of Pompidouism.

This failure is enlivening the contradictions within the presidential majority, contradictions that cannot be reduced to clique or family quarrels. Rather, they manifest the profound disarray of the political personnel of the bourgeoisie. It is in this context that the results of the cantonal elections must be interpreted. In this sense, they are unusual elections, for in the present conjuncture they lose a part of their traditional function and become a national confrontation between two blocs, turning into an electoral crystallization of the growing political polarization of the country.

Thus, these elections served to reveal the real situation on all levels: In the Union de la Gauche they highlighted the relationship of forces between the CP and the SP; within the bourgeoisie they acted as an alarm signal against the Union de la Gauche; finally, among the masses they highlighted the weakness of the regime. So much so that the consciousness born of the results of the cantonal elections (the majority becoming the minority) is becoming a weighty objective phenomenon in the struggles of the workers, especially if account is taken of the electoralist education of the workers movement.

The diversity of responses proposed by the bourgeoisie — from Debré and his Government of National Salvation to Faure, who wants to excommunicate the SP, to Chirac and his *troika** — must create no illusions. All these responses have one point in common: They draw the balance-sheet of the failure of the Giscardian attempt to make an opening to the left (to attract the SP or a part of the Union de la Gauche voters) and they uphold the necessity of returning to the traditional themes of the right (order and security) by brandishing the specter of "collectivism." What is involved, then, is a right turn on the ideological and political level. Clearly, Giscardism has not dismantled Pompidouism.

The great Giscardian illusion of a liberal party overstepping or breaking the UDR (Union des Démocrates pour la République — Union of Democrats for the Republic, the Gaullist party) has gone up in smoke. The rule now is every man for himself. From this point of view, the nomination of Jacques Chirac as coordinator of the presidential majority is also a bitter return to

* The reference is to a reconstituted majority, with its three components: the Gaullist UDR (Jacques Chirac), the Independent Republicans (Michel Poniatowski), and the Centre pour la Démocratie et le Progrès, Center for Democracy and Progress (Lecanuet).
—INPRECOR

reality and will further accentuate the weight of conservatism in the new policy of the regime, making Giscard more closely dependent on the UDR, even if this nomination will also generate deep unease among the majority.

The right turn had already been visible in practice with the development of anti-union repression in the factories. It has now been confirmed and accentuated. Thus, we must expect a much harder line in the regime's policy, an accentuation of the repressive policy in an attempt to break the combativity of the workers before the 1978 legislative elections and to make the workers bear the costs of the economic upturn.

Breakthrough of the SP

The cantonal elections confirmed the advance of the SP and the expansion of its base. Nevertheless, it may be noted that in the cantons in which the old SFIO Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière — French Section of the Workers International, the former name of the Socialist party) had its greatest strength, there was a levelling off, and even a decline, of votes for the SP. It was also in these cantons that it was most difficult to get the SP voters to vote for the CP on the second round. The facts testify to the profound transformation of the SP electorate, which is linked to the very evolution of the social structure; the SP electorate today can in no way be confused with the old electorate of the SFIO. One may also note the massive progress made by the SP in the working-class suburbs, which testifies to the expansion of the party's audience, if not its organization, in the factories.

The nearing of new electoral target dates is also heating up the debates within the SP and obligates Mitterrand to more rapidly homogenize the party apparatus in preparation for the legislative elections of 1978. The extraordinary SP congress called for May 15 and 16 is intended to allow him to take the offensive in this direction. Even though the SP is continuing to respond to the accusations of the CP, a desire to limit the polemic may be noted.

The personal role and weight of Mitterrand has clearly been strengthened by the success in the cantonal elections. In the eyes of everybody he is preparing for his function as chief of state by establishing the necessary relations on the international level:

*trip to Algeria in February 1976;

*meeting with the U.S. ambassador, during which there was probably discussion about conditions and guarantees in the event of a victory for the Union de la Gauche (NATO, relations with the USSR, etc.);

*in the framework of the Socialist International itself, within which his position has been aided by the election results, he is negotiating the attitude of Social Democratic Europe toward a France governed by the Union de la Gauche. Mitterrand is winning his gamble, which was to resuscitate the SP through an al-

alliance with the CP and win a position of hegemony within the Union de la Gauche in order to accede to power. However, after the cantonal elections, the SP has hastened to struggle against any "triumphalism" and to affirm that the party does not favor early elections.

The SP is counting on the fact that time is on its side and that between now and 1976 the majority will suffer further erosion. It is also counting on coming to power in a more serene economic context, leaving Giscard to deal with the current crisis. Finally, the SP wants to develop an apparatus capable of assuming the responsibilities of managing the state, responsibilities from which the party has been excluded for twenty years.

CP's tactic

The twenty-second congress of the French CP had provoked big emotion within the party. The party's place in the Union de la Gauche, the relations with the USSR, the questioning, and the malaise all crystallized around the problem of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." From this standpoint, the cantonal elections represented an important test for the line of party secretary general Georges Marchais. Now, the CP maintained its overall electoral positions, even though some erosion may be noted in its old fiefs, most often to the benefit of the SP. Nevertheless, there was an improvement compared with the previous results in the legislative by-elections.

The reaction of the CP to the election results is significant. It consisted of:

- * systematic harping on "blemishes" (see the report given by René Piquet in the name of the Political Bureau according to which 30 percent of the Socialist votes in the first round did not go to the CP in the second round);
- * deliberate underestimation of the electoral victory of the Union de la Gauche;
- * beginning of an "Italian-style" policy: This majority, the CP says, is insufficient both numerically and

in terms of political conviction. "Without a broadly majority popular assembling, we will not win," declared Marchais.

All this amounts to an attempt to justify for the CP militants the leadership's refusal to pose the question of power now (its rejection of early elections) by instead mobilizing them around the strengthening of the "party" and the "Union of the People of France."

The policy of the CP is thus proceeding as though the cantonal elections had not taken place. The leadership of the CP refuses to pose any political perspective other than that of the municipal elections of 1977 and the legislative elections of 1978. In an editorial published in the CP daily, L'Humanité, Laurent Salini wrote: "There is no way out other than collective action, democratic action in which the ballot box is the crucial lever."

In the workers struggles the CP offers its militants only one outlet: the strengthening of the party.

On the level of relations with the USSR, the CP continues to follow the policy of taking its distance from the Kremlin and is becoming more offensive on all fields, but without challenging the underlying solidarity that unites the bureaucrats. Examples:

- * the Suslov report in Pravda, which condemned "regional or national variants of Marxism";
- * the reaction of the Jeunesses Communistes (Communist Youth) to the visit of UDR and Giscardian youth to Rumania;
- * the denunciation by Kanapa of "Russian internationalism," which was used to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia;
- * Marchais's public affirmation of differences over the European conference of Communist parties. The CP is in the process of gaining maximum autonomy of the Soviet bureaucracy, following the Italian model.



Offensive revival of workers combativity

On the whole, the French working class has resisted the employers' desire to make it bear the costs of the crisis. In terms of defense of purchasing power, the working class has resisted more successfully in France than in some other European countries. The high level of combativity has been maintained, as is testified to by the many struggles over jobs that took place throughout 1975.

Nevertheless, since the public services strike of March 9, 1976, there has been an upturn in struggle, which has been picked up by the workers of the SNCF (the national railroad company) and the metalworkers. Some traditional factors can account for this offensive revival: the period of contract negotiations, the first effects of the upturn on workers' combativity. But one of the predominant factors has been the results of the cantonal elections, which, by concretizing a political alternative, have strengthened the workers' confidence in their own will to struggle. The wait-and-see attitude that characterized the preceding period has changed a bit. The revelation of the weakness of the regime is stimulating the sentiment that it is possible to win demands immediately; at the same time, the idea of a probable victory in 1978 is taking root.

These various mobilizations (public services, SNCF) have several common characteristics:

*The theme of the struggles has shifted from a defensive struggle around jobs to a more offensive struggle around wages and purchasing power, formulated everywhere in terms of across-the-board increases;

*The mobilizations are massive and give expression to all the built-up discontent. They are no longer limited to localized combative movements, but are drawing in entire sectors of the working class;

*Because of the very fact of the massive participation, there is a risk of a gap between the broad vanguard and the combative workers on the one hand (who are skeptical about the classical forms of struggle proposed by the trade-union leaders) and the mass of workers on the other hand, for whom the strike, even in this context, expresses an initial coming to consciousness;

*Finally, from the outset these movements have been viewed by the workers as profoundly united because of the participation, under their pressure, of all the unions, which has contributed extensively to the success of these mobilizations.

The development of the deepest student mobilizations since 1968 was a powerful revealing force throwing light on the evolution of the conjuncture. Nevertheless, the difficulties in broadening these mobilizations of student youth reflect the absence of any central outlet. In addition, the "traditional springtime explosions" are no longer enough for the high school students and apprentices to go into motion; now they require precise objectives and guarantees. In this context, what must be done is simultaneously:

*continue to view the struggles of the university



students and student youth in general within the perspective of an overall offensive of the workers against this minority regime (while respecting the autonomous pace of the student mobilizations);

*lay the basis for a protracted mobilization against the education policy of the regime and group together all those who want to fight the battle for unity, for the construction of united movements in the various milieus of student youth on the basis of structures of struggle that emerge in the course of the mobilizations themselves.

At the present time, the leaders of the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail — General Confederation of Labor) and the CFDT (Confédération Française et Démocratique du Travail — French Democratic Confederation of Labor) refuse to propose a centralization of the struggles, which would pose the question of a political outlet, although it is true that after the SNCF struggles these leaderships were led to slightly alter their declarations. Thus, the CGT and the CFDT seize upon the fact that some unions, such as Force Ouvrière (Workers Power) or the independent unions in the SNCF had signed a separate agreement as a pretext to halt movements whose massive character objectively posed the problem of going beyond the framework that had been set for them. The strikes in the SNCF at the end of March illustrated this phenomenon more clearly. Thus, especially for the CGT, it becomes difficult to assure control over these struggles when the workers see a political solution as perfectly possible, a solution that is in any case put forward by the national leadership of the CGT itself.

It can be predicted that the CGT and CFDT leaderships will try to channel this wave of struggle into the framework of a day of action sometime during the third quarter of the year, thus putting forward an appearance of centralization.

The toughening of the policy of the regime against struggles, the employers' establishment of an anti-strike system (transport of machine parts and labor force, etc.) can at any moment pose the problem of a regional and even national test of strength, thus transforming a conflict into a test during a pre-electoral period and requiring a high level of consciousness and organization on the part of the workers in order to offer a response.

Battle for workers unity

In this conjuncture, the battle for strengthening the unity of the workers in struggle must be waged by revolutionaries on a priority basis, both against the "sectarianism" of the CGT and against the "leftist" attempts of some sectors of the broad vanguard. Thus, the establishment of forms of self-organization should not be a precondition for the necessary unity, even though we must do everything possible to develop these forms.

Politically, the ongoing mobilizations must allow us to put forward objectives of centralization of the struggles in order to win our demands. For the great mass of workers, this perspective is not at all contradictory with the Common Program and the Union de la Gauche.

It is in liaison with the concrete forms of this process that we can move from propagandist denunciation of the SP and CP's refusal to take on their responsibilities to the positive agitational formula of an SP-CP government as a function of the very forms of this centralization. This is the only way to break down electoral logic



in real life, the logic within which we would be entangled by any other sort of initiative concerning the government formula.

But while the primary axis must be the problem of centralization of struggles for demands and their inevitable confrontation with the regime (possibly leading either to a new May 1968 or to early elections, as in Britain in 1974), we must concurrently denounce the SP and CP's respect for the constitution of 1958. We must show that by refusing to demand early elections based on proportional representation and by proclaiming their submission to the constitution of 1958 the SP and the CP intend to avoid precipitating the political situation, whether through action or even through elections. In fact, they are preparing to administer the strong state by demanding a "social pause." This only intensifies the contradiction of the CP between its professions of democratic faith and criticisms of the SP on the one hand and its submission to the 1958 constitution on the other hand, a constitution that will grant decisive weight to a Mitterrand, president of the republic, in administering a strong state.

But while today we put the emphasis on propagandist denunciation of the SP and CP's respect for the 1958 Gaullist constitution and their rejection of early elections on the basis of proportional representation, we do not advance the slogan of early elections and a constituent assembly as positive proposals.

*We will possibly be able to advance the slogan of early elections, along with an agitational campaign, when a second political defeat of the regime occurs (partial or municipal elections). Moreover, in this case, the regime's refusal to call immediate elections could be a point of departure leading us to directly posing the question of an SP-CP government.

*The slogan of the constituent assembly will not be able to become comprehensible to the broad masses until the left, now mired in respect for the 1958 constitution, actually uses this constitution against the demands of the masses (for example, by keeping Giscard, by preserving the repressive arsenal of the fifth republic, or on the occasion of conflict between the president-Bonaparte Mitterrand and the workers parties, above all the CP, but also the SP or a faction of the SP).

Of course, the scenario of the class struggle cannot be written in advance. Stages may be skipped and a general strike may give rise to the embryos of workers councils. The slogan of the constituent assembly would then amount to a retreat from the mobilization of the masses and could on the contrary serve the "democratic counterrevolution." But today we cannot substitute for the masses themselves in determining the pace of their radicalization and the experiences they will have to undergo. On the contrary, through our slogans and our demand for "democracy through to the end" we must lead them to shed their bourgeois-democratic illusions and to undergo the experience of the superiority of workers democracy.

FEBRUARY 20

GENERAL STRIKE IN SRI LANKA

In a clear and tangible manner, February 20, 1976, saw the rebirth of the combativity of the working class after its first manifestations, which occurred at the end of 1975. Thus, the paralyzing effects on the working class of the five years of social peace that reigned after the bloody repression of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) in the spring of 1971 are being overcome.

On February 20 the working class of the entire island once again took the offensive against capitalist domination. The growing but restrained indignation of the working class against the reactionary and repressive methods used by the government against workers struggles in general and against the strike of the nationalized printing industry in particular exploded massively when the workers belonging to most of the trade unions of the country, among them the Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU), struggled shoulder to shoulder in the course of the first united-front action of this kind since January 5, 1962. The strike spread throughout the entire island, and the Ceylonese working class showed once again that racial, religious, and communal differences do not divide it.

The state of mind of the working class was manifested during the militant speeches delivered in the course of the meeting of the General Council of the CMU on February 17. The meeting hall was packed with dele-

gates. Speaker after speaker came up to the podium to support the proposal made by the Executive Committee of the union to participate in the general strike not only in support of the struggle of the workers of the nationalized printing industry and against the government's use of emergency laws against this struggle, but also to demand the withdrawal of the Essential Services Order, which deprives the working class of the basic right to strike.

Although some important trade unions did not participate in this strike, among them the plantation workers union and the bank employees union, the paralyzing effects were total in road, air, and rail transport, in gasoline distribution, and in key sectors of industry and trade in both the public and private sectors.

In the Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) the strike was the most effective ever seen in this sector. Never had such unity been forged throughout the country in the struggle of all the employees of the CTB. In 1962 the strike in this sector had not attained the degree of participation and organization manifested on February 20, 1976. Likewise, in the railroads there could not have been greater proof of the absolute character of the strike than the complete desertion of the Fort and Maradana stations throughout the day.

In the port of Colombo ships were abandoned by the 15,000 workers who make up the work force. The same was true for the ports of Galle and Trincomalee. The state enterprises that employ thousands of workers — the Insurance Corporation, the National Textile Corporation, the State Engineering Corporation, the Steel Corporation, were all closed.

Most of the factories of the private industrial sector, notably in Ratmalana and Jaela, were affected by the strike. The Wellawata Spinning and Weaving Mills were completely shut down.

The main export establishments of tea, rubber, and fiber, like the maritime shipping companies, were unable to function at all. The impact of the strike on the population was so obvious that the government's feeble attempt to claim that it was not really effective served only to further widen the credibility gap between the people and the government.

Panic among the employers

Various incidents occurred in the wake of the strike. The most serious were at the State Textile Corporation some fifty-five kilometers from the capital, Colombo. This factory locked out its workers on February 23 and the president and one member of the factory section of the CMU were arrested. All day on February 21 the workers had forced the foremen to apologize for not having rallied to the strike the day before. The general manager was sequestered in his office all morning. He appealed to the army, which, at 9:30 sent a truckload of soldiers armed with machine guns. The workers lined up in front of the truck and told the soldiers to go ahead and shoot. Other workers began throwing stones

at the soldiers. They had to withdraw and the gates of the factory were closed. Then the angry workers demanded that the general manager come before them to explain why he had called on the army. He was forced to do this and had to explain that he had not asked the army to enter the factory grounds but admitted that he had called on the soldiers; he was forced to apologize to the assembled workers. New incidents occurred during the day when a police car arrived at the factory at about 10:30. The police were also compelled to leave the scene under the pressure of the workers. The management cancelled Sunday overtime work and on Monday, February 23, the gates of the factory were closed and all personnel, that is, about 4,000 people, were locked out. The buses going to the factory were stopped by the police, who assaulted passengers who protested.

February 20 was an important date in the struggle that pits the working class of Sri Lanka against their exploiters. Five years of open and veiled repression have been unable to paralyze the working class or dismantle its struggle organizations. As long ago as the end of last year this rebirth of combativity and offensive capacity of the working class has been clearly manifested.

On December 16, 1975, for example, more than 10,000 members of the CMU demonstrated in Colombo and its suburbs after stopping work for one hour. Their slogans were: Rehire the fertilizer workers, Seven months of struggle of the workers of Hunupitiya, Stop the lockout, and Stop employing scabs. Five hundred workers of the Ceylon Fertilizer Company had joined the CMU in March 1975, and since then none of them had been granted the right to bonuses, holidays, insurance, paid leaves, etc. These same workers were thrown out of their jobs on June 4, 1975, when they returned to work after a strike that had begun on April 22, 1975. It was to draw attention to these incidents and work stoppages that the demonstrations were held. These demonstrations snaked through the city as well as the industrial sectors of the suburbs. Then, on December 4, some 250 workers, some with their wives and children, entered the offices of the company with their banners: Restore the jobs! Restore the rights of the workers! The factory was occupied. Scabs were quickly brought in from another factory owned by the company. The same day about a hundred workers entered the brand new offices of the ministry to which the Ceylon Fertilizer Company is connected. The workers jammed the stairways and polished corridors of what used to be the headquarters of the Planters' Association. The workers did not leave the premises until they were assured that a meeting would take place between the ministry and the representatives of the strikers.

New rise of combativity

On January 2, 1976, some 2,000 workers of the Wellawata Spinning and Weaving Mills left work and spontaneously occupied the company offices to demand payment of their 1975 bonuses. Two years before, the workers of this same enterprise had suffered a deep defeat after

a four-month struggle against reductions in the work force and layoffs. The debacle of that struggle ended with strict limitations on trade-union rights and all activity. The factory operated under the police club. On January 2, 1976, the vice-president and executive director of the company were blockaded in their offices and had to discuss with the workers. The delegation of workers sent to hold these discussions did not include any members of the main union of the factory, which is controlled by the pro-Moscow CP. The discussion did not last long and the anger of the workers mounted. The workers booed the employers. The workers forbid the managers to assemble the whole management or to leave the premises of the factory before an agreement was reached; the managers then telephoned the headquarters of the CMU to ask CMU general secretary Bala Tampoe to come over within fifteen minutes because they had been sequestered by the workers. When he arrived at the factory, Tampoe assembled the members of the CMU to deal with the situation. Armed police detachments were forced to retreat. An agreement was reached to pay bonuses to the workers and employees of the factory and it was demanded that no worker be prosecuted. Although the leader of the pro-Moscow CP trade union was prevented from speaking during an assembly of workers outside the factory, the workers hoisted Tampoe onto a platform to address them. The immediate result of this conflict was the adherence of a thousand workers to the CMU.

These stages in the new rise of workers combativity show that the ranks of the working class are regaining their confidence, that the terror that followed the 1971 massacres, terror which had frozen the workers, divided them according to their different unions whether they were affiliated to the various government parties or not, has lost its ability to weaken the workers movement. In the meantime, it appears quite clearly that those of the workers who have maintained their class independence of the parties of the government coalition (the Sri Lanka Freedom party, the Lanka Sama Samaja party (Ceylon Equal Society party), and the Communist party) and who have held firm in their independent unions against the generalized repression now find themselves prepared and hardened to confront the regime in power. Thus, the place occupied by the CMU on the trade-union level and on the political map confers a combined role on it, political and trade union, and makes it a central element of the class struggle on the island. That this organization and the Revolutionary Marxist party, section of the Fourth International, have jointly organized the Campaign for Political Freedom in 1976, to which hundreds of workers have already extended their active adherence, also demonstrates that any action for workers demands in the period now opening has a political outlet and will inevitably further isolate a government whose social base is continuing to erode. To demand the "lifting of all restrictions on the freedom of political prisoners by the government," "the lifting of all bans imposed on political organizations and groups," and "the halt to all discrimination and witch-hunt" means to fight for the conquests that the workers movement of Sri Lanka must win for itself in order to broaden the field of its attack against the government.



BEHIND THE REVOLT OF THE ARABS IN ISRAEL

by JON ROTHSCHILD

In 1940 Mr. R. Weitz, a major Zionist leader and for many years head of the colonization department of the Jewish Agency, made this notation in his diary: "Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country. . . . We shall not achieve our goal of being an independent people with the Arabs in this small country. The only solution is a Palestine, at least Western Palestine (west of the Jordan River) without Arabs. . . . And there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them: Not one village, not one tribe, should be left."

Twenty-seven years later, in September 1967, the same Weitz, discussing the results of the June 1967 war, looked backward to 1948: ". . . when the UN passed the resolution to partition Palestine into two states, the War of Independence broke out, to our great fortune. In this war, a twofold miracle occurred: territorial vic-

tory and the flight of the Arabs." But not quite all the Arabs. The Zionist armed forces, charged primarily with the task of emptying Palestine of Arabs, did their work effectively. In November 1947 the Arab population of the territory that was to become the state of Israel at the end of the 1948 war was approximately 800,000. By the beginning of 1949, that population had been reduced to 133,000. The more than 650,000 expelled Arabs were scattered across the Arab world, the majority of them settling in miserable refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip. They are the Palestinian refugees. "Forgotten" for some twenty years by the majority of world "public opinion," they were to make their presence felt beginning in 1968 with the rise of the Palestinian Resistance movement.

The fate of the other 133,000 Arabs of Palestine was different. They became not "Palestinian refugees," but "Israeli Arabs." Most of them (not all) were granted

citizenship in the new Zionist state. According to the claims of the Zionist ruling class and propaganda machine, these Arabs enjoyed an enviable life, unlike their refugee brothers and sisters who had allegedly fallen victim to the hysterical anti-Semitic propaganda of the Arab leaders and had thus abandoned the territory of the Jewish state. Their standard of living was said to be higher than that of any Arabs elsewhere in the world. They were said to benefit from all the rights granted in Israel, the "only democracy in the Middle East." They were living proof that Arab hostility to the state of Israel was based solely on the racist demagoguery of the leaders of the Arab states, for after all, if the Arabs could live peacefully and happily under the very administration of the Jewish state, why could not the Arab states make peace with Israel? The tranquility of the Israeli Arabs, even during the wars of 1967 and 1973, was pointed to as the proof of the ultimate success of the Zionist state. The myth of the contented Israeli Arab thus took its place in the pantheon of myths that, taken together, constitute Zionist ideology.

During the last week of March 1976, this myth went the way of a number of others of its ilk: into the trash can. In spite of sweeping preventive arrests and violent assaults on preliminary demonstrations, thousands of Arabs in Israel launched a general strike to protest against the seizure of Arab land in Galilee in northern Israel. The target date was March 30, the day of the strike called by Rakah (the Israeli Communist party) and the Committee for the Protection of Arab Lands, a coalition opposing the Zionist land grab. The Israeli military forces opposed the strike with arms. At least six Arabs were killed by Israeli soldiers; dozens were wounded; more than 300 were arrested. Clashes occurred in at least nine villages in Galilee, as the Arab population, for the first time in more than twenty-five years, fought back actively against the Zionist army. The regime ordered its troops to fire into crowds; Arabs were beaten indiscriminately; in Jerusalem soldiers forcibly opened shops that had closed in solidarity with the strike. In Nazareth a group of twenty-five to thirty Israeli soldiers broke into the home of Tewfik Zayad, the Communist party mayor of the town, and beat members of his family.

But the collapse of the myth of the contented Israeli Arab enjoying equal rights with Israeli Jews raises a deeper question: Can the Israeli state make sufficiently sweeping reforms to satisfy the demands of its Arab population while still preserving its character as a Zionist state? Or, put another way, is oppression of the Arabs of Israel a necessary and integral feature of Zionism and its state, or is it simply the result of bad policies followed by unwise leaders? The question is not merely academic. The Israeli Communist party, which holds political hegemony over the Arabs of Israel, answers the first question positively. And its program consists of a series of demands aimed precisely at making some reforms in the context of the maintenance of the Zionist state. Thus, the development of a revolutionary outlook on the struggle of the Arabs of Israel requires an ex-

amination of the essential bases of both the Zionist movement and the state it created.

Zionism: The root of the problem

The core of Zionist ideology is a delusion: that all the Jews of the world constitute a single nation and that this dispersed nation has suffered systematic oppression because of the dispersion. The problem of anti-Semitism can be solved only by "ingathering" the members of this dispersed nation and establishing a Jewish nation-state "as Jewish as England is English." Any form of struggle against anti-Semitism that does not have as its goal establishing this Jewish nation-state is a utopian endeavor, misguided at best, disastrous at worst. Furthermore, the non-Jewish inhabitants of the land on which this Jewish nation-state is to be built must be dispensed with one way or the other; any means necessary to effect that task are justified, since the native inhabitants are, by definition, part of the universal oppressor of the Jews.

The colonization of Palestine, conducted on the basis of this ideology, thus took an unusual form. Under the usual form of colonization, the colons displace the indigenous inhabitants, destroy their culture and society, and then transform them into a proletariat exploited in an economic system owned and controlled by the settlers. But the leaders of the Zionist colonization were not primarily interested in exploiting the labor-power of the Palestinian Arabs; they were interested in removing the indigenous population to make way for the "normalization" of the Jewish nation, which meant creating a Jewish bourgeoisie, a Jewish petty bourgeoisie, and a Jewish proletariat. Palestinian Arabs displaced by Jewish settlers were not reintegrated as workers in Jewish-owned economic enterprises; on the contrary, they were deliberately excluded from economic life in the Jewish sector. The Palestinian Arabs were not seen as a potential supply of labor-power, but merely as obstacles to the construction of the Jewish state.

The three major slogans under which this colonization was conducted were: *kibush hakarka* (conquest of the land), *kibush haavoda* (conquest of labor), and *t'ozteret haaretz* (produce of the land). The first slogan meant that as much land as possible had to be acquired from its Arab owners and that no land owned by Jews could be sold, leased, or otherwise returned to Arabs. The second meant that Jewish-owned factories and farms should exclusively employ Jewish labor insofar as possible. (In fact, the Histadrut, which masquerades as a "trade union" in Israel today, was formed for the purpose of creating a Jewish proletariat by imposing a boycott on Arab labor.) The third slogan meant boycott of Arab production by Jewish settlers.

Dozens of pages of testimony, statistics, and records could be cited to demonstrate that these three slogans represented not only the theory but also the practice of the Zionist colonization. In the interest of brevity, we will simply quote a statement made in November

1969 to the Secretariat of Mapai, the former name of the ruling Labor party, by David Hacohen, an Israeli parliament member for many years and the chairman of the parliament's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee:

"I remember being one of the first of our comrades to go to London after the first world war. . . . There I became a socialist. . . . When I joined the socialist students — English, Irish, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, African — we found that we were all under English domination or rule. And even here, in these intimate surroundings, I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they not buy at Arab stores; to defend the fact that we stood guard at orchards to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there. . . . To pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash the Arab eggs they had bought; to praise to the skies the Keriin Kayemet (Jewish Fund) that sent Hankin to Beirut to buy land from absentee effendi (landlords) and to throw the fellahin (peasants) off the land — to buy dozens of dunams (a land measure) from an Arab is permitted, but to sell, god forbid, one Jewish dunam to an Arab is prohibited. . . . — To do all that was not easy. And despite the fact that we did it — maybe we had no choice — I wasn't happy about it."

We may pass over Hacohen's unhappiness, which is but a minor psychological occupational hazard of the "socialist" Zionist. The point is that the implementation of the program was aimed at creating a hermetically sealed Jewish society free of Arabs, a society with its own class structure, economic life, administrative apparatus, press, armed forces, and so on. That is what it meant to have a Jewish state. There is simply no place in it for Arabs, nor can there be.

Institutionalized repression

After the 1949 armistice that ended the first Arab-Israeli war, the ruling class of the new state faced a serious problem. The tasks of the construction of the Jewish state were complicated by the annoying presence of 133,000 non-Jews, the Palestinian Arabs who had not been put to flight. The Zionist leadership could not sacrifice its democratic pretensions without also sacrificing an ideological weapon that was crucial in maintaining support for Israel among democratic world opinion, especially working-class opinion. Thus, it was not possible to simply pass a series of laws openly denying rights to Arabs. At the same time, it was necessary to establish a legal and social structure that did just that.

The first step that was taken in this direction was to place the Israeli Arabs under military government. The legal basis of this regime, the content of which still exists throughout Israeli territory although its form has been modified, is the Emergency Regulations. These laws date back to the 1936-39 Arab revolt, which be-

gan in Syria and spread throughout Palestine, then under British rule. In 1936 the British passed the "Emergency Laws," creating the legal machinery for suppressing the revolt. In 1939 these laws were supplemented by the Defense Laws, which were aimed at constructing a durable system of repression based on the military defeat of the revolt. In 1945 these two sets of laws were combined and modified into the Defense Laws (State of Emergency). This time they were directed largely at the Zionist movement, which was then taking the initiative to establish an independent Jewish state in Palestine, whereas the British imperialists were still attempting to maintain the territory as a colony. The fact that the 1945 Defense Laws were aimed primarily against the Zionist movement stimulated great opposition to them among the Zionist leadership. In 1946, for example, a Jewish lawyers conference was held during which one Yaakov Shapira said, "The regime built in Palestine on the Defense Regulations has no parallel in any civilized nation. Even in Nazi Germany there were no such laws." But it is likely that Mr. Shapira came to regret that outburst, for in 1948 the entire body of the Defense Laws, without change or amendment, was incorporated by the Zionist government. Mr. Shapira was later to become minister of justice in Israel and thus the administrator of these same laws, which had in the meantime become part of the foundation of the "only democracy in the Middle East."

The Emergency Laws consist of 170 articles divided into fifteen sections. Essentially, they grant military commanders the following prerogatives: to imprison any individual indefinitely without charge or trial; to prohibit an individual from traveling within the country or from leaving the country; to expel any individual from the country; to restrict any individual to his home; to order any individual to report to a police station several times a day; to bar an individual from seeking work; to confiscate any property; to order the inhabitants of any area or village to provide food and lodging, at their own expense, to any members of the police force who are sent there for any reason; to impose a total or partial curfew in any village or area. Finally, one of the most commonly used articles, number 125, gives military commanders the right to declare any area "closed"; it is forbidden to enter or leave any area that has been declared closed.

These regulations also establish a series of military courts whose purpose is to try cases of infringement of the laws. Any measure provided for in the Emergency Regulations can be imposed by the local military authority at will; there is no appeal process except that established in article 119, which stipulates an appeal procedure the final authority in which is the minister of defense. In addition, the military courts that try cases of infringement of the Emergency Regulations are totally unconnected to the civilian courts; they must also not be confused with courts martial, which try cases of alleged violation of law by active-duty soldiers. These military courts have jurisdiction over the civilian population.

In essence, these regulations and the court system connected to them constitute a second judicial system in Israel, one parallel to and separate from the "normal" civil system. On a few occasions, the regulations have been used to break strikes by Jewish workers. On the whole, however, they are used — and frequently — exclusively against Arabs. "The law says 'person'; in practice it means 'Arab.'" That is, there are two different legal systems in Israel, one for Jews and one for Arabs.

In his book *The Arabs in Israel*, which contains the most comprehensive study of the rule to which Israeli Arabs are subject, Sabri Jiryis offers some examples of the use of the Emergency Regulations to demoralize Arabs: "In January 1956 a number of inhabitants of villages in the Triangle (an Arab area east of Tel Aviv — INPRECOR) were banished to the village of Beit Jann in Upper Galilee and told to report every day for six months at the police station in Ma'una, 20 kilometers from their place of exile. In September 1957 the Military Governor gave orders that five men of Baqa al-Gharbiya should report every day to the police station in Bardas Hanna, which is 15 kilometers from their home village. Similarly, two inhabitants of Tira in the Triangle were ordered to remain in their homes all night (from one hour after sunset until sunrise), and report twice a day to the police station at Tiba, eight kilometers from their home village. A particularly cruel and 'amusing' order was issued in the case of a certain Ahmad Hassan, a Bedouin of the el-Wadi tribe near the village of Araba in Galilee. The Military Governor ordered that he should sit every day for six months, from sunrise to sunset, under a large carob tree which stands to the West of the village of Deir Hanna."

Seizure of Arab land

The role of the Emergency Regulations in the imposition of repression against political movements and individual militants is clear enough. But that is not the only use to which the regulations have been put. They have also served as the legal mechanism for the massive theft of Arab land and property. The first manner in which the Emergency laws were used for this purpose was simply to expel Arab villagers from the country. This process, which was especially intense during the years immediately following the 1948 war, was aimed at "cleansing" the border regions and making way for the establishment of Jewish settlements. Ashkelon, for example, near the border of the Gaza Strip, used to be an Arab village. One morning during the summer of 1950 the Israeli army arrived in the village, loaded the inhabitants onto trucks, drove them to the Gaza border, and ordered them to flee. The new city of Ashkelon, which is free of Arabs, was then built. Between the years 1949 and 1951 the following Arab villages were emptied of their inhabitants in more or less the same manner: Rama, Kfar Bar'am, Anan, Kafr Yasif, Hisam, Qatiya, Jauneh, Ghabasiya, Batat, Mijsdal, and thirteen villages in the Wadi Ara.

In certain cases, Arab villagers appealed to the Israeli legal system for redress against the misdeeds of the military rule. In some cases, they even won favorable rulings from the Israeli Supreme Court, but to no avail, for the court decisions were simply overridden by the military, which has the "right" to act in defiance of the court for reasons of "security." Two of the best known such cases concern the villages of Bar'am and Aqrat. Bar'am was declared a "closed" area under the Emergency Regulations. The villagers were then expelled. They appealed to the Supreme Court, which in September 1953 issued an opinion stating that they should be allowed to return to the village. On September 16, 1953, the Israeli air force bombed the village out of existence. The lands of the village were handed over to near-by Jewish colonies for cultivation. The village of Aqrat was occupied by Zionist forces in October 1948. (There was no resistance from the population.) On November 5, 1948, the villagers were told to leave the area for a period of two weeks until "military operations in the area were concluded." For the following year and a half the villagers negotiated with the authorities, who refused to allow them to return. The Arabs finally decided that the military had no intention of rescinding the evacuation order, so they appealed to the Supreme Court. At the end of July 1951 the court ruled that there was no legal reason to prevent the return of the villagers. The villagers then asked the military governor for permission to return. They were referred to the minister of defense, who referred them back to the military governor. They then decided to appeal to the Supreme Court a second time, and the case was scheduled for a hearing on February 6, 1952. But on Christmas day 1951 the Israeli army systematically dynamited every house in the village. The lands of the village were handed over to two Jewish colonies.

But the seizure of Arab land — the most basic pillar of the entire Zionist endeavor — was too important to be left solely to the operation of the Emergency Regulations. Thus, these regulations were supplemented by more than half a dozen land expropriation acts. It is noteworthy that none of these laws refers specifically to the seizure of Arab land; that would be undemocratic. There are ways, however, of designating "Arab" without saying "Arab," just as there are ways of persecuting Jews while waging a struggle against "rootless cosmopolitans."

In the space of a few paragraphs it is impossible to examine all these laws and their implementation. Let us therefore restrict ourselves to one example: the Law on the Acquisition of Absentees' Property, which was passed in 1950. The stated aim of the law was to transfer the property of absentee owners to a "custodian of absentees' property" appointed by the law. On the surface, it seems wholly reasonable. After all, as all progressives know, there is nothing more reactionary than an absentee landlord. There was only one catch, and that was the definition of "absentee." The law stated that "any person who was a citizen of the Land of Israel and left his ordinary place of residence in the Land of Israel" during and immediately after the 1948 war was



an "absentee." The real intent of this definition was quite simple. In large part, the Palestinian Arab peasants were not active participants in the 1948 war. (This was a result of the reactionary character of the Arab leadership at the time, which was consciously opposed to any mass mobilization of Palestinians.) Thus, when the war came to their villages, many peasants did what unarmed and non-politicized peasants have always done when invaders have entered their fields: They left, hoping to return when the fighting ended. But this was a new kind of war. These peasants later found that when they tried to return home they had been declared "absentees" and their property had been confiscated. In other words, if a peasant had fled to a neighboring village in 1948 during the war, he could be declared an absentee owner in 1950, even if he had in the meantime returned to his village; alternately, he could be prevented from returning to his village for "security reasons" and then be declared an absentee because he was not on the scene cultivating his land. To ensure smooth implementation of this law, the following provisions were added: absenteeism is determined by decree of the Custodian of Absentees' Property and the "Custodian may not be questioned about information sources which led him to issue a decision by virtue of this law." In other words, the "Custodian," which is the Israeli state, has the right to declare anyone an absentee and the reasons for the decision may not be questioned.

One final point. What if, by some freak chance, it should turn out that a mistake had been made, that someone had been declared an absentee incorrectly, even under the sweeping scope of the definition? That contingency is provided for. The law states: "No deal concluded between the Custodian and another person in connection with property which the Custodian believes to be absentee property at the moment the deal is concluded may be invalidated, but shall remain in force even if it is later proved that such property was not absentee property at that time."

Lest there be any doubt that what is involved in this Kafkaesque legal structure is institutionalized theft on a grand scale, here is a citation from the 1959 edition of the Israel Government Yearbook:

"'Village property' belonging to all Arab absentees, whether they are outside the country or living in Israel, 'acquired' by the Custodian of Absentees' Property includes some 300 abandoned or semi-abandoned villages with a total area of 3 1/2 million dunums. The agricul-

tural property includes 80 thousand dunums of orange groves and more than 200 thousand dunums of orchards. . . . Property in the towns includes 25,416 buildings consisting of 57,497 residential apartments and 10,729 shops and light industry workshops." (Cited by Jiryis in *The Arabs in Israel*, p. 61.) Of the 370 Jewish rural and urban enterprises established between 1948 and 1953, a total of 350 were created on "abandoned" Arab land. As of 1954, more than one-third of the Israeli-Jewish population was living on confiscated land and nearly a third of the new immigrants were living in urban quarters "abandoned" by Arabs.

The last major wave of confiscation of Arab lands in Israel occurred during the 1960s. At the time, the government issued guarantees that this wave would be the last. It is no wonder, then, that the Arabs of Galilee reacted with rage this year when the regime published plans to seize 1,575 acres of Arab-owned land in Galilee to build schools, apartments, and factories restricted to Jews. The projected land seizures are part of a government plan to "Judaize Galilee" (that is the official term), that is, to increase the Jewish population of Galilee from 60,000 to 300,000 within ten years. It is not simply a question of a piece of land. It is a question of Zionism, of making sure that "not one village, not one tribe" of Arabs is left in the Land of Israel.

Systematic social oppression

The Emergency Regulations and the array of land seizure laws constitute two of the central underpinnings of the systematic oppression of Arabs in Israel. But the social institutions that they embody extend that oppression to virtually every sphere of life. This oppression begins at the most basic level: It forbids Arabs to live in large areas of the state: "First of all, as in the case of any persecuted minority, where are non-Jews authorized to live within the Jewish state? The answer is that in most places they purely and simply do not have the right to live. The majority of the land in Israel belongs to the state, which subjects it to rules prohibiting non-Jews from living there. A non-Jew is prohibited from building a house there; he is prohibited from renting an apartment there; he is prohibited from opening a business; in short, he is prohibited from living there. This is especially cruel in that the majority of the land in which these segregationist laws are in effect belonged to these very Palestinians who are officially defined in Israel as non-Jews and was taken from them. They are thus deprived, even as citizens of the 'Jewish state,' of the right to enjoy the lands of 'their' state. For example, in Israel there are entire cities — Carmiel, Nazareth-Illit, Hatzor, Arad, Mitzpeh-Ramon, and others — in which the law formally prohibits non-Jews from living. In places in which the majority of the land is private property, like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or Haifa, the 'Jewish state' does what it can to construct only segregated quarters in which the 'non-Jews' legally do not have the right to live." (Israel Shahak, chairman of the Israeli Human Rights League, in his new book *Le Racisme de l'Etat d'Israël*, Editions Guy Authier, Paris,

1975, pp.56-7.) In fact, in all Israel there are only six towns (and a couple of small villages) with mixed Jewish and Arab populations: Haifa, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Acre, Ramleh, and Lod.

In cases in which the regime finds it undesirable for reasons of public relations to formally bar Arabs from enjoying the benefits of laws passed for Jews, the government manages to find "code words," words that define an Arab without saying so openly. This is standard racist practice in the modern world, in which racism has become largely discredited. For example, one of the most pressing concerns of the Zionist ruling class is the fact that the Arab birth rate is significantly higher than the Jewish birth rate (because of the much higher economic and social status of the Jewish population). The 133,000 Arabs who remained in Israel in 1948 had become at least 400,000 by 1975. The formal annexation of Arab Jerusalem further raised the Arab population, and the gradual annexation of the territories occupied in the aggression of 1967 is raising it still further. Once again, there are simply too many Arabs. One of the ways devised by the ruling class to deal with this problem was to pass a series of laws granting financial subsidies to large families — a monetary incentive to increase the birth rate. It was thought undesirable to formally restrict these benefits to Jews, for that would be too obviously racist. The problem was solved in the following manner: The subsidies to large families were attached to an "aid to military veterans" bill. "Veteran" was defined as any person who had served or was serving in any branch of the armed forces or in any of the paramilitary organizations established before 1948. It just so happens that military service is obligatory for all Jews in Israel, male and female, and that 99 percent of all Arabs (the 1 percent are members of the Druze sect) are barred from serving in the army for "security reasons." Thus, the family subsidies affect 99 percent of the Jewish population and exclude 99 percent of the Arab population. The same technique is used on a broad scale to deny employment to Arabs. A random reading of the want ads in an Israeli daily newspaper indicates that virtually all offers of jobs apart from unskilled manual labor (and often even in the case of such labor) require that the applicant have "completed his or her military service."

And the oppression extends also to the educational and cultural spheres. Higher education is conducted exclusively in Hebrew, even though Arabic is listed as one of the official languages of the Israeli state. Of the 40,000 university students in Israel, barely a thousand are Arabs. The situation in secondary schools is scarcely better. Here the intent is to deny Arabs any knowledge of their own culture and history, vast as it is, and instead to instill in them an admiration for the achievements of Jews. In the four years of secondary education, a total of 32 periods are devoted to Arab history and civilization; 384 periods are devoted to Jewish history. As for elementary education, Sabri Jiryis summarizes the official curriculum as follows: "In the fifth elementary class ten hours are devoted to the study of the Hebrews, as against five hours for the study of the Arabian

peninsula; while in the sixth class Islamic history gets 36 periods out of a total of 64 for the whole of Arab history up to the end of the thirteenth century. . . . In the seventh elementary class Arab history is not studied at all, whereas a sixth of the school year is devoted to the study of the relations between Jewish communities abroad and Israel, while in the eighth and last class ten periods are devoted to Arab history from the 19th century up to the present day, as against thirty periods for the study of the history of the State of Israel."

A revolutionary solution

A number of important political conclusions flow from the position of the Arabs in Israeli society. Primary among these is that any important structural reforms to improve their status challenge the very existence of the Zionist state. As long as Israel remains a state whose purpose is to "ingather" the "exiles" of the "Jewish nation" presently scattered around the world, it is impossible to give the Arabs back their land; it is impossible to allow them to live wherever they want within the borders of the state; it is impossible to grant them equal rights in employment; it is not even possible to alleviate the crude chauvinism that characterizes the educational system, for to do so would simply be to foster the consciousness of the "Israeli" Arabs that they belong to the Arab nation and are logically a component part of its struggle for national and social liberation.

To make Arabs the equal of Jews in Israel would be to deprive Israel of its character as a Jewish state, that is, to "de-Zionize" it. For the Zionist ruling class, this would be equivalent to extinction, a fact which is openly admitted by the more honest representatives of the Zionist establishment. "We are a settler generation," Moshe Dayan said in 1956, "and without the steel helmet and the canon we cannot plant a tree or build a house." And, twelve years later, the same Dayan, speaking to a group of American Jewish students visiting the occupied Golan Heights: "During the last 100 years, our people have been in the process of building up the nation, of expansion, of getting additional Jews and settlements in order to expand the borders. Let no Jew say that the process has ended. Let no Jew say that we are near the end of the road." It is symbolic that the response of Yosef Almogi, the head of the Jewish Agency (which is funding the plan for "Judaizing Galilee") to the Arab general strike of March 30 was to say, "We'll have to speed up the project."

The open mobilization of the Arabs in Israel represents a turn in the Israeli political situation. It marks the end of the political passivity of the Arab population. It is a certainty, however, that the response of the ruling class will be intensification of repression; there is simply no available alternative.

Up to now, the leadership of the Arabs in Israel has been monopolized by Rakah, the Communist party. The reason for Rakah's hegemony is that it is the only mass

party in Israel that has consistently defended the democratic rights of the Arab population and has even won some small victories in this sphere. But Rakah does not challenge the existence of the Zionist state. Faithful to Kremlin diplomacy, it instead advocates Arab recognition of "secure borders" for Israel in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from some of the territory occupied in 1967. The shift of the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization to a similar outlook has created the basis for a potential bloc between Rakah and the PLO, and especially those sections of the PLO whose politics are most similar to Rakah's. The political activity of Rakah in the current Arab upsurge in Israel thus has a dual aim: on the one hand, to ensure that the Arabs in Israel are not attracted to the revolutionary-socialist perspective represented by the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen-Marxist), supporters of the Fourth International in Israel; on the other hand, to aid in bolstering the strength of that current in the PLO represented by the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the organization led by Nayef Hawatmeh. The more long-term project is an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank of the Jordan and the subsequent establishment of a Palestinian rump state in that territory. Should that come to pass, Rakah, as the Israeli Communist party and the representative of the "Israeli" Arabs, would enter into close relations with the self-proclaimed "Marxist-Leninist" wing of the PLO (mainly the DPF), which would become the Communist party of the new Palestinian rump state.



The problem with this perspective — apart from the fact that there is no sign that the Israeli ruling class has the slightest intention of withdrawing from any substantial portion of the West Bank — is that it offers the Arabs of Israel no real possibility of altering their present status to any considerable extent. Instead it leads them into an impasse, for there is no hope of modifying the position of Arabs in Israel as long as Israel remains a Zionist state.

But an alternative does exist. It begins from the understanding that the very characteristics of Zionism that make it a displacing colonialism have also given rise

to a force that can potentially become a major weapon in the destruction of Zionism. The Zionist state combines features of three types of capitalist states. As a settler-colonial state it is an instrument for procuring and maintaining privileges for Israeli-Jews of all classes (as well as for Jews everywhere who choose to immigrate) at the direct expense of the Palestinians and other Arabs. As a client state of imperialism it is an advance guard in the Arab world that spearheads imperialism's fight against the Arab revolution. But the Zionist state is also a capitalist nation-state, an instrument in the hands of the Israeli-Jewish ruling class for the economic exploitation of the Israeli-Jewish working class. The existence of an Israeli-Jewish proletariat with class interests that directly conflict with those of the ruling class distinguishes Israel from such states as South Africa, where the lines of national oppression coincide almost entirely with the lines of class oppression. Ultimately, the isolation of Israel from the Arab world is against the interests of the Israeli-Jewish working class, which pays for that isolation in the form of the deepening economic crisis, the militarization of Israeli life, the dependence on imperialism, and the constant series of wars generated by the inherently expansionist nature of Zionism. The inexorable long-term rise of the Arab revolution will make the maintenance of the present system of Jewish privilege ever more costly to the Israeli-Jews, especially to the Israeli-Jewish proletariat, both in terms of physical casualties and in terms of the increasing rate of exploitation of labor that will be required by the capitalist military economy, particularly in the context of the international crisis of the capitalist system.

The solution, then, not only for the Arabs but also for the Israeli-Jewish proletariat, is the dismantling of the Zionist state and its integration into a socialist Arab East. In the course of the struggle for this perspective, there are a series of democratic demands which have a transitional character in the Israeli context, demands that can mobilize the Arabs of Israel in a revolutionary struggle against the Zionist state and that are also in the objective interest of the majority of the Israeli-Jews themselves. These include the abrogation of all laws and practices conferring privileges on Jews, beginning with the law of return, which grants automatic Israeli citizenship to all Jews who wish to immigrate; the repatriation of all Palestinians to the present territory of the state of Israel; the rupture of all military and financial ties to the imperialist powers and of all financial and political ties to the Jewish communities of the world. Linked to these demands is the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967. There is no doubt that such a program represents the objective interests of the Arabs of Israel and also corresponds to their subjective concerns. It is also incontestable that such a program is supported today by only a tiny minority of the Israeli-Jewish population. At the same time, it has the potential of winning increased numbers of Israeli-Jews, for the only alternative is endless warfare with the Arab world and now, steadily increasing and violent conflict with the more than 400,000 Arabs who are said to be "citizens" of the Jewish state. □

ETTORE SALVINI 1938-1976



Comrade Ezio Ferrero (Ettore Salvini) was killed in a tragic automobile accident in Milan on the night of March 13. Comrade Salvini will be familiar to readers of INPRECOR as the author of a number of articles on the Soviet economy and Italian political and economic problems. At the time of his death, he was working on an article on the foreign policy of Brezhnevism, which was to have been published in the dossier on the Soviet Union that appeared in the last issue of INPRECOR (No. 47/48, April 1, 1976).

Comrade Ezio was born in Turin in 1938. He became a communist in his youth and joined the Youth Federation of the Italian Communist party. In 1956 he went to Moscow to attend the university there and remained in the Soviet Union for three years. Later on, he made frequent trips to the Soviet Union in connection with his professional activity and thus acquired an uncommon knowledge of that country. Also in the course of his professional activity, he was able to visit many other countries, among them the United States and China. In this manner, Ezio had the opportunity to acquire important international experience, which permitted him to develop analyses that were both concrete and of broad vision.

Shortly after his return to Italy from the USSR in 1959, Ezio, on the basis of what he had been able to see in Moscow and the studies he had undertaken, began to develop leftist positions critical of the bureaucracy. Thus opened the period of his collaboration with such publications as Nuova Generazione, Città Futura, and La Sinistra. In 1962 he was among the promoters of the far-left publishing company Samonà e Savelli.

Ezio soon came to revolutionary Marxist positions, finding in them an answer to all the questions he had begun to pose during his stay in the USSR and during the time of his activity in the Communist party. In 1962, as a logical outcome of his political development, he joined the Fourth International.

From that moment on, Ezio fulfilled important tasks for the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR—Revo-

lutionary Communist Groups, the Italian section of the Fourth International), both locally, in Turin, Rome, and Milan, and nationally. For many years he was a member of the National Secretariat and worked closely with the Political Bureau of the GCR. In 1963 he was elected a delegate to the Eighth World Congress of the Fourth International. At certain periods during his activity, he took on tasks assigned him by the leading bodies of the International.

Comrade Ezio contributed frequent articles and essays to the press of the GCR (*Bandiera Rossa* and *Quarta Internazionale*) and of the International (*Quatrième Internationale* and *INPRECOR*), signing his articles first with the pseudonym Sandro Mantovani and later Ettore Salvini. Others of his articles and essays have appeared in other press organs, both Italian (*Quaderni Piacentini*, under the name E. Sicco) and foreign.

Comrade Ezio's intellectual gifts were combined with human qualities that earned him the unreserved esteem of all those who knew him and great respect on the part of all his comrades. He combined various talents, from great political intelligence and acuteness of analysis to tactical sensitivity and understanding of organizational problems. His great human qualities compelled everyone to carefully consider all his proposals, even when there was disagreement with them. Finally, many of the youngest militants of the GCR have had occasion to fully absorb the lucidity and profound knowledge of revolutionary Marxism through the many decisive contributions of Comrade Ezio to cadre schools, both locally and nationally.

For the GCR, the Fourth International, *Bandiera Rossa*, for all of us, the death of Comrade Ezio is a profound loss, one we will not soon be able to make up for.

Ezio stood and worked among us with all the passion, dedication, and intelligence of a revolutionary communist militant, an internationalist communist militant. His comrades and the organization he worked so tirelessly to build will never forget him.