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CHINA



after the events
in tien-an-men square





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SPAIN



THE BOURGEOISIE ON THE RUN

The following interview with a member of the Central Committee of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria/Euzkadi ta Askatasuna-VI (LCR/ETA-VI — Revolutionary Communist League/Basque Nation and Freedom-Sixth Congress) was taken on April 22.

Question. What are the most important changes that have occurred in the political situation in Spain since the murders in Vitoria and the general strike of 500,000 workers of Euzkadi (the Basque country) in response to those murders?

Answer. The most important thing is that the masses have become conscious of the failure of the political project of reforming Francoism and not only of the failure of the Arias government. From this flows the understanding by the masses of the necessity not only of getting rid of the dictatorship but also of destroying all its bases. This is shown, for example, by the spread of slogans like "Dissolution of the repressive corps of Francoism," "Trials of those responsible for the crimes of the dictatorship," and so on. These have been raised both during demonstrations and in the platforms of demands of important workers strikes. So you can say that from this point on, the dominant political orientation within the bourgeoisie concedes that the short-term legalization of the whole of the workers movement is inevitable.

As far as the conquest of democratic rights is concerned, the mass movement feels its victory approaching with giant steps. This is giving an impetus not only to united action by the mass movement, but also to the outflanking of the demobilizing actions of sectors of the opposition, as was recently the case with the attempts to cancel the April 8 demonstrations in Madrid for amnesty and the demonstrations around Averri Eguna, the Basque national holiday. In all, about 30,000 or 40,000 people participated in the Madrid demonstrations and about 4,000 to 5,000 assembled for Averri Eguna in Pamplona, despite the declared state of siege. So the political situation is more and more tending toward a decisive turn.

The general strike for the overthrow of the dictatorship has become an immediate objective for broad masses.

QWhat is the function of the constitutional referendum the government is preparing for June 1976, according to the Spanish press?

AThe referendum is the instrument of the Francoist monarchy and the government for responding to the overall crisis of the regime and the state apparatus. Probably there will be three questions in the referendum. The first will relate to formal points about the succession to the throne. Obviously, this implies an indirect plebiscite for the monarchy. The second will relate to the modification of the Cortes, the pseudo-parliament created by the dictatorship. This institution will be divided into two Assemblies: a Senate with a corporatist composition, made up of members directly designated by the king, who has committed himself to including the forty Francoist "lifetime assessors" who now sit in the Cortes; and a "Congress of Deputies" elected by universal suffrage. These two Assemblies will have an approximately equal number of members and — this is the catch — practically identical spheres of competence. This is a good reflection of the political projects and intentions of the present government. The Senate is the "gift" to the old Francoists. The Congress of Deputies is seen as a "gift" to the bourgeois and Social Democratic opposition. The one should pretty much neutralize the other.

The third question of the referendum is the most surprising of all. It will solicit approval of the government's right to issue simple decrees to alter the "fundamental

laws of the kingdom," which were always considered immutable and eternal by traditional Francoist ideology.

So the meaning of the referendum is clear on two levels. On the one hand, the point is to break up the logjam the Francoist far right had established to block the projects of reforming the regime. On the other hand, the second point is to sketch out a sort of agreement with sectors of the "democratic" bourgeoisie, or, in any case, to establish rules of the political game that are as favorable as possible to the projects of the Francoist monarchy. This implies that the monarchy is trying, particularly through the vehicle of the third question of the referendum, to obtain the possibility of assuring a "legal" transition without any apparent discontinuity (once forced to by the action of the masses) from governments of the "reform of Francoism" variety to a government that would legalize the whole workers movement, like, for example, a government headed by the Christian Democratic chief Rufz Jiménez. This shows to what extent the bourgeoisie today considers its major political objective to be depriving the mass movement of its role as protagonist of the overthrow of the dictatorship.

In this situation, the Francoist far right is deepening its attitude of active resistance not only within the Francoist institutions but also in the streets, preparing itself to intervene politically as an independent force after the overthrow of the dictatorship, while still pursuing its policy of radically obstructing any project of institutional change, no matter how modest. It appears likely that this far right will call for a "no" vote, at least on the third question of the referendum.

The "democratic" sectors of the bourgeoisie and the Social Democracy have expressed their opposition to the referendum as a whole so long as the present political conditions persist. Even though the government may be able to obtain a formal success for the "yes" vote by resorting to maneuvers and fraud, the political operation represented by this referendum is condemned to failure in advance, as are all the other government projects.

The referendum is nothing but a new manifestation of the "flight forward" that characterizes the Francoist monarchy. Incapable of resolving the problems, it is simply trying to postpone things. But every postponement makes the solution to these problems more difficult from the standpoint of the interests of the bourgeoisie, because of the amplification of the mass mobilizations it provokes.

Q What is the meaning of the fusion of the Junta Democrática (Democratic Council) and the Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática (Platform of Democratic Convergence) into the "Coordinación Democrática" (Democratic Coordination)? (See INPRECOR, No.49, April 15, for the text of the Coordinación's founding communiqué.)

A This was the first of a series of similar events, such as the joint communiqué of the Democratic Council of Ca-

talonia and the president of the Generalidad of Catalonia in exile, Josep Tarradellas, as well as the fusion into a single body of the Junta Democrática and the Democratic Council of Valencia. As we have already pointed out in the communiqué of our organization on the constitution of the Coordinación Democrática (see INPRECOR, No.49, April 15), the basic objective of this fusion is the "negotiated break" (*ruptura pactada*) with the reformers of Francoism. The point is to push the orientation of peaceful transition from dictatorship to "democracy" to its ultimate logic. Not only is the monarchy not challenged, but the king appears as the principal protagonist of the "democratization" of the country. Thus, to give just one example, the most recent version of this "peaceful transition," as it was presented a few days ago in a document of the Christian Democracy, consists of the convocation by the king of legislative elections (not even a Constituent Assembly!) within six months. Since the creation of the Coordinación Democrática, two important events have occurred in this context. The party of Gil Robles (butcher of the Asturias insurrection of October 1934), a Catholic bourgeois politician, ultraconservative and fiercely anticommunist, has joined the Coordinación. At the same time, Rufz Jiménez has posed as a condition for his presence in the Coordinación the stipulation that the statutes must require that all decisions have to be taken unanimously. He explained this demand in the following way: "Under the conditions of social crisis the country is now living through, we must avoid any imprudent attitude in political declarations and above all in street demonstrations." The meaning is clear. In practice, the CP, the PSOE, the MCE, and the PT* have accepted this demand, hitching their "front" to the wagon of the bourgeois conservatives. Gil Robles and Rufz Jiménez have thus acquired veto power over all the activities of the Coordinación Democrática.

The function of the Coordinación Democrática as an instrument for creating a pact between the bourgeoisie and reformist opposition (supported by two important Mao-centrist groups) and the Francoist monarchy has been completely confirmed by these events. The function of the traditional workers parties within this body is in fact limited to acting as watchdogs over the mass movement, trying to hold this movement within bounds compatible with the veto rights of Messrs. Gil Robles and Rufz Jiménez. It is these two traditional workers parties that must also guarantee the future Social Pact, which they have promised big capital as compensation for the conversion to "democracy."

Also, we ought to stress the meaning of the accord between the Council of Catalonia and Tarradellas, as well as the relaunching of the Euzkadi government-in-exile. In both cases, it is a matter of utilizing "historic" bourgeois nationalism as a means of channeling the aspirations of the oppressed masses to obtain their right of self-

*PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español — Spanish Socialist Workers party (the Social Democracy); MCE: Movimiento Comunista de España — Communist Movement of Spain; PT: Partido del Trabajo — Labor party. The latter two are Mao-centrist formations.



determination for two nationalities for whom the problem of national oppression takes on special importance.

We can conclude that everything is now being prepared for the so-called constitutional period. In the course of this period, a "provisional government of broad coalition," within which the hegemony of the bourgeois forces will be absolute, is supposed to assure total control of the political situation in the name of the "establishment of democracy," that is, the reconstitution of the Spanish bourgeois state. It is significant that some members of the Junta Democrática, the entrepreneur Laroque for example, have openly asserted that one of the main objectives of this "constitutional period" would consist of reassuring investors by guaranteeing social peace in the country.

This shows how important it is to raise the slogan of immediate elections to a Constituent Assembly in order to reject the legitimacy of any provisional government imposed on the peoples of the Spanish state and as an instrument for sweeping away the whole Francoist political and institutional apparatus. This slogan must be articulated along with that of the no less immediate convocation of sovereign national assemblies of the oppressed nationalities so that they may freely exercise their own right to self-determination. To these two key demands of the present stage we must add the entirety of democratic slogans, the totality of which expresses the necessity, deeply felt by the mass movement, of completely destroying the Francoist regime.

Q How should the "tolerated" congress of the UGT be interpreted? (UGT: Unión General de Trabajadores — General Workers Union).

A The authorization of the UGT congress and the holding of this congress synthetically express the contradictions of the political situation in the Spanish state. (Some of these contradictions reach the point of absurdity: The government officially called the UGT congress "days of trade-union studies.") This authorization was inevitable even in the framework of the "reform of Francoism," because as we know, this reform implied the le-

galization of the historic Social Democracy. But the congress, which was held over Easter week, immediately turned against the government, going beyond what was desired by the UGT bureaucracy itself.

In fact, you have to take account of what forty years of dictatorship means in order to understand the enormous symbolic value acquired in the eyes of the workers of the whole country by the fact that a congress of an organization linked to the very birth of the Spanish workers movement was able to be held. During the course of this congress hundreds of people sang the International, with their fists raised, and there was no repression at all. The workers did not consider the holding of this congress as a concession from the government, but as a victory of the working class itself. The fact that it was a UGT congress was less important than the fact that it was a congress of a workers organization. The holding of this congress not only gave new impetus to the big debate about the creation of a class trade union that is now going on within the Spanish workers movement. It also stimulated preparation of other congresses of other workers currents, like those being prepared by the USO, the CNT,* and the Workers Commissions.

Concretely, the UGT congress ended in a victory for the right wing of the UGT, which had already held control of the apparatus. The fundamental thesis of this sector is summed up in the slogan "Unity in liberty," the real meaning of which is to center on building the UGT as such rather than any project of a trade union based on class unity. It is symptomatic that the congress responded with stony silence, if not murmurs of disapproval, to the appeal of Julian Ariza, well-known leader of the Workers Commissions, for a congress to form a united trade union.

But alongside this rightist majority, a significant leftist minority crystallized, represented essentially by the Madrid and Segovia federations, which put forward a motion calling for inviting representatives of all the working-class trade-union currents to the final session of the congress. This motion was the only one presented by the minority that received a majority of the votes.

The general positions taken by the UGT seem tough and radical. They talk of "class trade unionism" and of "revolutionary unionism." This expresses the bureaucracy's need to take account of the impetuous rise of the mass movement.

The official figure on UGT membership is barely 7,000. Several far-left political organizations in Spain already have more members than that. And it is a figure that is much lower than that of the Workers Commissions. But it is incontestable that the UGT will go through a rapid expansion now that it enjoys the tolerance of the authorities and can draw new and less politicized layers into action.

* USO: Unión Sindical Obrera—Workers Trade Union Federation; CNT: Confederación Nacional de los Trabajadores—National Confederation of Workers.

QWhere is the mass movement at right now?

AThe state of the mass movement has been substantially modified by the struggles that came after the Vitoria murders. Big workers struggles have gone on, especially in the metals sector of Barcelona and among the telephone workers of the whole country; a new rise of struggle by the construction workers is also possible now. Dozens of factories have seen important struggles. Some very significant victories have been won. At the SEAT automobile factory in Barcelona a large number of workers who had been laid off for going on strike were rehired. The same thing happened at Hunosa (the coal mines in Asturias). The workers are continuing to wage their struggles in a combined manner, both through the legal vehicle of the *enlaces y jurados* (the legally elected delegates of the official vertical union, the CNS) and through various types of representative bodies such as workshop assemblies and factory assemblies.

The point that has been attained by the mass movement implies the necessity for a basic qualitative leap toward centralization in order to broach the problem of the final overthrow of the dictatorship. In this situation, both the various united May 1 initiatives now being prepared in dozens of cities around the country (in fact, the majority of the important cities) and the capacity to go beyond conciliatory and reformist positions which was manifested during Averri Eguna in Euzkadi create good conditions for taking this qualitative leap soon.

QWhat are the latest developments within the far left?

AIt's not easy to answer this, because the situation is very fluid; continuous recomposition is going on. As for the traditional workers organizations, the most significant new fact is the development of internal tensions in the CP, caused by the demobilizing attitude to which its policy of alliance with the bourgeoisie leads, especially during mass street demonstrations.

The two biggest Maoist organizations, PT and ORT (Organización Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores — Revolutionary Workers Organization), have initiated a unification process, but it is running into many difficulties. For example, ORT did not agree to join the Coordinación Democrática, in which both the CP and the PT participate. But it did ask for observer status. The two organizations have been exhibiting greater independence of the CP in the past few weeks, unlike their attitude during preceding months.

The MCE is now sketching out a right turn which seems to have no limits. For example, it asked to be incorporated into the Basque government-in-exile, which is led by bourgeois nationalists.

On the other hand, Bandera Roja is now engaged in a rather far-reaching left turn, which has enabled them

to reach important practical convergences with our organization in struggles like that of the construction workers in Barcelona.

The OIC (Organización Internacionalista Comunista—Internationalist Communist Organization, an ultraleft group), which has been going through a big crisis since the beginning of the year, recently held a congress during which it worked out a turn away from some of its traditional positions, while maintaining both its sectarian positions on the Workers Commissions and its lack of understanding of the essential problem of the workers trade union in the Spanish state today. The politico-military ETA (Euzkadi ta Askatasuna — Basque Nation and Freedom) is now going through one of the most serious crises of its history, after the monumental error committed with the killing of Berazadi and other erroneous military actions.

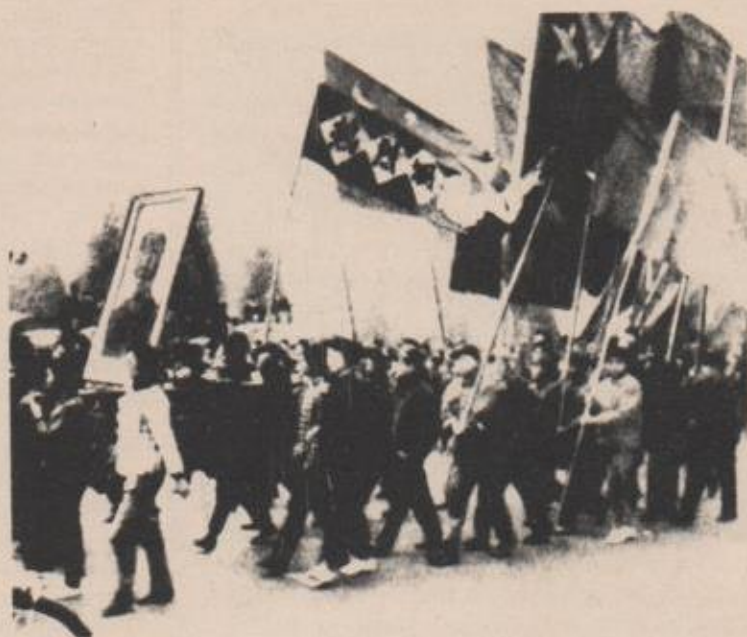
As for the LCR/ETA-VI, we are continuing to grow in terms of clarity, political influence, and organizational consistency, which has enabled us to double our strength in the past four months. But we remain weaker than the strongest Maoist organizations. It is therefore necessary to accentuate our efforts to expand our implantation in the working class and to prepare ourselves, the vanguard, and the mass movement for the decisive tasks they will confront in the stage immediately before us.

As for the Liga Comunista (Communist League), with which the Central Committee of our organization has decided to propose the opening of a fusion process, we believe that it has initiated an important practical evolution, which appears positive to us and which has been manifested in its present intervention into the metalworkers struggles in Barcelona.

QSo, to sum up?

AWe are already living through the process of the overthrow of the dictatorship. There have been sharp changes in the situation, and we will see others. Repressive attacks by the government, even bloody ones, remain possible and even inevitable. But the process is now under way and nothing will stop it. Within this process we forcefully reaffirm our basic strategic line: to resolutely drive forward the independent action of the mass movement as the only force that can destroy Francoism definitively. We reaffirm that the overthrow of the dictatorship, whatever concrete form it may take, will open a prerevolutionary situation in our country. Our task is to make this advance to a revolutionary situation. This strategy supplies all the meaning of our present orientation toward the centralization of mass action for the general strike against the dictatorship. This is also what gives full meaning to our battle for a united trade-union congress, to our slogan for immediate elections to a Constituent Assembly, to our propaganda for a workers government, and to our constant struggle for the workers united front against the dictatorship and capitalism. □

CHINA AFTER THE EVENTS AT Tien-an-men



by GREG BENTON

An earlier article in INPRECOR (see No. 46, March 18, 1976) dealt with the early phase of the recent political campaign in China against Teng Hsiao-ping. Since that article appeared, dramatic new events have taken place in Peking, confirming our earlier conclusions and indicating important new developments in the struggle. Before discussing the most recent turn in the Chinese crisis, it is useful to give a short background account of the course of the factional struggle in the Chinese Communist party (CCP) over the last decade.

At the most apparent level, the cultural revolution of 1966-68 was a confrontation at the pinnacle of power between two rival cliques, one headed by Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao, defense minister and high priest of the "Mao cult," and the other by Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping, both former general secretaries of the party who, like Stalin in the Soviet Union, had built up a strong political base in the party establishment.

The political program of the Liu-Teng clique broadly reflected the dissatisfaction of the hard-headed "realists" in the bureaucracy with the voluntaristic and egalitarian policies pursued by the "romanticist" Mao in the late 1950s. It is well known that these policies plunged China into economic chaos. Cadres at all levels of the party undoubtedly shared Liu and Teng's concern that these policies might be repeated. The Liu-Teng group also opposed Mao on certain foreign policy issues. While they shared Mao's basic criticisms of Soviet "revisionism," unlike him, they favored a certain measure of cooperation with the Russians against American imperialism.

Whereas the constituency of the Liu-Teng group was in the bureaucratic elite, Mao and his faction (among

them his wife, Chiang Ching, up to then a political outsider, and Chen Po-ta, his long-time personal secretary) set out to create a new base among sectors of Chinese society whose voice had long been silenced by the bureaucracy, particularly youth. By mobilizing them in struggle, Mao hoped both to swamp his enemies in the leadership and to "guarantee the succession" by revolutionizing new levies of future cadres. With characteristic impetuosity, Mao was banking on the fact that his immense authority among the masses would keep the movement more or less within the guidelines he had laid down for it. But the striking feature of the cultural revolution was the constant tendency of the forces mobilized in the struggle to escape central control. Not only did huge strikes break out in January 1967, but many organizations advanced independent political programs calling for socialist democracy in the spirit of the Paris Commune.

With his alliance crumbling at the base, Mao was forced to call in the military to restore order. This intervention involved the central military leadership around Lin Piao and the more conservative regional commanders, whose loyalties generally lay with their counterparts in the party. At the same time, Mao was forced to call off his purge of the party cadres. The disintegration of the Maoist base in the mass movement and the increased army involvement were to have far-reaching consequences for the future evolution of the factional struggle at the top.

The ninth congress of the CCP in 1969 institutionalized the balance of forces that had emerged from the cultural revolution, formally drumming Liu Shao-chi out of the leadership and ushering in the period of reconstruction of the party organizations destroyed during the mass assault.

In 1970 Chen Po-ta was purged from the leadership to prepare the way for a further rapprochement with the representatives of the central bureaucracy. Later, Mao's "close comrade-in-arms," Lin Piao, died in an airplane crash while fleeing to the Soviet Union after an alleged coup attempt. The details of the "Lin Piao affair" are obscure and need not concern us here, but objectively this episode marked the first stage in the whittling down of the newly-acquired power of the army in Chinese political life. Soon after Lin's death, other military leaders were also purged in the course of a campaign to reassert "party control over the gun." But rather than take on the whole of the army in one stroke, Mao applied his usual "salami tactics" to the problem.

Before 1966 the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was traditionally subordinate to a unified political leadership; its use in the factional struggle during the cultural revolution inevitably produced serious internal factional divisions. The relative speed with which the PLA leadership was forced or persuaded to back down from political power after 1969 demonstrated once again that the role of the army in China is in no way analogous to that in capitalist countries or even in the Soviet Union. But it is also clear that the identification of the military with the goals of the central political leadership is no longer absolute or automatic. Although he ousted the central Lin Piao clique, Mao was careful to do nothing that might antagonize the conservative regional commanders and made a number of political concessions to them.

The «radicals» in retreat

The period between 1970 and early 1973 represented the nadir of "radical" influence in the leadership. The downfall of "radicals" Chen and Lin reflected and reinforced the trend set in motion by the collapse of Mao's base in the mass movement. The "Lin Piao affair" also seriously undermined the credibility of the Maoists. In an attempt to restore his reputation for "infallibility," Mao produced a letter to Chiang Ching, allegedly written in 1966, which suggested that he had distrusted Lin all along. He then launched a "philosophical" campaign stressing the fact that it is an iron law of the universe that "one divides into two."

With the "radical" forces in temporary decline, a massive rehabilitation (or "liberation") of cadres who had been attacked during the cultural revolution got under way. This "liberation" was part of a general drift toward a restoration of the bureaucratic status quo, which was hastened by the shortage of administrative talent among Mao's "radical" entourage and by the need to convince the powerful regional commanders that the political power they had relinquished would pass into hands acceptable to them.

These "liberated" cadres provided the basis for reconstituting the "moderate" or "conservative" faction in the bureaucracy. As recent events have revealed, Chou En-lai and the rehabilitated "No.2 capitalist roader,"

Teng Hsiao-ping, were at the center of this regroupment. Why was Mao prepared to "liberate" Teng? The main reasons would appear to be that Teng was considered vital to the success of Chou's new "smiling face" diplomacy and economic construction and that his rehabilitation was intended as a gesture of good faith to the rest of the bureaucracy.

Even though the "radicals" were in retreat, they retained the trump card of the political backing of Mao himself. At the same time they had a power base in sections of the party (notably Shanghai), and they controlled the press and the urban militia, which was intended as a counterweight to the conservative military men.

The first major political test of strength after 1969 was the tenth congress of the CCP in August 1973. It was at this point that the "radicals" unexpectedly launched the "oppose the tide" and "oppose Confucius" campaigns in order to strengthen their position in the leadership struggle. The two factions appeared to emerge from the tenth congress equal in strength, but since the "moderates" were returning to posts they had already occupied before the 1966 upheaval, they were in fact in a better position to consolidate their power. The "oppose the tide" campaign was dropped shortly after the tenth congress, and the "criticize Confucius" campaign was given a sharp anti-cultural-revolution bias by the addition of the "criticize Lin Piao" aspect.

By the time Chou En-lai fell ill in May 1974, the "moderates" were strangely enough entrenched to be able to block the appointment of "radical" Wang Hung-wen, nominated No.3 in the hierarchy at the tenth congress, as Chou's stand-in and to ensure that this role went to Teng Hsiao-ping. In an unsuccessful attempt to reverse this defeat, the "radicals" launched an offensive in mid-1974 against "suspect" plays and operas, as well as a short-lived wall-poster campaign, which Western journalists revealed was suppressed, often violently, by local bureaucrats.

尔锐利元



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The Fourth National People's Congress (NPC) in January 1975 marked another important victory for the "moderates," increasing Teng's power and reducing "radical" representation to a minimum. Mao was conspicuously absent from the NPC, signaling his opposition to its decisions. In his speech to the NPC Chou En-lai, who made only the slightest reference to "economic development" at the tenth congress in 1973, was able to spell out economic targets for the next twenty-five years.

Still unwilling to concede defeat, the Maoists raised more and more explosive issues in the course of their 1975 campaign to "restrict bourgeois rights," attacking bureaucratic privilege and corruption and urging workers to oust "bourgeois power-holders" from the leadership. But the strike wave in the summer of 1975 alarmed all sections of the bureaucracy, giving Teng a chance to raise slogans more in keeping with his own conservative style of government.

The «anti-Teng» campaign

Since the issues involved in the anti-Teng campaign were dealt with extensively in the earlier INPRECOR article, it is necessary only to briefly summarize them here.

In the context of the struggles of the 1960s, there is little new in Teng's political program, which stresses the need for stability, professionalism, and a slight widening of differentials to cushion bureaucratic rule through the creation of a narrow privileged social stratum. In foreign policy Teng appears to favor the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union, although the evidence for this is flimsy. He also favors a certain liberalization of political and cultural life, and was recently accused (Hsinhua, April 8) of "wanting bourgeois libertarianism" and of denouncing Chiang Ching's theatrical works as "letting a single flower bloom."

While the "radicals" share Teng's basic aim of modernizing China's economy before the end of the century, they insist on the need to reduce inequality to a minimum through a downward compression of wage scales and favor permanent political mobilization to stamp out symptoms of bureaucratic degeneration. Their proposals for "all-round dictatorship" amount in practice to the extinction of all elements of proletarian democracy.

Even though the issues at stake in the recent dispute are similar in essence to those that arose in 1966, the differences between the two periods are crucial to an understanding of how the crisis has developed:

1. In 1966 the army, steeped for seven years in the spirit of "Mao thought" by Lin Biao, was firmly on the side of the Chairman. In 1976 the military hierarchy supports the "moderates" in the leadership, if only because of the traumatic memories of the cultural revolution, and resents the politically-motivated reshuffling

RED GUARDS DEMONSTRATING IN 1966 DURING CULTURAL REVOLUTION



of their commands. Needless to say, the lack of positive support from the military severely reduces the options open to the "radicals."

2. In 1966 the Liu-Teng clique was united by no more than an ill-defined opposition to Mao's more "extreme" policies and could not yet be said to constitute an alternative pole in the leadership. On the contrary, they collapsed almost as soon as pressure was brought to bear on them. In 1976, with the experience of the last ten years behind them, the "moderates" are apparently better organized, more united, and more prepared to advance an alternative program than ever before, as evidenced by Teng's obstinate refusal to make the slightest gesture of "repentance" for his "crimes."

3. The sheer numerical weight of "liberated" cadres in the administration gives "moderate" leaders a measure of immunity, since threatening moves against them would run the risk of alienating an entire layer of the bureaucracy. For example, it has been estimated that twelve of the vice-premiers and ministers, eighty-one officials of the state council, and over 500 central figures at the top level belong to the category of "liberated" cadres.

4. Another new and crucial feature of the recent period is the fact that although the social tensions dramatically highlighted by the cultural revolution are continuing to multiply, the masses are turning less and less to any section of the bureaucratic leadership for solutions and are relying more and more on their own independent actions. This is demonstrated, among other things, by the Hangchow strike wave of 1975 and by the fact that those Red Guards mobilized and then suppressed by the "radical" leaders in 1966, together with large numbers of jobless youth in the towns and villages, are now ready to fight against the Mao-Chiang Ching group. The emergence of powerful underground revolutionary currents among Chinese youth is best exemplified by the famous "Li I-che wall-poster" put up in Canton in late 1974, the importance of which will be discussed in a future article.

These important changes are the main reason why the Maoists insisted on the strict regulation of the anti-Teng campaign, and absolutely forbade the formation of mass organizations.

Behind the Tien-an-men events

Now let us consider the most recent phase in the present political crisis, particularly the riots in Tien-an-men Square in Peking, when more than 100 militiamen were wounded, twelve of them seriously, by a crowd incensed over the removal of wreaths laid in memory of Chou En-lai. Did the Tien-an-men events represent a demonstration of mass support for Teng's political program? Was the "counterrevolutionary" violence that flared up in the square staged by Teng and his backers, as the Maoists claimed? The answer to both questions would appear to be no. The Peking correspondent of the Far Eastern Economic Review, who spent several hours in the square, "did not hear or see Teng's name once." On the contrary, all reports indicate that if any one name was responsible for drawing the crowds, it was Chou En-lai's. For Teng to have stage-managed the incident that gave his enemies precisely the excuse they needed to strip him of all his powers would, in fact, have been an uncharacteristically inept move on the part of this master of the bureaucratic maneuver. In this context, it should be remembered that it was the voice of Teng's ally Wu Teh that boomed out from the public address system during the riots, warning against "class enemies and counterrevolutionaries."

The evidence available both in the remarkably full and frank People's Daily report of the incidents and in accounts provided by Western journalists present during the events shows clearly that the theory of an "organized, premeditated counterrevolutionary plot" has absolutely no substance. A main theme of the demonstrators — who sang the International, gave the clenched-fist salute, and repeatedly stressed their allegiance to Marxism — was the call for democratic rights and opposition to the totalitarian implications of the "radical"-inspired cam-



paign to deepen the "all-round dictatorship." (As the Li I-che wall-poster in Canton pointed out, the main victim of this "dictatorship" is not the "privileged class" but the "newly-emerged mass movement.") This is seen clearly in the "decadent and reactionary" poem pasted up by "counterrevolutionaries" in the square and later reprinted in People's Daily:

Devils howl as we pour out our grief,
we weep but the wolves laugh,
we spill our blood in memory of the hero,
raising our brows we unsheathe our swords.
China is no longer the China of the past,
and the people are no longer wrapped in
sheer ignorance,
gone for good is Chin Shih Huang's feudal
society.
We believe in Marxism-Leninism!
To hell with those scholars who emasculate it!
For the sake of genuine Marxism-Leninism
we do not fear to lay down our lives or shed
our blood,
and the day that China's modernization is
realized
we will return to offer libations and sacrifices.

The reference to Chin Shih Huang, despotic first unifier of the Chinese Empire, is in fact an attack on the "dictatorship" campaign, since Chin Shih Huang and his totalitarian legalist philosophy were recently the object of "radical" glorification. It is interesting to note that after the poem was first published in the national press, an official directive was issued by Hsinhua forbidding

editors to print it "on separate lines," presumably to make it less striking and attractive to readers.

The demonstrators also set up a "committee of the people of the capital to commemorate the premier." They raised a number of demands not specified in the People's Daily report and when the PLA soldiers marched into the square they shouted slogans such as "the people's army should stand on the side of the people" and "those befuddled by others are innocent. In this context the clashes that took place with the police, army, and militia take on a different significance from the one given to them in the Maoist press, although it obviously cannot be ruled out that hooligans and "bad elements" also had a hand in the rioting. Wall-posters were also seen in the square attacking Chiang Ching as the modern "dowager empress."

The fact that the authorities had to bring in tens of thousands of security forces, many of them from outside the capital judging by vehicle licence plates, shows that the demonstrators numbered more than the "tiny handful" mentioned in People's Daily. The significance of the Tien-an-men events was that supporters of the Chou-Teng faction, either through recklessness or miscalculation, had created the opening for tensions to rise and express themselves in what the Maoists were quick to call a "Hungarian-type" incident. It is important to add that the unrest was not confined to Peking: in Honan an official was killed by a "counterrevolutionary" crowd, and in Nanking pro-Chou demonstrations were reportedly accompanied by strikes on the railways.



Official references to "attempts to nominate Teng to play the role of Nagy, chieftain of the counterrevolutionary incident in Hungary," may unintentionally be a not altogether unfair representation of the Peking "spring," since the recent history of East Europe shows that in such antibureaucratic upsurges it is not uncommon for sections of the masses to develop illusions in a "liberalizing" wing of the bureaucracy. But it is just as likely that genuinely antibureaucratic forces used the split in the leadership as a cover to advance their own demands for democratic rights.

Factional struggle will intensify

Teng's downfall cannot be said to represent a decisive turning point to the left in the factional struggle at the top. Today, with the Maoist mass base eroded and the impossibility of an operation of the sort by which Liu Shao-chi was toppled, the anti-Teng campaign would probably have bogged down like every other "radical" campaign in recent months if it had not been for the apparent recklessness of a group of Teng's own supporters. Even after the Tien-an-men events, the Maoists' fear of the mass movement prevented them from driving home their temporary advantage against the "moderates." The April 6 People's Daily warned rank-and-file supporters against "establishing inter-unit ties, organizing fighting groups, or ganging up in factions." As if to underline the impotence of the "radical" offensive, the same day that Teng was stripped of his posts (but not, it should be noted, of his party membership) the "moderate" leader Li Hsien-nien, himself attacked during recent weeks, reappeared in public for the first time since Chou's funeral.

The main beneficiary of the crisis was, in fact, a nebulous "centrist" grouping represented by the newly-confirmed premier Hua Kuo-feng, a provincial bureaucrat whose main qualifications for power appear to be his independence of the two main factions and his links with Mao's native county of Hsiangtan. The speed with which Hua's appointment was confirmed suggests panic and shock in the leadership at the recent upsurge of unrest. Subsequent attempts to lend the appointment an air of legitimacy by marshaling well-organized and totally unspontaneous mass demonstrations can hardly disguise Hua's complete lack of genuine rank-and-file support. As the Times correspondent reported: "The masses of Peking people on the pavements showed a marked indifference to the parades of lorries and schoolchildren waving banners and posters."

There are numerous indications that the factional struggle is still far from resolved. The most recent of these is the April 18 People's Daily editorial calling for the elimination of other "bourgeois bigwigs" like Teng who are still active in the party and claiming that "class enemies" defeated at Tien-an-men are now staging a "frenzied" counterattack.

But the absence of a new generation of popular leaders of the stature of Mao and Chou will make it extremely difficult for either faction to create a stable base of support in the country. As Mao's death draws near, the pressures for a quick resolution of the leadership struggle are bound to multiply, especially since the "radicals" are aware that Mao's powerful backing for their faction can last only as long as Mao does. This opens up the possibility of a power struggle confined exclusively to the bureaucratic apparatus, one that could increasingly assume the classical Stalinist form of police purges and show trials. In this light, the Shanghai calls for Teng's execution may be more than just a ritual observance.



Revolutionaries in China will support neither of the bureaucratic factions in the struggles that break out in future years, but will take the side of the independent workers movement. They will fight for an independent program that embodies the aspirations and demands of all sections of the revolutionary masses and that incorporates those radical aspects expressed in a fragmentary and distorted form in the rival programs of the two factions — the egalitarianism of the Maoists, the timid liberalization calls of the "moderates." Such a program would be axised around the following points (tentatively formulated by some Chinese Trotskyists at the height of the cultural revolution in February 1967):

1. Opposition to the cult of the personality.
2. Opposition to bureaucratic privileges, corruption, and degeneration.
3. Support for the principles of the Paris Commune, i.e., elections by secret ballot to factory committees, committees of peasants, and communes at all levels.
4. The guaranteeing in action as well as words of the constitutional rights inscribed in the third chapter of the constitution of the People's Republic of China: freedom of speech, publication, association, demonstration, and strike; freedom of religion; freedom from violation of one's person or one's residence.
5. Opposition to cuts in the welfare or living standards of the workers and peasants.
6. The guaranteeing to one's opponents of freedom of political debate.
7. Support for a thoroughgoing assessment of the internal and external policies of the regime since 1949.
8. Freedom of artistic, literary, and cultural expression, but with the application of a clear-cut political standard.
9. Recognition that opposition to Russian "revisionism" should not stand in the way of a united front with Russia against the main enemy, U.S. imperialism.
10. Subordination in both theory and practice of the interests of the construction of socialism in China to the interests of the world revolution.

April 18, 1976



THAILAND after the April 4 elections

by PAUL PETITJEAN

One year after the elections of January 1975 the Thai National Assembly was dissolved. Social and political tensions had gotten the better of an unstable parliament lacking real power. A caretaker government was formed to organize new elections. On April 4, 1976, these elections were held, the Democratic party (the only opposition party under the former dictatorship, whose leader, Seni Pramoj, had long enjoyed a reputation for honesty) winning 115 of the 279 seats; the Democratic party had held only 72 seats in the old parliament. While the Social Action party advanced from 18 to 45 seats, its leader, Kukrit Pramoj, the prime minister, was defeated in his own district. As a whole, the parties of the traditional military right stagnated: The party of the Thai Nation (Chart Thai) doubled its number of seats (from 28 to 56); but the Social Justice party fell from 45 to 25 seats and the Social Nationalist party remains a negligible force.

The left, even the moderate left, is now practically excluded from parliament. The Thai Socialist party declined from 15 seats to 2, the Socialist United Front from 10 to 1, and the New Force party from 12 to 3. A real campaign of terror had been unleashed against these parties.

Bartering of influence and corruption remain the stock in trade of "civil and democratic" Thailand. More than 2,000 candidates presented by several dozen "parties" contested the 279 seats in the Assembly. According to Norman Peagan, votes were bought for anywhere between 50 and 100 baths, that is, about US\$2.50-5.00. (Far Eastern Economic Review, April 9, 1976.) The

Democratic party, with the support of the military officers, is said to have mobilized the soldiers in Kukrit Pramoj's district to vote as a bloc in order to guarantee the defeat of the former prime minister. In his border district, Air Marshall Dawee Chullassapya, new leader of the Social Justice party, was said to have granted the right to vote to a number of Chinese from the Kuomintang army as well as to members of the Montagnard tribes who had fled Laos.

So the elections were rigged, but significant nevertheless. The elimination of the legal left from parliamentary life in the wake of the terrorist campaign can have deep long-term effects. For the immediate future, the political center of gravity in the National Assembly is shifted clearly to the right. The new government coalition, built around the Democratic party (a pro-American bourgeois party), includes the three parties of the traditional military right, linked to the landed proprietors (Chart Thai, Social Justice, and Social Nationalist). But the meaning of the Seni Pramoj victory is nonetheless ambiguous. It tends to indicate that the population rejects the still present perspective of a military coup. In itself this is a very deformed reflection of the ongoing struggles in Thailand, which were not interrupted by the electoral campaign.

The far-right offensive, unleashed about a year ago, was sharply intensified as a section of the military hierarchy continued to apply a "policy of tension." In 1975 a series of murders were committed against the Federation of Farmers of Thailand, while fascistic formations sought to gain a base in the countryside (Navapol) and among the high-school students (Red Buffaloes). (See INPRECOR, No.38, November 20, 1975.) This time, the individual murders took on new scope in Bangkok itself. The attacks were more murderous and the legal and moderate left was directly hit; in several provinces the effort to establish a base in the rural areas was more pronounced.

There were more than thirty people killed, among them three candidates, and dozens wounded during the electoral campaign. On February 17 the headquarters of the New Force party (Palang Mai), a technocratic liberal party, was plastic-bombed. On February 18 a student leader, Amares Chai-Saard, was killed, along with three other students. On February 27 Boonsanong Boonyothayan, secretary general of the Thai Socialist party, was murdered, as was one of the SP's mass leaders. On March 2 a TNT charge was planted in the foundations of a technical school where the left had hegemony. Five bodies were dug out of the ruins. On March 25 a grenade was thrown into an electoral rally of the New Force party, killing ten. Five days later, a bomb was thrown at an anti-American mass demonstration. Result: three dead and about eighty wounded.

Many candidates had coffins delivered to their homes — as warnings. Since the overthrow of the military regime in October 1973 at least thirty-five leftist leaders and personalities have been murdered, including mass leaders, journalists, and a translator of Maxim Gorky. This "white terror" has not gone without effects. Fund

raisers for the Thai Socialist party ceased operating; the left virtually gave up campaigning; the Federation of Farmers of Thailand seems to be having trouble in some districts; some student or worker cadres have preferred to leave the capital.

The killers have gone unpunished. But the responsibility of the Red Buffaloes and Navapol in the attacks and murders is known. Their links with the upper reaches of the military hierarchy have been advertised publicly (see INPRECOR, No.38, November 20, 1975). The far-right is continuing to organize openly. Navapol has just founded a political party, Dhammat Patai (Moral Sovereignty). Its secretary general, Watana Keovimal, has support among the Buddhist hierarchy. This party puts forward a mystical, plebeian, fascistic program. An Anti Communist Imperialism United Front (ACIUF) has arisen. The existence of a series of parallel paramilitary formations is now a permanent feature of Thai political life.

The defeat of the legal left, its eviction from the parliamentary game, makes its initial democratic liberal project less and less credible. Power remains in the hands of the army in Thailand. After the murder of the secretary general of the Thai Socialist party, a division appeared within the SP as to the utility and opportunity of participation in the electoral campaign. The results of the election should bolster the solutions called for by the Thai CP or the most radical currents in Bangkok: continuation or preparation of armed struggle. The vice secretary general of the SP has revealed that Boonsanong had been on a blacklist of the Internal Security Operational Command (ISOC), the "countersubversion center." Workers leaders (like Prasit Chayo of the textile unions), student leaders (notably Thirayuth Boonmee, present adviser of the National Student Center of Thailand), the new secretary general of the SP (Somkid Srisangkorn), and others also figure on this list. Under these conditions, the "parliamentary solution" seems



Kukrit Pramoj

empty of meaning, especially since deep popular dissatisfaction with the electoral game was manifested throughout the campaign and the rate of abstention was high.

Continuation of social struggles

The shift to the right of the political center of gravity in the National Assembly does not reflect a subsiding of the social struggles that have been going on since 1973. The conditions under which the Assembly was dissolved in January confirm this.

The political class in Bangkok knows that it has to put forward some remedies for the agrarian crisis, which is hitting the Thai peasantry severely, increasingly ousting the peasants from the land. The Sanya and Kukrit governments attempted some very timid reforms. But their application — when there was any application — was carried out in such a way as to benefit the middlemen or the landed proprietors. In December 1975 Kukrit Pramoj, who was then prime minister, decided on a big increase in the price of rice, especially important for the prices in the state stores, where rice had been sold much more cheaply than on the free market. Officially, the point was to help the farmers, whose income is extremely low compared to that of the urban workers. The left replied that this measure would essentially serve the millers (who process paddy rice into white rice), the middlemen, and the big landlords and that on the other hand it would strike hard at a poor urban population for whom rice purchases often account for more than 50 percent of monthly income. On January 2 the Federation of Labor Unions of Thailand, supported by the NSCT (National Student Center of Thailand), called for a general strike to demand that the previous prices be maintained and for financial aid to the farmers. Some 10,000 people demonstrated on January 5. The parliamentary opposition then threatened to censure the government; Kukrit reshuffled the government and then, on January 12, dissolved the Assembly, after accepting the demands of the general strike.

The Federation of Labor Unions of Thailand (FLUT) is a union that has broken with collaboration with the State Department for Social Affairs. Its base is in the public sector, which has been ultra-collaborationist. This time, the workers of the public enterprises took to the streets. Joint social pressure, urban and rural, is now also a permanent feature of Thai political life.

New experiences in workers struggles, sometimes very advanced, are being accumulated. This is particularly the case in textiles, where the "reformist" and "radical" trade unions are contesting for influence among a young proletariat composed essentially of women. As far back as May 1975 there was a very tough strike at Standard Garment, with a factory occupation and the formation of self-defense pickets against the attacks of the official and employers' police. This strike ended in victory.

This time it was the women workers of the Hara factory who engaged in a long struggle with an occupation. After fruitless negotiations, they rechristened the factory and restarted production for their own benefit. As a sign of solidarity, their initial production was sent to the peasants of the North and Northeast, who were victims of a cold wave. Then they organized sales on the market, at very low prices: jeans that had been worth 190 baths were now sold for 50 baths. In spite of this, the workers earned much more than before. This experiment was quite educational in regard to the superexploitation to which the Thai proletariat is subject.

Other mobilizations have taken place this year: three tin mines owned by the Anglo-Oriental Company which account for 27 percent of Thai mineral production, were paralyzed; two gunny sock factories, one in Bangkok, the other in the provinces, went on strike, drawing 5,000 workers into struggle around wages and working conditions and against the privatization of a factory in the capital; the Bangkok docks were also completely paralyzed. The electoral campaign did not halt social struggles.

But while the strike of the women workers at the Hara factory indicated the extraordinary progress that has been made in social struggles in two years, it also confirmed the weakness of the movement as a whole. There was difficulty in organizing central responses. Of course, student solidarity was asserted on a regular basis; common meetings and educational courses were held with the aid of militants of the NSCT. But when the impending police intervention was announced, the demonstration organized in front of the prime minister's house was not sufficient. The factory was reoccupied by the police. In 1975 one of Bangkok's longest strikes, that of the Dusit Thani Hotel, had also been broken because of difficulties in broadening the response (see INPRECOR, No.38, November 20, 1975.)

Rural and urban social tension goes hand in hand with the struggles of the ethnic and religious minorities. In the southern provinces of the country the situation has deteriorated sharply. The population there is 80 percent Muslim. But the Buddhist minority has the upper hand in the administration, the police, and the army. In November 1975 "marines" murdered five villagers in a "countersubversion" operation. For a period of forty-five days several thousand Muslims occupied the central mosque in Pattani before winning their demands: arrest of the guilty parties, removal of the governor, a visit by Kukrit. Tension between the two communities remains high and the Buddhist right, linked to the administration, is becoming more active.

The offensive of the military right comes above all as a response to this rise of class struggles and of the struggles of minorities. But the military right does not presently command the means by which to suddenly break this social mobilization. It has to try to gather these means, especially since the weight of the victorious Indochinese revolution remains very great.



Seni Pramoj

"U.S. Go Home"

Thailand's geopolitical situation continues to dominate both Thai political life and American choices. Thailand is both a forward post in western positions against the development of the Asian revolution and the country in which the social and political repercussions of the Indochinese victory are most immediate.

Although class struggles take priority over any other consideration during periods of workers or peasants conflicts, on the eve of the April 4 elections the presence of American forces once again became the question of the hour. According to the accords reached with the Kukrit government just after it came to power, the last GIs were supposed to leave Thailand on March 20. But slightly before that deadline 4,000 troops were still left and the Thai military high command indicated that a contingent of 3,500 soldiers would remain indefinitely. A test of strength was then engaged. The government made its conditions known: effective withdrawal of the troops and control of all American military installations. The American Embassy refused and demanded diplomatic status for the American personnel of the various bases. Kukrit replied: "We have to decide. Do we want 4,000 American ambassadors in Thailand?" (Far Eastern Economic Review, April 2, 1976.) An agreement was reached with the student movement and demonstrations were announced for April 20. The Anti Communist Imperialism United Front threatened a counterdemonstration. The army was placed on alert. The U.S. Embassy obligingly translated a communiqué by a "People's Action Center of Thailand," which "exposed" a supposed plot of the Thai Communist party aimed at seizing power. A military coup seemed to be in the works when Washington suddenly backed down: between now and July 20 the troops will leave the country; 270 "advisers" will remain and the American military installations will come under the government's jurisdiction.

The abandoning of the complex of Thai military bases is irritating for U.S. imperialism on more than one count, but Washington has very probably already planned on a regional redeployment: the military and air bases will be shifted to South Korea, Japan, the Philippines (Clark Airfield and Subic Base), Guam, and the Mariana Islands; the Utapao radio communications center (which links Diego Garcia and the Philippines) and the Sattahip naval base will be shifted to Singapore or Indonesia. The Ramasum electronics base (a listening station), the air force symological station at Chiang Mai, and the Kuh Hua satellite station will also have to be replaced. The "nuclear umbrella" of the region will be maintained by the Seventh Fleet, or even Australia, as well as by the various island bases.

Nevertheless, in view of the strategic importance of Thailand and the example it has set, which may be echoed tomorrow in the Philippines or Japan, U.S. imperialism is not happy about dismantling its Thai military network. If it is being done, it is only because it has been forced. Washington cannot allow itself to become mired in a new confrontation on the continent, and Indochinese pressure, as well as that of the mass movement, is too strong to be ignored. Of course, the new government can overturn the decisions of the previous government, but it would then immediately appear as a tool of the United States. In order to remain in Thailand (through the "advisers" and the links between the Thai military hierarchy and the Pentagon), Washington will probably have to accept this limited withdrawal.

But under this same hypothesis, Thailand will remain a base of aggression against Indochina. It is from Bangkok that the Molinak (a so-called Khmer Liberation Movement) asserts its existence. It is in the North and Northeast of Thailand that commandos have been formed to organize attacks and sabotage in Laos. It is in Thailand that the essential part of the Indochinese refugees are assembled, and it is from there that the international anticommunist slander campaign has been launched. The Vietnamese are making no mistake when they reiterate their warnings. The anti-imperialist question will remain one of the keys to the mass struggles in Thailand.

Preparing a «constitutional coup»

The latest legislative elections can give the Thai bourgeoisie grounds to hope for a minimum of temporary political stability. The prospect of a possible military coup is thus postponed. But a policy of deep social reform, whether by a "civilian" government or by a group of officers, seems very difficult, because of the weight of the landed bourgeoisie, the direct interests of the military hierarchy in the imperialist enterprises, the links between the military high command and the Pentagon, the importance of smuggling (drugs and other items), and the Communist pressure. Consequently, the possibility of a coup continues to hang over the country, especially since the social movements are slowly ripening and the Thai CP is gradually gaining in strength.

Several armed clashes occurred during the electoral campaign. The guerrilla forces have expanded at a rate of about 15-20 percent a year. Absolute figures on the number of CP partisans vary considerably according to the source. In the February 27, 1976, Far Eastern Economic Review Anders Tandrup attempted an estimate based on the three categories of villages defined by the CP (combat villages controlled 80 percent by the CP, expansion villages in which between 50 and 60 percent are partisans of the CP, contact villages in which CP influence affects less than half the inhabitants) and the figures advanced by government agencies and special services. Tandrup puts forward the figure of 10,000 guerrillas and a million organized partisans (out of a total population of 42 million). The CP's base clearly remains extremely uneven according to region, the Northeast being the zone of greatest influence and the Center the weakest area. But it is precisely in the Northeast that the American withdrawal threatens to have the most immediate social consequences (unemployment), and the CP's audience has undeniably grown among the most radical inhabitants of Bangkok.

Imperialism has not overcome its dilemma: wait and allow new revolutionary forces to organize or precipitate a "coup" and throw many militants now far from the CP into the arms of the CP. In this context it is probable that the American services and the Thai military command are now trying to assemble the conditions for a "constitutional military coup," which, without challenging the foreign policy of détente with China, would allow for government by decree and the strengthening of the repressive apparatus.

The threat of a coup has been affirmed on various occasions. When Kukrit left the conference of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), there was a reported attempt by some young officers. General Boonchai Bamrungphong, commander-in-chief of the army, "admitted" that there is a group of officers "discontented with the indecision of the government who feel they should do something about it." (Far Eastern Economic Review, February 27, 1976.) In March a special "cocktail party" was held in Bangkok. The military high command had invited Admiral Sa-Ngad Chalawyo, head of the three branches of the armed forces. At this party, he is reported to have stated that the officers "will play their role if the leftists start moving," and that they were able to wait: "I'll tell you when the time comes." (Voice of the Nation, March 14, 1976.)

The dissolution of the National Assembly in January had been desired by the officers. The crisis of the Kukrit government was raising the possibility of the formation of a coalition "toward the left." They can hope that the new team will have better means by which to govern "toward the right." Under these conditions, the coup could take the form of a decree of martial law, with the moral support of the king (who has already accused Vietnam of committing "direct aggression against the country" — Far Eastern Economic Review, January 2, 1976), the consent of the Democratic party and Seni Pramoj, and American support. □

BOLIVIA



TWO DEFEATS FOR THE BANZER REGIME

by LUIS ROCA C.

The year 1976 began in a tense political atmosphere. In 1975 the economic and social problems facing the masses had intensified. Although the masses made important steps forward in their concrete struggle against the November 9 decrees, which had ordered a wage freeze and the dissolution of the trade unions, they still lacked a leadership to centralize their forces and struggles. The general consciousness of the workers expressed an opposition, a revolt, but without national or even sectoral cohesion. Hence, the explosions of protest that broke out remained fragmented and isolated and were thus unable to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, at the end of 1975 a strong tendency emerged among the masses: to breathe new life into the trade-union bodies that had been dissolved by the government, to defend the purchasing power of the wage-earners, under attack by inflation, and to contain the repression and demand the release of political prisoners and the return of those exiled. Two factors intensified the political tension: the government's contemptuous rejection of the demand for amnesty and Banzer's attitude of capitulation during negotiations with Chile over the opening of a corridor to the Pacific Ocean.

Under these conditions, two conflicts unfolded that mobilized important sectors of the masses and became transformed into real tests of strength on a national scale: the conflict in the Manaco factory and the conflict in the universities. For the first time, the dictatorship was faced with a real mobilization of the masses which constantly spread and deepened. Shaken by the scope of the conflicts, it was compelled to give in. In both cases the test of strength resulted in victory for the masses.

The Manaco conflict

The Manaco factory is a shoe factory, a subsidiary of a British trust that operates in Latin America under the name Bata. It was set up in Bolivia thirty-five years ago and since then has constantly expanded its investments, causing the bankruptcy of small companies (Plus Ultra, Zamora, Tardio, etc.). During the MNR government* Manaco bought into the nationalized mines, benefiting from a sort of monopoly. Apart from its virtually absolute control of the domestic market, this company has specialized in the manufacture of deluxe shoes for export, especially to Europe, taking advantage of the low prices for raw materials and the cheap labor supply.

Concurrently with the expansion of this company and with the power it acquired within the country, a combative proletariat developed within it. Although not very numerous (slightly more than a thousand workers), this proletariat nevertheless had a clear revolutionary consciousness. The role of these workers within the industrial proletariat as a whole may be compared to that of the Siglo XX-Catavi workers among the miners. When the dictatorship began destroying the workers organiza-

tions in August 1971, the Manaco workers became an advanced bastion of defense of the interests and rights of the proletariat. With exemplary tenacity and courage, they opposed the measures of the government and the employers, which were breaking the demands of the industrial workers. The factory management complained that the Manaco workers engaged in seventeen strikes during this period. It was thus that Manaco acquired a vanguard position among the industrial proletariat. While the Manaco workers were winning the sympathy of the toiling masses, they were also attracting the hatred of the fascist officers, the exploiting bourgeoisie, and imperialism. When a problem came up in one of the departments of the factory, this coalition decided that the time had come to subdue, defeat, and destroy this advanced nucleus of the industrial proletariat.

The employers had resolved to introduce "reforms" in the factory aimed at increasing production and thus aggravating working conditions. Resistance to these changes began in the cutters workshop, in Circle 423. Sixty machines were functioning there and the management eliminated ten of them; thus, the work pace was stepped up in consonance with the reduction in the number of machines, an attempt to achieve the same production as before. The workers said: "In this way we do not even have the time to wipe our brows and we are more exhausted than before." They demanded the return to the previous work system, but management refused. The intention of the employers was clear: increase production with the same number of workers and the same wages, but with a reduction in technical facilities. The workers did not accept these measures of superexploitation, and that is how the conflict began.

On January 13, Circle 423 went on strike. Four days later the whole factory walked out in solidarity. Events then moved at an extraordinary pace. The speed with which the struggle deepened was a product of the policy of repression implemented by the company and the government. A few hours after it began, the labor authorities declared the strike illegal and ordered the workers to go back to work within twenty-four hours. When the deadline ran out, the company laid off 820 workers, denying them all the social compensation provided for by law in cases of indefinite layoff.

The company intended to crush the workers, depriving them of any material possibility of survival. It wanted to take advantage of the conflict to carry out an 80 percent turnover in personnel, for the workers were considered too militant. In the history of Bolivian trade unionism, this procedure is comparable to that decreed in 1947 by the Enrique Hertzog government, whose cabinet of "National Unity" authorized the layoff of 5,000 miners of Siglo XX-Catavi. These workers had had the audacity to form their own unions and to confront the power of the Patiño Mining Company. This cabinet of National Unity was composed of representatives of the oligarchy and of the Stalinist party of the time, the

*The Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR — Revolutionary Nationalist Movement), whose best-known leader was Víctor Paz Estenssoro, governed the country from 1952 to 1964.

PIR.* This party, which developed a line of class collaboration and upheld the theory of revolution by stages according to the Stalinist concept, is today cooperating with the gorilla dictatorship of Banzer.

But times have changed, and in spite of the presence of the fascist gorillas in power, resistance to partial measures has a snowball effect. Around the Manaco conflict, the causes of which appeared simple and routine, the country began to vibrate and the social forces polarized. The federations of private employers supported the company management and waged a campaign of propaganda and intimidation in the press and on the radio. Then the political police and the Seventh Division of the army mobilized to bring the Manaco workers to reason. But the workers resisted the attack, basing themselves on the solidarity of the peasants, the workers, and the university students.

The proletarian response was rapid and decisive. The miners of Siglo XX and Catavi stopped work and asked the Miners Federation to decree a twenty-four-hour strike. This took place on Monday, January 26, and affected 45,000 miners in the nationalized, private, and cooperative mines. Motions of solidarity from the clandestine peasant movement were sent to the Manaco workers. During vigorous and violent demonstrations, the miners of Catavi-Siglo XX decided to send 10 Bolivian pesos per head to support the Manaco workers. The FSTMB (Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia — Trade Union Federation of Mineworkers of Bolivia) decided to intervene and close all Manaco sales outlets in the mines, declaring a boycott. At the same time, 20,000 students of La Paz and Cochabamba joined the twenty-four-hour strike. It must also be added that the Manaco conflict had an impact on the sectors most tightly controlled by the dictatorship, such as the manufacturing industry of La Paz. The union delegates appointed by the government were ousted and rank-and-file committees arose in factories larger than Manaco, such as Soligno, Said, Fateja, Plasmar, Inmetal, and Plastic. The construction workers and graphic arts workers took the initiative in organizing a work assembly of the three sectors (workers, peasants, students) to analyze the Manaco strike and launch a campaign of solidarity.

The workers, peasants, and students understood that the conflict went beyond the limits of Manaco and had become a test of strength between the masses on the one hand and the employers and the government on the other hand. Having understood this, they committed themselves to struggle. Manaco tried to intensify the repression by calling on the army. But the government was afraid and hesitated. Then the Manaco employers played their last card, ordering a total lockout. On the night of January 26 the employers made known their intention to close down the factory and transfer it to another location. Rather than intimidating the workers, this maneuver ex-

*The Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left party) is a petty-bourgeois formation that arose during the 1940s and was dominated by Stalinist elements.

acerbated the conflict and entailed new consequences. The Federation of Private Enterprise of the city of Santa Cruz asked Manaco to set itself up in that city; it offered the company political guarantees and assurances in addition to economic benefits. Thus, a new regional problem was stirred up going beyond the relations of capital and labor and involving other sectors of the population as well. The response of the workers was not long in coming: "Let the bosses get out of the factory; the installations shall remain; not one screw will be moved!"

The nationalization of Manaco and the creation of a cooperative was demanded, with the support of broad popular layers. The management of the factory had gone too far! The bourgeoisie and its dictatorship were afraid. They saw the danger of the situation getting completely out of control. Thus, the anti-worker offensive began to crumble. On January 27 the employers gave in and canceled the massive layoffs. The workers went back to work without any sanctions being taken against them, with the exception of thirteen of them who were accused by the Manaco management of being extremist agitators. A mixed commission (employers, workers, and the government) was named to study the situation. Finally, on January 29 a definitive agreement was reached favorably resolving the case of the thirteen workers, who in reality represented the de facto leadership of the Manaco workers. The company thus failed in its last attempt to destroy this central nucleus.

The struggle was tough. The dictatorship used all the weapons at its command: It arrested militants, persecuted the workers, denounced an alleged "subversive plot," ordered the intervention of the Seventh Division of the army. The minister of labor even came to Cochabamba and joined the military-police-employer "task force" that was meeting on a permanent basis, following the development of the conflict. In spite of all these maneuvers, the strike of nearly 70,000 workers and students was decisive. The threat of even greater mobilizations, with the participation of other workers and people's forces, led the dictatorship and the employers to capitulate in order to avoid an even more violent political and social explosion.

The workers are holding their position in the Manaco factory. But something has changed both at Manaco and on a national scale. The combative spirit of the masses has advanced; the consciousness that it is possible to win a battle against the dictatorship now exists. Even though the COB (Central Obrera Boliviana — Bolivian Workers Federation) is not functioning as a centralizing national leadership, the mobilizations around Manaco were united. This shows that strength, spirit of struggle, and desire for unity exist among the rank-and-file workers. The will to take hold of the unions and make them function despite the decrees of November 9, 1974, likewise exists. Future struggles will integrate this rich experience.

The struggle in the universities

The dictatorship has been unable to subdue the universities of the country, even though the student body and teaching corps had been purged after the triumph of the gorillas in 1971. After being closed for a year, the universities were reopened under a new structure. University autonomy was eliminated; the administrative authorities, the teaching corps, and the student leadership were directly appointed by the government. But once the new university system was enacted, it was not long before resistance was expressed and the struggle to recover lost gains was launched. But this process was neither automatic nor general. It began little by little in one department, then in another, then in a single university. The first struggles were isolated; logically, they posed the problem of the right of the students to directly elect their own leadership. These objectives sometimes appeared confused, lacking in orders of priority. It was not until the end of 1975 that the student movement engaged in more important mobilizations, comprehensive actions against the University Law. Nevertheless, there was no national coordination. Political maturity reached its highest point in La Paz and Cochabamba.

The Manaco conflict had extraordinary repercussions among the students. They were struck by the strength of the mass movement and they considered themselves an active participant in the struggle. With the triumph of the Manaco proletariat the students gained confidence and launched a frontal battle, coordinated on a national scale. The student struggle thus asserted itself as a continuation of the workers struggle. Two days after the definitive accord of the Manaco struggle, 1,700 students of the architecture school of the University of La Paz (UMSA) went on strike. They denounced the arrests and decided to recognize the "Interdepartmental Committee" as a central student leadership for the whole university. They demanded the resignation of professors and assistants who had not passed through the "merit examination" and the "test of competence." The university authorities and the minister of the interior called the student agitation subversive; they claimed that a plot to overthrow the government had begun at Manaco. They seized upon this pretext to imprison six student leaders. Colonel Manuel Ayora Montaña was likewise accused of conspiracy. On February 5 all were deported to Paraguay. Finally, the authorities threatened to close the university if the climate of agitation persisted. From this point on, the situation became aggravated. On the night of February 5 the University of La Paz was surrounded and an assembly was dissolved by police commandos. One hundred students were arrested, then released "after careful consideration," according to the words of the minister of the interior himself. In fact, this meant after having been identified and booked. The next day there were new clashes; the students opted for staggered strikes by department; the movement developed a cohesion and provided itself with a platform. On February 7 the Interdepartmental Committee called upon the authorities of the UMSA to discuss the following demands:

- * release of all student prisoners;
- * return of the exiles;
- * guarantees that the student organs would function;
- * assurance of an effective professional system (against favoritism);
- * price reductions in the university cafeteria.

The students took to the streets around these slogans. On February 9 the students of the medical school declared a twenty-four-hour strike and erected two barricades, blocking Saavedra Avenue, which runs right past the headquarters of the armed forces general staff. The civil engineering department and the sociology department joined the strike. The conflict spread from La Paz to Cochabamba and then to Sucre, where protest strikes took place against repression and in solidarity with La Paz. The Bolivian Catholic University joined the strike. Its leader was arrested on February 10.

The CNES (Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior — National Council of Higher Education), whose president is the PIR Stalinist Mario Rolón Anala, tried to maneuver. It declared that it would agree to a dialogue, but claimed the right to select the university representatives. The Interdepartmental Committee rejected this fraud and agreed to "an honest dialogue with its representatives."

In Cochabamba the conflict had interesting consequences. The student center of the law school carried out an inquiry among the students of the school. The results were as follows:

- * 92.85% of the students rejected the present educational system imposed by the dictatorship through the CNES;
- * 4.65% agreed with this system;
- * 2.48% did not respond.

The law professors responded to this inquiry with an unlimited strike and demanded trials and disciplinary measures against the student leaders. On February 12 in La Paz, after an assembly, the students took to the streets. On the "Avenue July 16" they were attacked by the police, who used dogs, clubs, and armored cars. A forty-eight-hour strike was called. In face of a situation that was becoming increasingly tense, the authorities declared that they were prepared to engage in a dialogue with the Interdepartmental Committee, but would regard the Committee's members as rank-and-file students and not as the leadership of the struggle. On Tuesday, February 17, violence mounted. There were new confrontations around the University of La Paz; at 12:30 in the afternoon the students built barricades blocking Villazón Avenue; they were violently repressed. The police were not sufficiently numerous, so specialized army troops were called out (dressed in civilian clothes), who attacked the students with chains, clubs, and blackjacks. At 7:00 the students assembled again and even more violent clashes with the police occurred. On Wednesday, February 18, there were new bloody clashes and mobilizations. The police opened fire, and the students responded with Molotov cocktails. The University of La Paz was closed.

Two hundred thirty students, forty of whom remain in prison as of this writing, were arrested. During this time, a national assembly of student leaderships met in Cochabamba. This assembly tried to unify the struggle on a national scale. It put forward a forty-eight-hour deadline for opening a dialogue with the CNES. The discussions would no longer occur on a regional level, but would henceforth take place with the national authorities. When the forty-eight-hour deadline ran out, the country's nine universities went on unlimited strike. The students asked for the mediation of the church, the press, and the radio. Banzer denounced the existence of a plot led by ex-president J.J. Torres and Major Rubén Sánchez; he asserted that the government would accept no mediation. The closing of the UMSA brought on forty-eight-hour protest strikes in the universities of Oruro, Potosí, and Sucre. After an assembly, the Bolivian Catholic University "invited the students of the UMSA to attend classes in its campus while their university is closed." It then issued a deadline for the reopening of the UMSA; if this was not done, it would decide on other measures to take.

In the meantime, the miners federation called for a general strike to support the students and accused the government of being incapable of resolving the problems of the students, since it relied on repressive violence. The miners' resolution concluded as follows:

1. Decree a twenty-four-hour protest strike in all the mining districts of the country beginning at seven o'clock in the morning February 21.
2. Firmly condemn the closing of the UMSA.
3. Support the initiative of the press and the radio aimed at reestablishing talks to resolve the problem.
4. Demand the immediate release of all students arrested."

The peasants also supported the students. The peasant federations of the provinces of Omasuyos, Los Andes, Ingavi, and Camacho condemned the government and proclaimed in a special document: "The living and representative forces of the country must be prepared to give their support to the students, who are struggling for the defense of rights and liberty in the educational system and in professional work." They denied the authority of the peasant federation controlled by the government, for this body did not include the peasants. Finally, they attacked the single agricultural tax. The National Confederation of Liberal Professions and the Episcopal Conference also condemned the closing of the UMSA. The government responded to all this with increased repression. The University of Potosí was shut down. Several students and military officers opposed to the regime (Colonel Raúl López Leyton and José Patiño Ayoroa, former minister of urban affairs under Banzer) were accused of conspiracy and deported to Chile. The right and the left were accused of conspiring together. They were unable to arrest General Juan Ayoroa Ayoroa, but he was publicly threatened with deportation. The conflict had reached its most critical point. Three thousand students of Cochabamba went on hunger strike; the army intervened and dispersed them. Some of them then

occupied the cathedral and continued the strike. The students of the Catholic University also started a hunger strike and installed themselves in the headquarters of the archbishop of La Paz. The Manaco factory declared a twenty-four-hour strike. The miners federation brought out a new document and announced new measures of solidarity with the students. That was on February 26. The next day the government began to give in. The CNES took to the airwaves to consult the authorities of the nine universities about a dialogue and was authorized to begin that dialogue. The Ministry of the Interior and the CNES began to give in at the Catholic University and came to an agreement to terminate the strike at the archbishop's headquarters. The proposals were as follows:

1. The students of the Bolivian Catholic University would be released immediately.
2. Rapidly, by March 1, the Ministry of the Interior would examine, case by case, the status of the arrested students and would commit itself to releasing those not involved in incidents of violence.
3. The Ministry of the Interior would hand the dossiers on those students not released over to the regular courts.
4. The CNES would guarantee the opening of a dialogue, which would begin on Monday, March 1.



The government was beginning to capitulate; it did so before the church and not the students, but it amounted to the same thing. The official front dissolved. On the night of February 27 fifty-three students were released. There remained only seven, accused of "extremism," who would be handed over to the regular courts. But although the dialogue began on March 1, the final accord was not yet reached. The government resisted, opposing the accord. The student representatives and the members of the CNES held extremely heated discussions. The critical point related to the release of the students. On March 4 the negotiations were broken off and the conflict began again.

A large group of students from the University of La Paz came to the archbishop's headquarters and began a hunger strike again. The miners of Catavi-Siglo XX went on strike for three days and the miners federation reaffirmed its unconditional support for the students. It threatened to launch a national mobilization. The firm attitude of the mineworkers swept away the last resistance of the government. The dialogue began again the following day and finally, on March 6, the university conflict came to an end. The agreement that was reached was as follows:

1. The CNES committed itself to undertaking initiatives to obtain the release of the students within two weeks. It also promised to negotiate with the minister of the interior about the return of the exiled students.
2. The process of democratization of the student leaderships in all the universities of the country would begin with the election and renewal of the Professional and Departmental Student Centers beginning in June of this year. This included reopening of their officers, restitution of their property, and release of the funds of the student organizations without imposing retroactive taxes on them.
3. The authorities (the Ministry of Education and the CNES) would guarantee the functioning of the representative bodies of the students.
4. The prolongation of the second semester of 1975-76 at the Universities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Potosí would last until April 19.
5. The beginning of the first semester of 1976 was set for May 3 in these universities.
6. All the instructors provisionally appointed must submit to the "merit examination" and "test of competence"; the participation of the students in verifying the holding of these tests was granted. The reform of the educational system would be formulated by a commission composed of instructors, students, and the CNES; the reforms will have to be approved by the CONUB (National Congress of Bolivian Universities).
7. The maintenance of the polytechnical schools and the departments of humanities and education in the Bolivian university structure was guaranteed; the number of technical institutes will be increased.
8. Student participation in the student welfare departments of universities was agreed to.
9. The decision made by the CNES and the Conference of Deans in December 1975 to allot 2 percent of the university budget to the Catholic University will have to be ratified by the students.

This agreement was signed by twenty-one student delegates, as well as by the president of the CNES and six of its voting members.

The seven arrested students came before the regular courts and were released soon after by the judge. The question of the exiled students has not yet been answered. The struggle for their return continues and will probably be launched again, on the basis of the experiences recently accumulated, when the new school year starts in the fall.

Government counteroffensive

Although these conflicts ended with the defeat of the state, the dictatorship is now reorganizing its forces. It is intensifying repression against the revolutionary organizations, especially the POR-Combate (Partido Obrero Revolucionario — Revolutionary Workers party, Bolivian section of the Fourth International), the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional — National Liberation Army) and the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario — Revolutionary Left Movement). Several militants of these parties have been arrested, their houses and apartments have been ransacked and turned into police centers of repression. Warnings have been published in the press banning the renting of houses to leftist opponents of the regime under pain of prosecution. The campaign against the revolutionary leaders being waged on the radio, in the press, and through posters has been intensified. Rewards have been offered to informers.

The dictatorship has to put its own ranks in order, for the conflicts at Manaco and with the students have had a big impact. During these confrontations the "institutionalist" sector of the army and some high officers were imprisoned. In order to cut down on the influence of this sector, a "Command Assembly" of the large and small military units throughout the country was convoked. On this occasion, the High Command, Banzer, and his ministers tried to explain their projects and political orientation. After three days of secret deliberations, they obtained the support of the armed forces for the government. Nevertheless, signs of disagreement are already being manifested on the question of access to the Pacific Ocean. The military chiefs recognize that a definitive agreement with Chile will not be reached without popular consultation. It is obvious that there are contradictions within the armed forces and that oppositions are arising constantly. The mobilization of the masses and the defeat of the government have undoubtedly exacerbated these tensions.

Finally, in order to try to limit the expression of its social isolation, the dictatorship has organized "spontaneous popular concentrations." They began in the regime's bastion, Santa Cruz; later they were held in Ucareña (Cochabamba), the peasant center where the agrarian reform was signed in 1953, and then in La Paz. They have been held in all the provincial capitals. The employees of the public sector, the merchants of the



marketplaces, and the whole civilian bureaucracy of the armed forces have been compelled to mobilize. The "masses" are transported to one place or another by train, truck, and bus. These demonstrations of "spontaneous support" have cost very dearly. But the government needs to hold these demonstrations in order to maintain its image abroad. To calm the impatience of discontented elements in the army, the government has to make a demonstration of its "strength." But these demonstrations are so artificial and fragile that they cannot even stand up under a light rain! In La Paz, for example, Banzer had to make his speeches to an audience composed of his own bodyguards because the "people" he had assembled did not want to get wet!

This does not mean that the dictatorship is on the point of collapse; it still commands rather broad room to maneuver. It receives much money from imperialism and its institutions in the form of loans and gifts, which enable it to finance many public investments, particularly in roads and construction of housing. But above all, it can maintain its enormous repressive apparatus. The weakness of the revolutionary leadership, which needs time to recover from the blows it has suffered, is another factor prolonging the life of the dictatorship.

Balance-sheet and perspectives

The conflicts of Manaco and the universities express a new stage in the political maturity of the Bolivian masses. The defeat of the dictatorship during these mobilizations

builds the confidence of the masses in their own strength. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go. The level of political maturity is very uneven; some sectors are in the vanguard, while others have not yet broken with the control of the government. The former must address themselves to the latter in order to stimulate their combativity. A struggle has already been launched to assure the functioning of a trade-union movement, with democratically elected leaderships, in order to breathe new life into the COB and the other national trade-union federations. This mobilization to force the dictatorship to respect the democratic rights of the masses constitutes the primordial task. Nevertheless, this struggle is linked to the fight for other social and economic gains, especially the elimination of the wage freeze and the defense of the living standard of the masses. In reality, these two demands are part of the struggle for the overthrow of the dictatorship.

The weakest point, apart from the unevenness of political maturity, remains the problem of the unity of the workers movement, the left parties and organizations. Only this would be able to avert the development of fragmentary struggles having varying objectives. The reanimation of the movement of mineworkers, which has recently overcome the obstacles of lack of national coordination, must be seized upon as the point of departure for overcoming these weaknesses.

It is in this direction that revolutionary Marxists must work. The next miners congress, which will be held in Corocoro at the beginning of May, must attempt to go beyond the limits of the mining sector itself and pose the totality of the problems of the masses of the country. If it does this it can offer an outlet, a perspective, and arm all the people politically in such a way as to unify their forces to overthrow the dictatorship and lead them on the road to socialism. It is for this reason that it must be a "little national congress" of the Bolivian masses.

Throughout the two mobilizations, that of Manaco and that of the students, victory appeared possible because the conflicts were broadened and new forces were drawn into struggle. It is necessary to assimilate the methods used to extend a conflict that is initially local and to popularize it in order to win the support of other sectors of workers and students. Likewise, the primary objective of the students must be to make their university problems known so that they may be discussed by the worker masses in order to obtain their support. That is the current stage of the struggle. Further stages will produce a more centralized mass movement with a single leadership and a common program that assembles all the partial conflicts and offers them a perspective of political power. Revolutionary Marxists must prepare themselves for this by integrating themselves into the mass movement and by acting as its vanguard.

March 31, 1976

March 1976: four dead in the occupied West Bank; six dead in the territories under Israeli rule since 1948.

For the first time since 1969, the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank were confronted with mass demonstrations and had to open fire; for the first time since 1948, the Palestinian-Arab population under Israeli rule rose up massively against government policy and was confronted by the "forces of order," who had to open fire. Officially, ten people were killed on both sides of the "green line" (the pre-1967 borders); in reality, it was certainly more. The blood spilled by the Zionist forces once again sealed the unity of the struggle of the Palestinian people, beyond the borders drawn through this people by the Zionist colonization and expulsion. March 1976 marks a turning point both in the relations between the Zionist state and the Palestinian population under its rule and in the relations among the various components of the Palestinian-Arab people.

New situation in the «newly occupied territories»

The October War of 1973 opened a new situation in the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967. The first resistance, which had immediately followed the 1967 occupation, was able to be dissipated by the arrest and expulsion of all the major political leaders of the West Bank Palestinians and by a policy of fierce repression against all forms of civilian resistance and opposition to the Israeli occupation. Because of the repression, a certain degree of economic integration, and the existence of a layer of notables prepared to collaborate more or less openly with the occupation forces, the West Bank was able to be "integrated," unlike the Gaza Strip, where the first wave of resistance lasted until 1971. In a general sense, calm has prevailed in this part of the occupied territories since 1969, despite the fact that many West Bank Palestinians continued to be active in the ranks of the resistance organizations. This situation began to change with the outbreak of the October War.

The formation of the Palestine National Front (PNF), led and staffed by members of the Palestinian Communist party but actually a civilian organization of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the West Bank, marked a turning point: for the first time, the Palestinian population of the West Bank provided itself with a political leadership that took charge of civilian resistance to the Israeli occupation. The CP has always been the only force sufficiently organized, despite the blows of repression, to be able to organize and speak for the occupied population. But this CP, which was the Jordanian CP until 1972, completely discredited itself by refusing to support and participate in the armed Palestinian resistance and by supporting King Hussein as against any Palestinian solution. But the cadres of the CP preserved some influence in the clandestine mass organizations, and the CP's journal, *el-Watan*, continued to appear regularly. The change in the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the Palestinian Resistance



allowed the Jordanian CP, which in the meantime had split and become the Palestinian CP, to change its line, replacing support for King Hussein with support to the project of a Palestinian state and to the leadership of the PLO, notably its most capitulationist elements.

The PLO had an interest in supporting the Palestine National Front and its impact among the population of the occupied West Bank; this was easier than setting up its own civilian mass organization. In effect, the PNF today is the non-armed wing of the PLO in the West Bank. The existence of the PNF was to enable the PLO to lead a mass civilian movement in the occupied territories, especially after the October War. The diplomatic victories of the PLO and the placing on the agenda of the scheme of a Palestinian state on the West Bank gave a new impetus to the struggles of the masses in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. These struggles were often conducted and led by a new generation of militants, frequently students, who have grown up under Israeli occupation and who came of age politically around the time of the October War. This generation did not experience the fierce wave of repression that followed the occupation of 1967; on the contrary, it is mobilizing in a period marked by the political victories won against Israel by the Arab states and the PLO.

It is in the framework of these post-October 1973 mobilizations that the recent wave of demonstrations in the occupied West Bank must be located.

The fact that the demonstrations began while the UN Security Council was meeting on the Palestinian question demonstrates the degree to which the mobilizations in the occupied territories are linked to the diplomatic offensives of the PLO. But it was the decision of a judge in Jerusalem allowing Jews to pray on the promenade of the *el-Aqsa* mosque that immediately provoked an uprising in all the cities of the West Bank. Besides this

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS UNDER ITS DOMINATION: A NEW PERIOD

by MICHEL WARSHAWSKY

provocation, there was the added ingredient of the municipal elections the Zionist occupiers had scheduled for mid-April. For the first time, political forces linked to the PLO, primarily the PNF, called for participation in the elections and presented their own candidates, many of whom were former political prisoners recently released by the occupying forces.

What was unusual about the March demonstrations was both the prolonged character of the mobilizations (virtually constant for more than a month) and the violence of the confrontations with the police and the army. The latest demonstrations, unlike the previous waves, did not disperse as soon as the Israeli troops appeared; the demonstrators held their ground, often counterattacking with great determination, burning military vehicles, setting up barricades, etc. More than once Israeli soldiers took flight before a half dozen high-school students armed with rocks and sticks!

The Israeli response was commensurate with the radicalization of the young Palestinians. For the first time since 1969, the occupying forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing several. There were hundreds of arrests, fines as high as 8,000 Israeli pounds, and unprecedented brutal treatment of anyone who fell into the hands of the police or the army. But the brutality of the repression had no real effect on the mobilizations; on the contrary, it strengthened militancy, extended the revolt to villages that had hitherto remained calm, and forced most of the municipal councils of the West Bank to resign, which has now placed a question mark over the efficacy, doubtful in any case, of the previous elections.

It is obvious that if the government decides to hold the coming elections on schedule, they will unfold under the sign of the latest mobilizations, and the opposition candidates (if they are not deported, as were two can-

didates known for their sympathy with the PNF) threaten to sweep away the moderates — in spite of the tricks, the repression, and the permanent intervention of the occupation authorities in the electoral campaign (banning of "political" programs, intimidation of all sorts, and so on).⁽¹⁾ It is no exaggeration to define what has happened in the occupied territories during past weeks as a generalized revolt, even though this cannot lead to a withdrawal of Israeli forces, even a partial one, in the near future. The mobilization of the Palestinian masses of the West Bank remains closely linked to the political, military, and diplomatic victories of the Palestinian Resistance beyond the borders of the Zionist occupation and has no independent prospects of its own. But even within these limits, the civil resistance movement has reached a point of no return: In the territories occupied since June 1967 the Palestinian population has proven that it will not remain passive in face of the perpetuation of the occupation and that, on the contrary, it has succeeded in pumping new strength into the diplomatic victories of the PLO.

Palestinian population in the territories conquered before 1967

Those who escaped the process of expulsion carried out by the Zionist colonial movement, that small part of the Palestinian-Arab population that remained under Zionist rule after 1948, have been completely isolated from the Arab national movement and the living forces of the Palestinian-Arab people for more than twenty years. Even though their economic situation is superior to that of the refugees, the Palestinians who remained under Israeli rule have been those on whom the defeats of 1937 and 1948 have had the most lasting impact. This was due above all to their isolation from the active centers of the Arab revolution and to the violent repression exercised by the Zionist regime against the Palestinian minority under its rule.

The situation was to change with the 1967 war and the occupation of the rest of Palestine by the Zionist state. The isolation was broken, just at the moment when the Palestinian national liberation movement experienced a new upsurge with the emergence of the armed Palestinian Resistance. Concurrently, a new generation of militants emerged within the Palestinian population of Israel, a generation born after 1948, which had not directly suffered the blows of Zionist repression during the 1950s and 1960s, and reached political maturity during a period when, for the first time in decades, an independent Palestinian liberation movement existed.

Many indications were to confirm this profound change among the Palestinian population of Israel, especially among the young generation: the movement of Druze youth against their mobilization in the Israeli army; the emergence of local lists in some villages independent of the familial clans and diffusing a militant nationalist political ideology; the emergence of Arab stu-

dent unions in all the universities, their national coordination, and their taking of increasingly radical positions; the electoral results, ever more favorable to the CP, the only force in opposition to the government parties.

But it was above all after the October War of 1973 that what the Zionist press has called "Palestinianization" was intensified among the Arabs of Israel. This time, the Palestinians of Israel massively defined themselves as an integral part of the Palestinian question and the Palestinian national movement. Sympathy for the Palestinian Resistance became increasingly openly declared, as did understanding by the Palestinians in Israel that their problems amounted to a national problem and not simply a problem of discrimination within Israeli society. Also for the first time, the debates within the Resistance had an impact, albeit deformed, within the Palestinian population of Israel.

This March, for more than forty-eight hours tens of thousands of young Palestinians were confronted by the Zionist forces of order. They organized demonstrations, built barricades, and ceaselessly assaulted the police forces that were massively sent into the Arab cities and villages. The threats of the Israeli authorities and the Arab collaborators were unable to prevent the strike; on the contrary, they redoubled the combativity of the Palestinians. Villages that had been considered calm were the scenes of bloody confrontations, and the murders perpetrated by the Zionist forces only egged the demonstrators on.

The massive and militant response to this latest plundering of land can be understood only on the basis of the evolution of the national consciousness of the Palestinian population as we have just described it. Granted, the very dimensions of the new plan to "Judaize Galilee" were alone sufficient cause for a massive mobilization. Such massive quantities of land had not been seized at a single stroke since the 1948-51 period; practically no village in Galilee was spared, even those known for their good relations with the Zionist state. The reason for this sharp attack must be sought in the political situation Israel is facing: the possibility of a division of Palestine into a Palestinian state and a Jewish state requires the "de-Palestinianization" of certain territories in which a high Arab concentration would threaten to legitimize attachment to the new Palestinian state. In this sense, the latest expropriations are closely linked to the plan for the Palestinian state. The struggle of the Palestinians living west of the green line is also a new component of the solution of the Palestinian state, a new obstacle to the realization of the imperialist plan. Through their massive and militant mobilization the Palestinians of Israel have reintegrated themselves into the camp of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation. For them, the situation will never again be as before. Those who have seen Israeli policemen surrender with their hands up before a "commando" of four young high-school students armed with stones will never again be intimidated by agents of the Shin Beth (the Israeli secret police) or by house arrest.

Role of the Communist party

To believe the Israeli press, the mobilizations of the day of struggle for defense of Arab land were merely a vast manipulation organized by the Israeli Communist party, which is alleged to have called, under the impetus of the PLO, for an insurrection of the Palestinian masses. Such an explanation is not astonishing coming from bourgeois commentators for whom history is nothing but manipulations and acts stage-managed by apparatuses. But it remains to answer the question, What was the role of the CP in these mobilizations?

Since the creation of the state of Israel, the Communist party (Rakah) has been the only political party whose non-Zionist positions have enabled it to present itself before the Palestinian masses as a party of opposition to the Zionist regime. Because of this, the CP has become the party through which the national consciousness of the Palestinian population of Israel has been expressed. No one can deny the fact that for more than twenty-five years Rakah has been the spokesman for and defender of the immediate interests of the Palestinian population of Israel. It was thus predictable and natural that the CP would find itself at the head of the protest campaign against the new expropriations of Arab land.



The CP tried to wage this campaign in collaboration with left Zionist parties and personalities, as well as with Arab notables whose links to the Zionist authorities are well known by everyone. It likewise tried to limit the campaign to restricted meetings and the sending of delegations of notables to the authorities. But its original plan failed: Under the pressure of the government, the right-wing notables quit the campaign in which they had been forced to participate by the pressure of the voters. Then, under the pressure of its own ranks, the CP was compelled to undertake increasingly massive actions. Of course, after the desertion of the notables, the CP tried to justify certain retreats (cancellation of the central demonstration in Jerusalem) and to do everything to reduce the "day of struggle" to simple work stoppages. But once the process was launched, the CP had no choice but to sanction actions that often unfolded without it and without its agreement.

Real problems will be posed for the CP after the general strike. Not because there is any risk of the CP's being outlawed, as certain far-right parliament members want, for the government is quite conscious of the moderating role played by the CP among the Palestinian population. The problem for the CP is a political one: For the immense majority of the Palestinian population, Rakah is seen as the force that led the general strike of March 30; this majority thus expects the CP to initiate new radical actions. But there is no question of this as far as the CP is concerned. Its political project remains that of a "peace front" with the moderate Zionist forces and it is still seeking to win "legitimacy" in the eyes of the Zionist Jewish masses. That is why Rakah will do all it can to demonstrate its responsibility and its Israeli patriotism. The CP will thus be confronted with contradictory pressures, the classic phenomenon of the Stalinist movement in Palestine, which has divided in two on numerous occasions, precisely over the national question. These tensions are especially inevitable in that the mobilization of the Palestinians of Israel has provoked an unprecedented wave of solidarity in the territories occupied since 1967 and in the Arab countries, which will compel the leaders of the PLO to take the rights of the Palestinians of Israel into consideration in any compromise with Israel, making such a compromise all the less probable. As for the CP, it remains the most resolute advocate of the solution of the Palestinian state, within which there is no place for the Palestinians of Israel, whom the CP considers citizens of the Jewish state who have to struggle for racial equality. This constitutes a flagrant contradiction between the political line of the CP, which recognizes the existence of the state of Israel, and the growing consciousness on the part of the CP ranks that they belong to the Palestinian people and are struggling for the restitution of their rights along with the whole of the Palestinian people. We must thus expect important breaks within the CP, especially inasmuch as a revolutionary alternative is taking shape among the Palestinian population of Israel.

The far left

For the first time in many years the CP did not have absolute hegemony in the mobilization of the Palestinian masses within the state of Israel. In the villages of Tiran, Um el-Fa'hem, and in many others the CP leaders were rapidly outflanked by young militants often influenced by the Revolutionary Communist League, Israeli supporters of the Fourth International.⁽²⁾ In Shfar'am and Kfar Yassif the leaders of the National Committee for the Defense of Arab Land were forced to read messages from the RCL; in Tira and Taibe many inhabitants rejected the leaflet of the National Committee and preferred to distribute the RCL's leaflet. But it was above all within the Union of Arab Students that the presence of the revolutionary Marxists was most heavily felt. After many harsh discussions with CP members, who are dominant at the University of Haifa, the majority decided to put out a leaflet recommending that the demonstration in Jerusalem not be canceled. The CP delegates withdrew, after accusing Matzpen-Marxist, along with

all those who refused to bow down before CP blackmail, of criminal adventurism.

Along with militants of the RCL, the Arab students were the only ones to organize in the big cities with Jewish populations on the day of struggle; this included a demonstration in front of parliament which was harshly repressed. It was often these Arab students who stood in the front lines during confrontations with the Zionist forces of order. Through their real influence among the Arab students and through systematic agitation in most of the Arab villages, the revolutionary communists of Matzpen-Marxist were the only organized force active during the preparation and unfolding of the general strike, apart from the CP of course. The response to the RCL's activity, amplified by a press campaign after the arrest of some of its militants, has strongly increased the esteem for and audience of the revolutionary Marxists among the Palestinian population. For the first time, the RCL appeared not as an organization of anti-Zionist Jews in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinians, but as an organization that is an integral part of the struggle of this Palestinian population and is implanted among it.

Today this is more important than ever in view of the fissures that will appear in the Communist party, for the existence of an alternative pole having at least some base among the Arab population of Israel can be a place of regroupment of the broad vanguard now detaching itself empirically from the CP. The opportunist line of the CP prevents it from offering an acceptable outlet for the national struggle of the Palestinians living within the borders of Israel. Only the revolutionary Marxists, with their total rejection of the Zionist state, have a coherent response to offer the Palestinian population. For the first time, they also have a possibility of putting this response into practice and organizing the best elements of this population, those who have been in the vanguard of the mobilization to defend Arab land. For the revolutionary Marxists also, the situation has changed radically, and they will do everything they can to measure up to the new tasks required of them.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The elections took place on schedule, after this article was written. Oppositionists won 148 of the 188 seats being contested in twenty-two town councils. A total of sixty-three pro-Hussein incumbents withdrew from the elections before the voting because of the intensity of nationalist feeling among the population. The shift to the left was especially significant in that the elections are held under Jordanian law, which still maintains property qualifications for voting.

2. The Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) emerged from a split in the Israeli Socialist Organization (ISO), an anti-Zionist group founded in the 1960s. The ISO was more commonly known by the name of its newspaper, Matzpen (Compass), and the RCL is often referred to as "Matzpen-Marxist," the name of its newspaper today.

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