

# Intercontinental Press

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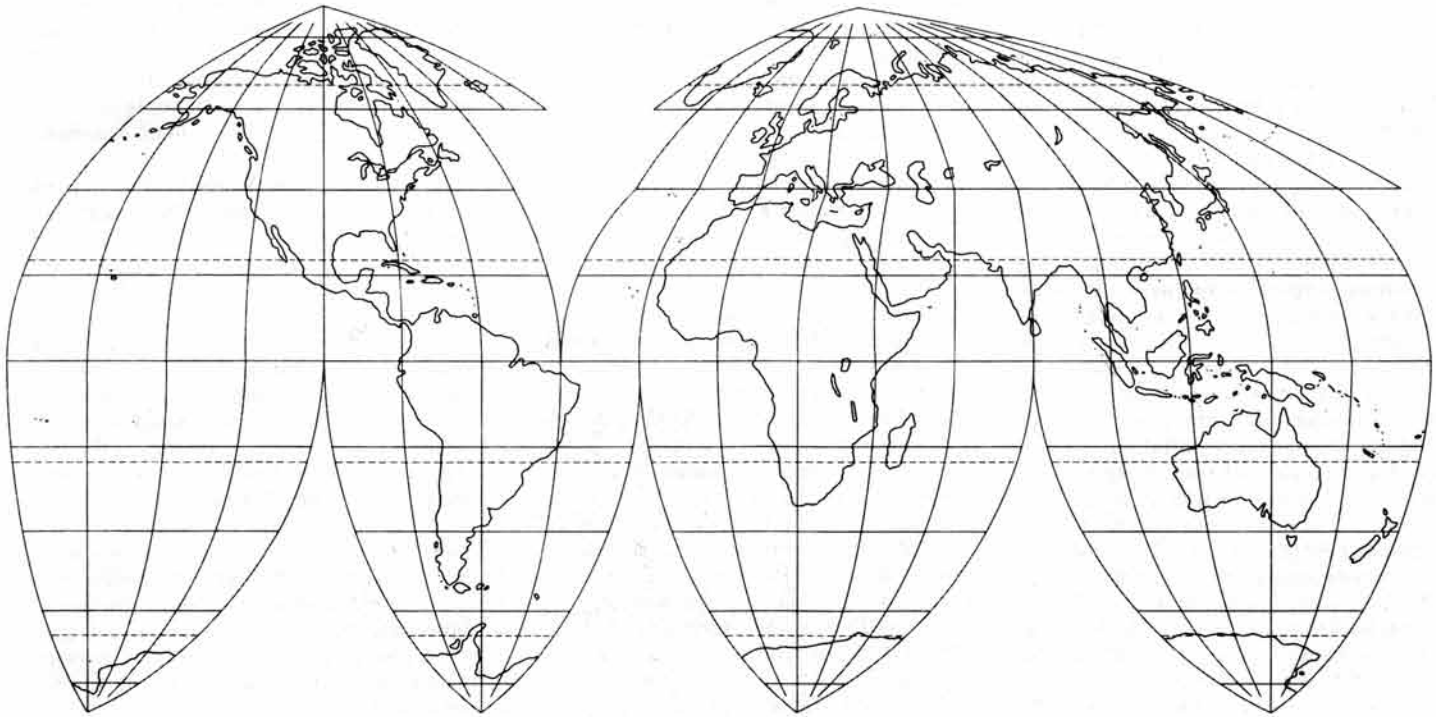
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**Index for 1977**



**Summary for the Year**

## Rulers Step Up Worldwide Austerity Drive

By Jon Britton

Nineteen seventy-seven opened with the promise of greater prosperity around the world. The "locomotive" economies of the United States, Japan, and West Germany, boosted by more expansionary tax and monetary policies, were to lead the way.

The powerful trend toward economic nationalism and intensifying trade rivalry was to be reversed, according to declarations adopted at imperialist "summits," through increased cooperation between governments.

But at the end of the year, working people everywhere faced stepped-up attacks on their living standards. And trade conflicts between rival capitalist powers were sharpening.

Things began going awry almost from the beginning.

In January the newly inaugurated chief of American imperialism, James Earl Carter, proposed a series of tax cuts and rebates adding up to \$20.2 billion. These measures, along with \$11.1 billion of added government expenditures, were supposed to get the economy moving again and put the unemployed back to work, as Carter had vowed in his campaign for president.

The package was a very modest one, however, owing to ruling-class fears of rekindling double-digit inflation. Trade union bureaucrats and some businessmen in the United States, as well as officials in Tokyo and Bonn, expressed surprise and disappointment that Carter had not proposed a more ambitious program.

The U.S. economy did pick up speed in the first half of the year—to a 6.8% annual growth rate, as against 3.4% for the last half of 1976. But unemployment dropped only slightly, with jobless totals for Blacks, women, and youth resuming their upward trend as the year wore on. Black unemployment is now higher than when Carter took over from Gerald Ford's Republican administration.

The pickup in the American economy helped spur a boom in Japanese and West German exports. But soaring sales abroad failed to lift these two countries out of stagnation. Unemployment, especially among youth, continued to rise. In Japan it is now at an eighteen-year peak.

To make matters worse, slow growth in their domestic economies held down imports and produced huge trade surpluses for Japan and West Germany. These surpluses, together with rising imports of oil, caused the United States and other countries to run up enormous trade deficits. The U.S. is closing out the year with imports

exceeding exports by \$30 billion, an all-time record.

The U.S. trade deficit further weakened a dollar already sinking as a result of Carter's record "peacetime" budget deficit of \$45 billion for fiscal 1977, partly financed by resort to the printing press.

Carter's decision in April to drop his proposals for a \$50 rebate to individual taxpayers and for an enlarged investment tax credit was undoubtedly made at the behest of bankers worried about the sagging dollar. At that point, the U.S. dollar had lost more than 30% of its value measured in gold compared to August 1976.

Ruling-class worry about the declining dollar may also have been behind the U.S. government's underspending its 1977 budget by more than \$11 billion, which pretty much neutralized the rest of Carter's much-ballyhooed stimulus program. The Labor Department's failure to spend \$400 million budgeted for minority job-training centers accounts for part of the total.

Contrary to the widespread impression that the U.S. dollar was among the weakest of major currencies in 1977, its depreciation in relation to gold (a key measure) and other commodities was about average.

The Japanese yen, Swiss franc, German mark, and British pound (the latter boosted by North Sea oil revenues) were stronger than the U.S. dollar. The Canadian dollar, Portuguese escudo, Spanish peseta, and most currencies of the semicolonial countries were much weaker.

The result was great turbulence on world money markets and uncertainty for capitalists engaged in international trade.

A demand voiced frequently this year by representatives of American imperialism—backed up by its still paramount economic and military strength—was that Bonn and Tokyo follow more "expansionary" policies.

Officials of other countries with large trade deficits have joined the refrain. Some of these (Portugal and Spain, for example) were forced by the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund to impose harsh and politically destabilizing austerity measures this year, or face a cutoff of international credit.

A more stimulative policy in West Germany and Japan, it was hoped, would counteract an expected world economic slowdown in 1978 or 1979 and boost exports from the United States and other countries. This would reduce disruptive trade imbalances, strengthen the dollar

and other currencies, and relieve pressures for more belt-tightening.

Washington's demands were underscored by threats of a trade war and even tentative steps, utilizing "antidumping" laws, toward cutting off a major part of the giant U.S. market to steel exports from Japan and Europe.

In response, Bonn and Tokyo in September and October announced modest "reflationary" measures. But the Carter administration was not satisfied. At a November meeting of the twenty-four-country Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, it urged much stronger stimulatory action. In separate trade talks with Japanese officials, U.S. negotiators raised other demands aimed at reducing barriers to the sale of American goods.

Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda responded in late November and early December with a cabinet reshuffling and some new concessions, including tariff cuts and a program of stockpiling raw materials.

Carter's special trade representative Robert Strauss said December 12, however, that the Japanese steps announced so far fall "considerably short of what this government and I feel is necessary. . . ."

Bonn, at this time, seems even less cooperative than Tokyo in meeting the demands of Washington and other governments. At a recent Common Market summit meeting in Brussels, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt angrily told other European representatives that "we must not give way to people who for opportunist reasons pretend to have a panacea for unemployment, like printing money."

Both the West German and Japanese governments have attempted to shift the blame for mounting world economic strains onto Washington. Schmidt recently took the United States to task "for living beyond its means with the financial sup-

### 1977 in Review

In this issue of *Intercontinental Press*, the last one of 1977, we present a series of articles summarizing the major events and trends that typified world politics throughout the year.

After a one-week break we will resume publication with the issue dated January 9.

port of the European Economic Community" (*New York Times*, December 10).

He was referring to the fact that European, as well as Japanese, central banks have been buying up dollars by the tens of billions in the world money markets in 1977, paying for them with newly printed marks, pounds, Swiss francs, etc.—greatly expanding the world's money supply and feeding the fires of inflation as a result. Such intervention on the part of European governments alone is said to have amounted to \$18 billion in the past year.

This costly operation was carried out in order to prevent the price of U.S. goods sold in Europe and Japan from falling—owing to the dollar's falling exchange rate—and to prevent European and Japanese goods sold in the United States from rising correspondingly in price. American corporations were thus discouraged from capturing a bigger share of the combined market. But at the same time, the German rulers were complaining of the U.S. government's success in "exporting" a significant amount of its inflation.

International competition between monopolist combines became so sharp and the threat of all-out trade war so grave in 1977 that the imperialist bourgeoisies launched major new efforts to "organize" world trade—that is, divide up markets through negotiations.

One form this took was the "orderly marketing agreement," such as the deal Washington negotiated with Japan to restrict the export of color television sets to the United States, and with South Korea and Taiwan limiting the export of shoes. The French government proposed that virtually all international trade be organized along this line.

The capitalists hope that such agreements will provide protection for profit-threatened industries while avoiding unilateral imposition of tariffs and quotas, which in the past have led to retaliatory moves that end up severely constricting world trade.

But such agreements can be negotiated, and lived up to, only as long as alternative markets are available for exporting countries to exploit. For instance, Japan is willing to limit the export of color TVs to the U.S. if markets exist in Europe and elsewhere that can absorb the difference; or if markets exist for greatly expanding the sale of closely related products, such as video tape recorders, for example.

But as 1977 wore on, it became apparent that more and more industries were sinking into overproduction crises of international scope—with gluts of commodities, excess production capacity, or both.

Steel is only the most dramatic example. In one country after another this past year, the least productive plants were shut down and tens of thousands of steel workers lost their jobs (60,000 in the United States alone).

The major capitalist powers, including the most efficient steel producer, Japan, even lost markets to semicolonial countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil as they progressed—thanks in part to loans from the imperialist banks—toward self-sufficiency in steel and in some cases the beginnings of an export capability.

Overproduction also made its appearance this year in sectors as diverse as copper, shipbuilding, oil, synthetic textiles, and agriculture.

As this crisis worsens, it will become increasingly difficult for capitalist governments to negotiate new market-sharing pacts or abide by those already agreed to.

Paradoxically, a major cause of overpro-

duction in 1977 was the growing hesitancy on the part of capitalists to invest their profits in expanded production facilities—what the London *Economist* aptly dubbed an "investment strike."

Nearly 70% of U.S. steel production goes for such expansion projects, for example. Thus, a slowdown in industrial expansion leads directly to a contraction of the market for steel, to production cutbacks by the steel companies, and to massive layoffs of steelworkers. These actions, in turn, cause new markets to contract, contributing to overproduction in other industries.

April 1977 marked the beginning of the third year of recovery from the 1974-75

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slump. While that was the deepest and most general slump of the past forty years, the current upturn is the weakest recovery, as measured from the previous peak.

Unemployment is rising in many countries as production stagnates and as women and teen-age members of working-class and middle-class families who did not work before are shoved into the job market, willingly or not, by the rising cost of living and education.

Capital spending by American corporations in this upturn has increased by only about half the amount it did, on the average, in the similar periods of the five previous post-World War II recoveries. Spending on expansion in Europe and Japan is even more sluggish.

Contributing to the lag in new productive investment has been the fact that the profitability of widening sectors of industry around the world has slipped far below the average.

Capital tends to flow out of such relatively unprofitable sectors until the average rate of profit is restored. This often takes the form, as it has in steel, of cutbacks in production capacity, shutdowns of the most inefficient and obsolete plants, and layoffs of workers.

In periods of rapid economic expansion, like the long post-World War II boom, such capital tended to flow toward those industrial sectors enjoying above-average profits, speeding up their rate of expansion and assuring continued economic growth overall.

Since the end of the long boom, however, "surplus capital" has made its appearance in even the fastest-growing, most profitable industries, such as computers.

International Business Machines, for example, built up in recent years an enormous reserve of cash that it doesn't know what to do with. The huge corporation has temporarily bought U.S. Treasury notes with its \$5 billion hoard.

In the past year, other companies with surplus cash, such as Armco Steel, bought up their own shares on the stock market (IBM also did this) or acquired the undervalued shares of other companies in giant take-over bids.

Surplus capital—that is, capital that is not being productively invested because of an "inadequate" expected rate of return—is building up all over the capitalist world. And a substantial portion of it ended up in the United States this past year as growing numbers of investors sought a haven from economic and political instability in their own countries.

Surplus oil dollars accruing to the governments of countries like Saudi Arabia continued to be deposited with the biggest New York banks, putting great pressure on the banks to "recycle" the money in the form of loans.

Due to sluggish capital spending in Europe and North America, more than the

usual proportion of this money was loaned to semicolonial governments, both for financing balance-of-trade deficits and for profitable industrial projects. These governments now owe about \$180 billion to the banks and to agencies such as the International Monetary Fund. A number of these countries (Turkey, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Zaïre, for example) had to pay out from one-quarter to nearly half of their export earnings for debt service this year. Many were forced by the IMF to impose extremely harsh austerity measures to ensure that the flow of tribute to the imperialist centers was not interrupted.

Another portion of surplus capital is being "invested" in gold hoards. Europeans have long held a portion of their assets in the yellow metal. And it is an even more entrenched tradition in colonial and semicolonial countries such as India. Now American capitalists, large and small, are getting onto the gold bandwagon. (U.S. citizens have been able to buy and sell gold since 1974, when Roosevelt's 1933 ban on such dealings was lifted.) The United States has now taken the lead in world gold trading.

The capitalists hope to get out of their economic crisis by extorting from society a higher rate of profit. That is why, all around the world, they have been staging "investment strikes"; closing down socially needed but unprofitable steel mills; shifting more of the tax burden onto workers; imposing austerity on their own governments (except for military expenditures)—forcing cutbacks in already inadequate health, education, old-age, and other services that are properly the responsibility of society to provide.

That is why they have been trying to get around or repeal environmental-protection laws and to roll back gains registered by women and oppressed nationalities.

That is why they have been striving to weaken or break unions (witness the current offensive against the U.S. coal min-

ers), create and deepen divisions in the working class, drive down real wages, and impose speedup.

In the United States, the largest of the world's economies, Carter's latest economic program is part and parcel of this profit drive. It includes major new tax breaks amounting to billions of dollars for big business to directly boost profits. Through enormous increases in Social Security and energy taxes, Carter seeks to shore up government finances—reducing the federal deficit and slowing the depreciation of the dollar.

Carter's proposals for sharply boosting domestic oil and gas prices and taxes will add more billions to the already bloated profits (and surplus capital) of the energy trust, while imposing "belt-tightening" to slow the rise of oil imports—which, at their present level, the U.S. rulers find militarily dangerous and financially destabilizing.

A new Carter plan to aid the U.S. steel industry is explicitly aimed at increasing prices and boosting profits for steel companies by at least \$900 million a year.

The paltry tax-cut bone that Carter will throw to American workers—said to amount to possibly \$300 a year for a family of four in the \$15,000-\$20,000 income bracket—is designed to help him and the Democratic and Republican parties hide the real nature of their economic policies.

But this year also saw the continuation of incipient trends in the U.S. labor movement toward the development of a new consciousness and combativity among the rank and file. The campaign for union democracy by Steelworkers Fight Back and strikes by militant coal and iron miners are only the most conspicuous examples. As the results of the rulers' austerity drive and the deepening world crisis of capitalism hit home, new class-struggle movements are certain to rise up to challenge the bosses in the fight of the century. □

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# Mideast—Peace Is Not At Hand

By Steve Wattenmaker

"We are dying of hunger anyway so kill us, Sadat, with your bullets!" Tens of thousands of workers and students raised that cry as 1977 began in the Middle East with a powerful upsurge of the Egyptian masses.

The January 18-19 anti-government protests against a decree raising the price of food and other basic necessities were the largest since the overthrow of Egypt's monarchy in 1952. Sadat ordered his soldiers to shoot down the demonstrators, but in the end gave in to their demands.

Menahem Begin's upset victory in the Israeli elections, and the Carter administration's diplomatic maneuvers center-around reconvening a Geneva peace conference, soon overshadowed Sadat's domestic difficulties.

By year's end, however, Cairo was again the center of international attention. In a startling bid to improve his desperate position, Sadat undertook his "sacred" mission to the Israeli Knesset (parliament).

More than any other event in recent years, Sadat's November 20 trip to Jerusalem raised the expectations of millions of people that Mideast peace was finally at hand.

But it was a cruel hoax. The Egyptian leader's pilgrimage to the Zionist state—an unambiguous recognition of Israel's right to exist on land stolen from the Palestinian people—did nothing to remove or expose the real cause of war in the Middle East. It was simply one more blow suffered by the Palestinian and Arab masses during the year.

In Lebanon, the Syrian occupation forces continued to reinforce the right-wing Maronite Christian regime of Elias Sarkis. Attacks against Palestinians and leftist strongholds in the north, were matched by combined Israeli and right-wing Christian operations against Palestinians in the south.

### Washington: 'Opportunity for Peace'?

The Carter administration struck its own blows at the Palestinians, often disguising its mailed fist with a velvet glove.

Four days after his inauguration January 20, Carter told reporters that he thought it "very likely" a Mideast peace conference would take place in 1977. Speaking at a March 9 news conference, he explained further:

"We are going to mount a major effort in our own government in '77 to bring the



SADAT

parties to Geneva. Obviously any agreement has to be between the parties concerned. We will act as intermediary when our good offices will serve well."

Seeming to make good on his pledge, Carter sent Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the Middle East in February, while receiving a succession of Arab rulers at the White House.

Carter complemented this flurry of diplomatic activity with a series of statements calculated to leave the impression that he was developing some sympathy for the Arab cause.

Israel must be prepared to return to her 1967 borders with only "minor adjustments," Carter declared March 9. However, such a withdrawal might take as long as eight years and Israeli "defense lines may or may not conform . . . to those legal borders."

A week later Carter appeared to take an even more dramatic pro-Arab stance. On March 16 he told reporters there had to be a "homeland provided for the Palestinian refugees. . . ." Twenty-four hours later Carter suggested that the Palestinian "homeland" he had in mind could be King Hussein's Jordan—a position favored by the Israeli regime.

On several occasions in the following months the White House also took its distance from the new Israeli regime's more open policy of encouraging Zionist colonization of the occupied territories.

Carter's pronouncements initially set off a storm of protest among American Zionists, but produced the desired effect in the Arab capitals.

By dangling in front of the Arab regimes the promise of helping them wrest concessions from Israel sometime in the future, Washington persuaded them to pressure the Palestine Liberation Organization in return.

At best, American imperialism hoped the Arab regimes could force the PLO to recognize the Zionist state. The Palestinians, Carter said at his March 9 news conference, "have never yet given up their publicly professed commitment to destroy Israel. This has to be overcome."

Short of that ultimate goal, administration officials pressed the Arab states to further isolate the PLO by accepting a "Geneva formula" that would deny Palestinians all but token representation at any Mideast talks.

Exactly what Carter had in mind was divulged October 13 when Israeli foreign minister Moshe Dayan revealed the secret contents of a U.S.-Israeli Geneva "working paper" he and Carter initialed eight days earlier in Washington.

"Palestinian Arabs" would be permitted to sit in on the opening session and a discussion of the West Bank and Gaza issues, according to the document. However, Dayan explained, he and Carter agreed that none of the Palestinian Arabs could be supporters of the PLO.

Underlying Carter's entire diplomatic strategy for the Middle East was American imperialism's continued massive arming of the Zionist state. The State Department announced July 22 that the Carter administration had tacked an additional \$250 million onto a \$1.5 billion military aid package negotiated in 1976.

### Israel Under Begin

The signal news event in Israel during 1977 was the "surprise" election of right-wing Zionist Menahem Begin as prime minister May 17. To close observers, however, the upset of Israel's Labor Party government—which had ruled since 1948—was not as surprising as it seemed.

The Labor Party's plurality underwent a significant erosion after the October 1973 war. Growing international isolation and a troubled economy added even more gloom to Labor's electoral prospects.

The inflation rate in 1976 was 35 percent. Inflation was expected to run at a similar rate in 1977, while the gross national product remained virtually stagnant. Analysts predicted a staggering balance of payments deficit exceeding \$3

billion.

Workers in Israel were hit hard by the economic slump. Two months before the elections, dockworkers defied the government and closed the Israeli ports of Ashdod, Haifa, and Eilat to press for higher wages.

Coupled with Labor's economic woes were a series of scandals within the Labor Party leadership.

On April 8, barely a month before the election, Israeli Premier and Labor Party head Yitzhak Rabin resigned after admitting he and his wife had lied about illicit bank accounts they maintained in Washington.

Widespread contempt for the Labor Party regime paved the way for the victory of Begin's Likud bloc, right-wing by even Zionist standards.

Begin's provocative declaration that occupied Arab territories were, in fact, "liberated" parts of Israel—combined with his credentials as former commander of the Irgun terrorists—evoked predictions that Carter's diplomatic initiatives were doomed.

A typical response came from U.S. columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, who wrote in a May 20 article: "Not only have the odds on a new Middle East war escalated with the surprise election of hard-line Israeli nationalist Menachem Begin and his right-wing Likud Party, but the region's entire political fabric has been ripped to shreds as well."

In practice, however, the Begin regime proved different from its Labor Party predecessor only on questions of style, not political substance.

Jerusalem's decision to allow the fanatics of the religious-Zionist Gush Emunim movement to establish a number of West Bank settlements was seized upon as proof that Begin's election had ushered in a new era of Zionist colonization.

But Begin was simply carrying out more openly the settlement policies of his predecessors in government.

Since 1967 the Labor Party had been carrying out a completely expansionist course in the occupied territories. In ten years it had spent more than \$500 million to erect nearly 100 settlements stretching from the Golan Heights to the Sinai.

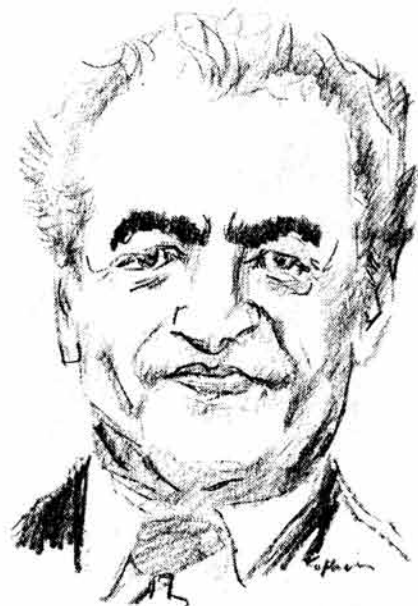
Begin also proved a more willing partner to Carter's Geneva diplomacy than commentators initially predicted.

On one hand, Begin adamantly maintained Jerusalem's traditional positions of refusing to consider returning any West Bank territory and ruling out any negotiations that include the PLO. Yet by October he had upstaged his Labor Party predecessors by signing the U.S.-Israeli Geneva working paper.

Strengthened by his hard-line reputation and Israel's preponderant military might, Begin felt confident enough of his popularity at home to initiate his own "diplomacy" late in the year.

Israeli jets stormed across the Lebanese border November 9 and 11, leveling two villages in southern Lebanon. More than 100 civilians were killed and 165 wounded.

Providing the militarily weaker Arab



SHAH

states with a small demonstration of its firepower, Jerusalem calculated, would encourage its neighbors to reconsider even token support for the Palestinian struggle.

With the blood still wet on his hands, Begin hastened the capitulation of one Arab adversary—Anwar el-Sadat. Speaking in Cairo the same day Israeli jets pounded Lebanon, Sadat declared his willingness to "go to the furthest corners of the earth" to bring peace to the Middle East.

Begin was happy to oblige Sadat with an invitation to visit Jerusalem. It proved to be an offer the Egyptian despot couldn't refuse.

Under pressure on every front in 1977, the masses throughout the Middle East nonetheless were able to continue their resistance to imperialism, Zionism, and their own reactionary rulers.

During January and February international attention focused on the plight of Palestinians held in Israeli jails, as political prisoners staged an extended hunger strike at Ashkelon prison that spread to other Zionist detention centers.

West Bank protests in early March supporting the hunger strikers and commemorating the "Day of the Land" brought thousands of Palestinians into the streets. Demonstrators were met by Israeli troops wielding tear gas, truncheons, and machine guns.

This militancy was reflected at a meeting of the Palestine National Council March 12-20 in Cairo. For months the reactionary Arab regimes had been pressuring the PLO leadership of the PNC to amend sections of the Palestine National Charter that call for dismantling the Israeli state.

Yet the final declaration approved at the meeting reaffirmed the struggle against Zionism and the PNC's commitment to "recover the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian Arab people. . . ."

The Palestinian cause got another boost when Israel's fraudulently cultivated image as a bastion of democracy and human rights was seriously damaged by a June 19 London *Sunday Times* article that exposed the practice of torture in Israeli interrogation centers.

The carefully documented report was based on five months of research and interviews inside Israel and the occupied territories. It concluded:

"Torture is organized so methodically that it cannot be dismissed as a handful of 'rogue cops' exceeding orders. It is systematic. It appears to be sanctioned at some level as deliberate policy."

The evidence of torture was so compelling and the Israeli government's defense so transparently flimsy, that even strongly pro-Zionist newspapers like the *Christian Science Monitor* were forced to editorially chide the Israeli regime.

In Iran the resistance of the masses took on proportions unseen in recent years. Although not an Arab country, Iran's importance in the region guarantees that the upsurge will spur the process of radicalization throughout the Middle East.

During October and November, Iranian workers and students stood up to the Shah's bloodthirsty rule in the largest antigovernment demonstrations since the American CIA-engineered coup installed the Tehran butcher in 1953.

Ten evenings of poetry readings October 10-19 evolved into a powerful protest of the Shah's repressive dictatorship.

As many as 10,000 persons jammed an outdoor stadium to participate in these events. Every time a speaker mentioned the word freedom, the crowds burst into jubilant applause.

While the Shah visited the Carter White House in mid-November, new demonstrations in Tehran were attacked by the Iranian police. More than 4,000 persons responded to an attack November 15 by sitting in after a dissident poetry reading at Aryamehr University. Students throughout the country declared a strike and planned more actions for December.

The voices of protest—heard this year in the streets of Tehran, in the villages of the West Bank, in the slums of Cairo—were an eloquent reminder that peace and social progress in the Middle East will only be fought for, and finally won, by the masses themselves. □



## Mass Ferment Spreads Across Africa

By Ernest Harsch

Two momentous events—whose reverberations are still being felt today—shook the African continent in 1974. The Portuguese colonial empire, the oldest in Africa, began to collapse following a coup in Lisbon. And in Ethiopia, the archaic regime of Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by the military in the midst of massive upsurges in the cities and the countryside.

Both events set in motion a series of upheavals that have altered the face of African politics.

The attainment of political independence by the Portuguese colonies, especially Angola and Mozambique, inspired the Black masses in the rest of southern Africa to step up their own fight for liberation. The uprisings in Soweto and other South African townships and the sharpening struggles for Black majority rule in Zimbabwe and independence in Namibia are a direct legacy of this.

In a similar manner, Selassie's downfall accelerated the process of disintegration of the old Ethiopian empire, which was based on the domination of the Amharas over a number of other nationalities. The struggles of the Eritreans, Somalis, and other oppressed peoples against Ethiopian rule became a focus for most other developments in the Horn of Africa.

The upheavals in these two regions are significant in their own right. But they can have even more far-reaching effects, coming at a time of severe economic problems and deep discontent throughout Africa. Of all continents, Africa has been hardest hit by the stagnation of the world capitalist economy, with more than 60 million workers out of a total labor force of 140 million either unemployed or underemployed. This has further undermined the already shaky foundations of a number of Black neocolonial regimes.

In reaction to this increasingly explosive situation, American imperialism has escalated its intervention into African affairs, largely under the guise of Carter's much-touted concern for "human rights."

### The South African Cauldron

Despite a ferocious repression in 1976 that had left hundreds of Black demonstrators dead and thousands more in prison, the apartheid regime was unable to stamp out all overt expressions of opposition by South Africa's oppressed Black majority. In many cases, in fact, the repression only stiffened the determination of Blacks to

struggle for their freedom.

Given the degree of exploitation of Blacks in South Africa, such perseverance is not surprising. The regime, which is based on a population of only 4.3 million whites, rules over more than 22 million Blacks, who are denied virtually all political rights and all of whose movements are strictly regulated. Blacks are basically allowed to function only as underpaid servants and laborers for the enrichment of the white-owned capitalist economy.

In the wake of the mass uprisings of 1976, the new militancy of Blacks was expressed in a series of protests, especially in Soweto, the center of active resistance to the regime. Students took to the streets repeatedly in 1977, to demand the release of political prisoners, to protest the murders of Blacks in jail, and to oppose rent hikes.

On the anniversary of the first Soweto protests, tens of thousands of Blacks around the country demonstrated in commemoration of the victims of the repression.

Two developments in particular gave an indication of the growing support for the young anti-apartheid fighters among the Black population as a whole, as well as the more organized and carefully focused nature of their campaigns.

In early June, the Soweto Urban Bantu Council, a Black-staffed advisory body set up by the regime, collapsed after most of its members resigned under pressure from the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), which has been in the forefront of the protests. Prominent Soweto figures then set up a new body, the Committee of Ten, which attempted (unsuccessfully) to force the regime to grant greater Black control over the township.

The SSRC also launched a campaign by students in Soweto to boycott classes in protest against Pretoria's segregated Bantu Education policy. By November, about 300,000 students around the country were participating, and some 500 Black teachers in Soweto had resigned their posts in solidarity.

In reaction, the Vorster regime clamped down with yet more repression. Although the police refrained from butchering hundreds as they did the previous year, a number of Black youths were nevertheless cut down by police bullets during the various demonstrations. Pretoria also continued its policy of murdering Black political prisoners in jail.

On September 12, Steve Biko became the

most prominent Black leader to fall victim to Vorster's jailhouse executioners thus far. A key figure in the militant Black Consciousness movement, Biko had been a founder and first president of the South African Students Organisation and was honorary president of the Black People's Convention at the time of his death.

The regime tried to cover up its responsibility, but substantial evidence surfaced proving that he had been beaten to death. Despite this, an official inquest absolved the police of any blame.

Biko's murder ignited protests around the country, including a funeral rally of nearly 20,000 Blacks in King Williamstown September 25.

In a bid to turn back the tide of mass protests, Vorster outlawed every major Black group October 19, including the SSRC and most organizations identified with the Black Consciousness movement. Scores of Black leaders were arrested. As with earlier crackdowns, however, Pretoria has been unable to stifle the Black freedom struggle itself.

Vorster's repression provoked international protests and prompted African representatives in the United Nations to call for an end to all foreign complicity with Pretoria. Specifically, they demanded a ban on all foreign investments and credits to Pretoria and a halt to all arms sales and other military collaboration.

However, Vorster's allies in the UN Security Council—the American, British, and French governments—came to his rescue, using their veto powers to block adoption of such measures. But the international pressure was so great that they were compelled a few days later to reluctantly approve an arms embargo.

Since Pretoria is already capable of producing most of its weapons (thanks to earlier Western assistance) and the embargo contains numerous loopholes, the measure was largely a symbolic one, with no real impact on the apartheid regime's ability to suppress the Black population.

In fact, the UN arms embargo was basically a smoke screen for continued Western collaboration with Pretoria, especially on the economic level. American companies and banks alone have about \$3.8 billion in direct and indirect investments in South Africa, profiting greatly from the extreme exploitation of the country's underpaid Black working class.

This is the real meaning of President Carter's "new" policy toward South Africa. The verbal denunciations of apartheid by Carter, Young, Mondale, and other officials are designed to enhance the White House's assumed image as a "defender of human rights," the better to cover up American imperialism's close involvement in South African racism.

### Maneuvers in Namibia and Zimbabwe

Another side of Carter's "new" policy



was evident in his approach toward the conflicts now raging in Namibia and Zimbabwe. In both cases, as a result of significant advances by the Namibian and Zimbabwean freedom struggles, the American imperialists have concluded that their long-term interests can be best preserved by a transition to indirect forms of rule, that is, by the establishment of Black neocolonial regimes willing and able to restrain the masses and protect foreign investments.

Toward that end, Washington and several other imperialist powers have been applying pressure on Pretoria to relinquish its political control over Namibia, a mineral-rich territory that it rules as a direct colony. They were successful in getting Vorster to drop his plans to install a sham "independent" regime, composed of local white administrators and African tribal chiefs. But Vorster has so far refused to concede any significant role to the South West Africa People's Organisation, the main Namibian nationalist group fighting for the country's independence.

Meanwhile, Pretoria's war against the Namibian freedom fighters continues.

Similarly, the American and British imperialists have stepped up pressure on the Smith regime ruling Zimbabwe. They want him to make enough concessions to the Zimbabwean nationalists to make a negotiated settlement possible. They fear that Smith's continued intransigence could provoke a massive upsurge of the Zimbabwean masses that could escape control and further inspire Blacks in South Africa itself.

Complementing this effort, the Black regimes in the region have sought to heighten the divisions within the already faction-ridden Zimbabwean nationalist movement so as to weaken it and make it more amenable to a neocolonialist solution.

So far, the British and American efforts have failed and the fighting in Zimbabwe continues to escalate, with the Rhodesian forces conducting periodic massacres of Zimbabwean refugees in neighboring Mozambique.

#### Upheaval in the Horn

After southern Africa, the most explosive region of the continent is the Horn of Africa, comprising Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti.

The mass upsurge in Ethiopia in 1974 and the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie unleashed a host of social forces, ranging from the urban working class and the poor peasantry to the various oppressed nationalities. The Ethiopian military junta, known as the Dergue, is desperately trying to contain this upheaval through massive repression and heavy doses of "socialist" demagoguery.

Since the beginning of 1977, the Eritrean freedom fighters in particular have made

substantial gains in their struggle to win Eritrea's independence, taking control of a series of important towns and cities. With the overwhelming backing of the Eritrean population, they now exercise control over about 85 percent of the territory, including all but 300,000 of Eritrea's 3.5 million people. The Ethiopian forces are confined largely to Eritrea's capital, Asmara, and its main port, Massawa.

Despite these gains, the rivalries between the two groups—the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Eritrean Liberation Front—have hindered the independence struggle to an extent. But both are now trying to establish a common front against the Dergue.

Since June, the oppressed Somali people living in the Ogaden region in the southeast have also risen up to demand their right to self-determination. Since they had been conquered by several outside powers at the end of the last century (the Amharic dynasty in Addis Ababa and the British, French, and Italian imperialists), the Somalis today are divided by artificial borders, with some in the formally independent state of Somalia, some in the Ogaden, and some in Djibouti and Kenya. Because of this, the specific aim of the Somali struggle has been the unity of all Somalis within one state, a "Greater Somalia."

Like the Dergue, the Somali military junta is an oppressive capitalist regime. But since it rests to an extent on the Somali aspirations for unity (and might not long survive if it abandoned them) it has extended substantial military support to the Western Somali Liberation Front, which is fighting the Ethiopian forces in the Ogaden. Together, they have driven the Ethiopians out of most cities and towns in the region, except for the major cities of Harar and Dire Dawa.

On top of this, the Dergue, headed by Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, continues to face unrest in Addis Ababa itself. Journalists have reported that shooting can be heard frequently in the capital, as government supporters and activists of the Maoist-leaning Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party battle in the streets. One sign of the Dergue's growing isolation was the rift in mid-1977 between the junta and Me'ison (All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement), another Maoist group that had earlier backed the regime.

The mounting pressures around the country may be partly responsible for the frequent power struggles within the Dergue itself, the latest of which resulted in the execution of Lt. Col. Atnafu Abate, until then considered the most important figure in the junta after Mengistu.

Despite the Dergue's suppression of worker and student struggles and its denial of the right to self-determination to the Eritreans, Somalis, and other oppressed nationalities, the Stalinists in the Kremlin have seen fit to give it substantial

political and material support. In the interests of its self-serving foreign policy, Moscow terms the Dergue "revolutionary" and "progressive" and is supplying it with arms to help it contain the unrest.

Unfortunately, the Cuban regime has also extended political support to the Dergue. While Castro has several times denied Washington's charges that Cuban military advisers are aiding the junta, he has stated that he considers Mengistu a "true revolutionary." Such statements only help the Dergue maintain its "socialist" pretenses and sow confusion among Ethiopian revolutionists.

Explosive in themselves, the conflicts in the Horn can also have an impact on struggles in the rest of Africa and in the Middle East as well. Accordingly, Washington has been casting about for a way to contain them.

Until early 1977, it tried to do so by giving military aid to the Dergue. But with the junta's failure to bring the upheaval under control, the Carter administration pulled back from aiding it directly (though Israel still gives the Dergue military assistance). Instead, the White House is relying for the moment on behind-the-scenes maneuvers among the various forces in the region in an attempt to disorient and derail the Eritrean and Somali struggles and to strengthen its own hand to influence the course of events.

This policy, of course, carries an implicit danger of American military intervention—directly or through its local neocolonial allies—should the struggles in the Horn seriously threaten the imperialist interests.

#### Carter Rattles His Sabers

The fact that Washington is still considering the possible use of military intervention in Africa was made clear in two other developments in Africa during 1977.

In February, when President Idi Amin of Uganda barred American citizens from leaving that country (he later rescinded the order), the Carter administration launched a high-powered publicity campaign against Amin, focusing on reports of atrocities. This campaign was designed to prepare public opinion for possible imperialist intervention to topple Amin in favor of a figure better suited to maintaining stable, neocolonial rule over the country. The White House let it be known that it was ready to issue orders to the U.S. aircraft carrier *Enterprise*.

While the reports of massacres in Uganda may well be true, the imperialists have no right to intervene there. Imperialist intervention would not be aimed at ending the oppression and exploitation of the Ugandan masses, but at prolonging it.

Following an uprising in Zaïre's mineral-rich province of Shaba in March, Carter did actually intervene to help prop up the dictatorship of Washington's long-

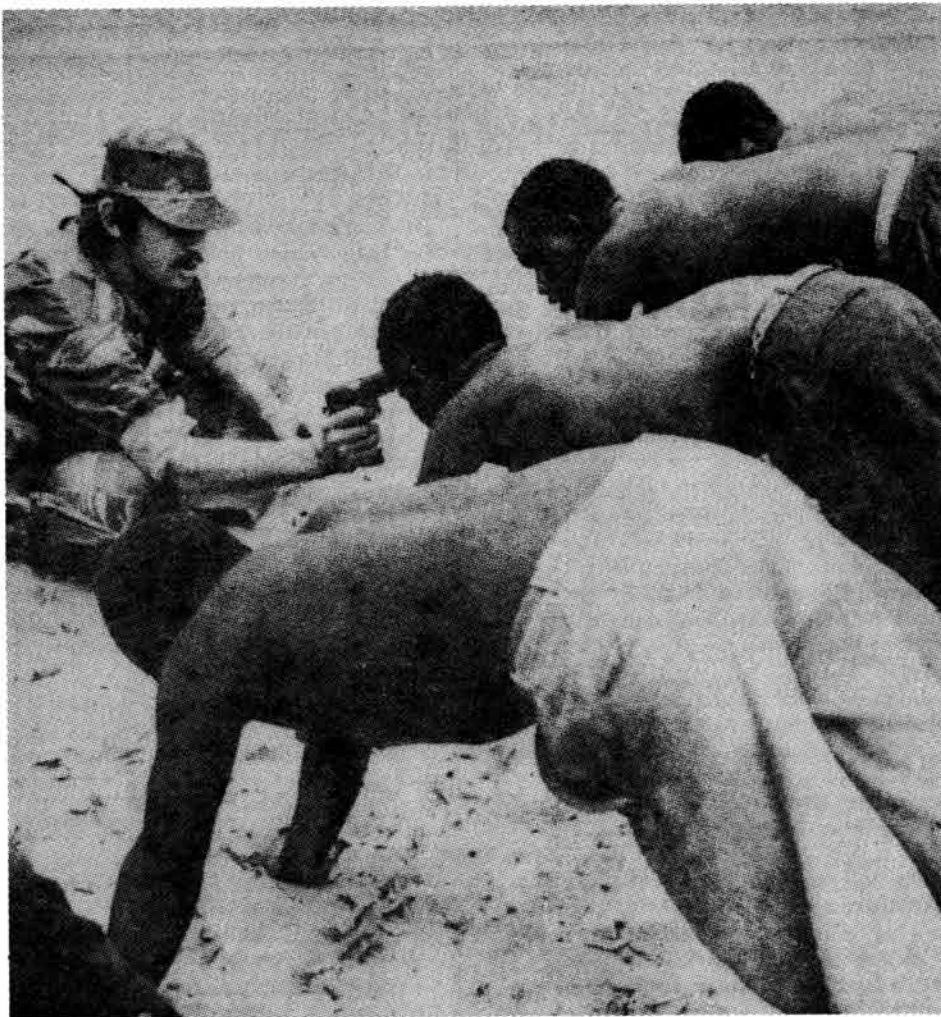
time ally, Mobuto Sese Seko. Within a few days he approved the shipment of \$2 million worth of military aid and less than a month later sent another \$13 million in emergency supplies.

At the same time, Carter's response was notable for its relative "restraint." The White House stressed the "nonlethal" nature of its military shipments and said that no American troops or advisers would be sent to Zaïre. This was a result of the massive antiwar sentiment in the United States, which Carter sought to avoid provoking into active protests reminiscent of those during the Vietnam War.

He chose instead to let the European imperialist powers, particularly Paris, carry the bulk of the imperialist intervention. French pilots and planes helped airlift 1,500 Moroccan troops to aid Mobutu, and a number of French military advisers were sent. With this aid, Mobutu was able to suppress the opposition to his regime—at least for the time being.

In a second direct military intervention in Africa, the French government announced in July that it had provided "logistical support" to the regime in Chad in its war against Toubou rebels in the northern part of the country.

And in October, under the guise of winning the release of captured French nationals, Paris threatened to intervene against the Polisario Front, which is fighting for the independence of Sahara (a territory ceded to Morocco and Mauritania by Spain in November 1975 against the wishes of the Saharan population).



Rhodesian soldier "interrogating" prisoners in September.

#### A Continental Tinderbox

But with the heightened tempo of upheaval and unrest throughout much of Africa, Washington, Paris, and the other imperialist powers will find it increasingly difficult to douse the flames everywhere that they arise. Besides the major areas of conflict, there are ample signs that the ferment is spreading to quite a number of countries.

In the first few months of 1977, the Zambian regime of Kenneth Kaunda was challenged by the most widespread student demonstrations and strikes since the country gained its independence in 1964. Significantly, a number of unionists linked to the ruling party came out in support of the students after five of them were killed by police.

In Angola, the ruling MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) was rocked by a coup attempt in May led by dissident MPLA members. Although factional conflicts were involved, the dissidents were able to play on the discontent in Luanda's shantytowns. Following the suppression of the coup, hundreds of persons were arrested and a wide purge of the MPLA was conducted.

At the same time, the MPLA has been confronted with continued guerrilla resist-

ance by the UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), one of its rivals in the 1975-76 civil war.

Several West African countries have also been swept by unrest. Mali and Liberia were both hit by student protests, with the Malian junta threatening to impose emergency rule. In Senegal, railway workers staged a major strike in June, just a few weeks after thousands of students rallied and demonstrated against the regime's education policy. The growing demands for democratic rights in Senegal were reflected by a wide range of protests after the arrest of a newspaper editor in September.

The Nigerian military junta has been compelled to promise a return to civilian rule by 1979, partly as a result of rising ferment among workers and students that was evident in a series of strikes and demonstrations. In an effort to contain the unrest, it has also tightened restrictions on the labor movement and has threatened to send troops into schools "to maintain discipline."

The military junta ruling nearby Ghana has likewise been buffeted by demands for greater democratic rights by students, unionists, lawyers, church figures, and others. It, too, has promised to make way for a civilian regime.

Hit by a worsening economic squeeze, women market vendors in Guinea marched in front of President Sékou Touré's palace in August. After they were fired on by police, they responded by sacking ten police stations and holding further demonstrations.

In neighboring Sierra Leone, a state of emergency was imposed in February following widespread demonstrations by youths demanding President Siaka Stevens's resignation.

Given the rising combativity of the African masses—against both the white supremacist states and the Black capitalist regimes—it is possible that any one of the many struggles now erupting throughout the continent could escalate into a major test of forces. □



## Latin America—New Rise in Mass Struggle

By Fred Murphy

Growing combativity among workers and students caused big problems for the rulers in a number of key Latin American countries in 1977. General strikes, work stoppages, and mass demonstrations challenged the attempts of capitalist governments to impose "austerity" plans and showed that even the most repressive military dictatorships are unable to maintain social peace.

The year's biggest struggles were in Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.

The living standards of Argentine workers came under fierce attack after the March 1976 military coup. By the first quarter of 1977, real wages in Argentina were at their lowest point in postwar history.

In mid-October, the Argentine workers launched a fight that smashed through the junta's wage freeze. Six thousand auto workers in Córdoba went out for four days beginning October 13, and won a pay boost higher than that originally offered. This was followed by a nationwide rail strike and strikes by Buenos Aires subway workers, airline pilots, and workers in a number of sectors in Rosario, including dock workers and power workers.

The strikes went around and against the military trustees appointed to run the unions and their collaborators in the labor bureaucracy.

As the strike wave threatened to spread further, the junta abandoned its economic program and granted wage hikes of 38% to 43% to all the striking unions. Family allowances were increased, and more raises were promised within sixty days.

The strikes ended in early November, but not before the Argentine workers had shown that kidnappings, murders, and repression have not broken their willingness to struggle.

The big victory against the wage freeze opens new possibilities for future trade-union struggles and for the fight for democratic rights in Argentina.

Major union contracts in Colombia expired this year, at a time when inflation was running at more than 40% and the López Michelsen government was seeking to hold down wages and enforce a series of big cutbacks and layoffs in the public sector.

In the face of government and employer intransigence in the National Wage Board, Colombia's four major labor federations joined with several big independent unions to organize a "citizens' national general strike" on September 14 around a series of demands, including a 50% across-the-board wage increase.

The mobilization paralyzed Bogotá and other major cities. Mass discontent with rising prices, unemployment, poverty, government corruption, and the deterioration of public services gave rise to a social explosion in Bogotá that was put down by armored military units. More than 50 persons were killed, 500 injured, and 4,000 arrested.

Despite the brutality of López Michelsen's response, the struggle continued. On November 18, mass demonstrations were held in a number of cities to protest the September repression and reiterate the general strike's demands. The march in Bogotá was the largest mobilization of the year, according to the Bogotá daily *El Espectador*.

At the center of the labor struggles in Colombia was a strike by nearly 5,000 workers at ECOPETROL, the state-owned petroleum complex. The government fought these workers for more than two months with military harassment, the use of strikebreaking, arrests of union leaders, and the firing of 300 workers. The union decided to end the strike, at least temporarily, on October 30. None of the demands were won.

Despite this setback, the trade-union unity forged in September continues. Even the union bureaucrats tied to the two big bourgeois parties have been forced by rank-and-file pressure to put up a show of strength against the government and the employers. At the same time, divisions have surfaced inside the ruling class that will no doubt grow deeper as the 1978 presidential elections approach.

"Peru is in the midst of an extremely serious economic and financial crisis," a dispatch from Lima to the December 13 *Christian Science Monitor* reported. "Its currency is sinking in value literally by the day. Exports have fallen off drastically and credit needed to keep the economy going is rapidly drying up."

The military regime's problems result from a \$4 billion foreign debt, the failure of an ambitious oil-development scheme, and a disastrous drop in the anchovy catch. Austerity measures imposed at the demand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have provoked rising protest.

Big price increases were announced in June, sparking demonstrations by thousands of students across the country. On July 19, a nationwide general strike paralyzed Lima and other cities. The government responded with army and police attacks on strikers, the jailing of 300 union leaders, and the dismissal of more than 5,000 workers.

This failed to stem the resistance. Copper miners struck in July and August. General strikes shut down the city of Cuzco on November 17 and again on November 22 and 23.

A rally of more than 25,000 in Lima on November 24, called by the Communist Party-led General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), demanded the reinstatement of all workers fired after July 19, the release of the prisoners, and repatriation of all those deported by the regime. The Peruvian leftist weekly *Marka* commented:

All the speakers blamed the government for the crisis facing the country. . . .

This signifies an explicit change in the position of the CGTP leadership and contrasts with its more or less "critical" support of the government for the past eight years. It reflects the negligible results obtained through "dialogue" . . . as well as the growing impatience of the rank and file for a concrete plan of struggle, such as a new national general strike.

In December, strikes by hospital workers, steelworkers, and copper miners against the IMF-ordered austerity were under way. More protests could come in January, when further gasoline and food price hikes are to take effect.

Eight activists were arrested in São Paulo, Brazil, on April 28, while leafleting for a May Day event. On May 5, thousands of São Paulo students took to the streets to demand their release.

This marked the beginning of a country-wide student upsurge that is presenting the thirteen-year-old military dictatorship with one of its biggest challenges. Meetings, boycotts of classes, rallies, and street demonstrations have expressed the demands outlined in the "Open Letter to the Brazilian People" that the São Paulo students issued May 5: "For an end to torture, arrests, and political persecution. . . . For a broad, unrestricted amnesty for all political prisoners, banned individuals, and exiles. For democratic freedoms."

The Geisel government mobilized thousands of riot troops, ordered a military occupation of the University of Brasília on three occasions, and arrested 800 persons preparing to attend a national student assembly at Belo Horizonte in June.

But the protests continued and have spread to other sectors of the population. Scientists, filmmakers, lawyers, shopkeepers, and even some businessmen have spoken out against military rule. Dissent has even spread into the military's ruling apparatus, the ARENA party: Sixty-three



ARENA congressmen have called for democratic reforms, and six state governors have gone on record for a multiparty system.

The rising discontent has revealed fissures inside the military regime. Geisel sacked army chief Sylvio da Frota on October 12. Frota, who had presidential aspirations, denounced Geisel for showing "criminal indifference to communist infiltration and leftist propaganda . . ."

ARENA Senator José de Magalhães Pinto has received wide publicity as a candidate for the 1979 presidential "succession." Magalhães Pinto proudly declares his support for the military's 1964 takeover, but says a civilian president is now needed to restore "peace and understanding." Geisel himself favors intelligence chief João Baptista de Figueiredo as his replacement.

The dictatorship's difficulties could be exacerbated by a new downturn in the international capitalist economy. The regime has a \$30 billion foreign debt, so large that "any sign that Brazil could not pay its debts would rock the [international monetary] system to its foundations," as *Business Week* magazine warned December 5. The country's gross national product continued to rise at a rate of 6% in 1977, and foreign bankers remain willing to provide big loans. But a number of ambitious development projects are either completely stalled or far behind schedule, and, as *Business Week* noted, "Brazil's exports could be hit by rising protectionism in industrial countries."

U.S. President Jimmy Carter's main foreign-policy initiative in Latin America in 1977 was the new Panama Canal treaty. These accords provide some economic concessions to Panama and eventual control over canal operations, but their main thrust is to replace the blatant colonialism of the 1903 treaty and assure permanent American domination over the waterway, including the right of military intervention.

Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos's efforts to put this over as a "victory" have been less than totally successful. On several occasions after the terms were announced, thousands of persons mobilized to demand immediate sovereignty over the canal and the expulsion of the fourteen U.S. military bases on Panamanian soil. The Trotskyists of the Liga Socialista Revolucionaria played a major role in these actions.

In the weeks leading up to the October 23 plebiscite on the treaty in Panama, opposition to Torrijos's concessions became increasingly linked to complaints about inflation, unemployment, government corruption, and repression. The treaty was approved by a 2-to-1 margin, but this was far short of predictions by Torrijos that 90% of the voters would give their OK.

The treaty must still be approved by a two-thirds vote in the U.S. Senate.

Radicalization deepened in other Central American countries in 1977. In El Salvador, 100,000 persons demonstrated in February to protest election fraud, and in November, 1,500 workers occupied the labor ministry to press demands for higher wages.

Growing opposition to the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua gave rise to divisions in the ruling class, with some sectors voicing support for a "dialogue" with the Sandinista guerrilla movement. The Sandinistas carried out a number of military actions in the country in October.

Blacks in Costa Rica have been mobilizing for improvements in their living conditions. In response, the Oduber government jailed six leaders of the Black community in Limón for "instigating a riot," and charged two Trotskyist leaders with the same offense. Thousands of persons have marched in Limón in recent weeks to protest this repression. The eight activists have been released from jail and are awaiting trial.

The biggest struggles in Mexico this year were by university students against government attacks on education, and by professors and university workers for union recognition.

On July 6, 150,000 members and student supporters of the STUNAM (Union of Workers of the Autonomous National University of Mexico) marched in Mexico City. The next day, 25,000 cops occupied the UNAM campus. The STUNAM strike ended July 10, but the government did agree to recognize the union and begin negotiations for contracts.

Almost half Mexico's work force of 17.5 million is either unemployed or marginally employed. Such high joblessness leads many workers to cross the border into the United States to seek work, where they are victimized by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. A xenophobic campaign against "illegal aliens" in the United States, fostered by the Carter administration, reached new heights this year.

But a response also began to develop. A number of Mexican trade unionists and socialists attended the National Chicano/Latino Conference on Immigration and Public Policy in San Antonio, Texas, in October, which mapped out a campaign to oppose the deportation of Mexican workers by U.S. authorities.

The Mexican government dropped charges against 424 political prisoners in April, and then announced that "there are no more political prisoners in Mexico." But the López Portillo regime is still trying to extradite Héctor Marroquín Manríquez from the United States.

Marriquin is a Mexican political activist who fled the country in 1974 upon discovering he was being sought on frame-up charges of murder and "subversion," owing to his involvement in a leftist student

organization. He has asked for political asylum in the United States on grounds that his life would be endangered if he were sent back to Mexico. Persons in similar situations have been known to "disappear" or be summarily executed by the Mexican police.

López Portillo has announced electoral reforms designed to take some heat off the official government party, the PRI, which has long been practically the only legal party in Mexico. Political organizations claiming 65,000 or more adherents can qualify for full legal status and a ballot spot in the 1979 congressional elections. The Trotskyists of the Partido Revolucionario do los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party) have launched a campaign to gain such legalization.

The PRT suffered a blow in May with the assassination of Alfonso Peralta Reyes, a Political Bureau member and a leader of the UNAM workers' struggle. On June 10, almost 20,000 persons marched in Mexico City to protest the murder and demand a halt to government repression and provocation.

A number of Latin American military regimes announced plans in 1977 to turn the reins back to civilian governments.

Bolivian dictator Hugo Banzer Suárez announced in November that general elections would be held July 9, 1978, with the armed forces retaining their "role as guardians of the country." No mention was made of any amnesty for the 5,000 to 20,000 political exiles or the hundreds of political prisoners still in the dictatorship's jails.

The Peruvian junta has said that elections will be held in June 1978 for a constituent assembly.

In Ecuador, a referendum on a new constitution is to take place in January, with general elections to follow later in the year. Such motion toward civilian rule did not keep the ruling military from gunning down 120 sugar workers in October. The massacre sparked trade-union and student protests and a widespread sugar strike during the harvest period.

Chilean butcher Augusto Pinochet made some promises in July about civilian rule and presidential election in 1985, but totalitarianism remained the reality in Chile in 1977. The state of siege was renewed twice, and "the existence, organization, activities, and propaganda" of all political parties was banned in March. This step was aimed mainly at the Christian Democrats, leftist parties having been outlawed long before.

Public opposition to the junta grew this year nonetheless. The first street protest since the 1973 coup was held by relatives of "disappeared" persons on November 17. Strikes and slowdowns by port workers in Valparaíso and by 1,700 copper miners at El Teniente have also been reported in recent weeks. □

# Struggles for Democratic Rights Sharpen in Asia

By Ernest Harsch

In a period of just four months in 1977, three of the most powerful and repressive rulers in the Indian subcontinent were toppled from their thrones. Indira Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Sirimavo Bandaranaike each fell from power, either directly or indirectly as a result of massive opposition to their years of authoritarian capitalist rule.

Their downfalls marked a reaffirmation of the powerful attraction that struggles for elementary democratic rights can have on the oppressed masses of the semicolonial world.

The series of upsets began in India, which had been governed by Prime Minister Gandhi since June 1975 under a draconian state of emergency. Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of political prisoners languished in jail, the press was muzzled, strikes had been banned, and all signs of political resistance were quashed.

Lulled by months of enforced silence into underestimating the depth of mass opposition to her regime, Gandhi called general elections in March with the aim of providing a democratic veneer for her dictatorial rule. But once the repressive measures had been relaxed slightly, the masses saw an opportunity to express their sentiments. Hundreds of thousands flocked to the election rallies of Gandhi's political opponents, who promised to restore democratic rights.

The reaction against Gandhi gained such momentum that she could not even try to cancel the elections. Sensing that Gandhi's regime was doomed, prominent figures in her administration, such as Jagjivan Ram, split and allied themselves with the main bourgeois opposition grouping, the Janata Party.

Warning against the phony promises of all the bourgeois parties, the Trotskyists of the Communist League, Indian section of the Fourth International, fielded their own candidate in Baroda. They stressed the need for independent working-class political action to wage a consistent fight for democratic rights and to advance the struggle for socialism.

When the 200 million votes were in, Gandhi's Congress Party had been swept from power and Gandhi had lost her own seat in Parliament. The pro-Moscow Communist Party of India, which had backed Gandhi, also fared poorly in the elections.

In face of this mass sentiment, the new Janata Party regime was forced to make a number of concessions. It released most of

the political prisoners who had been jailed under the emergency and lifted formal censorship of the press.

It revealed its real intentions, however, when it refused to release *all* political prisoners, especially among those who had been detained before the emergency as alleged "Naxalites." It also stalled on promises to repeal several repressive laws.

Nevertheless, while the Janata Party's fundamental aim is the same as Gandhi's—maintaining capitalist rule—it is not yet in a position to effectively clamp the lid back down on the Indian masses.

The workers quickly took advantage of this situation and launched a series of strikes throughout the country in an effort to make up for the economic losses they suffered during the state of emergency.

One sign of the growing erosion of support for the capitalist parties came during the July state elections, when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) won a majority of the seats in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. As a Stalinist party, however, the CPI(M)'s main interest is in collaborating with the bourgeoisie, not in advancing the interests of the workers.

Although the CPI(M) had enough support to form a state government on its own, it established a popular-front regime that included two regional bourgeois parties. CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu, now chief minister of West Bengal, took pains to reassure the capitalists that their interests were not threatened. But how long the popular-front regime will be successful in holding back the masses remains to be seen.

In neighboring Pakistan, Prime Minister Bhutto tried a ploy similar to Gandhi's—he called elections as a cover for his repressive rule. But unlike Gandhi, Bhutto rigged the vote to ensure that it came out in his favor. The elections in early March were so crudely and obviously stolen, however, that the opposition Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) was compelled by its supporters to call protests.

The Pakistani masses, subjected to years of government attacks and deteriorating living standards, burst onto the political arena in the most direct fashion possible. They took to the streets in their tens of thousands, in most major cities to call for Bhutto's ouster and for the holding of new elections. The protests were initially under the PNA's direction, but they soon grew so massive that they escaped its control.

In April, the working class, under the leadership of the Pakistan Labor Alliance, took action in its own name. A general strike totally paralyzed the key industrial city of Karachi.

Bhutto responded to the upsurge with his usual brutality. Police, troops, and paramilitary forces gunned down hundreds of demonstrators and arrested thousands. Martial law was declared in the three largest cities—Karachi, Lahore, and Hyderabad.

A series of inconclusive negotiations between Bhutto and the PNA followed. With the civilian politicians unable to restore a degree of political "stability," and with the impact of the upsurge beginning to have an effect on the ranks of the army itself, the military decided in July to step in and take direct control. Bhutto was removed from office and arrested.

The military junta initially promised to hold new elections, but later canceled them. New repressive measures were introduced under the guise of Islam.

But the radicalizing experience of the upsurge had already left a deep imprint on the urban masses. A Pakistani revolutionary socialist who visited Pakistan shortly after the coup reported that everyone was discussing politics and that hatred of martial law was widespread.

Within a few weeks of Bhutto's ouster, yet another head of state was driven from office—in Sri Lanka, the island country just southeast of India.

Massive disillusionment with Bandaranaike's regime had been building up since shortly after she took power in 1970. An early sign of this was the growth of the radical youth group, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP—People's Liberation Front), which led an abortive uprising against the regime in April 1971. Even before the uprising, however, Bandaranaike declared a state of emergency and arrested a number of JVP leaders, including Rohana Wijeweera. The uprising itself was crushed only after thousands of youths were killed and 18,000 arrested.

Throughout this period, Bandaranaike's capitalist government was aided by the pro-Moscow Communist Party and by the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP—Ceylon Equal Society Party), which had been expelled from the Fourth International in 1964 for its participation in an earlier coalition regime. The LSSP ministers were dismissed from the cabinet in late 1975, however, and the CP minister



withdrew in early 1977.

Massive unrest surfaced at the end of 1976 and beginning of 1977 in a series of major strikes. Protest campaigns were also launched demanding greater democratic rights and the release of the remaining political prisoners.

Bandaranaike was forced to make some concessions. She lifted the state of emergency and called general elections.

Like Gandhi, she was routed, her repressive policies and rising unemployment having become major issues in the elections. While she managed to retain her own seat, her Sri Lanka Freedom Party was reduced from eighty-five seats to eight. The LSSP and CP, which had been badly tarnished by their responsibility for Bandaranaike's policies, lost all their seats.

The main beneficiary of the disillusionment with Bandaranaike was the country's other major bourgeois party, the United National Party. Its leader, J.R. Jayewardene, became the new prime minister. Like the Janata regime in India, Jayewardene had to make some concessions on the question of democratic rights and in early November released Rohana Wijeweera and the other JVP prisoners from jail.

At the same time, Jayewardene moved to increase government interference in the union movement and to amend the constitution to give the president dictatorial powers. In addition, attacks by the dominant Sinhalese against the oppressed Tamils culminated in a pogrom in August in which scores of Tamils were killed.

In Bangladesh, the fourth major country in the Indian subcontinent, the military junta headed by Gen. Ziaur Rahman was able to survive the year, but not without challenge. In late September and early October, uprisings by troops took place in Bogra and Dacca, the capital.

After the revolts were crushed, thirty-seven persons were executed and another fifty-five sentenced to death. Three parties were banned, including the Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (Socialist National Party), which had played a major role in an earlier military uprising in November 1975.

The generalized conflict between repressive regimes and struggles for democratic and economic rights featured prominently in a number of other countries in Asia as well.

In the Philippines, thousands of young demonstrators rallied in the streets of Manila September 23 to protest the fifth anniversary of President Ferdinand E. Marcos's martial law. It was but one of a series of actions by students and workers that reflected rising discontent with the Marcos regime. Despite this pressure, Marcos declared that martial law would remain in effect indefinitely.

One justification he gave was the continued struggle by Muslim rebels in the

south, who are fighting for regional autonomy from the central regime. In late September, Marcos ordered an escalation of the war against the Muslims and his troops massacred hundreds of civilians.

Marcos's counterpart in South Korea,



GANDHI

Park Chung Hee, was also confronted with continued student protests, despite intense repression. The largest, on October 7, drew about 1,000 students who called for the abolition of repressive laws and the freeing of political prisoners. Earlier actions had protested Park's bribery of American government officials.

In Thailand, several thousand workers defied a ban on strikes in January, downing their tools to protest new job regulations. The military junta cracked down, arresting twenty-seven labor leaders. In September, eighteen students and workers arrested at the time of the coup in October 1976 were brought to trial. On the opening day, between 2,000 and 3,000 persons demonstrated outside.

The Indonesian regime of General Suharto continues to hold 100,000 political prisoners, many of them since the 1965 bloodbath in which more than half a million persons were killed. In a rare act of open defiance, at least 1,000 university students marched to central Jakarta November 10 to protest against the regime.

Japan, the only imperialist country in Asia, has had a significant antipollution movement for a number of years. During 1977 there were numerous environmental protests around the country, one of the largest taking place at the new Tokyo International Airport October 9, where almost 22,000 persons turned out. For

twelve years, peasants in the area have carried out a campaign against the land seizures and ecological damage brought on by the airport.

Buffeted by a whole host of social movements—ranging from antipollution campaigns and student struggles to labor actions and anticorruption protests—the Fukuda regime has been searching for ways to strengthen its repressive powers. The October hijacking of a Japan Air Lines DC-8 by the Japanese Red Army provided it with an ideal excuse.

Under the guise of an "antiterrorist" campaign, police raided the offices of eighteen groups alleged to have "some connection with the Red Army Faction." New laws were passed bolstering powers of arrest, providing for stiffer penalties, and cutting back the rights of prisoners and defendants. The real target of these moves was the workers movement.

The three countries of Southeast Asia liberated from American occupation more than two years ago—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—continued to suffer from the effects of years of war and massive American bombing.

One of the gravest problems has been lack of adequate food production. The Laotian regime issued an international appeal for 367,500 tons of rice. And an expected shortfall of two million tons of rice was a major theme during ceremonies marking the thirty-second anniversary of Vietnam's independence.

While most of the blame for the disruption of Vietnam's agriculture can be laid to Washington, which left the countryside pockmarked with bomb craters and caused lasting environmental damage through the heavy use of chemical herbicides and defoliants, the Vietnamese leaders have also acknowledged mistakes in their agricultural policy.

Washington, however, has refused to acknowledge any responsibility or to provide aid to its former victims. Carter rejected appeals by the Vietnamese that he fulfill a secret pledge made by Nixon in 1973 to provide \$3.25 billion in assistance.

Refugees from neighboring Cambodia have reported widespread hunger and disease in that country as well, but the Khmer Rouge regime has so far denied the reports. In fact, during a visit to Peking in late September, Prime Minister Pol Pot claimed that the situation in Cambodia was "excellent" and that agricultural production was sufficient to feed "our people an average of 312 kilos [a kilo is 2.2 pounds] of rice per capita."

During the same visit, Pol Pot officially confirmed for the first time the massive evacuations of Cambodia's cities shortly after the American withdrawal and the fall of the Lon Nol regime in early 1975. He claimed the extraordinary measure had been necessary to break up "all sorts of enemy spy organizations." □



# China, One Year After

By Les Evans

The year after the death of Mao Tsetung was one of watchful waiting in China. There was nothing so dramatic as the events of 1976, which saw the Tien An Men demonstrations, the passing of Mao, Chou En-lai, and Chu Te, and the purge of Mao's faction, to so-called Gang of Four.

After those convulsions, 1977 had to make do with the anticlimactic rehabilitation of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, finally consummated in July, and the convening of the Eleventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party the following month. These were interesting as straws in the wind, indicating the composition and political direction of the post-Mao leadership. But the real story lay elsewhere, in the belated revelations of the shambles Mao's Cultural Revolution had made of China's economy, educational system, and the arts.

A series of national conferences were held to assess the damage to the economy in Mao's last decade and to formulate a new policy. These culminated in a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fourth National People's Congress in October, where Minister of Economics Yu Ch'iu-li gave a sobering report on the true state of affairs.

There had been "grave damage to the national economy," Yu said on October 23, and "there was a stagnation in industrial and agricultural production and a decline in the output of a number of industrial products." (Hsinhua, October 25, 1977.)

The specifics cited by Yu included the following. In "some localities and units," "Corruption and graft, theft, speculation and profiteering were rife and socialist ownership was undermined." On the collection of state revenues, there had been "several years of failure to fulfill state quotas." At the Anshan Iron and Steel Company, China's largest, "Production stagnated for a long time; accidents were frequent and equipment was seriously damaged." Szechwan province, once China's granary, was "reduced from a grain supplier to a grain deficient province and industrial production plummeted."

Yu said that the dislocations were so extensive as to make them impossible to correct "within the short space of one year." He gave this summary of particular problem areas:

Firstly, the growth of agriculture and light industry falls short of demand for the country's construction and the people's life; secondly, the development of the fuel and power industries and the primary goods industry is not keeping pace with the growth of the whole national economy;

thirdly, consolidation of economic management and the management of enterprises has just begun, and no significant improvement has yet been made as regards the poor quality of products, big consumption of material, low labour productivity, high production cost and the tying-up of too much funds, which continue in some of our enterprises.

Such reports confirm the opinion expressed by *Intercontinental Press* at the time of the arrest of Chiang Ch'ing that important economic failures under the Mao regime had provoked the split within the bureaucracy (see "Hua Kuo-feng Reveals Issues in Purge," *IP*, December 20, 1976, p. 1812).

The terminology used by the Western press to describe this split—"radicals" versus "moderates"—falls wide of the mark. But it is not farfetched to see in this intrabureaucratic rupture the reappearance of tendencies that had long divided the Chinese nationalist movement: on the one side, xenophobic, traditionalist ideologies (Mao and Chiang Ch'ing); on the other, Westernizing technocrats (Chou En-lai, Teng Hsiao-p'ing). One would look in vain here for the much-talked-about "proletarian revolutionary headquarters" that appears in the Maoist press.

It is becoming possible now to plumb the depths of what the Mao faction submitted China to in the name of creating a "proletarian culture." In December 1976 the new government began to publish interviews with political prisoners, held for a few months or years because of differences with Mao and Chiang Ch'ing over cultural matters. But beginning in the spring of 1977 a series of interviews with writers and performing artists were arranged for Western reporters that gave a more sweeping picture.

One of the first of these was with Yuan Hsueh-fen, one of China's most famous actresses and singers in the 1950s and early 1960s. Journalists from the *Washington Post* were invited to speak with her in May in Shanghai. The Cultural Revolution had branded the traditional Shaohsing Opera she performed as "bourgeois." Yuan was consequently arrested in 1966, imprisoned for three years in a room of a Shanghai mansion, then barred from the stage for another seven years. She was even prohibited from revealing her identity to anyone under threat of being returned to imprisonment. (*Washington Post*, May 5, 1977.)

By the end of the year interviews of this

kind were commonplace and it became apparent that many if not most of China's artists, writers, singers, actors, and musicians had been under detention in one form or another for the last ten years. In the late fall of 1977, the Chinese government arranged interviews between Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* and a number of cultural figures. Salisbury's account, which appeared in the December 4, 1977, *New York Times Magazine*, is an important document of life in Mao's China.

He comments that during an extended visit to China in 1972 he was able to meet only one writer. In 1977, he met many. "The riddle of the nonpresence of writers and artists in 1972 was solved. Almost every person I met in 1977 had been in prison in 1972, or confined to his home, exiled to a farm in the countryside, or put to some other form of disgrace."

The government of Hua Kuo-feng and Teng Hsiao-p'ing has set itself on a "new course." After more than a year, however, the reforms that have been granted are painfully meager. The regime is intent on technological modernization, to be achieved by aid that Peking imagines will be forthcoming from Western imperialism in exchange for help in propping up Washington's client states in the semi-colonial world.

To achieve this end domestically, Hua and Teng have begun to reestablish a system of higher education and to do away with the seminaries for the study of Mao Tsetung Thought set up by the previous government under the name of universities. A wage raise has been granted to about half of the urban workers—it does not apply to the peasants—although the government procrastinated for a year before coming through with this elementary concession. (Real wages in China before the new increase were lower in 1977 than they had been in 1957.)

It is, of course, a step forward for the writers and artists to be out of jail. But the only thing to be published so far is new editions of novels of the pre-Cultural Revolution period, including a few good ones from the 1930s by Pa Chin and Mao Tun.

The thaw, if it can be called that, has so far not been even so extensive as the cautious liberalization under Khrushchev in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s. Still, as well as one can read the mood from a distance, the feeling of the masses appears to be one of hopeful expectation. Things have begun to move again; the government is off balance and is making concessions. The old tyrant is gone and the bureaucracy has no one who can do for it what Mao did. It is the beginning of a new period, a period the Chinese masses are entering with high expectations and a readiness to return some of the blows they have been given by the privileged bureaucracy that rules over them. □

## A Year of Increasing Tensions in Western Europe

By Gerry Foley

In nearly all countries of capitalist Europe, the bulk of the workers are under the influence of mass Communist and Social Democratic parties. With the deepening crisis of capitalism, these parties have played a more and more central role in holding back mass upsurges that could threaten the capitalist system.

In 1977, the contradictions of the CPs and SPs, which are based on the working class but subordinate themselves to the interests of capitalism, sharpened considerably.

In Portugal, two years of running the government for the bourgeoisie has left the Soares leadership of the Socialist Party deeply discredited and the party itself demoralized and disintegrating.

In order to keep the party in line behind his procapitalist policies, Soares had to continue the purges that he began in the period leading up to the October 1976 SP congress. They reached a new stage when Lopes Cardoso, leader of the moderate left wing, was forced to leave the party formally on November 8.

Toward the end of 1977, the Portuguese bourgeoisie and the internationally dominant capitalist interests seemed to be preparing to give Soares his reward for rescuing their system in Portugal.

The International Monetary Fund presented him with an ultimatum, demanding all-out austerity. The interests behind the fund could not help but be aware that it is extremely unlikely he could carry out such a program or survive the attempt.

At the same time, the representatives of Portuguese capitalism have been complaining more and more emphatically that not even the most right-wing or compliant Social Democratic leadership can be relied on to do the job they want done and that this job cannot be put off any longer.

Even without a new sharpening of austerity, the buying power of Portuguese workers has been pushed below the level that existed before the fall of the dictatorship. Inflation stands at 30% annually and unemployment at 15%.

Soares's promises to bring a "European" standard of living to Portugal with the help of the more developed capitalist countries, especially those governed by "sister Socialist parties," have turned to ashes.

Expelled from the government after the November 25, 1975, crisis, the Portuguese Communist Party has continued to play an indispensable role in safeguarding the capitalist system. As the only mass opposi-

tion party, it has been able to defuse the growing discontent and prevent it from taking any concentrated and sustained form.

In 1977, the Spanish Communist and Socialist parties experienced an explosive growth similar to that of the Portuguese CP and SP in 1974-75. This process, which got under way following the death of Franco, accelerated with the approach of the June 1977 vote for the first elected parliament since the end of the Spanish Civil War.

The SP and CP leaderships subordinated themselves to Franco's heir, Suárez, allowing the bourgeois government to keep a precarious grip on the political situation. However, the mass upsurge was too powerful for Suárez to be able to keep the workers parties in the background. He was forced to grant substantial freedom for the workers parties to campaign in the parliamentary elections. And even though he assured important trump cards for his Democratic Center Union, it failed to get a popular mandate. It even failed to get a majority in the lower house, although it received 47% of the seats with less than 34% of the vote.

The lion's share of the left vote went to the SP, which had seemed to adopt more of an oppositionist stance toward the Suárez government than the CP. The Stalinists have been most anxious to convince the capitalists in Spain and internationally of their reliability. They paid a heavy price for this in the elections.

Following the elections, support for bourgeois politicians continued to decline. The polls indicated that a majority of the population looked to the workers parties for leadership.

However, even as they were being buoyed by a growing upsurge against bourgeois rule, the reformist leaderships came openly to the defense of the Spanish bourgeoisie. On October 21, the CP and SP leaders signed an agreement with Suárez accepting a wage freeze.

The CP and SP leaders know that the Spanish bourgeoisie has little margin for concessions. At the same time, the retreat of the ruling class from open dictatorship has released the resentments and long-thwarted aspirations of the masses in the Spanish state. Virtually every political observer in Spain recognized that the combination of these two forces could produce explosions more powerful than any so far since Franco's death. The

reformists recognized this also. They chose to try to get the organizations they lead off a collision course with the bourgeoisie at any cost.

Such a move was highly risky, since both the CP and SP are still at an early stage of building mass legal organizations. It was especially dangerous for the SP, which still lacks an effective bureaucratic machine.

Such strong opposition to the wage-freeze pact welled up in the workers organizations that the Social Democratic leaders began fighting among themselves, trying to avoid the responsibility. In the CP-dominated union organizations, also, important sections came out against the pact, especially in the Basque country.

The rapid growth of opposition to the pact also reflected the strength in the union organizations of radicalized forces that are either suspicious of the traditional reformist leaderships or have rejected them. The Trotskyists played a significant role. For the first time in any of the mass upsurges in Europe that have developed since the late 1960s, the Trotskyists have substantial strength in the workers movement. The membership of the Spanish section of the Fourth International is already more than 7,000.

In Italy, as in Spain, the Communist Party has begun openly defending the bourgeois political and economic order before assuming any formal responsibility for the government. The Italian Stalinists have developed this tactic, which has become known as the "Popular Front in the Corridors," in an elaborate way. They have taken the line that austerity should not be seen in an "outdated" manner as less money in the workers' pockets, but rather as a "method for transforming society," by "reordering priorities."

Probably the most flexible and adroit of the West European CP leaderships, the Italian Stalinists have been able to win overwhelming dominance in the workers movement and prevent the development of serious rivals. However, even while their control of the labor movement went essentially unchallenged, the great unevenness in the development of Italian society and the inherent weakness of Italian capitalism have made it hard for them to achieve a stable deal with the capitalists.

One of the forces that has obstructed the CP's "historic compromise" has been the development of a mass women's liberation



movement that arose against the imposition of Catholic morality by the state. This movement destabilized the main bourgeois party, which is based on the Catholic church, and disrupted the CP's attempt to make a deal with the church hierarchy and the Christian Democratic leaders. The Italian bourgeoisie still has not granted the full right of abortion. Ferment has continued to develop in 1977 around the issues raised by the feminists and their allies.

In the past year, the desperation of the masses of student youth, left without any perspectives by the crisis of jerry-built Italian capitalism and a hopelessly backward and disorganized education system, became clear. Signs increased also that even in the big working-class centers, the CP's credibility is under increasing strain.

In France, the breakup of the Union of the Left on the eve of certain victory in the French parliamentary elections scheduled for March 1978 has tended to create disillusionment with the bureaucratic parties.

The Trotskyists have opened up a campaign stressing the need for the workers themselves to discuss what the program

for working-class unity in the elections should be and the need for the CP and SP to subordinate their narrow factional interests to the interests of the proletariat as a whole.

In Northern Europe, the traditionally dominant Social Democratic parties have proved less and less able to inspire confidence on the part of new radicalizing layers in particular, even though in the face of the economic crisis workers still look to them as the only means of defending their interests.

The unpopularity of the Labour government in Britain continues to grow, as shown by the defeats of Labour Party candidates in local and by-elections. The Scottish and Welsh nationalists in particular continue to make inroads into the traditional support of the Labour Party.

Increasing tensions in British society are also shown by the growth of the racist National Front.

In West Germany and Scandinavia, socially critical currents have continued to crystallize around the movement against nuclear power that has grown up both outside and inside the SPs and in opposi-

tion to the Social Democratic political and union leaderships.

The emergence of a mass antinuclear movement in West Germany has given impetus to the development of opposition to the Schmidt leadership within the SP, which had already arisen on other issues. The massive witch-hunt campaign started up under the pretext of fighting terrorism has momentarily set back the growth of this opposition, but the deeper processes at work in West German society cannot be turned back so easily.

It is notable that nowhere in Northern Europe have Communist parties gained any credibility as political alternatives to the Social Democratic parties. In Southern Europe, growing radicalization has created a dilemma for the mass CPs. It is hard to appeal to newly radicalizing layers without taking some distance from Stalinist dictatorship. However, it is difficult to do that without drawing the fire of the Kremlin, which encouraged a major split in the Swedish CP this year and opened up a campaign against the most outspoken "Eurocommunist" leader, Spanish CP head Santiago Carrillo. □

## Rise in Open Opposition

# A Year of Simmering Unrest in Eastern Europe

By Gerry Foley

Open opposition to bureaucratic dictatorship spread throughout East Europe in 1977. Accordingly, the movement began to assume a more international character. The groups and individuals demanding democratic rights in the various East European countries began to act in closer political concert. A concrete political interrelationship developed between the movement for democratic rights in the USSR and East Europe and the progressive, socialist, and labor movements in the capitalist countries.

At the start of the year, an open movement of protest against the denial of basic democratic rights reemerged in "normalized" Czechoslovakia. This followed eight years of defeats for the masses. Moreover, it was in the face of the particularly retrograde Stalinist bureaucracy reconsolidated under the protection of Soviet tanks, which was determined not to concede the slightest margin for criticism or democratic reform.

Czech and Slovak antibureaucratic fighters drew up a manifesto, entitled Charter 77, calling on the Husak government to respect the guarantees of democratic rights contained in its own constitution and the

international treaties and conventions signed by the Prague Stalinist regime.

The Czechoslovak Stalinist authorities responded to the presentation of Charter 77 to international public opinion by launching a campaign of intimidation against the signers. This culminated in the trial and sentencing on October 18 of four prominent figures associated with Charter 77 for political "crimes."

Theater director Ota Ornest pleaded guilty and was given three and a half years in prison. The journalist Jiri Lederer got three years. The writer director Frantisek Pavlicek and the playwright Vaclav Havel got suspended sentences of seventeen and fourteen months.

The prosecutor reportedly asked for "light but firm" penalties. Ever since the publication of Charter 77, The Czechoslovak Stalinist authorities have played a cat-and-mouse game with those who challenged bureaucratic dictatorship. The well-known figures were arrested, released, rearrested, subjected to prolonged interrogation, beatings, and gangster-like attacks by parallel police agents, thrown out of their apartments, and fired from their jobs.

On March 13, the elderly philosopher

Jan Patocka died of a cerebral hemorrhage following long drawn-out questioning by police. In June, the writer Zdenek Mlynar, faced with the prospect of permanent unemployment, was forced to leave the country.

Stalinist authorities have acted with even greater harshness toward activists in the provinces who distributed the charter and were not known internationally.

Shortly before going into exile, Mlynar gave an interview indicating the extent of the movement that grew up around Charter 77:

Tens of thousands of persons have read it [the charter], and copied and distributed the text. They give it to their friends and acquaintances. Through completely informal structures, which the police cannot keep track of, the demands of Charter 77 are being spread more and more widely in the society as a whole.

This task is no longer being taken up only by certain layers, such as the intelligentsia. It is not being taken up simply by political groups either, such as the Communists expelled from the Czechoslovak CP after 1968. In all workplaces, often among the workers, and especially among the youth in all walks of life, Charter 77 is arousing interest about what obligations the government assumed in pledging to abide by the



international convention on human rights in Czechoslovakia as well.

... Those who vilify, persecute, and discriminate against persons who have openly declared their support for the charter by signing it can only discredit themselves further in the eyes of people. By doing this, they only expose the gap between the political dictatorship and the citizenry, who hunger for political democracy.

Charter 77 was inspired largely by the Russian human-rights movement. It copied the method of acting as if legal rights actually existed and patiently protesting against every violation by the Stalinist regime of its own laws.

The Czechs and Slovaks, like the Russians, appealed to the workers movement in the capitalist countries for support. However, they also had the benefit of the experience of a mass movement that had been able to exert direct and strong pressures on the Western CPs. Perhaps as a result of this, they were better able than the Russians to avoid being diverted by Carter's demagoguery about defending human rights. In interviews given to Western reporters, both Patocka and Mlynar clearly differentiated the Czechoslovak opposition from the propaganda of capitalist governments.

The emphasis of the Czechoslovak opposition on democratic rights was misunderstood by many in the currents that came out of the youth radicalization in West Europe. The left oppositionist Petr Uhl, who is identified by the Prague government as a Trotskyist, explained the revolutionary socialist implications of these demands in an open letter that was published in the Trotskyist press and the publications of a spectrum of groups that claim to stand to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties.

When a witch-hunt against the left opened up in West Germany in October, Czechoslovak oppositionists spoke out in defense of the defenders of democratic rights who were attacked, and denounced the reactionary scare campaign.

Thus, the tactic of the anti-Communists who tried to exploit the opposition to the Stalinist dictatorships for their own purposes boomeranged against them, and the Czech and Slovak oppositionists were able to give far more effective help to the victims of the witch-hunt than all the Stalinist apparatuses put together.

In Poland, where the bureaucracy is still reeling from the mass, semi-insurrectionary strikes of June 1976, the opposition achieved a major breakthrough.

In July 1977, the Polish Committee to Defend Worker Victims of the Repression Connected With the Events of June 25, 1976, won a virtually complete victory. The jailed workers were released and the government dropped its attempts to prosecute defense activists.

The Polish opposition advanced rapidly in 1977. Clear political differentiation began to appear. In March, those elements in

the opposition that were not specifically oriented toward fighting for a system of direct workers democracy set up their own organization, the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights. This group has its own publication, *Opinia*, which the government has not authorized but apparently tolerates to some extent.

In October, the Committee to Defend the Worker Victims dissolved itself, since it won its objectives. It had been the most active and effective opposition group and was led by elements with a conscious orientation of working toward the establishment of a system of direct workers democracy. Its leading activists formed the Committee for Social Self-Defense, standing on a platform of opposition to censorship and political repression, and of support for workers' right to organize freely to defend their interests.

The new committee's viewpoint is expressed in the magazine *Glos* (Voice), which is unauthorized but tolerated to some extent by the government. Reportedly 1,000 copies of *Glos* are printed in samizdat form.

Also in October, a student movement for democratic rights was founded, the Student Solidarity Committee. Its views are expressed in the magazine *U Progu* (On the Threshold), which is published under the same conditions as *Glos* and *Opinia*.

In late 1977, the Western press began to report a flowering of all sorts of unofficial publications.

At the same time, a division appeared in the official press. On November 8, the major Warsaw daily, *Zycie Warszawy*, ran an article attacking Mieczyslaw Rakowski, editor of *Polityka*, a weekly paper that reflects a technocratic point of view. Ra-

kowski was accused of lacking "faith in the potential of our socialist state whose guiding force is the Party." He had timidly suggested in an article that there was a limit to the extent that decision-making could be centralized.

The Warsaw authorities were evidently worried about relations developing between oppositionists and revolutionists in the West. They went to the trouble of distributing a forged letter purportedly written by leaders of the French section of the Fourth International, charging that a leading defense activist in Poland was leading a life of "debauchery."

Charter 77 encouraged Romanian anti-Stalinists to speak out for the first time against a dictatorship that has allied itself with the "Eurocommunist" parties.

The Ceausescu government forced one of the most prominent oppositionists, Paul Goma, to leave the country. But a massive strike in the Jiu Valley mining region indicates that the regime faces stormier weather ahead.

The Russian and Ukrainian opponents of bureaucratic dictatorship were hardest hit by repression in 1977. This reflected both the determination of the Kremlin to stamp out a ferment that is causing it increasing problems and some weaknesses of the opposition movement itself, which lacks the experience of a mass movement. Dissident intellectuals were diverted to some extent by Carter's human rights demagoguery.

However, the Russian opposition has played a vital role as an example for opposition movements in other East European countries, and it can now benefit from their experience and impact. □

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### Gloomy Outlook in Canadian Ruling Circles

By Bret Smiley and John Riddell

"Woe Canada."

That's the mood of Canada's capitalist rulers today, as expressed by an editorial headline December 15 in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*.

The editorial summarizes statistics that portray an economy in shambles.

Even more ominous is the struggle for Québec independence, which puts in question the survival of the Canadian state in its present form.

The Parti Québécois (PQ) took office in Québec in November 1976—a bourgeois-nationalist party pledged to achieve Québec's sovereignty by breaking from Canada's federal state.

Canadian politics in 1977 were dominated by the massive propaganda war between the PQ government and the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie.

The PQ government made few moves to challenge the federal state; it worked in 1977 to prepare a national referendum on Québec's relation with Canada, currently slated for 1979.

But the Canadian bourgeoisie took fright, not so much of the PQ as the militant nationalist working class that thrust it into office. They launched a massive campaign against Québec. Their "Canadian unity" propaganda drive in English Canada aimed to prepare public opinion for future economic, political, and quite conceivably military intervention against Québec.

Inside Québec, the Parti Québécois victory had contradictory effects. Nationalist sentiment received new impetus; millions now saw that independence could be realized. But it also generated a "wait-and-see" attitude among the working masses, and a gap in new mass actions.

Most nationalists were content to let the Parti Québécois test its strategy of a referendum on "sovereignty" followed by negotiations with Ottawa.

There is no mass workers party in Québec, and the trade-union bureaucracy has been in tacit alliance with the PQ for some years. It utilized workers' illusions in the Parti Québécois to initiate a policy of more open class collaboration.

The PQ's policies have been blatantly procapitalist. But only after a year, on December 16, did labor in Québec organize an antigovernment action—against a supposed "antiscab" law that seriously restricts union rights.

Naive euphoria about the Parti Québécois is beginning to wear off.

A marked decline in Canada's economy

in 1977 reduced Ottawa's room to maneuver—particularly in terms of economic concessions—in its battle against Québec independence.

The Canadian dollar acted as an economic barometer. It fell 10% relative to the U.S. dollar, and as much as 30% relative to other imperialist currencies.

Although two years of wage controls have sharply cut back wage increases, this has not visibly improved the competitive position of Canadian big business. Inflation is accelerating, and is now officially estimated at 9.1% a year—close to the peak before wage controls.

Rising unemployment reflects the near-stagnation of the economy. The government estimates that 8.4% of the work force are jobless. The actual number of unemployed, as measured by Ottawa's own private calculations, is much higher—well over a million.

This situation demands a continuation of the assault on workers' living standards—but that may well provoke a new wave of labor militancy, as well as reinforce independentist sentiment in Québec.

Canadian labor lost ground before this assault in 1977.

After the success of the October 1976 mobilization against wage controls, the leadership of the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) turned away from mass actions, and spent almost a year trying to negotiate a British-style "social contract" with the federal government.

Stymied by their failure to obtain any meaningful concessions, the CLC brass finally called off negotiations in August.

The CLC's course led to disaster. The union's fighting power had been badly hit by wage controls and massive unemployment. The volume of strikes in the first nine months of 1977 was only 30% of the level of January-September 1976. Layoffs reduced the membership of industrial unions by 10%. Wage increases were cut to one-third their previous level. The New Democratic Party, a mass workers party in English Canada linked to the unions, also suffered significant setbacks in elections in Ontario and Manitoba.

But the impact of labor's crisis is beginning to show. Recent union conventions reveal a wider questioning of the leadership's policies. Many unionists are searching for a plan of action to fight the effects of the economic crisis.

The "social contract" proposed by the CLC, which it termed "tripartism," has

been debated and voted down by several major labor conventions, including those of the British Columbia and Saskatchewan labor federations, and of the country's largest union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Strong criticism of the NDP's right-wing course was heard at the 1977 conventions of the Saskatchewan federation of the Postal Workers Union.

And labor and NDP conventions have seen the beginning of a real debate on Québec. CLC and NDP leaders were quick to enlist as camp followers of Trudeau's "Canadian unity" campaign. But all the unions mentioned above have passed resolutions affirming Québec's right to self-determination, as has Canada's strongest industrial union, the Steelworkers.

Most of these resolutions also affirmed support for "Canadian unity," but the Postal Workers, CUPE, and the Saskatchewan Labor Federation took an unambiguous stand for self-determination.

The atmosphere of political crisis was sharpened in 1977 by a new factor: the outbreak of the scandal over Canada's federal "security" police.

A vast surveillance operation was revealed, directed against the trade unions, the NDP, the Parti Québécois, and various left-wing organizations. Police were shown to have routinely opened mail, conducted break-ins and stolen political files.

Hard-pressed to justify these activities, Prime Minister Trudeau cited on one occasion the value of obtaining membership lists of the Trotskyist organization. And in two particularly notorious cases, where police infiltrated the supposedly respectable New Democratic Party, they explained that their goal was to track down Trotskyists.

The Trotskyist movement in Canada and Québec remains small. But it gave some indication in 1977 why federal police view it with apprehension.

Supporters of the Fourth International, previously divided into three groups, fused in August to form a unified section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state, the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvrière Révolutionnaire. The fusion has already accelerated activity and recruitment by Fourth Internationalists across the country.

Revolutionary Marxists have bright prospects in the period of intensive political crisis now opening in Canada and Québec. □

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## Economic Slump Deepens in Australia and New Zealand

By Jane Sellers

When the Labor party governments in Australia and New Zealand were thrown out of office at the end of 1975 a new offensive was launched against the working people of those countries. For the first time since World War II, workers who had previously enjoyed a relatively high standard of living had their wages eaten away by double-digit inflation while unemployment reached record levels.

The primary intention of the capitalist backers of these new conservative governments was to increase their competitiveness in the international market by driving down wages and boosting profits, (a process begun by the Labor governments).

Smaller capitalist powers like Australia and New Zealand have been hit hard by the international economic crisis and the increasing inter-imperialist rivalry with its resulting trend towards protectionism. Dependent on their exports of wool, meat, dairy produce, minerals and other primary products, Australia and New Zealand are inevitably affected by contraction of the world market.

These countries look to an upturn in the international economy as the solution to their growing deficits and trade imbalances. But an upturn of sufficient scope is not in sight.

In their goal of driving down wages, the bosses have had considerable success. In New Zealand profits rose by 33% during 1976 and in the first quarter of 1977 some companies recorded more than a 100% profit increase. This jump in profits has been almost entirely due to the reduction of the wage bill as there was no increase in production during the same period.

The Fraser government in Australia has had similar success. The fake indexation scheme whereby wages were pegged to a certain percentage of the Consumer Price Index increase effectively cut real wages by 5%.

The role of the labor bureaucrats has been vital to this ruling-class offensive. The thorough thrashing that the Australian Labor Party received in the December 10 elections clearly shows the failure of the labor leadership to give any direction or inspiration to an effective fight back by working people. These labor fakers have largely been bypassed by the mobilizations of working people and their allies that have taken place over the last year.

The most outstanding example of this has been the remarkable growth of the antiuranium movement during the last

year. Prime Minister Fraser has tried to use Australia's massive uranium resources to boost his country's bargaining position with Japan and its other major trading partners—a policy dubbed “uranium diplomacy.”

Thousands of students, unionists, housewives, high school students, and others took to the streets on April 1 and again on August 6 to demand an immediate halt to the mining and export of uranium. On October 22 more than 60,000 persons participated in actions around the country called by the Movement Against Uranium Mining.

The strength of the antiuranium movement in Australia is particularly significant considering that the Australian government has no plans at this stage to establish any nuclear power plants and that only one uranium mine is currently operating. The movement is based on an awareness of the hazards of nuclear power and nuclear weapons anywhere in the world, as well as concern about the dangers of the actual mining of radioactive materials.

Another major challenge was presented to the Fraser government when the power workers of the Latrobe Valley in Victoria went on strike in August. Fraser recognized this strike as a serious threat to his wage-freeze policy and used the strike to provoke a head-on clash with the union movement. The power workers were subjected to a ferocious barrage of lies, slanders and antistrike propaganda.

Liberal Party Premier Hamer accurately described Victoria as a “battlefield” when he declared a state of emergency. Power restrictions were enforced, thousands of workers were laid off, the unions involved were threatened with deregistration, and scab labor was called for in an attempt to isolate and intimidate the workers.

Although after ten weeks the powerworkers were convinced by the union bureaucrats to take their case back to the Arbitration Commission, the militancy of the workers and the shop stewards was an important example to other workers wanting to smash through the freeze on wages.

### Democratic Rights Under Attack

A precondition to the success of this economic offensive against working people is the whittling away of their democratic

rights. The restrictions on civil liberties proposed by the Muldoon government in New Zealand has been the issue that has provoked the largest protests that country has seen since the anti-Vietnam War movement.

In September the Security Intelligence Service Amendment bill was introduced into parliament. This bill legalizes a wide variety of snooping and bugging activities by the secret police against “subversives” or even “potential subversives”.

“Sabotage” was another reason cited to justify such harassment. And the definition of sabotage is very broad, as Muldoon pointed out in an interview with the *Canberra Times*: “The fact that a shipment of specialised milk powder going to Venezuela misses the ship because storemen and packers won't load it out—that's sabotage,” he said.

The implications of this bill for the labor and radical movements is extremely broad, and thousands of New Zealanders made their opposition more than clear. On October 14, 20,000 persons participated in a protest against the bill in Wellington.

As the October 21 issue of *Socialist Action* reported: “The developing mass action caught the parliamentary Labour Party by surprise, forcing its leaders to come out with statements of opposition to a bill that they only had petty objections to when it was first announced.” But Labor's obvious support for such practices meant it provided no leadership for those who opposed the bill, and it was passed in parliament on November 4.

An important strategy of the ruling class in Australia and New Zealand has been to pick off the weaker sections of the work force first, such as women, migrant workers, youth, or oppressed nationalities. The Maori people in New Zealand, however, have set an inspiring example in an attempt to stand up for their rights.

On January 5 members and supporters of the Ngati Whatua tribe occupied ten acres of land at Bastion Point, outside Auckland, which the government was about to subdivide. They set up tents and built a meeting house, as well as planting vegetables to support themselves.

They have so far resisted all threats and legal intimidation and continue to reestablish their communal life on the land that has traditionally been theirs. The Maoris' militant action has won them broad support from the labor movement and other sections of the community. □

## Carter's First Year—Heavy Blows Against U.S. Workers

By Matilde Zimmermann

Black Americans and supporters of women's rights voted overwhelmingly for Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election. In exchange they got 1977—a year of broken promises and bitter setbacks.

The much-vaunted "recovery" from the 1974-75 economic crisis brought no relief to Blacks. Government statistics released in August shocked the country: a Black unemployment rate of 14.5%, well over twice the white rate of 6.1%. As Julius Shiskin, commissioner of labor statistics, said in October, "We have two separate economies. This is a great expansion—for whites."

The official jobless rate for Black teenagers was 40.4% in August. A more realistic figure emerged from a federal survey of Black teenagers in New York City in July. It showed that 86% were unemployed.

Those Black workers who did have jobs made, on an average, 38% less than white workers.

In order to keep Blacks and other oppressed minorities at the bottom of the economic ladder, the Carter administration and U.S. Supreme Court spearheaded a campaign to turn around the gains made during the civil-rights movement of the 1960s.

The most important challenge to the legal rights of Blacks was the anti-affirmative-action case of Allen Bakke. Bakke, a white engineer, won a California court ruling that special admissions plans for Blacks and Latinos were illegal "reverse discrimination."

Affirmative-action programs have been the cornerstone of efforts by oppressed minorities and women to achieve economic and social equality. Black students and other civil-rights supporters made the fight to overturn the *Bakke* decision their central campaign for 1977.

Civil-rights defeats were handed down on other fronts. The execution of Gary Gilmore on January 17 revived capital punishment after a decade. Although Gilmore was white, about half the prisoners on death rows are Blacks and Latinos; and reinstatement of the death penalty was widely perceived as a racist move.

The Supreme Court devised a new roadblock to civil-rights actions. They ruled that even pervasive and systematic discrimination was legal unless the *intent* to discriminate could be proven. This enabled them to deal a blow to open housing by upholding zoning laws in a Chicago

suburb that had the effect—though not the stated purpose—of keeping Blacks out. Using the same yardstick, school-desegregation busing plans in several cities were overturned. In May the court upheld discriminatory seniority systems that penalized Blacks and women for having been excluded from certain jobs. Affirmative-action programs in the sixties and seventies had weakened these systems.

Inspired by government attacks on the rights of Blacks and Latinos, reactionary extremist groups stepped up their activity. The Ku Klux Klan and Nazis became increasingly visible. When Black children started school in Chicago in September, their buses were met by rock-throwing racists.

The inability of Black officeholders in the Democratic Party to turn back attacks on the standard of living of Blacks became increasingly apparent. In fact Black Democrats were often responsible for driving through layoffs and cutbacks in social services. The most graphic example was the union-busting campaign carried out by Maynard Jackson, Black mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, against the 80-percent-Black city workers union.

The prospect in 1977 for many residents of the urban ghettos and barrios had become one of continued poverty and intermittent employment at best. The rebelliousness this caused was shown most clearly by the social explosion that rocked New York City's Black and Puerto Rican communities during the massive power failure July 13 and 14. When the lights went out, hundreds of thousands of people simply took what they needed and wanted; they opened the stores to "shop for free," as one participant put it.

Despite sweeping arrests and racist hysteria about "animals" and "marauders," Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers managed to get out some facts about the conditions that caused the social explosion. Unemployment was the biggest cause of anger and frustration. "You bum!" one woman shouted at Mayor Abraham Beame as he toured a devastated neighborhood. "If you want to know what to do for us, give us jobs!"

"You know how many people here are looking for jobs?" a Puerto Rican asked Catarino Garza, mayoral candidate of the Socialist Workers Party. "If the lights go out again, everything will go."

Women shared the setbacks of Blacks on

affirmative action and seniority as well as suffering some reversals all their own in 1977.

The most serious blow was the passage of the Hyde Amendment barring the use of federal Medicaid funds for most abortions. In 1976, 300,000 abortions were paid for by Medicaid, one-third of all abortions performed in the United States. The Hyde Amendment will force many of these women to dangerous back-alley abortionists or compel them to bear children against their will.

Before Carter was elected, he said: "I want to be the president that will have done more in establishing the rights of women than any president before." One of the first things he was going to do as president was "give" women the Equal Rights Amendment. At the end of 1977, the ERA appeared to be permanently stalled three states short of ratification. The best the administration could project was the possibility of postponing the deadline for ratification, now set for March 1979.

Feminists began to get worried during 1977, as they suffered reverses on abortion, equal rights, and affirmative action and saw themselves consistently out-mobilized by right-wing opponents. The National Organization for Women, the country's largest feminist organization, was deeply divided at its national convention in April between those who favored continued reliance on "friendly" politicians and those who wanted a strategy of independence and mass action.

The setbacks for women have occurred despite growing support for women's rights in the population as a whole. One measure of the impact of feminist ideas was the turnout at International Women's Year conferences around the country. Some 130,000 women—overwhelmingly supporters of women's rights—came to the state conferences, and 15,000 attended the national conference in Houston in November. Although the conference was sponsored by the government as cover for its antiwoman drive, it had a contradictory character. Carter cannot be pleased that women turned out in such large numbers and passed by wide margins proposals that run counter to many of the government's actions over the past year.

Another sector of the working class which came in for more than its share of adverse attention was the six to eight million persons who work in the United States without benefit of immigration pa-



pers. The capitalists want to saddle the blame for the jobs crisis on undocumented immigrant workers in the U.S. and low-paid workers in foreign countries.

Nearly a million undocumented workers were deported in 1976, the great majority to Mexico. "Illegal" immigration from Mexico has increased sharply in recent years as a result of the intolerable economic conditions created in that country by U.S. imperialism.

Secretary of Labor F. Ray Marshall spelled out one of the reasons the government fears this stepped-up immigration:

I believe we are now building a new civil rights struggle of the 1980s by having an underclass of people come into this country. . . .

Their children will be even more dissatisfied and likely to revolt against such conditions, and they will demand their civil rights in the fashion of the civil rights struggles which began in the 1960s.

Under cover of an "amnesty" program for which no more than 500,000 people will be eligible—according to generous Department of Labor estimates—Carter plans to double the Border Patrol and institutionalize the no-rights status of most undocumented workers. Since Carter hoped to pass his proposal off as an act of mercy, he was somewhat embarrassed when the Ku Klux Klan responded enthusiastically and started helping on the border patrol.

The Klan may like the plan, but not one single Chicano or Latino organization or leader has had a good word to say about it. The fight against deportations, and specifically against the Carter plan, became the central issue of struggle for Chicano and Latino activists in 1977 and was the theme of an October action conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Two other attacks on democratic rights met with organized responses. The anti-homosexual crusade of Anita Bryant and the defeat of a gay-rights referendum in Miami, Florida, brought a quarter of a million people into the streets of various cities in the largest actions ever in defense of gay and lesbian rights.

Others took up the defense of everyone's right to live free from the danger of nuclear contamination and catastrophe. The antinuclear movement in the U.S. is not yet on the scale of activity in Western Europe; the May demonstration of several thousand in Seabrook, New Hampshire, was the largest action to date. But it has already had an impact in educating the public about the dangers of nuclear energy and blunting Carter's pronuclear drive.

The attempt to drive down workers' standard of living was not restricted to those who could be singled out by race or sex for special victimization. The country's rulers regard the unionized industrial work force as their main target, and they are counting on housebroken trade unions and the proven success of divide-and-rule tactics to make the job easier.

Already in 1976 union-busting opera-

tions had been started against public workers unions and against certain crafts such as the building trades and printers. The bosses were most successful where the municipal unions allowed themselves to be pitted against the Black and Latino communities, as in Atlanta and New York. The craft unions found themselves paralyzed by their traditions of protecting the privileges of senior white male workers at the expense of the oppressed and excluded.

By the end of 1977 the bosses were testing their strength against the United Mine Workers of America, which one union official has called "the granddaddy of them all." In December the coal operators forced the militant miners into a strike to defend their health and safety benefits, right to strike, working conditions, and their union itself.

The development of an opposition caucus in the United Steelworkers of America was the best proof of the ferment caused in the ranks of labor by three years of high inflation, severe unemployment, and assaults on workers' rights. Steelworkers Fight Back, organized around Ed Sadlowski's campaign for president of the USWA, put forward a program of membership control of the union, the right to vote on contracts and strike to enforce them, the incompatibility of the interests of the workers and bosses, defense of the special needs of those who have been victims of racial and sexual oppression, and rejection of the idea that undocumented or foreign workers are to blame for unemployment.

Carter came to office promising to take up the cause of the disadvantaged, show no mercy to those who abused their power, restore faith in government, and do his bit for world peace.

The reality of his first year in office was quite another story.

If he were to uncover CIA misdeeds, Carter claimed before his election, he would simply call a press conference and let everyone know. He did not have to wait long for the opportunity.

In mid-February word got around about decades of CIA payoffs to right-wing dictators. The share of Jordan's King Hussein was as much as \$2 million a year. Carter defended the payoffs and then—exactly as his predecessors had done—lamented not the bribes but the fact that they had been disclosed to the public.

Later it was revealed that for years the CIA had been experimenting with behavior-modifying drugs on unsuspecting victims, in an effort to find the secret to mind control.

Congress began to look like so many puppets dancing on the strings of the South Korean puppeteer-dictator, as evidence emerged of a million dollars a year in Korean bribes and favors to friends in high places.

Before his election, Carter had promised to trim five to seven billion dollars from the swollen military budget. Instead he

stepped up the arms race with a record \$123 billion military budget, including a 25 percent increase in weapons spending. With much fanfare about phasing out the B-1 bomber, he opted for the more efficient and deadly cruise missile. Then Carter unveiled the perfect capitalist weapon, a bomb that kills people and spares property.

Mr. Human Rights paraded some of the world's most hated dictators around Washington, D.C.—Pinochet, Videla, and the Shah of Iran—and planned to finish out 1977 visiting the Iranian butcher in Tehran.

As the eyes of the world focused on the brutality of South African apartheid, Carter had his deputy in the United Nations, Andrew Young, vote against a mandatory arms embargo.

Carter's credibility took an early beating, when he tried to convince the country that there wasn't enough natural gas to go around. During a record-cold January, the oil and gas companies cut off supplies until restraints on the price of interstate gas were lifted. Two million workers were laid off because of lack of fuel. The elderly and poor suffered and died in unheated apartments. There was widespread disbelief that the shortage was genuine.

The most hotly debated foreign-policy issue during Carter's first year was the Panama Canal. Although the Carter-Torrijos treaties actually provide for continued U.S. domination of the canal, a right-wing campaign was whipped up against the "give-away." The slogan of the jingoists was: "There is no Panama Canal; there's an American canal at Panama."

The drive for continued direct U.S. rule of the Panama Canal, and some large demonstrations against abortion and bus-ing gave certain observers the idea a general swing to the right was taking place in the United States in 1977.

But the reason the right wing has some wind in its sails is not because it enjoys majority support—it is because it enjoys government support. The reactionaries are emboldened because they see their program being carried out and because their mobilizations have not yet been met by countermobilizations of Blacks, women, unionists, and their supporters.

There is ample evidence, however, that the general population is not shifting to the right: the restlessness in the unions, the unwillingness to accept the rollback of affirmative action, the growing acceptance of the ideas of the women's liberation movement, the tendency to disbelieve whatever the government says. No leadership has yet come forward to mobilize this sentiment into action, and consequently the government's antirights drive has not been blocked or appreciably slowed. But the idea is spreading that decisive social change is necessary, helping to bring together forces better able to turn the coming battles into victory. □

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