

THE INTERNATIONALIST

- Published by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International -

March 6, 1963

IMPRISONED PERUVIAN TROTSKYIST ON HUNGER STRIKE

LIMA, Peru, Feb. 25 -- Ismael Frias, a leading Peruvian Trotskyist, was placed in Carrion hospital at El Callao, a suburb of this city, after a 21-day hunger strike in Peru's notorious El Fronton prison. Although the authorities made no statement, it was learned that Frias' condition was fair.

He was arbitrarily arrested January 5 in the nationwide witch-hunt that swept up some 1,200 trade unionists, intellectuals and radical political figures.

Thrown into the concentration camp at El Sepa, Frias was later transferred to the grim dungeons of El Fronton.

Other Trotskyist leaders, herded with hundreds of members of the labor movement into the El Sepa camp, included Carlos Howes, Jorge Zegarra and Abraham Zevallos. They were later released.

Frias belongs to the wing of the Trotskyist movement adhering to the International Secretariat of the Fourth International; the others to the International Committee. The two sectors have joined forces in fighting against the witch-hunt which was unleashed by the dictatorial military junta. They report that despite the repression, the Trotskyist movement in Peru is growing in size and influence.

In the tangled mountainous areas where the descendants of the Incas live, Trotskyism is especially strong because of its role in helping to organize sizeable guerrilla forces.

(For a good round up about the peasant struggle in Peru under the leadership of the Trotskyist Hugo Blanco see the February 25 Militant. To obtain a copy write The Militant, 116 University Place, New York 3, N.Y.)

THE TRUTH ABOUT AID TO ALGERIA'S WAR ORPHANS

PARIS, March 4 -- Few people care -- really care -- it seems, about the fate of Algeria's war orphans. Rich America and prosperous France have slipped inspired stories into the capitalist press that they are about to give all kinds of help to Algeria, which will include help, it goes without saying, to those most desperately in need. Not in any rush, however. In the modern world of nuclear strike capacity, atomic counterforce and the balance of terror, what is so pressing about sending food and clothing to North Africa?

Some radicals -- even some socialists -- who pride themselves on their capacity to sympathize with human suffering, display an attitude that is not much different. They seem to find it inconvenient to organize even a small campaign of aid. Perhaps they count on the imperialists doing the job after all.

Thus it would appear that Algeria's war orphans, the tens of thousands of the most pitiful victims of history's most savage colonial war have been abandoned by the outside world and are even being disregarded by certain officials in Algeria itself.

These are the facts that came out in a press conference held by Mlle. Djamilia Bouhired, Mme. Zohra Bitat and Abderrahmane Naceur March 1 in Algiers as reported in the March 2 edition of Al Chaab. These three young people head Algeria's national organization for war orphans "El Djil El Djadid."

"We are at our wit's end."

"We don't have financial or material means."

"We suffer at times from failure of the public powers to understand."

These three statements, said Al Chaab, constituted the theme of the press conference.

"We called this meeting with the press," Mlle. Bouhired declared, "in order to make clear the numerous problems and the very limited means faced by our organization, which is very isolated. There is one thing on which everything focuses -- it's the publicity in the press. In brief, they talk about collections among the brother Arab countries amounting to seven billion francs (\$14,000,000). This is false. Nothing has come to us up to now except promises. We were promised aid about as follows: 200 million francs (\$400,000) from Egypt, 300 million (\$600,000) from Iraq, 65 million (\$130,000) from Syria, and 600 million (\$1,200,000) from Kuwait. But this never went further than the stage of promises.

As for richer and more powerful countries, these were not even mentioned in the conference. If help from Arab countries ends only

in promises, what can be expected from imperialist powers? Or from "socialist" countries whose concern for "peaceful coexistence" with a country like France scarcely permits them to extend a helping hand toward a country like Algeria?

"We have at present in El Djil El Djadid," the three officers of the organization reported, "2,059 children, divided among 15 centers. The cost for each one of them is around 800 francs (\$1.60) a day. During the days of colonial rule, social centers had 1,700 francs (\$3.40) to expend for each child, a difference of 50 per cent, and to this must be added our lack of material means. On this subject we would like to indicate that there are things which we could turn to use in our homes for young people that are mildewing on the docks in Algiers or other places. We find it difficult to explain we aren't permitted to take what we need there."
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The most anguishing problems are not in the capital or other big centers but among the youth in the interior. "It is there that the families hit hardest by the war exist and it is there that the greatest number of orphans or maladjusted children are found and it is in getting at the source of the ills that the means for curing them can be found. But without means nothing can be done. It is a question of life or death."

In reply to what the press might do about the situation, one of them said: "Our aim in meeting with you today was to raise a cry of alarm. We don't know how we will be able to get along if the public powers don't come to our aid. We propose to organize a national and international campaign. We count on the entire press to defend our cause and to let people know that our organization is an organization for children and that children have rights we must respond to. We invite you to visit our centers the better to judge the truth about our activities. The Minister of Youth and of Sports refused to grant us certain means without any valid reason. We repeat then, we count on the press to take an active part in the defense of these children who form part of the framework of the reconstruction of the country and the building of socialism."

For those who feel something should be done to help Algeria's war orphans, the address is: Association El Djil El Djadid, Haut Mont D'Hydra, Chemin de la Madeleine, Algiers, Algeria.

DE GAULLE AND ALGERIA'S AGRARIAN REFORM

Surprise has been expressed among some sectors of the socialist movement over the fact that the de Gaulle regime in imperialist France has not openly expressed opposition to the agrarian reform in Algeria, in fact has even indicated that it will "support" it. What kind of reform can it be, they ask, if de Gaulle is willing to give it his approval?

Some light on the real motives and aims of the de Gaulle regime was offered February 26 by Secretary of State Jean de Broglie. "We are carrying out a policy in Algeria and not a squabble over price," he told a press conference. "If this co-operation, founded on a free economy, equality and the liberty of the two partners, succeeds in all its scope, it will give cause for reflection among countries looking toward France for economic and social advancement. But if it fails, these countries can turn towards other horizons to accelerate their advancement. This shows with what vigilance and what prudence our policy must be guided in this respect."

With cold-blooded cynicism, this calculating practitioner of imperialist politics answered specifically about the government's attitude toward Algeria's agrarian reform, an attitude which has no doubt struck many an unthinking landlord and capitalist as strangely out of character. In aiding Algeria, said de Gaulle's spokesman, France has been seeking to prevent the dangers of a revolution.

"There is a phenomenon of restriction and contraction of needs against which Algeria must struggle if the country is to become the market which it used to represent for French economy. Our policy in Algeria is a long-range one. It is a work of patience and of good faith which cannot immediately reveal the importance of its results."

"THE TRIPOLI PROGRAM" AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH

An English translation of "The Tripoli Program" is now available. This is the program of the Algerian Revolution adopted by the National Revolutionary Council, highest body of the National Liberation Front, at its June 1962 conference held in Tripoli, Libya.

The Ben Bella government subscribes to its tenets as official doctrine.

The program presents a good analysis of some of the key problems facing the Algerian Revolution and is well worth studying as a key document.

For a copy of this attractively mimeographed translation send \$.35 (Canadian) to the Vanguard Bookstore, 81 Queen St. W., Toronto, Canada.

FRENCH MINERS PUT DOWN THEIR PICKS

PARIS -- In face of steadily rising prices, the wages of state employes have remained stationery for some time. France's miners felt the squeeze particularly acutely. At the end of the worst winter since 1880, during which they saw the reserves of coal

sink to the vanishing point, they asked the government to bring their wages back into line with living costs. This required an increase of 11%. The de Gaulle regime responded by offering 5.77% --- not at once but spread over the next year. This irritated the miners.

Talk about the need for strike action spread rapidly through the coal fields. The union bureaucracies felt the pressure and began to respond in an uneven way. The big Communist-dominated CGT (Confederation Generale de Travailleurs) was even more cautious than the smaller Social-Democratic FO (Force Ouvrière) and Catholic CFTC (Confederation Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens), the CGT calling for a 48-hour strike, the other two demanding that it be made "indefinite."

The response of the government was to announce a decree "requisitioning" the miners; that is, making it obligatory to show up on the job and to work as usual under threat of heavy fines and jail sentences. The government has been able to get away with this kind of decree with smaller and weaker sectors of the labor movement. It brought the anger of the miners to boiling point.

Strike action began in the Lorraine area and spread to the Nord and Pas-de-Calais.

The government warned the strikers that not only must they turn to as ordered in the official decree; they've also got to dig coal.

This order did not win de Gaulle any new friends among the miners. In fact it seems to have aroused still wider sympathy for them among other sectors.

The mine engineers decided unanimously to donate two day's pay as a token of solidarity and to refuse to put any pressure on the miners to go back into the pits.

In the Pas-de-Calais, general sentiment among the public can be gauged from a statement made by the bishop of Arras: "This strike concerns all of us; we must show solidarity. . . . What can we do to help make the voice of the miners not only heard but listened to?"

Throughout France this appears to be the feeling among the working people. The entire labor movement decided to indicate its attitude ~~by a fifteen-minute nationwide work stoppage. This is scheduled for today.~~

Will the government decide that discretion is now in order or will de Gaulle decide to press his challenge to the miners? There is as yet no clear indication.

Whatever the government decides to do, the fact is that the miners have already taken a most significant step. The last big

mine strike occurred in 1947. It was marred by opposition between Communists and reformist Socialists. After the defeat, the CGT was split by the reformists who set up the rival FO.

During the parliamentary elections last November signs of a possible new united front appeared. Mainly in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, Socialists and Communists voted for each other's candidates after the preliminary vote in which first choice candidates were indicated.

Renewed unity of action has not yet appeared among the top leaders but a fresh wind of unity and confidence is blowing. The movement is primarily for wage demands, but the government by issuing its decree has begun to give this question a political meaning.

NEW STAGE IN CHINESE-SOVIET RIFT

With the publication of a long editorial in the February 27 People's Daily and a 100,000 word "Reply to Comrade Togliatti," published in four installments in Red Flag, the Chinese Communist party leadership brought their differences with the Khrushchev grouping to a new and sharper stage.

Recent moves in Moscow suggesting that the Chinese proposal for an international conference of all Communist parties might be acceptable, provided that preliminary bilateral discussions were held, had led to speculation that Khrushchev might proffer some kind of economic concessions and that the Chinese might agree to a bargain which would again cover up the main differences. Peking's move puts an end to these speculations.

While the Chinese leaders do not reject out of hand Khrushchev's demand for "bilateral contacts" prior to a world conference, they demand a series of concessions that could not be accepted by Khrushchev without a retreat of such proportions as to concede to Peking the paramount ideological role in the Chinese-Soviet alliance.

The demands include accepting the Albanians as equals while excluding the Yugoslavs as "traitors" and agreeing that the 1960 Declaration, which both Peking and Moscow signed, is still correct in maintaining that ideologically the "main danger" that faces the Communist movement today is "revisionism" and not "sectarianism."

Until we receive the texts of the new documents, we will not attempt a rounded appraisal of this new development in the dispute. However, it is apparent even from the sketchy summaries in the daily press that one accusation is of far-reaching import: the charge that the Khrushchev leadership resorted to economic reprisals against revolutionary China.

"Certain comrades," the editorial in the People's Daily is reported to have said, "lost no time after the Bucharest conference [June 1960] in mounting economic and political pressure against China, in breaking unilaterally and in a perfidious way, hundreds of agreements and contracts which had been made with a friendly country."

It will be recalled that in 1960 the bourgeois press was filled with stories about the sudden withdrawal of Soviet technicians from China and the abrupt abandonment of hundreds of important projects throughout the country, some of which were nearing completion. No confirmation of these stories was available at the time in either Peking or Moscow.

The substantial accuracy of the accounts is now evident. This, however, casts new light on the great difficulties and even setbacks in China which have just as consistently been reported in the bourgeois press the past couple of years. Peking has ascribed the causes primarily to catastrophic weather conditions.

To the surmises that the difficulties were due to bad planning and to mismanagement, as well as such things as floods and droughts, must now be added what amounted in effect to sabotage from Moscow. In a delicately poised balance, this factor alone could have been decisive in tripping up China's "great leap" forward.

The Khrushchev faction has not yet offered a reply to Peking's extremely grave charge. It would seem quite difficult to avoid answering, however. A number of underdeveloped countries will want to know the truth about what really happened and above all whether there was the slightest shred of justification for such punishment as abruptly ending aid to a socialist country.

L'Humanité, daily newspaper of the French Communist party and a strong supporter of Khrushchev, did rush into print February 28 with a summary of an article on Sino-Soviet trade which appeared in the Soviet magazine Foreign Trade. This curious article offers a balance sheet on aid given by the Soviet Union to China, but it carefully refrains from giving an annual breakdown of the statistics. It publishes only the over-all figures for the entire period from 1955 to 1960.

The next issue of Quatrième Internationale, official publication of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, which is now on the press, will carry an article by E. Germain on economic developments in China for the past five years. Figures compiled by Germain would confirm the charge that economic reprisals were undertaken by the Kremlin.

Germain shows that the total volume of Sino-Soviet trade fell from 8.2 billion rubles in 1959 to 6.7 billion in 1960 and 3.3 billion in 1961.

Total Soviet exports of machinery and equipment to China were cut by more than four-fifths, falling from \$597 million in 1958 to \$108 million in 1961.

NEW ZEALAND COMMUNIST PARTY MOVES CLOSER TO PEKING LINE

A statement in the January 23 issue of the weekly Peoples Voice, an official publication of the Communist party of New Zealand, indicates that the leadership is moving closer to Peking's position in the dispute with Moscow. Under the headline, "Fighting Monopoly in New Zealand and throughout the World," the National Secretariat states that in regard to ideological issues, "We stand firm on the fact that they cannot be solved by discussion and demonstrations at congresses of individual parties, as has happened recently. They will not be solved by an attitude of 'We, and only we, are right all the time on everything.'"

The declaration continues, "Such an attitude, plus refusal to develop collective discussion internationally, makes appeals for unity useless and dismisses the honest opinions of other parties and their leaderships without consideration. It excludes collective discussion of all aspects in an objective manner. We stand firm on the approach agreed by all Marxist-Leninist parties in the Statement of the 81 Parties after their conference in Moscow in 1960. There a method was agreed upon if disputes arose between the leadership of various parties. It was a totally different procedure from that being pursued by the C.P.S.U. and other parties."

After this pointed thrust at Moscow, the statement continued, "Today, we are more fully convinced than ever that our call of February, 1962, for the holding of an international discussion on problems and differences was a correct one. Also that we were correct to emphasize, in line with the 81 Parties' statement, the need for preliminary discussion between those with differences. This has not been done, but it should be started without delay."

The article goes on, "Our party. . . considers correct the statement made with emphasis there that revisionism is today the main danger in our world Marxist-Leninist Movement. We are concerned that, while all possible dangers. . . arising from dogmatism are receiving full attention, the main danger of revisionism is, except in a few sweet words, to a large degree being ignored. We cannot see any basis at present for ideological unity with the revisionist views of Tito communists and must strongly oppose any such development. . . ."

WIDENING DIFFERENCES IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

LONDON, Feb. 23 -- Copies of the Australian press received here indicate widening differences in the Communist party of Australia as a result of the rift between Peking and Moscow.

A circular issued by a "rank and file committee of the CPA" has been distributed among the party membership by a pro-Chinese group in Victoria, second most populous state in Australia. It attacks Lance Sharkey, national general secretary, who removed the general secretary of the Victoria area when the national leadership switched adherence from Peking to Moscow.

The Sharkey leadership, declares the circular, adopted "positions of self-interest rather than those in the best interest of the working class." It criticizes "the unprincipled attacks on the Chinese Communist Party at the Berlin and Italian CP congresses, and on the Albanian CP also at the Bulgarian and Hungarian congresses." It calls for "a world congress of CP's to discuss problems rather than having them aired at individual congresses." It calls for genuine democratic centralism in the CPA.

Sharkey is scored as "such a hater of the so-called 'Chinese line' that he has moved ground on this as well as on other questions." The circular claims that "Sydney comrades are joining us in increasing numbers."

There are three tendencies in the Communist party in Victoria. First is the pro-Chinese. While it includes some of the most Stalinist-type leaders such as E.F.Hill, it also has many good militants. A second group that stands strongly for inner party democracy comes close to Trotskyist positions on many issues; yet it also supports "peaceful coexistence" as interpreted by Khrushchev. It has fought many bitter battles with Hill on the issue of internal democracy in the party. The third group, probably the most Stalinist of all, is the Sharkey tendency which now supports Khrushchev and condemns the "Albanians" as Trotskyist.

FRENCH COMMUNIST YOUTH CUT APRON STRINGS

The French Communist youth are beginning to give indications of getting out of hand -- at least the hand of Thorez. This was rather evident at the recent congress held by the UEC (Union des Etudiants Communistes), an organization under the control of the UJCF (Union des Jeunes Communistes de France).

The UEC has about 4,000 members, the strongest sector being at the Paris University where 1,500 members are listed. The monthly paper of the organization Clarte has a press run of between 15,000 to 20,000.

Nuances have appeared in the UEC in the past. Some of the leaders, for instance, against the orders of the Political Bureau of the French Communist party, participated in the FUA (Front Universitaire Antifasciste) which organized some 7,000 students in Paris during the last year of the war against Algeria. Again in the crisis in the Political Bureau over the differences with Casanova and Servin (beginning in 1960), a leader of the UEC felt

the disciplinary ax along with them and other members of the Central Committee. But no open revolt occurred. The UEC appeared to be tied tightly to the political apron strings of the Thorez leadership.

Recently the UEC began to display an inclination to echo the views of the Togliatti leadership in the Italian Communist party. Leaderships of other Communist parties likewise seemed to be fishing among the French Communist youth.

When the UEC leadership decided to hold a congress at the end of February, the Political Bureau sought to have it postponed. But the proposal was rejected. Preparations for the congress took place in defiance of the Thorez leadership.

The Thorez tendency received support only in the provincial universities and among older students. In the Paris University and elsewhere, left tendencies appeared, including pro-Chinese and pro-Cuban.

The differences did not take clear political form even at the congress. Minor incidents thus tended to receive undue emphasis as substitutes for clearer expressions.

An Italian youth representative, for instance, made a rather confused speech, veering from left to right on various points. But his remarks were greatly appreciated by the audience because they raised problems that required thoughtful consideration. The delegates awarded the speech with warm applause, finally rising to their feet. The representatives of the Central Committee, among them Roland Leroy, remained ostentatiously seated. After a few minutes, the delegates clamored, "Debout! Debout!" (Stand up! Stand up!")

The pro-Thorez wing received only about one-third of the votes and the main supporter of the Political Bureau was not elected to the National Committee of the UEC. Due to the political confusion it is not easy to determine exact shadings, but about one-fifth appear to be inclined to the left.

The importance of this development among the Communist youth of France lies not so much in any crystallization of definite political tendencies as in the open rebellion against the Thorez leadership. The first time that this has occurred, it marks a very significant step forward.

It is quite possible that the rebellion was covertly encouraged by a sector of the top leadership of the French Communist party itself, and that it is symptomatic of a deeper crisis in this organization over the process of de-Stalinization.

How the Thorez leadership will react remains to be seen. If it turns to disciplinary measures, it may stir up further rebellion.

If it does not, the youth who got away with it, will feel emboldened enough to begin asking the fossilized Thorez leadership some new, highly embarrassing questions.

At long last France's Communist youth seem about to begin thinking for themselves and this bodes no good for Thorez.

SHIFT TO THE LEFT IN BURMA

The Burmese government nationalized all private and commercial banks in the country February 23. A few minutes after the decree was announced over the radio, armed troops took over the fourteen foreign and twelve Burmese-owned institutions. Accounts of the private banks were checked before staffs were permitted to leave.

Business circles were reported to be suffering "panic" following the sudden seizure.

The government said the move was required to prevent private enterprisers from wrecking the economy. They had begun to withdraw funds from the banks following an announcement by the government the previous week that it was taking over all export and import businesses, the entire rice trade and some private industries.

The rice trade, Burma's single most important industry, will be completely nationalized by next year, the government announced.

This shift to the left follows the resignation early in February of Brigadier Aung Gyi. A reformist Socialist, he had pressed for continued reliance on foreign investments and private enterprise in developing the Burmese economy.

The weight in the ruling Revolutionary Council now appears to have shifted toward the more radical wing although the equivocal General Ne Win remains the central figure in the government.

NIGERIAN DOCK STRIKE

LONDON, Feb. 23 -- The Nigerian dock strike continues unabated despite attempts by the government to break it. The dockers are fighting for elementary rights taken for granted in Europe and North America -- a fixed wage rate, guaranteed minimum rate, closed shop, etc.

The dock workers union is affiliated to the left-wing national union organization led by Michael Imoudu, which is giving the fullest support to the strike. In fact the fears of the government that the strike will spread are such that they have arrested the leader of the Seamens union.

Widespread sympathy for the dockers has forced the right-wing trade-union congress leadership to take a neutral position despite heavy pressure from the government to come out against the strikers.

Threats to break the strike through use of unemployed workers have failed to materialize because of mass sympathy for the waterfront men. Fear of a rash of sympathy strikes has prevented the government from using troops up to now to break the strike.

The strike is the longest since the 1958 postal workers strike and recalls the days of the 1945 general strike.

The strike is of political import in its challenge to the government. It has already strengthened the left wing against right-wing trade-union leaders who had gained due to government patronage and recognition. The Nigerian working class is on the rise.

"DON'T INVADE CUBA!" SAY AMERICAN PEOPLE

"Americans Are Increasingly Against U.S. Invasion of Cuba." This was the headline in a report about a recent poll in the February 28 European Edition of the New York Herald Tribune. That is a rare headline in this imperialist sheet which has been foaming at the mouth for some time for "action" against Cuba.

The results of the poll, announced by George Gallup, director of the American Institute of Public Opinion, reveal an astounding fact. Although the war hysteria whipped up by all the big publicity media reached heights in recent months never before seen in the history of the United States, the American people brushed it off as if they hadn't been listening.

Shortly before Kennedy ordered his illegal blockade of Cuba last October, the Institute asked the following question: "Some people say that the United States should send our armed forces into Cuba to help overthrow Castro. Do you agree or disagree?"

Almost two-thirds opposed invading Cuba. The exact figures then were: "Disagree, 63%; agree, 24%; no opinion, 13%."

The same question asked today brought the following results: "Disagree, 64%; agree, 20%; no opinion, 16%."

This is strong evidence of the basic goodwill of the American people toward the rest of the world, even toward a country singled out by Wall Street and its entire propaganda machine as Enemy No. 1. It points to the immense feeling of human solidarity in America which will eventually flow into the socialist movement and make it one of the most dynamic the world has seen. And it offers fresh confirmation of a mass mood noted repeatedly in the United States

since the end of World War II: Fear of another world war is deep and irremovable. The American people don't want a world of radioactive ruins. What Truman did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki was enough!

JULIÃO ANNOUNCES CUBAN SOLIDARITY CONGRESS

"There is no other way out except armed struggle in Latin America." This declaration was reported to have been made in Havana February 20 by Francisco Julião. The leader of Brazil's Peasant Leagues has been visiting the capital of revolutionary Cuba since February 22.

"If an aggression were to occur on the part of imperialism," the Brazilian socialist reportedly added, "the popular masses would rise up with great violence and attack all United States property; and civil war would be unleashed, unless the governments took the part of the people."

Julião announced that a meeting of a "continental Congress of Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution" is in the planning stage. While an exact date has not yet been set "because of lack of coordination among the Brazilian and Latin-American organizations that defend the Cuban Revolution," the conference will be probably held in April or May, Julião said.

Among prominent figures in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa who are expected to attend, Julião listed Bertrand Russell, Lazaro Cárdenas and Jean-Paul Sartre.

While Julião was in Havana, the Chinese News Agency Hsinhua reported that a violent armed clash occurred recently between landless peasants and farmers in Sape, state of Paraíba, in northeast Brazil where the Brazilian peasant leader has his main base.

Some time ago, according to the report, landless peasants in Sape seized the land of a local latifundist named Aduato Gomes. They set up homes and began farming.

The owner, with the help of local authorities and other landlords, drove the squatters off. But the peasants reorganized and came back in defiance of the landlords' gang. In the fighting, which lasted more than forty minutes, a landlord received wounds from which he later died.

At the request of the local Peasants' League, a member of the Chamber of Deputies went to the area to conduct an investigation. He supported the peasants. They were fully entitled, he said, to occupy land left idle by the owners.

Tension arising from the armed clash still exists in the area.

MORE STRIKE LEADERS CONDEMNED IN FASCIST SPAIN

PARIS, March 4 -- Leaders of the strikes of April 1962 continue to be railroaded to prison in fascist Spain. After the trial of the Valencia and Catalonia militants of the FLP (Frente de Liberación Popular), Basque members have now been tried and sentenced in Madrid.

The Franco regime, its judges, radio and press, have tried consistently to play down the role played by the FLP in the strikes and the important position which this organization has come to occupy in the working-class underground. This ties in with Franco's effort to play up the "Communist menace," which he does by picturing the Communist party as the main underground opposition force in Spain. The truth is that more than one hundred members of the FLP have been tried, or are awaiting trial, for participating in the strike.

Western bourgeois papers, including the usually objective Paris Le Monde, have fallen in with Franco's game of playing down the FLP role. They do this by putting the spotlight on "Catholics" and "intellectuals" as presumably the principal victims.

As a matter of fact, the great majority are workers. This includes four out of five among the Basque militants, 18 out of the 25 in the Valencia group, and 11 out of the 17 in the Catalonia-Barcelona group.

Of course, such well-known left Catholics as the Basque writer Recalde, are among Franco's victims. But so are such atheist left-wing militants as the son of Angel Pestana, the famous anarcho-syndicalist leader of the twenties, who was condemned to many years of hard labor, and Angel Abad, a national leader of the FLP, who was condemned to six years at hard labor for his role in the Barcelona strike.

KURDS STEP UP PRESSURE IN IRAQ

Iraq's dictatorial Aref regime, which seized power last month in a bloody coup d'etat, seems to be seeking to equivocate on the issue of autonomy for the Kurds.

Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani, main leader of the Kurds in their two-year-old rebellion, sent Jalal Talabani to negotiate with Aref at Baghdad.

The new government, however, stalled for time. It inveighed Talabani into going to Cairo and Algiers with an Iraqi delegation which visted Nasser and Ben Bella.

When Barzani heard about this, he expressed annoyance. "Talks there have nothing to do with us," he was reported to have declared.

At a press conference February 20, the Kurdish leader said that "If they don't declare our autonomy within the Iraqi Republic, then we will fight and maybe we will have to declare our independence."

"We are not begging for our rights," he went on. "If they don't declare our rights we will fight for them until death, and even if this should mean separation from the Iraqi Republic."

The rebellion of the 'some 2,000,000 Kurds in Iraq was one of the key factors in undermining the Kassem regime which was toppled by Aref.

Meanwhile the new Iraqi dictator is continuing his savage nationwide witch-hunt. "The Iraqi Communists are the worst enemies of the Arab nation and must be completely eliminated," he said in an interview published February 26 in the weekly Egyptian Rosa El Youssef. "We believe in God, while the Communists profess atheism."

Accounts of the repression in Iraq continue to filter into the press. Under the label "Communist" the prisons have been filled with trade-unionists and people of the mildest social beliefs. There have been no reports of new killings but on February 25 the press reported that tanks were again patrolling the streets of Baghdad.

BELGIAN SOCIALISTS FIGHT PROPOSED ANTIUNION LAWS

BRUSSELS, March 3 -- An emergency congress of the Belgian Socialist party met here yesterday to discuss the so-called "laws to maintain public order" (lois sur le maintien de l'ordre) which are due for discussion in parliament in a few weeks.

Ever since the great general strike in December 1960 and January 1961, the Belgian bourgeoisie has tried to pass repressive antiunion legislation that would make the organization of such general strikes more difficult, or at least more illegal. When the present coalition government (between the Social-Christian [Catholic party], Belgium's main bourgeois party, and the Socialist party) was constituted, the bourgeois cabinet ministers and politicians began clamoring for such laws, but the reformist leaders were slow to respond. They feared the reaction of the rank and file and of the working class, among whom the memory of the great general strike is still very much alive.

Last August four proposed laws were finally submitted to parliament after having been accepted by the whole cabinet, including the reformist Socialist ministers.

When these were made public, the left wing of the Belgian Socialist party and of the trade unions organized a huge campaign of opposition. Mass meetings were held in the most important towns.

At Liège 50,000 workers assembled in a militant rally. Resolutions were passed in most factories, some of them threatening strike action when parliament opens discussion on the proposed laws.

Under this pressure, the reformist leaders had to back up. They brought in a series of amendments which their coalition partners reluctantly accepted in order to save the coalition. Although they removed some of the teeth in these laws the amendments did not change their over-all nature as repressive antiunion legislation. The left wing of the Socialist party declared that despite the amendments the laws remained unacceptable. The campaign against them continued.

The struggle came to a head last week at the congress when one SP federation after another opposed the laws, indicating precisely what antiunion measures they contain, and how they could be used against strikers.

It became obvious that the SP leadership had to make a rather hasty retreat in order to save the coalition, at least for the time being. The resolution it proposed at the March 2 emergency convention states that the laws as originally drafted were unacceptable, that the amended laws cannot be accepted either, and while it calls upon the Socialist members of parliament to press for still more amendments, it also states that these must be based on the reasons given by the party federations for rejecting the laws; i.e., that they must take up practically all new stipulations in the law.

It remains to be seen if the bourgeois coalition partners of the Belgian reformists will accept the big retreat demanded of them. Attempted horse-trading has been made more difficult by the fact that a new emergency convention of the SP will have to be held to vote on the final draft of the laws.

One of the leaders of the left socialists, Ernest Mandel, editor of the weekly La Gauche, speaking immediately after the reporter P-H Spaak, challenged the party bureaucracy by announcing that the tendency which he represented would fight to the end against any new legislation that could be used under any conditions against strikers.

Mandel called for mass action against the proposed laws, pledging full support to the workers in resisting them whatever the decisions of the SP congress or parliament might be. He was violently attacked by Spaak and party chairman Collard. Such declarations, they said, amounted to "a call for party indiscipline."

The debate between Spaak and Mandel made headlines in the Belgian press.

Supplément au N° 17 de "Quatrième Internationale"

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