

Intercontinental Press

combined with **IMPREGOR**

Vol. 16, No. 13

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April 3, 1978

USA 75¢

UK 30p

Plight of Refugees in Israeli Blitzkrieg



Lebanese mother and daughter fleeing March 18 bombing in Nabatiyeh, claimed by Israelis to be

Wide World Photos
guerrilla center. Now virtually deserted, the town had a population of 30,000 before blitzkrieg. See p. 388.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Peruvian Exiles Win Amnesty

By Fred Murphy

The Peruvian military government announced March 15 that all persons forcibly exiled from the country would be allowed to return. A communiqué from the Ministry of the Interior said that "conditions that had prevented Peruvians who found themselves abroad from returning to the country are now without effect."

The amnesty will affect a large number of persons ejected from the country in recent years for their role in working-class and peasant struggles. Among those who will now apparently be able to return to Peru are the Trotskyist peasant leader Hugo Blanco, miners union leader Víctor Cuadros, labor attorneys José Oña and Ricardo Díaz Chávez, and Antonio Aragón, who led struggles of the residents of the shantytowns around Lima.

Return of the exiles was a major demand of the forty-eight-hour general strike that swept Peru February 27-28.* The demand also figured prominently in the many strikes, rallies, and street demonstrations that have been occurring almost continually throughout the many strikes, rallies, and street demonstrations that have been occurring almost continually throughout the country in the past nine months.

The military regime's first concession to the rising protest against its austerity measures and repression was to announce plans last July for a gradual, two-year transition to civilian rule. Elections for a constituent assembly that will write a new constitution under military guidance will be held June 4.

President Francisco Morales Bermúdez now apparently hopes to make his "democratic" face-lift operation more credible by allowing the exiles to return.

The first indication that such a move might be made came on March 9, when the National Elections Court (JNE) ruled that exiles could participate as candidates in the constituent assembly election. Blanco, Cuadros, and Díaz Chávez have declared their intention to run on slates put forward by workers parties and trade unions.

Shortly after the JNE's ruling, Díaz Chávez returned to Peru clandestinely and was preparing to publicly announce his presence.

It remains to be seen whether the regime will try to place restrictions on the activity of the returning exiles. Hugo Blanco's

experiences with the military government on two previous occasions should serve as a reminder in this regard.

Blanco was released in December 1970 after spending almost eight years in prison for his activities as a leader of peasant struggles in La Convención valley in the early 1960s. Three weeks after being freed he was called in to the Ministry of the Interior and told that he was forbidden to travel to Cuzco, that he was being watched, and that he had to receive permission to travel outside Lima.

He was rearrested March 9, 1971, and interrogated for twenty-four hours about his support for workers struggles. Then on September 13, 1971, he was deported to Mexico, having been confined to Lima throughout the period since his release.

Blanco was not allowed to return to Peru until late 1975. He was again deported on

July 10, 1976, after mass protests against austerity broke out in Lima—despite the fact that he had been in Cuzco at the time and only learned of the strikes and demonstrations after they had begun. Blanco described his experiences before this second deportation in an article published in the August 30, 1976, issue of *Intercontinental Press*:

From the moment I arrived in Peru . . . there was always at least one police car, at times two or three, in front of my house. Sometimes there were also motorcycles equipped with radios. Everywhere I went, the police followed me. Several times they took photographs of the people who came to visit me.

When I went to Cuzco they watched me until I got onto the plane. And when I reached Cuzco, as soon as I got off the plane the police took photos of me and began following me. . . .

As a result of all those activities, the police had a more accurate record than I did. They had all this written down, and I was not memorizing everything I did day after day.

Blanco also learned from the interrogations before his second deportation that the police had been reading his mail.

Supporters of human rights should remain alert and ready to protest in the event that such measures are again applied to the exiles now returning to Peru. □

Smith Inaugurates 'Transitional' Regime

By Ernest Harsch

At a closed-door ceremony in Salisbury March 21, three prominent Zimbabwean figures were sworn in as members of a "transitional" coalition regime with Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith. This was the first step in the implementation of an agreement signed March 3 that will supposedly lead to the establishment of a largely Black "majority rule" government by the end of the year.

The three Zimbabweans included two well-known nationalist leaders, Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole, both of whom had led significant struggles against the racist white minority regime in the past. The third was Chief Jeremiah Chirau, a government-paid tribal figurehead.

Along with Smith, who remains prime minister, the three are now part of the new Executive Council, which has been billed as a "governing" body. Decisions are to be made by consensus, giving Smith automatic veto power. Smith and Muzorewa told reporters that a new cabinet would soon be set up, with a Black and a white minister chosen for each post.

Two days earlier, at a rally in the Salisbury suburb of Highfield that reportedly

drew a crowd of 150,000 Blacks, Muzorewa hailed the agreement signed with Smith as the inauguration of a "genuine transfer of power from the minority to the majority."

But as it now stands, the Salisbury accord falls far short of meeting the aspirations of Zimbabwe's 6.7 million Africans for real majority rule. Though some Black figures have now been brought into the government and "democratic" elections have been promised for later this year, direct control continues to rest in white hands. The police force, the military, the courts, and the civil service are still dominated and run by the same whites who have administered the racist system of minority rule for years.

In addition, the privileged white population still owns 80 percent of the country's wealth and about half its land.

The agreements that Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau put their signatures to include provisions specifically designed to retain many of these white privileges for years to come. The new draft constitution contains clauses that provide, among other things, for prompt compensation for any expropriated white property.

To safeguard against alterations to the constitution without white approval,

*See *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, March 20, p. 337.

whites are to be given a disproportionate number of seats in a new parliament, as well as the power to block any constitutional amendments.

Smith has been able to win Muzorewa's and Sithole's participation in this scheme by playing on their factional rivalries with two other Zimbabwean nationalist leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, who are allied within the Patriotic Front and who took no part in the Salisbury accord. (On March 13, Nkomo and Mugabe reaffirmed their willingness to negotiate with the American and British governments instead.)

By including Muzorewa and Sithole in the government, Smith hopes to utilize their influence with the Zimbabwean population to dampen the struggle for real Black majority rule.

On March 22, a day after being sworn in as a member of the Executive Council, Sithole told reporters that he would soon "order" the freedom fighters of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) to cease armed actions against the regime. Sithole claims that he still holds the allegiance of most of the ZANU ranks, though this is strongly contested by the ZANU faction led by Mugabe.

But from Smith's viewpoint, Muzorewa's backing will be most important in the efforts to sell the accord to the Zimbabwean population. His ability to draw such a sizable crowd was interpreted as a sign of his continued mass support among the urban population of Salisbury.

Nevertheless, the turn-out was well below what Muzorewa's United African National Council had projected and somewhat smaller than earlier rallies held in 1976 and 1977. The mass attendance at the rally, moreover, cannot be seen as signifying Black support for the provisions of the accord safeguarding white privileges, but for the promises of Black advancement and eventual majority rule.

Smith has clearly set up his "transitional" regime in an effort to buy time and to stave off mounting pressure for real social change.

The ability of Muzorewa and Sithole to sidetrack the struggle for freedom still remains to be proved. In the meantime, Smith is continuing the war against the Zimbabwean guerrillas and against the rural population as a whole.

Shortly before the agreement was reached, regulations in some rural areas were tightened to include shoot-on-sight orders against anyone found outside their villages during curfew hours. And on March 7, just four days after the accord was signed, the regime imposed a curfew on some of the suburbs around Salisbury itself.

The same day, the regime announced that its forces had crossed the border into neighboring Zambia to attack a guerrilla base of the Zimbabwe African People's Union, led by Nkomo. □

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Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Varick Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10014. Published in New York each Monday except the first in January and the third and fourth in August.

Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y.

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Intercontinental Press specializes in political analysis and interpretation of events of particular interest to the labor, socialist, colonial independence, Black, and women's liberation movements.

Signed articles represent the views of the authors, which may not necessarily coincide with those of Intercontinental Press. Insofar as it re-

flects editorial opinion, unsigned material stands on the program of the Fourth International.

To Subscribe: For one year send \$24 to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Varick Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10014. Write for rates on first class and airmail.

In Europe: For air-speeded subscriptions, write to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 50, London N1 2XP, England. In Australia: Write to Pathfinder Press, P.O. Box 151, Glebe 2037. In New Zealand: Write to Socialist Books, P.O. Box 1663, Wellington.

Subscription correspondence should be addressed to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Varick Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10014.

Please allow five weeks for change of address. Include your old address as well as your new address, and, if possible, an address label from a recent issue.

Intercontinental Press is published by the 408 Printing and Publishing Corporation, 408 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Offices at 408 West Street, New York, N.Y.

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Plight of Refugees in Israeli Blitzkrieg

By Michael Baumann

"Our task is to kill as many terrorists as possible."—Israeli Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur, quoted in the March 27 issue of *Time* magazine.

* * *

In scenes reminiscent of the German army's invasion of Poland in World War II, the Israeli blitzkrieg into Lebanon has driven virtually the entire Arab population south of the Litani River from their homes.

The sea of refugees is estimated to number at least 265,000, not counting the 100,000 persons who still remain homeless in the aftermath of the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war.

Incomplete lists of casualties, released by the Lebanese government March 20, placed the death toll at 1,168. The number of bodies still buried in the rubble of flattened villages and refugee camps can only be guessed at.

This is the initial toll of the Israeli invasion, begun March 14 by 25,000 troops backed by tanks, armored personnel carriers, heavy artillery, bombers, jet fighters, and gunboats.

Striking without warning by sea and air, and by land at three major points along the sixty-mile border, the invaders occupied nearly all of southern Lebanon, an area of more than 500 square miles, by March 20.

Officially, the takeover was described by Israeli authorities as a "retaliation" in response to a Palestinian commando operation in Tel Aviv March 11 that resulted in the deaths of forty-four persons.

The hypocrisy of this claim is demonstrated by eyewitness accounts establishing that the Israeli invaders reserved their heaviest fire for villages, cities, and camps housing Lebanese civilians and Palestinian refugees.

Uzai—'Half of It Isn't There Any More'

A case in point is the bombing of Uzai, a southern suburb of Beirut. In the March 27 issue of *Newsweek*, correspondents William E. Schmidt and Tony Clifton reported the results of the Israeli air strike on this heavily populated area.

The jets did their job perfectly, leveling restaurants, bakeries, service stations and houses for five hundred yards. The cement-block walls crumbled, and families eating lunch were buried in the ruins. As Red Cross workers scabbled through the rubble, a girl rounded the corner. Suddenly, she screamed so loudly that she lost

her breath and collapsed. She had come to check her own house—and found herself looking into a 10-foot deep crater, slowly filling with water from a broken pipe. When we left, the girl was still leaning against a wall, panting—rather than crying—with shock. The relief workers said they were unable to help; the house had completely disappeared. There was simply no way of knowing whether anyone had been inside.

The force of the explosions was tremendous. In the ruins of another house, we found half a human leg, shoe and sock still on the foot. . . .

Later in the week, the Israelis claimed that the PLO had its radio station in Uzai, as well as a base where they trained the guerrillas who took part in the bus attack outside Tel Aviv. We were in Uzai half an hour after the raid and went through every building that still stood. We found nothing that looked like a radio station, or the remains of one. And it would be an unlikely place for a training base. Uzai was a squalid line of little houses, shops, and the fish restaurants that were its main attraction—a very public place. The only difference now is that half of it isn't there any more.

'Hardly a House Remains Intact'

The bombing in the south of Lebanon was, if anything, worse. *New York Times* correspondent Marvin Howe cabled this report from Tyre March 20:

The entire area from Tyre to Nabatiyeh was a scene of desolation and destruction. The exodus of civilians that began with the Israeli invasion six days ago has slowed to a trickle.

A few trucks carrying families with their mattresses and blankets, a gas truck full of children, and several herdsmen driving their sheep and goats moved north along the road.

Dead cows and donkeys and shattered automobiles were seen along the main highways out of Tyre and Nabatiyeh.

Hardly a house remains intact in Nabatiyeh. There are only 25 to 30 families left in the once prosperous farm center of 40,000 inhabitants.

Refugee camps, far from being spared, were particular targets. Jonathan C. Randal reported in the March 20 *Washington Post*:

For the first time in this conflict, Israeli warplanes dropped cluster bomb units, which scatter shrapnel across a football-field-sized area.

The target was the Rashidiyeh Palestinian refugee camp. Hours after the raid, an Israeli helicopter flew over the camp south of Tyre no more than 20 feet off the ground and was not fired upon.

Hit with conventional high explosives and heavy artillery—possibly U.S.-supplied 175 mm guns—was the Bourg Chemali refugee camp due east of the [Tyre] port area.

The effect of such massive bombing can be gauged from this report from southern Lebanon:

Villages like Taibe and Qantara are demolished and deserted. Much of the landscape is empty of people and the absence of human beings adds to the eeriness and the sense of fear. Bomb craters the size of children's swimming pools can be seen. Amputated buildings are everywhere. . . .

At the village of Sreifa, or at the site that was once the village of Sreifa, two old Arabs huddled in the ruins and talked of the raids. The main streets stank of sewage. Burst pipes spilled into the street and felled power lines swung crazily in the strong wind.

Practically the only people to be seen are old men and women who did not have the energy to flee north. Occasionally one spots a dead cow splayed grotesquely in a field. There are abandoned dogs in many places, sniffing the ruins, growing leaner and leaner. . . .

Near Tbnine, a car full of looters maneuvers around human carrion. One reporter peeks into a doorway and turns away to retch. He saw what had been a person.

In some Moslem villages there are white flags fluttering from houses—days ago the village mukhtars asked for Israeli succor to stave off annihilation. . . .

There are many reports that the Christian militia committed atrocities against Moslems, including women and children, in places like Bint Jbail and Khiam during the Israeli attacks. No one denies them. [William E. Farrell, in the March 25 *New York Times*.]

'The Bombardment Seemed to Have Been Indiscriminate'

By the third day of the invasion, *Time* correspondent Dean Breilis reported in the March 27 issue, "the exodus of Lebanese from the area was both enormous and pitiful":

As many as 200,000 people fled their homes, clogging the roads heading north toward Beirut. On the coastal highway, tractors pulled wagons filled with livestock; children could be seen riding in the trunks of crowded automobiles, sitting with the open trunk doors curving over their heads like umbrellas. At Adloun, a town well north of the Litani River, two Mercedes taxis packed with families fleeing the fighting were ambushed by an Israeli reconnaissance party; men, women, and children—14 in all—were slaughtered by machine guns and rockets (a fin from one of them was found, bearing Hebrew letters). The sight was ghastly: flesh hanging out of windows, bullet holes gouged in the doors, a child's charred arm on the road. Palestinians guided traffic while others went about the grisly task of removing the dead.

Farther south in Tyre, all that remained of a

population that once numbered 45,000 was a few hundred aged Lebanese civilians and scores of teen-age Palestinian fighters. Smoke rose from the ruins of a building hit by Israeli bombs. Palestinians and Lebanese dug through the rubble in search of bodies. The bombardment seemed to have been indiscriminate, both from the air and from ships offshore. Except for one Palestinian anti-aircraft gun on the outskirts of town, no military targets had been hit. The port remained undamaged. What had been hit, and hit hard, was the civilian dwellings. Was this deliberate counterterror on the part of the Israelis? It certainly looked that way.

'They Shot Us, All of Us'

In Sidon, correspondent John K. Cooley interviewed the sole survivor of the Adloun taxi massacre. He told her story in the March 24 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor*:

If people in the Western world find it difficult to understand why so many of the 130 million or so Arabs still reject Israel 30 years after the establishment of that state, the story of Miriam Kaddou might help them.

Two newsmen located Miriam, a teen-age Lebanese girl, among the other wounded Lebanese crowded into a small roadside hospital in this south Lebanese coastal city—a city jammed with civilian refugees and wounded victims of Israel's invasion and occupation of south Lebanon.

Miriam told her story quietly, in uncomprehending sorrow—not in anger—with silent tears running down her cheeks. She had regained consciousness just long enough to realize that her mother, father, and brother had not survived.

The Kaddous and another family, numbering 16 persons in all, lived near Tibnine, a hilltop village in south Lebanon which the Palestinians turned into a temporary stronghold. For that reason, the Israelis bombed, shelled, and blasted it until its few remaining residents hung out white flags and sent a surrender delegation, asking Israeli "protection."

At around midnight March 18, said Miriam, the two families, like about 200,000 other south Lebanese, realized their lives were in danger and their property probably lost forever. Houses near theirs collapsed under direct bomb and artillery hits.

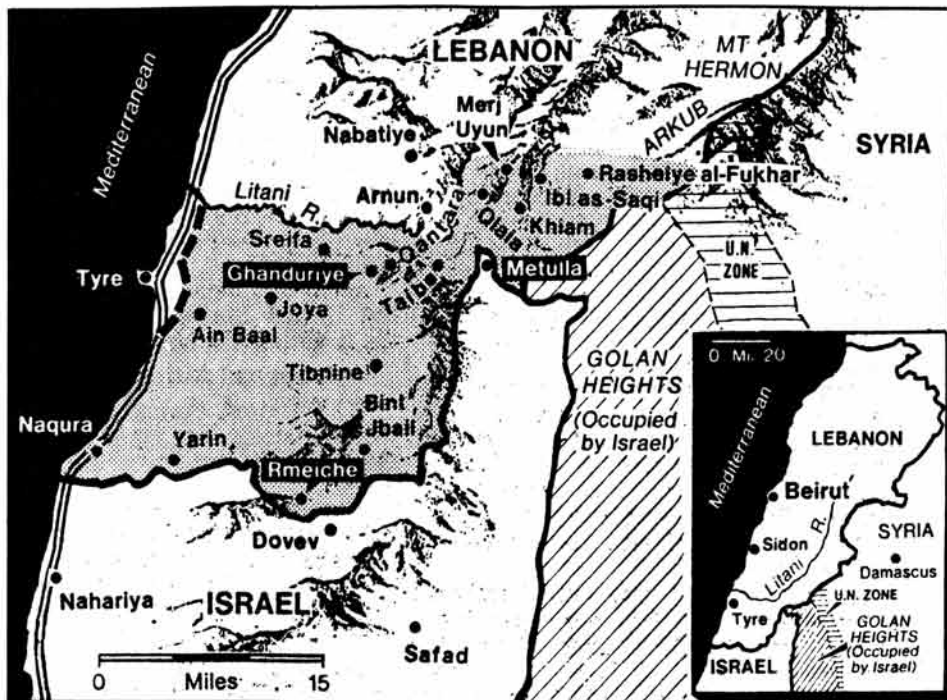
So they found two local taxi owners willing to make the run northward toward Beirut. Loading everything they could, from cook pots to a little clothing, they crammed into the two bulging taxis and set out for Tyre, the main southern coastal town.

"There were many explosions. We saw tanks. But we came safely through Tyre," Miriam said. At Adloun, a tiny hamlet where the coast road curves around a beach, the taxis had to slow down.

Miriam saw a blinding flash and was deafened by a thunderclap from the taxi ahead of them. It had been hit squarely by a rocket fired from the direction of the beach. (The rocket casing was found.)

"Suddenly," said Miriam, "there were five men all around our car. They spoke some strange language, not Arabic. We called out to them, but they stood there and pointed their guns at us. Then one looked into the front window and they shot us, all of us."

Israeli spokesmen at first denied the



New York Times

whole Adloun incident had ever occurred, Cooley reported.

After photos were published, they admitted "several Lebanese civilians" had "apparently been hurt."

The same day, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and ranking Israeli staff officers were speaking of their efforts to spare Lebanese—over 200,000 of whom are now homeless—in their "cleansing operations" against the "terrorists" in south Lebanon.

'Now We Have Nothing'

As of March 20, United Press International correspondent David Pearce cabled from Lebanon, 20,000 refugees a day were flowing north to Beirut.

On their faces is written the agony of the war in south Lebanon. On some, their eyes reflect robot-like listlessness; on others, there is a look of ferocity born of desperation.

The Lebanese government has made a stab at stanching the flood, setting up a four-man ministerial committee headed by Labor and Social Affairs Minister Assad Rizk to oversee relief efforts.

The committee has established relief centers in the municipal stadiums of both Sidon and Beirut, as well as the Beirut Golf Club.

Last Saturday [March 18], the United Nations Relief and Works Agency estimated 160,000 people—60,000 Palestinians and 100,000 Lebanese—had been left homeless. That figure has now passed the 200,000 mark, officials believe, roughly equal to the entire number of refugees who fled from the battles in the south over the past year and a half.

In some Israeli-held villages, such as El Khiam, Lebanese Christians picked the scarred shells clean, looting refrigerators, appliances, even kitchen tables, and carrying off the booty to their own homes in nearby mountain villages.

Neither the Israeli army burial detail poking

through the ruins on its own grim hunt, nor the Christian militiamen who were crowded together on armored personnel carriers, bothered the scavengers as they made their way through the debris-strewn streets.

The Christian Lebanese men, most of them wearing Israeli-made combat fatigues, rode in dusty, broken cars and pickup trucks on a treasure hunt in which everyone was the winner. Every car carried something: one, a refrigerator, another, a wicker table and chair tied onto the roof; a third, a breakfast in new condition.

Pearce spoke with one of the survivors of the Israeli blitzkrieg:

Maaref Kamal, a middle-aged Shia Moslem mother of nine, said she fled with her children when the Israelis entered her village, Debbal, which is located eight miles east of Tyre. She is now living in one of the Beirut tent cities.

"They entered and started shelling and shooting," she said. "I ran with my children and we threw ourselves onto the back of a truck with other families from the village. We waved white shirts so they would not shoot."

"The Israelis asked us if we were Lebanese. We answered 'yes' and they let us pass, after studying our faces carefully. But they still kept firing bullets over our heads until we were far away from the village," Kamal said.

Then she burst into tears and sobbed uncontrollably.

"My husband refused to leave. He made us leave without him because he said if he left we would lose the cows, which are everything we have and our reason for living."

"I paid all the money I had to flee with my children. The driver of the truck wouldn't let us on until I gave him 100 dollars for the trip to Beirut. Now we have nothing."

Appealing for international aid for the refugees, Dr. Assad Rizk, Lebanese minister of labor and social affairs, warned that if help does not arrive soon Lebanon may

face the "worst social catastrophe" in its modern history.

As of March 25, relief supplies flown in amounted to no more than a token effort. Washington, for example, which has armed and equipped the Israeli invading forces to the tune of \$1.8 billion a year, had sent a single planeload of emergency supplies.

'A Good Army Always Has Lots of Options'

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon initially had the full support of the entire Zionist establishment. "Leaders of all Israeli political parties," *Time* reported March 27, "agreed to a Knesset [parliament] statement declaring the terrorist organizations must be attacked and 'exterminated.'"

Some went even further: ". . . a small nationalist sect headed by Rabbi Meir Kahane . . . openly demanded the expulsion of all Palestinians from Israel, including the 574,000 who are Israeli citizens."

The blitzkrieg had been planned at least six years in advance, *Time* said:

. . . The PLO raid only gave Israel the excuse it needed to move decisively. As one Western diplomat analyzed it, the Tel Aviv incident was "just what the Israelis had been waiting for, because they have been wanting to take over south Lebanon for a long time."

In an interview published in the March 23 *New York Times*, Israeli Chief of Staff Lieut. Gen. Mordechai Gur confirmed that the invasion was planned well in advance:

When pressed by questions, the general acknowledged that contingency plans for the invasion of Lebanon had been made before the March 11 Palestinian terrorist attack . . . saying that a good army always has "lots of options." . . .

General Gur said he was not surprised at Syria's passive reaction to the invasion—"We never thought the Syrians would react"—and cited an understanding that dates from the entry of the first Syrian tanks in Lebanon at the height of the Lebanese civil war in the spring of 1976 that effectively confines them well north of the Litani.

The first response in Washington was silence, which in the circumstances could only be interpreted as approval. James Wieghart, in a report in the March 17 *New York Daily News*, summed up the reaction in the White House in this way:

There is no anger here over the massive Israeli thrust into Lebanon. . . . The Israeli retaliatory raid was anticipated and understood by President Carter and his advisers. . . .

The magnitude and daring of the Israeli response . . . won secret admiration in some quarters. . . .

In an editorial written as the final preparations for the invasion were being made, the editors of the *New York Times*, America's most influential and prestigious capitalist daily, gave Begin a blank check.

"Inevitably, the Israelis will respond with force against the terrorist havens in

Lebanon," they said March 14. Calling for "understanding for that impulse" from the rest of the world, they added that the world "owes the Israelis an honest sympathy and partnership in measures to punish terrorism on every front."

Advice From the Pentagon

American military strategists, assessing the first few days of the Israeli blitz, concluded that if anything the Israeli high command had been too squeamish in not inflicting even more massive civilian casualties so as to totally "eliminate" the Palestinians. Drew Middleton, who has good sources of information in Pentagon circles, reported in the March 21 issue of the *New York Times*:

Military analysts in the United States and Western Europe have raised the question of whether the Israeli victory in southern Lebanon has been somewhat flawed by the failure to cut off and eliminate Palestinian forces, allowing them to escape to fight again. . . .

The conclusion of most analysts familiar with the area is that, although Israel accomplished its initial objective, enough of the P.L.O. units survived to carry on their guerrilla activity.

The announced objective of the Israeli operation was to destroy the P.L.O.'s ability to use the area north of the Israel-Lebanon border as a base for terrorist raids against Israel. . . .

The Israelis, in the view of most analysts, were content to establish a belt of captured territory north of the border rather than cut off and eliminate the Palestinians.

In the view of these analysts, tens of thousands more civilians should have been butchered so as to ensure the operation's lasting success. The following "missed opportunities" were noted:

If they had chosen to eliminate the P.L.O. units, it could have been done more effectively, the sources said, by using troops carried by helicopters to block the two main exits from southern Lebanon.

One of these is the coast road running north through Tyre to Saida. A force landed by helicopters, it was pointed out, could have established a strongpoint anywhere along the road and "scooped up" the Palestinians fleeing northward.

A second road begins at Bint Jbail, about three miles north of the frontier, and runs northwest to join the coast road at Tyre. This road runs through rough, broken country and appeared to experienced officers to be made to order for demolitions by the Israelis and the establishment of an airborne blocking force.

A third missed opportunity was the failure to seize, again with airborne forces, the bridges over the Litani River. The Israeli air force bombed one bridge, but otherwise made no attempt to cut off the flow of Palestinians moving north. . . .

Arab sources contend that, as a result of the Israeli failure to block the exits, about 10,000 officers and soldiers of the P.L.O. were able to escape into central Lebanon.

These survivors, it is thought, will take advantage of the Arab reaction to the Israeli operation to organize new P.L.O. formations.

They will also exploit, military experts think, the wave of anti-Israeli emotion that the inva-

sion has started in the Arab world. . . .

The reasons why the Israelis mounted the type of campaign they did are being sought by military observers.

A Costly Blunder

From the strictly military angle, the Pentagon's experts in mass slaughter are no doubt correct—kill as many Palestinians and Lebanese as possible, the better to advance the interests of American imperialism. Left out of consideration, however, are the political repercussions of even the actual Israeli invasion.

The Israeli reprisal—including as it did the deployment of such massive air and ground forces and the seizure of a large chunk of territory—was more than the Carter administration had counted on.

The March 27 *Newsweek*, quoting a "top White House aide," said that prior to the invasion "the Israelis were simply advised 'to try to keep their perspective and not do anything that would destroy sympathy for Israel . . . the last time they did this sort of thing they ended up with pictures of dead babies all over the American networks.'"

Whatever Begin may have thought about the invasion, the high civilian casualties and grabbing of land cut across Washington's current diplomatic stance in a most embarrassing way.

The fact that the operation was carried out with American weapons and on the eve of Begin's visit to Washington made clear to the whole world that Carter was responsible. It came at the same time as Carter stepped up his campaign to force Cuban "mercenaries" out of Africa and pressed the Soviet Union to limit its activity in the politics of that part of the world.

It also came just after Carter had persuaded Siad Barre, the head of the Somali government, to withdraw his ground forces from Ethiopia, in this instance by dangling the prospect of an increased flow of U.S. arms in return for the pullback.

Furthermore, the Israeli blitzkrieg put tremendous pressure on all the bourgeois Arab governments and in particular on the Egyptian government, ruling the most populous country in the Middle East, to take a stand against Washington. Here big stakes are involved, for the last thing in the world Carter wants to see is the Egyptian regime turn in the direction of Moscow.

Begin failed to take these broader considerations into account. Worse, when Carter tried to help him out, he proved incapable of making a quick tactical shift—in this case immediate assent to United Nations intervention—necessary to lessen the consequences of his blunder. This explains his chilly reception in Washington.

A Show for the Television Cameras

In face of the disastrous situation in

Lebanon, Carter did what he could to turn Begin's visit March 21-22 into a media event of high drama. The aim was to divert attention from the plight of the refugees, providing the media instead with a show of Begin having his wrists slapped.

Carter's call for UN intervention, passed by the Security Council March 19, was part of the effort to help the Israelis. The move opened the way for Begin to present withdrawal as a major gesture toward "peace." At the same time, the "international peacekeeping forces" could be counted on to carry out the same Israeli-American policy of clamping down on the Palestinians, particularly on any effort by them to fight back.

That this is the UN's role is clear from the organization's entire history. An American creation from the beginning, the United Nations was sponsored by Washington as the continuator of the League of Nations. One of its more notable actions was the Korean War, carried out under the UN name and flag.

Furthermore, the UN forces have *not* been sent to Israel, to counter a new buildup by the forces of the invading state, but rather to Lebanon—to the territory already smashed by the invaders.

To increase pressure on Begin to adopt a more "flexible" stance, Carter also sought leverage among the Zionist leader's political opponents. As there is no difference between them and Begin on basics, the implied threat was that he could be replaced by a more "supple" team better suited to keeping in mind Washington's global diplomatic interests.

The results of this effort were quickly reflected in a cross-section of the Israeli press.

"The time has come to rethink our positions rather than dig in defiantly," the editors of the *Jerusalem Post* said March 23. "It is to be hoped that Mr. Begin and the Government will now engage in such a reassessment of our positions and strategies."

"New elections should be declared," said the opposition Labor Party newspaper *Davar*.

Al-Hamishmar, a left-Zionist newspaper, said that Begin had alienated large segments of public opinion and was guilty of "intransigence, adherence to the myth of 'the whole land of Israel' [i.e., the "biblical" borders] and a doctrinaire approach that loses friends and does not influence the waverers."

Begin's own defense minister, Ezer Weizman, called publicly March 23 for the formation of a new government—a "national-peace Government"—that would include the Labor Party but not necessarily Begin.

Part of the success of Carter's move stems from extensive doubts that already existed in Israel as to the wisdom of

Begin's course. *New York Times* columnist James Reston reported from Jerusalem March 22:

After the savage Palestinian terrorist attack . . . the people rallied behind the Government. But



MENACHEM BEGIN: Butcher of Lebanon.

Mr. Begin's invasion of the Lebanon with bombers and artillery, with its casualties and over 150,000 refugees scrambling into the already crowded and tragic city of Beirut—all recorded on worldwide television—have made thoughtful people here wonder how many more Israeli "victories" like this the nation can afford.

Nor is there agreement in Israel over Begin's policy of humiliating Sadat and sponsoring new settlements in the occupied territories. In February Begin's cabinet split over the question of the settlements. The move was also opposed, in favor of a more "moderate" course, by such well-known members of the Zionist establishment as former prime ministers Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin, former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, as well as by most leaders of the World Zionist Congress.

In the United States, *Time* magazine reported March 27, "early last month the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations advised Begin that his stance . . . was costing him support from American Jews." This was confirmed by a Gallup poll taken in February, which showed that the percentage of Americans who said their sympathies were "basically with Israel" had dropped from 48 percent to 33 percent.

In Israel itself, the latest poll conducted by the Pori Public Opinion Research Institute found that a total of 60.9 percent of

the population believed that Begin's policy on the settlements was bad for Israel's "image abroad." (*New York Times*, March 25.)

The truth is, however, that Begin's genocidal course represents nothing new either for him, for the settler-colonial state he represents, or for the imperialists who helped implant that state in the first place.

In the days when he commanded the Zionist murder squad known as the Irgun, Begin's feats included the bombing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel (ninety-one men and women killed) and, most hideous of all, the razing of the Arab village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, where 250 Arab men, women, and children were put to death.

He has simply expanded his field of operation to another Arab country, with the following result:

"Our refrigerators are full of dead bodies," the administrator of the Red Crescent Hospital in Sidon reported. "We started sending them to the Central Hospital here, but that hospital has told us their refrigerators are now full and there is nowhere else in this city to store the corpses." (Quoted in *Newsweek*, March 27.)

Qoboza Among Ten Prisoners Released in South Africa

The white minority regime in South Africa released ten Black political prisoners March 10, including Percy Qoboza, the former editor of the *Johannesburg World*.

The prisoners were among several dozen Black figures and activists who were arrested in October 1977 during a massive crackdown in which eighteen Black groups, as well as the *World*, were banned.

Justice Minister James T. Kruger said that Qoboza would be allowed to return to journalism, but that the *World* would remain banned.

The other nine Blacks were all connected with the Black Consciousness movement, whose leading figure, Steve Biko, was killed in police custody in September 1977.

The nine were: Ellen Khuzwayo and Levi Kraai of the Soweto Committee of Ten; Moses Chikane of the now-outlawed South African Students Organization; Justus Legotlo, a minister from Pretoria; Mortimedi G. Malaka, a member of the banned Black People's Convention; Kenneth Matime and Rebecca Musi of Soweto; and Dimza Pityana and T.V. Sehume of Port Elizabeth.

Of the ten, only Pityana was under a banning order, which restricts her movements and bars her from any political activities. Kruger warned the others that he would "watch them" and ban them as well if they got out of line.

The Turmoil Over the Kidnapping of Aldo Moro

By Gerry Foley

The kidnapping of Christian Democratic Party Chairman Aldo Moro on March 16 and the slaughter of his five bodyguards, one of whom was only nineteen years old, spread shock and confusion among the masses of the Italian people.

In a statement on the attack, the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR—Revolutionary Communist Groups), the Italian section of the Fourth International, said:

The kidnapping of Aldo Moro has an extremely reactionary logic in the savagery that accompanied it, the choice of target (not only one of the least unpopular leaders of the Christian Democracy but the leader of a battle against the most anti-Communist wing of this party), and in its timing politically.

The emotional reactions that this action unleashed are being systematically utilized to facilitate an outright reactionary turn and unprecedented step-up in repression. Bourgeois liberal figures are openly talking about restoring the death penalty and resorting to emergency laws.

In the March 20 issue of the French Trotskyist daily *Rouge*, Livio Maitan, a leader of the GCR, wrote:

Can the Red Brigades [the group that carried out the kidnapping], who still claim to represent the working class and the revolutionary movement, take pride in the results of their actions?

It is true that from their point of view they have won the greatest success in their history, touching off an earthquake while their historic leaders are being tried in Turin and while the bourgeoisie and its collaborators in the reformist parties were trying to give the impression that the formation of the new Andreotti government represented a turn in the situation.

But nonetheless the analysis made by the Red Brigades of the situation and their characterization of the present political framework is totally wrong, and the orientation they base on this analysis completely aberrant. Their "strategy" is not only suicidal in the long run, but in the short run as well it favors the game of those who want to carry out a "democratic restoration of order." It is provoking reactions that . . . are dangerous for the entire workers movement on the part of petty-bourgeois layers that want a restoration of "order" at any cost. It is even provoking disarray in the ranks of the workers themselves.

Rouge commented:

In January the Italian union leaderships strained every effort to prevent a general strike for the vital demands of the workers (no cutbacks in living standards, defense of jobs, and so on). But now it appears that they have been able to launch a nationwide strike in solidarity with the chairman of the main party of the ruling class. That is the most eloquent testimony to the confusion that the kidnapping created and the

diversion it represented from the struggles of the working class.

The Rome daily *Repubblica*, close to the Socialist Party, reported the funeral of Moro's bodyguards under the headline: "The State, the Relatives, and Poor People Gather Around the Victims of the Red Brigades." The story quoted the lamentations of the relatives as they stood by the coffins. The following is an example:

The wife of Ricci, a policeman who was Moro's driver for twenty years, spoke. She is a young woman, blonde, wearing a cheap fur wrap. She embraced her two sons, Paolo, ten years old, and Gianni, twelve. She sobbed quietly, always saying the same thing: "Did you see your daddy, dear? He's left all three of us."

On March 18, Christian Democrats and Communists demonstrated together in Rome in protest against the Red Brigade's action. According to *Le Monde* correspondent Robert Solé, the main slogan of the first was "Unity, unity, unity, the Christian Democracy will not yield," while the Communists chanted: "Unity, unity, unity, fascism shall not pass."

The Red Brigade representatives showed no sign of any sensitivity to the mass reaction. Their statements could hardly have been more provocative. The communiqué that took responsibility for the kidnapping boasted that Moro's escort had been "annihilated." It said that the organization's intention was "to launch a vast and united armed initiative to advance the class war for communism."

Small terrorist groups such as the Red Brigades can, of course, develop anywhere, more or less independently of the political conditions; and their actions may not have any lasting political impact. However, Maitan pointed out that in Italy at present the attacks of the Red Brigades are particularly ominous:

What is happening in Italy is not only the result of the activities of small groups of adventurers. It must not be forgotten that the so-called Workers Autonomy formations have a rather broad base and influence . . . and even the Red Brigades enjoy fairly widespread sympathy and direct or indirect support. . . .

The economic situation is deteriorating steadily. The outcast sections of society are growing. The students have very little possibility of finding work at the end of their studies. This produces a feeling of rebelliousness and frustration.

But what has prepared the way for such reactions is the fact that since the second half of 1976, these layers—as well as broad layers of the working class—see no real political perspective,

no alternative to the present regime; they no longer believe that the workers parties and unions can effectively struggle to change the situation. The crisis of all the far-left formations fills out the picture. It is no accident that the growth of the Autonomy Groups followed the outbreak of this crisis.

Even before the Moro kidnapping, an atmosphere of confusion had been deepened by the way some of the far-left groups were resorting increasingly to elitist violence to achieve their objectives. Ironically, one of the groups that most promoted this was the Movimento dei Lavoratori per il Socialismo (MLS—Movement of Workers for Socialism, a Maoist group), which, like the "Official" republican movement in Ireland, launched a campaign of violence against groups it considers to be ultraleft and adventurist.

For example, in Milan, Fausto Pagliano, a member of Lotta Continua, was attacked by an MLS squad while pasting up a leaflet and beaten almost to death. Moreover, the Red Brigades have threatened to use violence against those on the left who criticized them.

In the March 15 issue of *Bandiera Rossa*, organ of the GCR, Elettra Deiana pointed out that the bourgeois press had taken advantage of such conflicts to talk about "gang warfare" among the politically active youth.

On March 18, two youths, eighteen and nineteen years old, were gunned down as they approached a Milan social center identified with the far left. This murder came only four days after the appearance of a group called the "Vindicators of Italy from Sicily to Bolzano" that threatened to kill two "friends" of the Red Brigades for every person killed by the urban guerrillas.

Apparently, fascist groups are trying to exploit the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty created by the Moro kidnapping and similar incidents.

In her article in the March 15 *Bandiera Rossa*, Elettra Deiana stressed the need for countering the growth of elitist violence on the left with a campaign for democracy in the workers movement. She pointed out that the only way to eliminate the dangers posed by adventurers is to win the masses of the workers for a united struggle to solve the problems of the society, beginning in the mass workers organizations themselves. Her conclusions were confirmed dramatically by the Moro kidnapping, which no one could have anticipated, and by its aftermath. □

Selections From the Left

Y Ddraig Goch

Golygydd: Eurig Wyn

"The Red Dragon," Welsh-language organ of Plaid Cymru (the Welsh Nationalist Party), published monthly in Caernarfon.

The January issue cites the speech by party chairman Gwynfor Evans in parliament on the Devolution bill granting limited local government to Wales:

"It has been eighty-two years since a Liberal Party prime minister came to Wales to promise a parliament for our country. . . .

"There is no hope that the Tories, with their John Bull attitude, will give Wales any measure of control over its own life. Emotionally they still live in the last century and have not accepted the fact that the British empire is gone. Whatever 'freedom' the Conservatives may believe in, it is not freedom for Wales.

"The Liberals have quite a different historical background. They have some sympathy with the just struggle for nations for their freedom. Toward the end of the last century, the nationalist movement among the Liberals was strong enough to force the prime minister to come to Cardiff in 1895 and say that there would be a Welsh parliament. That was eighty-two years ago, and they still tell us not to be impatient.

"For a long time . . . the Labour Party favored freedom for Wales. This position was confirmed in 1918 by the party secretary Arthur Henderson, who said:

"We consider the rights of Wales to home rule as equal to those of Ireland. There are few places where parliamentary home rule would have more success and arouse greater hopes than in Wales. . . . With home rule, Wales could make itself a modern utopia . . . an example and an inspiration to the rest of the world." [Retranslated from Welsh.]

"The history of Wales, with its last two generations of emigration and depopulation would have been quite different if we had gotten the home-rule parliament Arthur Henderson wanted us to have. . . .

"Despite its weaknesses . . . this devolution measure gives the people of Wales more power to develop local government, health, social services, and education.

"It will be a boost to the self-confidence of Wales. For these reasons, Plaid Cymru is trying to strengthen the measure, despite all its weaknesses."

klassen kampf

"Class Struggle," fortnightly central organ of the Revolutionary Communist

League, Luxembourg section of the Fourth International.

The editorial in the February 20 issue comments on a united-front campaign against youth unemployment:

"Eleven youth organizations [including trade-union, Catholic, Social Democratic, and Communist Party youth groups] have decided to form a united front against youth unemployment, based on a series of anticapitalist demands. We mention only a few: a thirty-six-hour workweek with no cut in pay, no speedup, unemployment benefits for school leavers equal to the minimum wage, unemployment benefits for the entire length of unemployment, no freeze in cost-of-living increases and no pay cuts, no boss control over vocational training, equal training for young men and women . . . , a united front of the workers organizations, union membership for the unemployed.

"United-front rallies are to be built in the major cities with common posters and leaflets. The concluding rally will take place in Luxembourg city on the eve of May Day.

"With the capitalist crisis and the reduction in jobs in all the capitalist countries, unemployment of youth in particular has risen sharply. In Luxembourg, 60% of all registered unemployed are youth. This is the highest rate in the Common Market. The massive reduction of jobs without the creation of new ones to replace them, in the steel industry especially, is making it harder and harder for school leavers to find jobs corresponding to their qualifications. The crisis-management policy of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition has helped to promote this development. Class collaboration on all levels has left the working class without perspectives and has divided and blocked united-front defensive actions based on anticapitalist demands. And so up till now it has been possible to throw the burden of unemployment gradually onto the least organized sections of the proletariat—women, foreign workers, and youth—without running into any great resistance.

"In this context, the united-front initiative of the eleven organizations is a much-needed and welcome one. It puts the need for building a broad united anticapitalist current in the proletariat and among young workers in particular, a current capable of fighting the effects of the economic crisis, ahead of the narrow interests of any group. . . .

"The Revolutionary Communist League gives its full support to the united front of the eleven organizations and the demands it has put forward, which for the most part correspond to the axis of struggle that we

ourselves have called for since the beginning of the economic crisis. The RCL calls on all its members and sympathizers to participate in this campaign and to support and disseminate its common demands."

HAYTH

"Auge," (Dawn), the morning paper of the left. Published daily in Athens. Reflects the views of the Greek Communist Party ("interior").

The March 21 issue reports:

"Violent scenes developed yesterday evening at the University of Patras Annex, when a large police force invaded the campus, wielding clubs and firing rubber bullets. . . . In this attack, which was a flagrant violation of university autonomy, at least fifty students were wounded.

"A rally had been called for 6:00 p.m. by the students who have occupied the university since March 1. The occupation was called in the context of the struggle that began in mid-December to press demands that students not lose credit for this year. . . .

"So many persons showed up for the rally that there was not room for them all inside the campus area, and some spilled out into the street, where they were subjected to police provocations. Reports indicate that the police attacked at about 9:00 p.m. with clubs and water cannon that had been concentrated earlier in this area.

"The police declared that they considered the rally illegal, and began preparations at 7:30 to break it up.

"After the students refused to dissolve the rally, the police first attacked the section of the crowd outside the university gates and then invaded the campus itself. As a result of this attack, many persons were wounded, most of them students.

"After the invasion, which the students tried to stop by closing the university gates, the police prevented those who had been wounded from leaving the area.

"In the meantime, many persons had been arrested and taken away in police vans.

"The University of Patras took on the appearance of a besieged city. More than a few people were reminded of the scenes at the Polytechnic in 1974 [when the junta drowned a student rebellion in blood, arousing a wave of indignation that prepared the way for its collapse six months later]. Ambulances summoned by the students picked up the injured, and the campus radio station called for help.

"At the time of this writing, 600 students were besieged in the university, and the mayor of Patras, Anninos, and the City Council members had gone to the scene."

Eritreans Claim New Successes in Independence Struggle

By Ernest Harsch

Since the end of last year, the Eritrean independence forces have made a new series of military advances. The two main nationalist groups, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), claim that they now control the bulk of the territory, leaving only a few key cities in Ethiopian hands.

According to several reports, Barentu, the only Ethiopian garrison left in western Eritrea, is under siege from forces of the ELF. The rival EPLF says it has captured a string of garrisons along the road between Massawa and the Eritrean capital of Asmara. These include Dongolo, Ghinda, Emba Atkala, Mai Haber, and Nefasit, according to a report in the February issue of the New York monthly *Eritrea in Struggle*, which supports the EPLF.

In addition, the EPLF began a major assault on Massawa, Eritrea's major port, in late December. Western journalists who visited the city with the EPLF forces reported that the guerrillas had taken about three-quarters of the city, forcing the surviving 6,000 Ethiopian troops to retreat to Massawa's naval base and island port facility. So far, however, the EPLF has been unable to secure control over the entire city.

Massawa and its population of 50,000 have been severely affected by the fighting. An Ethiopian deserter quoted in the February 2 *Washington Post* said that the Ethiopian troops had taken heavy reprisals against the civilian population at the beginning of the EPLF assault, killing more than 250 on December 14-15 alone.

As the Eritreans pushed the Ethiopian troops back, the city came under sporadic air, sea, and land bombardment. In a dispatch from Massawa in the January 25 *Christian Science Monitor*, correspondent Dan Connell reported that mosques, schools, and residential sections had been severely damaged. "One EPLF guerrilla," he reported, "estimates that a quarter of the houses in Massawa have been destroyed." Most of the city's population has left.

Connell reported in the March 9 issue of the Paris daily *Le Monde* that heavy fighting was also under way in the mountains just southwest of Asmara. Units of both the ELF and EPLF have taken up positions around Asmara, cutting off all surface routes in and out of the city. The 20,000 Ethiopian troops stationed there are supplied by air. In December, Asmara's

airport was shut down for three days by guerrilla fire.

In response to the Eritrean military gains, the Ethiopian occupation forces have begun to bomb some of the towns and cities now held by the two groups.

According to a report in the February *Eritrea in Struggle*, Ethiopian planes "are dropping napalm bombs in the liberated areas and have sprayed the important agro-industrial complex in Ela Bered as well as other plantations of citrus fruits with defoliation gas." In addition, cluster bombs were said to have killed and wounded hundreds of civilians in Massawa, Keren, and Tessenei. The report noted that the Ethiopian junta used planes that had previously been supplied by Washington, as well as ones more recently supplied by Moscow.

In a dispatch from Tessenei, which is held by the ELF, *Washington Post* correspondent Raymond Wilkinson reported January 14 that Ethiopian planes attacked both Tessenei and the neighboring village of Ali Giddir with napalm and cluster bombs on several occasions. Six persons were known to have been killed and several dozen were wounded.

Two of the bombs were thought to have been of Israeli manufacture and the canister of another bore the inscription "bomb-cluster" in English. Until early last year, Washington was a major supplier of arms to the Ethiopian regime; Israel reportedly still is.

Wilkinson reported that according to the ELF the bombing "is a new and deliberate policy of terror by Ethiopia's military rulers aimed primarily against civilians rather than guerrillas."

In an interview in the March issue of the London monthly *Africa*, Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the chairman of the Ethiopian junta, blamed the Eritreans for the continued warfare and condemned them for rejecting his promises of "full regional autonomy" and choosing instead to press for full independence.

Despite its claims that its policies are "Marxist-Leninist," the junta denies the Eritreans and other oppressed nationalities their right to self-determination and seeks to perpetuate their subjugation within the borders of the existing Ethiopian state. Like its undemocratic methods of rule and its antilabor policies, this approach toward the oppressed nationalities has nothing to do with revolutionary socialism.

Both the ELF and EPLF are seeking to consolidate their positions in the areas now under their influence. Connell estimated in his March 9 *Le Monde* report that the ELF controls western Eritrea, areas along the border between Eritrea and the Ethiopian province of Tigre, and the Danakil region around the port of Assab. The EPLF is dominant in northern, eastern, and central Eritrea.

Both groups use "Marxist-Leninist" rhetoric, but they are essentially nationalist formations holding the central aim of winning Eritrea's independence. The economic reforms carried out in their regions have thus far not gone beyond an overall capitalist framework.

In two articles in the January issues of *The Middle East* and *New African Development*, both published in London, correspondent Fulvio Grimaldi described the situation in the ELF-held regions of Eritrea.

In western Eritrea, Grimaldi reported, all big landed estates have been taken over by the ELF, which says it will eventually distribute the land to the peasants. One such estate he visited, just a few miles south of Tessenei, near Ali Giddir, was a cotton plantation that had been owned by Roberto Barattolo, formerly Eritrea's biggest industrialist and landowner. Part of it has now been brought back into production for the cultivation of sorghum to feed both the local population and the ELF's troops. The wages of the 1,000 agricultural workers there he said, have been doubled to about US\$1 a day.

"All around the Ali Giddir plantation," Grimaldi reported, "small farmers are being encouraged to begin production again and to form co-operatives. The ELF lends tractors and machinery free, and assures the supply of oil from Sudan or from Port Sudan on the Red Sea."

The cities, towns, and villages are being administered by "revolutionary committees" that were set up by the ELF and that seek to win the support of the urban populations through so-called mass organization of workers, peasants, students, women, and youth.

In cities like Tessenei, price controls have been imposed and consumer cooperatives have been set up to help regulate the market. According to Grimaldi, "The ELF's new economy envisages a leading role for the nationalised sector. . . ."

Grimaldi also noted, however, that some merchants have been drawn into the

ELF's production and distribution schemes. And Jean-Claude Guillebaud reported in the December 10, 1977, *Le Monde* that some of the property nationalized under the Ethiopians was now being returned to its former owners by the ELF.

The ELF's policy toward women has met with some opposition. Although a growing number of women are joining the organization, the leadership still reflects traditional patriarchal attitudes, forbidding sexual relations before marriage and compelling unmarried women who become pregnant to marry the alleged fathers. Women members have denounced this policy and have demanded, among other things, to be allowed to have abortions and to have nurseries for their children.

Describing the ELF's general approach, Grimaldi reported, "In discussions there is an awareness of class demands," but it is also held "that at present these must be subordinated to the imperatives of the national struggle for independence."

Though there are some differences in style, the policies undertaken by the rival EPLF in the areas under its influence have been essentially similar to those of the ELF.

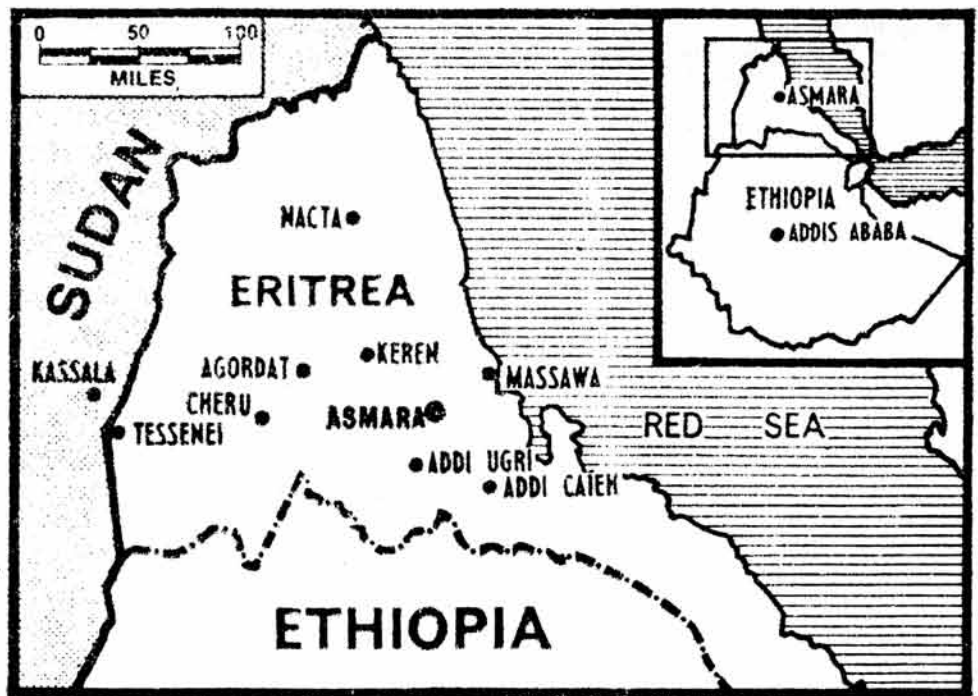
The EPLF has brought the agricultural complex in Ela Bered back into production, as well as other plantations near Keren. Former Italian-owned plantations and companies that had been nationalized by the Ethiopian administration are now under the EPLF's direct control.

According to a report in the February *Eritrea in Struggle*, the wages of workers in Keren have been raised and the EPLF is seeking to keep prices low. Cooperative stores have been set up where food prices are about 30 percent lower than in the private stores. At the same time, however, the EPLF is allowing merchants in the city to make a "minimal" profit of about 10 percent.

The EPLF has set up its own kind of "mass associations" to administer the cities it controls. Guillebaud, who visited Keren, reported in the December 10 *Le Monde* that the city was divided into six sectors, each of which was run by an assembly in which associations of youth, women, and men were represented. Each of the latter associations was in turn subdivided into associations based on "class interests." Although workers had an automatic majority by virtue of their numbers, associations of capitalists were also given places in the administration.

In addition, the EPLF's program specifically states that Eritreans who are not opposed to the territory's independence are to be allowed to own "small factories and workshops." The EPLF's economic policies thus favor the continuance of capitalist property relations, along with a considerable degree of state participation.

The EPLF leadership employs "Marxist-Leninist" terminology to a greater extent



than does its rival, borrowing concepts and terms used by the Stalinists in Moscow and Peking to suit its own purposes. Guillebaud reported that in an "ideological school" in Keren prominent portraits of Stalin and Mao hung next to ones of Marx and Lenin.

The efforts of both the ELF and the EPLF leaderships to contain the Eritrean upsurge within basically capitalist limits have hindered the national liberation struggle itself. Though they now appear to be nearing their goal of political independence, their attempts to restrict the struggle to carefully controlled military actions have contributed to its long and costly nature.

Moreover, the absence of independent mobilizations of workers and peasants in their own class interests jeopardizes the advances already made toward national liberation.

Another factor that has weakened the fight for Eritrean independence is the recurrent rivalry between the two main groups.* Although they signed an agreement in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum last October pledging to united their forces against the Ethiopian oppressors, it has so far meant very little in practice.

Guillebaud noted in the December 11-12 *Le Monde* that travel between the zones dominated by the ELF and EPLF was even more difficult than between the Eritrean- and Ethiopian-controlled areas. Two months earlier, Reuter correspondent

*A third Eritrean group, the Eritrean Liberation Front-People's Liberation Forces, split from the EPLF in 1976, but it exists largely outside of the territory and has much less support than either of the other two groups.

Bernd Debusmann reported in the October 5 *Christian Science Monitor* that the groups denied each other transit facilities through the towns under their respective control.

In the cities it has taken, the EPLF has staged rallies and demonstrations with the dual aim of consolidating its own support and of whipping up factional sentiments against its rival. For instance, the January *Eritrea in Struggle* reported that 7,000 persons rallied in Segeneiti to celebrate the EPLF's "all round victories as well as to condemn the reactionary and opportunist forces in the Eritrean struggle," a thinly veiled reference to the ELF, which the EPLF frequently slanders in similar terms.

Most seriously, an armed clash between ELF and EPLF units reportedly took place in mid-December, resulting in thirty deaths.

In addition, new factional conflicts have emerged within the ELF. Hurui Tedla Bairu, a prominent ELF leader who considered himself a Marxist, was expelled from the organization last year. Also in 1977, a group of about 1,000 ELF dissidents, calling themselves the "democratic forces," broke away following serious clashes that were said to have left many dead. Guillebaud reported that they subsequently joined the EPLF.

The Ethiopian junta will no doubt try to use these factional conflicts to its own advantage. The lack of Eritrean unity facilitates its efforts to crush or derail the independence struggle.

According to EPLF guerrillas cited by Connell in his March 9 *Le Monde* report, the Ethiopian regime is now preparing a new offensive against the independence fighters.

The EPLF also claims that 2,000 Cuban

troops have been airlifted into Asmara to aid the Ethiopians. But Cuban Vice-President Carlos Rafael Rodríguez has said Cuban troops were in Ethiopia only to fight the Somalian army in the Ogaden desert region of eastern Ethiopia and that they would not help the junta against the Eritreans.

But even without Cuban assistance, the junta is now in a better position to launch an offensive against the Eritrean nationalists. Its recent gains against Somali troops and insurgents in the Ogaden—and especially the withdrawal of the regular Somalian army—will permit it to send more forces to Eritrea. Moreover, the Ethiopian

military has been strengthened by recent Soviet arms shipments.

Despite the heightened frictions between the two main Eritrean groups, the March 8 *Le Monde* reported that leaders of the ELF and EPLF were once again meeting in Khartoum to discuss efforts toward unity in face of the expected Ethiopian offensive.

From Toronto to Tokyo

Demonstrations Celebrate International Women's Day

By Matilde Zimmermann

Women celebrated International Women's Day around the world March 8, raising on several continents and in a variety of languages a number of common demands: for free birth control and abortion; for equal pay and against job discrimination; for child care; against cutbacks in education and social services. The actions were characterized by special attention to working women and their demands. In a number of countries the March 8 activities helped to forge new links between the trade unions and the organized women's movement.

Canada

International Women's Day actions across Canada drew 8,000 persons.

The largest demonstration was in Montréal, where more than 3,000 women and trade unionists responded to a call from the interunion women's committee of the three major trade-union federations. The central demand was for maternity leave for women workers. Women's liberation activities occurred in Montréal throughout the period February 20 to March 11. A program at the University of Montréal, for example, entitled "ten days of reflection on ten years of women's struggles," drew 600 persons or more each evening.

Smaller actions took place in Québec City and several other cities and towns in Québec.

In 1978 for the first time English-speaking Canada also saw sizable International Women's Day demonstrations in a number of cities. Between 1,000 and 1,500 persons braved snowy weather to march and rally in Toronto March 11. As in Montréal, union contingents and union speakers illustrated growing realization of the fact that, as one Toronto rally speaker said, "Women need unions need women."

March 8 actions also took place in Sudbury, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, Hamilton, Saskatoon, Regina, and Win-

nipeg. In some cases these were the largest women's liberation activities in a number of years.

Spain

Although there have been impressive mobilizations of the women's movement in Spain for a number of years, this was the first time large coordinated demonstrations took place around the country in celebration of International Women's Day. As the Trotskyist newspaper *Combate* points out in its March 16 issue, "It was also the first time the women's movement had the support of the workers organizations. . . . And even though this support was often more formal than active, it is something which can make us optimistic that in the next struggles the women's movement initiates, it will not find itself isolated from the other oppressed sectors."

The Feminist Coordinating Committee of Barcelona initiated the call for a March 8 demonstration that won broad support from the labor movement and drew 10,000 persons. There were also labor solidarity actions. The workers commission in one industry, for example, issued a statement of support and organized an assembly at which female representatives of the trade-union federations spoke to 1,000 workers about the meaning of International Women's Day.

In Madrid, 8,000 marchers demanded amnesty for women, employment rights, free birth control and abortion, and a constitution that recognizes women's rights. Although right-wing counter-demonstrators and the intervention of police created some moments of tension, it was still the largest feminist demonstration ever to occur in Madrid. The week of women's liberation activities there was initiated by a meeting of 2,000 on March 5.

As in 1977, there were March 8 demonstrations this year in Bilbao and San

Sebastian in Euzkadi (the Bilbao action drew 2,000 persons). Unlike last year, there were also commemorative actions and meetings in numerous towns and cities throughout the Basque provinces.

Mexico

A series of activities in Mexico City the week of International Women's Day began with a trade-union-sponsored meeting March 5 where more than 100 women discussed the need to build alliances with organized workers while at the same time continuing to struggle around their own demands in an independent women's movement. Speakers pointed out that abortion, for example, was not only a women's issue but also a class issue, since it was poor and working-class women who had to risk their lives at the hands of butcher abortionists.

In Tijuana, Mexico, 200 women came to hear speakers from both Mexico and the United States. Among the panelists were representatives of the National Organization for Women in California and the Socialist Workers Party.

France

Several thousand women marched through Paris March 4 in a women's liberation demonstration that was also an affirmation of international solidarity. For the first time, African women, Arab women, and Latin American women joined the march with their own chants and banners. According to the Trotskyist daily *Rouge*, women from various far-left groups as well as many independent women participated, while the reformist parties ignored the demonstration.

Demonstrations were also held in Lyon, Bordeaux, and Orléans. The women's committee of the trade-union federation influenced by the Socialist Party sponsored a meeting in Paris March 8 where 250-300



Frank Rooney/Socialist Voice

Part of march of more than 1,000 in Toronto, March 11.

persons heard speeches by women workers from a number of factories.

United States

Rallies and meetings took place in a dozen cities across the United States in commemoration of International Women's Day. The Boston and San Francisco actions were the largest, drawing 1,200 or more persons each.

A highlight of the San Francisco rally was the greeting brought by Terry Frye of the striking United Mine Workers of America. He pointed out that both coal miners and women's rights fighters were struggling for the "cause of the common people."

An International Movement

An overflow crowd rallied in support of women's rights at the London School of Economics Old Theatre March 8, in an action organizers called an "overwhelming success." The audience heard speakers on the repression of women in Iran and Latin America, on abortion, and on the women's liberation movement in Ireland.

Demonstrations occurred in various Italian cities on or around March 8. In Genoa, police arrested and beat twenty-three femi-

nist demonstrators, leading to a subsequent protest march of 1,500 persons.

In Tokyo, 3,000 women protested on March 8, demanding the banning of nuclear weapons and increased funds for education.

In Stockholm, 2,000 persons marched for women's employment rights, the six-hour day, child care, and abortion rights. Among the other Swedish cities where International Women's Day actions took place were Göteborg, where trade unionists testified at a tribunal on female unemployment; Luleå, where 1,000 attended a rally; and Malmö, Umeå, Örebro, Uppsala, and Gävle.

Five thousand persons marched through Ghent, Belgium, March 4, under the slogan, "Decriminalize abortion, let women choose." The protest included delegations from the major trade unions, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party women's committee.

In Moscow, six women were arrested when they used the occasion of International Women's Day to demonstrate against the government's refusal to allow them to emigrate to Israel. Four other women who intended to take part were seized by police nearby, and twenty-three were confined to their homes under police surveillance. According to the March 10 *Le Monde*, the women who were subjected to

house arrest began a protest hunger strike, in which they were supported by twenty-one other women. □

Death Squads in Guatemala

Amnesty International released a ten-page document February 22 detailing 113 cases of death-squad killings and "disappearances" in Guatemala during the last three months of 1977.

"None of those dead or missing was considered a victim of abduction for ransom, murder for financial gain or murder in private quarrels, but each appeared part of a longstanding pattern of political murder and intimidation," the human-rights organization said.

According to Amnesty International, since 1966 more than 20,000 Guatemalans have died in the hands of these paramilitary groups, whose actions "are characterized by a total impunity before the law."

Amnesty International found "little indication" that Guatemalan authorities had taken measures in 1977 to curb the death squads. "There was, on the contrary, considerable evidence that the highest levels of government tacitly condoned the continuing abductions and murders, especially of peasant farmers in the countryside and of the urban poor."

The Trade-Union Elections in Spain

By Michel Rovere

Since the trade-union elections in the Spanish state have already been held in more than a third of the enterprises concerned, and the final results should not differ much from the trend already established, three major lessons can be drawn from this vote.

1. These elections mark an overwhelming victory for the working-class unions [i.e., as opposed to the multiclass vertical unions].

2. They confirm the polarization between two big union federations, the COs¹ and the UGT.² The smaller unions are being squeezed out.

3. The big lead of the COs over the UGT marks the failure of the PSOE leadership's attempt to carry over into the unions the momentum of its crushing defeat of the CP in the June 1977 legislative elections, in which it won three times as many votes as its rival.

By February 25, the COs, UGT, USO,³ SU,⁴ and CSUT⁵ had won 66,000 of the 99,000 shop delegates' positions for which results were available.

After forty years of Francoism and of corporatist "vertical" unions, such a vote shows the level of consciousness attained by the immense majority of the Spanish working class. Despite all their money and paid staffs, the resources of the CNS,⁶ and the support of the ruling coalition and the most hard-nosed sections of the Spanish capitalist class, none of the yellow unions has won any significant support on a national scale. They have gotten less support even than the small Maoist unions.

The bulk of "company unionists" elected ran as "independents" or "unaffiliated."

The other striking thing is the polarization around the two big union federations, the COs and the UGT, each of which claim to have about two million adherents. The two of them together are getting about 60% of the shop stewards. Thus, these elections have pushed the USO, the SU, and the CSUT to the sidelines. Respectively, these small unions are getting 2.9%, 1.8%, and 2.4% of the shop delegates.

Although it scored some relative successes in certain provinces such as Cadiz and Valencia, it seems that the USO's perspective of offering an alternative in the trade-union field based on greater militancy and a program of workers control has definitively faded. Its outmoded "rejection of partisan politics" could not stand up against the increasing polarization and politicalization of the Spanish working class.

Although the vote for the Maoist unions indicated real influence in one or another region (Navarre for the SU, Andalusia for the CSUT), and although these unions may continue to play an active role in struggles, the Maoists' overall score shows that their attempt to form their own labor organizations was a strategic error. They began in the fall of 1976 to try to build unions on a strictly revolutionary basis at the very time when the bulk of the workers were turning toward the big federations—the COs and the UGT. These workers went in, of course, with all their illusions but also with all their capacity for struggle.

The fact that the Maoists find themselves on the outside is an even graver weakness today. It is not enough now just to help advance the demands or forms of struggle in this or that conflict. The problem is to defeat the line of the leaderships inside the big federations. These leaders still have the support of the majority of the workers. But they have agreed to go along with the government's austerity policy, the keystone of which is the Moncloa Pact.⁷

As for the big federations, the UGT, and the PSOE leaders in particular, seem to be the biggest losers in these elections. According to the latest figures, the COs have won 36,000 shop delegates (or 35.5%) and the UGT, 23,000 (or 22.7%), that is, a 3-to-2 margin for the COs.

The PSOE leaders did not hide what was at stake in these elections for them. Their

primary objective was to consolidate the PSOE's capacity to be a real ruling party, equipped with a well-oiled trade-union transmission belt controlling a majority of workers.

On January 18, Felipe González, the general secretary of the PSOE, said:

"It is vitally important for us that the UGT grow and become stronger because it is clear to us that the PSOE will be able to rule only if alongside its representation in parliament it has deep roots in the trade-union movement."

Since the UGT did not really reappear in the Spanish state before Franco's death, the COs took full advantage in these elections of the fact that they were present and played a role in the major struggles waged by the Spanish workers over the last fifteen years.

The COs are winning out over the UGT in almost all the industrial areas—Catalonia, Valencia, central Andalusia, and Madrid. The only exception is the Basque country. In the latter case, the small margin in favor of the UGT reflects the relative weakness of the CP in this area and the reaction to the positions taken by the leadership of the COs (including, for example, the denunciation of the May 1977 general strike and the bureaucratic coup staged by the CP to seize the leadership of the union while it still had only minority support).

The UGT is out in front only in the most backward regions, such as Extremadura, or in areas in Castilla la Nueva and Castilla la Vieja that are completely devoid of industry (Burgos, Palencia, Cuenca, Segovia, and Salamanca).

To confirm this assessment, it is sufficient to point to the fact that it is in the small enterprises, with 50 to 250 workers, where the system of "open slates" makes it possible to elect the recognized leaders, that the COs are widening their lead over the UGT.

In the enterprises with more than 250 workers, the gap between the COs and the UGT tends to be narrower. This is partly a result of the fact that election there is by "closed slates." However, indications at present are that the COs' lead is greater in the traditional bastions (steel, auto, the shipyards, electrical machinery, chemicals), with some notable exceptions in Vizcaya [the most industrialized of the Basque provinces] and in Catalonia.

It is apparent that the PSOE leaders have found food for thought in the setbacks suffered by Mário Soares in Portu-

1. Comisiones Obreras (Workers Commissions), dominated by the Communist Party.

2. Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers Union), dominated by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE—Spanish Socialist Workers Party, the major Social Democratic formation).

3. Unión Sindical Obrera (Workers Union Federation).

4. Sindicato Unitario (United Union Federation), led by the Maoist Organización Revolucionaria de Trabajadores (ORT—Revolutionary Workers Organization).

5. Confederación de los Sindicatos Unitarios de los Trabajadores (Confederation of United Workers Unions), led by the Maoist Partido de Trabajo (PT—Labor Party).

6. Central Nacional Sindicalista (National Federation of Syndicates), the vertical "union" organization.

7. A social-contract-type agreement between the regime and the PSOE and the CP.

gal, where the SP has lost the bulk of its trade-union base, becoming too weak to form a new union federation of its own to compete with the CP-dominated one.

The number two leader in the PSOE, Enrique Mugica, who belongs to the most Social Democratic wing of the party, said not long ago:

"If the Portuguese and French Socialist parties are experiencing difficulties, this is because they have no trade-union policy. As a result, the strongest unions are in the hands of the Communists."

Therefore, the UGT leadership waged an extremely "politicalized" campaign in the elections, basing itself internationally on its membership in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and on the backing of the West German unions. It systematically counterposed "Socialist trade unionism," which it claimed to represent, to "Communist trade unionism," supposedly represented by the COs.

The PSOE's determination to develop muscle in the trade-union field had other grave consequences: In order to "clear the road" in the trade-union movement and eliminate the small currents, the UGT leadership proposed that elections in the plants be by closed slates. The effect of this was to favor a head-on confrontation between the two big federations. (The Suárez government accepted the UGT's proposal for plants with more than 250 workers.)

As part of the attempt to strengthen their position in the union movement, the PSOE leaders also fought to assure the predominance of trade-union organs over bodies responsible to general assemblies, which could represent all the workers and conduct negotiations for them on a basis of unity, notably on an industry-wide basis.

Faced with this UGT offensive, the CP leadership of the COs responded with arguments that were just as demagogic and divisive. For example, Marcelino Camacho and Nicolas Sartorius claimed that the election was a contest between "working-class unionism," represented by the COs; and "reformist unionism," represented by the UGT.

To see how demagogic the COs' claims were you have only to look at the support of the leaderships of both federations for the Moncloa Pact's austerity plan. They both back it, with only nuances of difference in their approach.

However, the most serious dereliction of duty on the part of these union leaders was accepting the Suárez government as arbitrator in their conflict.

In November 1977, the Provisional Government issued a decree regarding the factory committees that had sprung up spontaneously by the hundreds in the second half of 1977. The workers elected them without waiting for directives from anyone.

This decree gravely infringed on the rights of these committees and attacked

their norms of functioning. It constituted outright governmental interference in the workers movement. However, in December, the leaderships of the COs and the UGT agreed to the dissolution of the so-called wildcat committees and the election of new ones.

However, since the "wildcat" committees had a great flexibility for recalling elected leaders and a greater number of delegates, they allowed for keeping a closer check on mandates and for a more precise and faithful representation of the various currents that might be present in a plant.

The acceptance of the government's decree had other grave repercussions, inasmuch as enterprises with less than fifty workers, which make up a good part of the industrial network in the Spanish state, are not "entitled" to elect factory committees.

The Provisional Government's decree segregated workers into different categories and was thus divisive. The lines were drawn by various means, such as establishing age qualifications for delegates and setting up a two-tiered electoral system that perpetuates the effects of the technical and hierarchical division of labor and tends to reduce the weight of production workers.

Moreover, this decree denied the right to form committees to an important part of the Spanish working class, such as the unemployed and agricultural workers, although in a number of regions the latter had called for organizing the election of committees with delegates for each locality.

With its hand strengthened by the union leadership's concessions and their agreement with an austerity policy, at the beginning of January, the Suárez government tried to press its advantage. It proposed to replace the provisional decree with a still more restrictive permanent law.

In the first place, this bill would upset the present elections and require calling new ones three months after passage by the Cortes [the parliament]. Secondly, this bill on "trade-union activity in the plants" just happens to neglect to give legal recognition to the union organizations in the factories or to guarantee their rights.

It seeks to further limit the rights of factory committees. It grants them the right to negotiate only at the factory level. In particular, it accords them only a purely informational and consultative role in all the areas where the union leaderships themselves proposed giving them watchdog functions. The unions had proposed that they have such functions in regard to "major" decisions about the organization of work, production, investments, overseeing the books, and measures directly affecting the workers, such as reorganization, layoffs, transfers, etc.

In addition, the new bill also seeks to limit the rights of assemblies in the facto-

ries. It aims to make them simply meetings to ratify decisions and not to supervise the work of the committees. Also, it seeks to limit the right of recall of delegates. (For example, it requires a two-thirds vote by secret ballot for this.)

Thus, the government obviously wants to channel the factory committees toward a system such as exists in France, or the German codetermination setup. This is also what Mário Soares did in Portugal last year for the Workers Commissions through the so-called Workers Control Law.

However, the role that these elected factory committees have played in the conflicts that have arisen or revived in such plants as Babcock Wilcox and Altos Hornos in Vizcaya, Ensidesa in Asturias, and SEAT in Catalonia, where the old contracts are running out, show that these bodies can develop in a different way.

Such examples show that the factory committees can become united and democratic organs for mobilizing the working class and for decision making, first in the economic field but later extending into other areas of social and political life.

The trade-union elections have opened a new period in the development of the organized workers movement in Spain. They have confirmed the existence, alongside the growth of self-organization, or powerful union federations with several million members, which have been able to build their organization on the level of the plants, the localities, the regions, and on an industry-wide basis.

The COs, the federation that appears to have the most advanced positions on the question of trade-union unity and workers self-organization, emerged as the victor. But the relationship of forces between the COs and the UGT shows that today the questions of unifying the unions and of unity in action in the labor movement requires a tactical approach different from that of three years ago. Likewise, it demonstrates that resolving these questions will be decisive in assuring that the workers of the Spanish state have the means to win their struggles, whether they be limited in scope or general, economic, or political.

A major responsibility falls on the LCR⁸ in shaping this new dialectical process developing in the workers movement and in carrying it forward in practice. For long years, the LCR has been in the forefront of the fight for self-organization, for respect for workers democracy, and for pluralism. Today it is the *only* working-class current that has considerable forces in both of the main union federations and that clearly and consistently fights for the unity of the class. □

8. Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Communist League), Spanish section of the Fourth International.

The Turbulent Background to Colombian Elections

By Enrique Morales

[The most significant aspect of the February 26 parliamentary and municipal elections in Colombia was the selection of the Liberal Party's candidate for president. Julio César Turbay roundly defeated his Liberal rival in this "primary," former president Carlos Lleras. Turbay is now being given a good chance at winning the June presidential election.

[The February voting was also marked by a high degree of abstention—on the order of 70 percent—and a low score for the electoral coalitions supported by the workers parties, which received only 5 percent of the votes cast.

[Of course, these elections reflected the evolution of the relationship of class forces in Colombia only in a very distorted way. One significant point, among others, is that the revolutionary campaign headed by Socorro Ramírez attracted more workers to its meetings than the number of votes it received.

[This article analyzes the development of the workers movement since the 1920s. It provides an understanding of the real situation in Colombia and clears up a number of paradoxes.]

* * *

The outstanding feature of the Colombian workers movement has undoubtedly been its participation in social struggles under the leadership of bourgeois personalities, currents, or political parties.

The roots of this lack of working-class independence can be found in the early 1930s, when the trade unions gave up their autonomy in contract negotiations. The traditional and permanent presence of the government as the arbiter of conflicts between workers and bosses dates from that long-past period. The way the state is set up allows the government sufficient power to impose its own solutions on the contending parties. This often led to victories for the workers in the early period. But those days have long since ended.

In December 1934—just six years after the great struggle that marked the beginning of the Colombian workers' fight against capitalism¹—a strike broke out in

the imperialist enclave of the United Fruit Company. The president sent his minister of war to intervene, and this resulted in a 50 percent wage increase for the workers.

Such policies were to determine for decades the development of the Colombian trade-union movement. This situation not only prevailed in the unions, but arose also in politics. Around that time the Communist Party adopted the Stalinist policy of popular-frontism, becoming a fervent advocate of working-class collaboration with the bourgeois Liberal Party.

This policy was consummated at the May Day demonstration in 1936. Addressing from the balcony of the presidential palace the huge crowd assembled by the unions for that purpose, the reformist Liberal President López Pumarejo did not fail to praise the Stalinists for their role. The Communist Party then began sharing control with the Liberals over the young trade unions and social organizations that the working class was building.

Liberal historians have noted this with knowing appreciation. In their eyes, such an attitude on the part of the working class has been quite "beneficial" for the country. But they also note some drawbacks: "... this led to the loss of the workers movement's independence, to its alienation from the government, and to the linking of its fate to that of the Liberal Party. The latter of course did not hesitate to utilize the vast labor contingents as ingredients in its electoral cookery, engaging in a whole series of tactical maneuvers of a strictly routine character.²

The result, quite simply, was an alliance between the national bourgeoisie and the working class behind López Pumarejo's economic development program. The slogan of "defense of national industry" first appeared at the 1936 May Day demonstration, and then three months later at a trade-union congress in Medellín. This congress was particularly important for its demonstration of the unity—however fleeting—of the workers movement. The first union federation arose out of that

the side of the plantation workers. The massacre provoked great indignation throughout the country and contributed largely to the loss of the Conservative Party's prestige. The Conservatives had dominated political life in Colombia since the end of the nineteenth century.

2. Gerardo Molina, ed., *Las Ideas Liberales en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1977), volume 3.

congress; it soon took the name Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC—Confederation of Colombian Workers).

At the 1938 trade-union congress—during a period when the workers and their organizations were coming under the blows of bourgeois reaction—the thesis of "defense of national industry" was adopted as part of the program of the working class.

The Liberal bourgeoisie had originally used this collaboration to blunt the workers and popular movement against the Conservative government in 1930. As a quid pro quo for working-class support, the Liberals adopted social legislation. Although decreed from above, this recognized victories won in a series of strikes that began in the 1920s and continued throughout the period. Neither the popular front nor Liberal control over the workers organizations was able to block that working-class offensive.

The Liberals' policy changed in the late 1930s. They were divided into two wings. The reformists wanted to bring the workers movement—under their control—into politics. The conservative wing of the party, on the other hand, was trying to keep union activity limited to a strict kind of corporatism. There was, of course, no disagreement on the need to keep the union movement under the state's thumb; the differences turned only around a choice of methods.

The CP's Counterrevolutionary Policy

Thus the workers movement was deprived of any class independence in its organizations and activity when a political and revolutionary crisis broke out in 1948. The defeat then suffered by the workers vanguard—the result of the Stalinists' policy—only deepened the central problem of the Colombian workers movement: the lack of a mass workers party such as the ones existing elsewhere on the continent.

The 1948 defeat occurred in a particular set of circumstances. While the Liberal bourgeoisie was casting aside its reformist policies, the Conservative Party had been evolving toward positions that were clearly bonapartist and in some cases openly fascist. The Conservatives launched a campaign of "direct action"—paramilitary bands carried out a selective repression against the Communists and the leaders of the populist wing of the Liberal Party.

1. Reference to the great "banana strike" of 1928, an uprising throughout almost the entire region of Ciénega in northern Colombia. The Conservative government declared a state of war and launched violent repression. Deaths have been put at 1,000, out of 6,000 persons who rose up on

Beginning in 1946, the Liberal bourgeoisie not only abandoned its reform program but also, frightened by the workers and popular mobilizations, openly passed over to the camp of bonapartist reaction. They resorted to a pact with the Conservative reactionaries to block the way to Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán had gained a majority in the Liberal Party and his victory in the 1950 elections appeared to be inevitable.

In this situation, the Communist Party supported the right-wing Liberals against Gaitán. The Stalinists had already backed the candidate of the reactionary Liberal bourgeoisie, Gabriel Turbay, against Gaitán in the 1946 elections.

The division among the Liberals led to a victory for the Conservative Party in 1946. Once in the government, the Conservatives intensified the repression against the workers and popular vanguard and the peasantry in particular.

The suicidal policy of the Stalinists lost them the support of the masses who followed Gaitán, of all the Liberal-controlled unions, and even of some organizations controlled by the CP itself. The populist illusions of the working class were reinforced, and it was left without any leadership when the populist movement disintegrated. The workers could provide only very weak support to the peasant guerrilla movement that broke out after April 9, 1948. The murder of Gaitán—which the workers were unable to avenge—exhausted the last of their strength.³

Peasant Guerrillas—Obstacle to the Counterrevolutionary Wave

The Bogotá uprising—the “Bogotazo”—marked the high point of Gaitanism, but also brought on its demise. The right wing regained control over the Liberal Party. The final efforts of the masses to wage a struggle were paralyzed from above. The Liberal bourgeoisie had more fear of these masses than of the uncontrolled semifascist government of Laureano Gómez, even though it attacked some right-wing Liberal leaders.

Shaken by the mass struggles, the republic could no longer be governed through

bourgeois nationalism, however timid the form this took in Colombia. A change in the political regime was needed to achieve what the “democratic reaction” of the 1930s had failed to accomplish. But any political transition in the mold of capitalist society divides the bourgeoisie and opens a breach for the mass movement.

In Colombia, such a division between Liberals and Conservatives, bonapartists and semifascists, led to a civil war in which the Conservatives fought the Liberals. This in turn gave rise to a peasant revolt.

After a preventive coup on June 13, 1953, General Rojas Pinilla sought to resolve at the negotiating table what the army had failed to halt on the battlefield. This defeat of the workers and peasants movement put an end to the first period of political and social struggles in modern Colombia.

A new period opened with the formation of the National Front government and the birth of what revolutionary socialists have called a bourgeois-democratic regime marked by reactionary bonapartism.⁴

The development of widespread peasant guerrilla warfare kept the Colombian ruling class from resorting to a Pinochet-type solution. But the defeat of the guerrillas allowed the installation of the antidemocratic National Front government for a sixteen-year period.

The workers movement recovered slowly. This was preceded by a quite radical student movement and by renewed land struggles on the part of the peasantry. Both of these suffered from lack of centralization; new and better organizations did not arise in these social sectors.

The situation was aggravated in the case of the peasantry by the repression unleashed by the government under the pretext of the rise in banditry that occurred after the defeat of the guerrilla war. The peasant sectors that had preserved their armed self-defense organizations and certain forms of direct democracy suffered from constant punitive attacks by the army, such as the expeditions against the “independent republics” of Marquetalia and Guayabero.

Peasant resistance in the face of this official violence led to creation of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC—Revolutionary Armed For-

ces of Colombia). The principal leaders of the FARC are members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

For their part, the Castroist and Maoist currents ten years later organized guerrilla columns based on marginal peasant struggles in the mountainous areas of the country. But neither the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN—National Liberation Army) nor the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL—People's Liberation Army) have been truly integrated into the peasant struggles. The EPL is practically extinct at present, along with the radical Maoist current as a whole.

In face of the National Front, the workers movement is not only disarmed ideologically and politically but also is divided on the trade-union level. In addition to the CTC, the Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia (UTC—Union of Colombian Workers) was created as an organization with a clearly confessional inspiration. Founded under the Conservative Ospina Pérez government in 1946, the UTC is controlled by the Catholic church and the Conservative Party. Today it is the most powerful union federation.

On the other hand, the CTC split during the same period. This was provoked by the expulsion of Communist militants at the initiative of the Liberals and the government, and gave rise to the Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Colombia (CSTC—General Trade-Union Federation of Colombian Workers).

In addition, there are the anarchosindicalist current influenced by the Maoists, and some centrist-led unions. These reject the three federations in a sectarian fashion and from what are known as the independent trade unions. These sectors have never been organized on a national scale.

Renewal of Workers Struggles and Evolution of the ‘Strong’ State

The “new left,” which arose after the Cuban revolution and developed in the student struggles of the 1960s, isolated itself by engaging in single combat against the state outside the real struggles of the masses. The Communist Party, meanwhile, dedicated itself to the patient organization of the vanguard union militants in the CSTC. At the same time, the CP continued to offer its services to the nationalist bourgeoisie.

Reduced to clandestinity under the National Front, the Stalinists hitched themselves to the wagon of the Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal (MRL—Revolutionary Liberal Movement), a split-off from the Liberal Party. Led by now-President López Michelsen, the MRL represented for a whole period the “democratic” opposition to the National Front and based itself on popular discontent. But it later rejoined the ranks of the official Liberals and the government.

The CP then moved into the orbit of the

3. On April 9, 1948, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was shot down as he left his office on a Bogotá street. The crime provoked an uprising by his supporters and the presidential palace nearly fell into the hands of the insurgents. In three days, the capital was practically destroyed and put to the torch. Several thousand corpses lay in the streets. The rest of the country experienced comparable uprisings, and in some towns revolutionary committees were formed, flying the red flag with a hammer and sickle. To put a stop to the insurrection, the government had to resort to regular troops stationed in the provinces, since during those magnificent days entire detachments of the national police went over to the insurgents.

4. The National Front was an agreement on a system of government—approved by a wide margin in a 1958 plebiscite—that followed the overthrow of the dictator Rojas Pinilla on May 10, 1958. A general strike jointly organized by the Liberals and the Conservatives put an end to the bonapartist military dictatorship that threatened to eliminate the two-party system. The accord stipulated that the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party would alternate in power every four years and divide the posts in public administration equally. The pact ended in 1974 after the term of Conservative President Pastora Borrera.

Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO—National People's Alliance). This movement had clearly right-wing populist origins. In a few years it was able to regroup the opposition inside the Liberal Party and the sectarian wing of the Conservatives.

ANAPO succeeded in defeating the official candidate in the 1970 elections, the Conservative Pastrana Borrero. Tumultuous demonstrations broke out on April 19, 1970, when the government refused to recognize ANAPO's electoral victory. But this spontaneous mass mobilization was halted by violent government repression and by betrayal on the part of former dictator Rojas Pinilla, ANAPO's principal leader.

Denouncing ANAPO as "fascist," just as it had denounced Gaitán in the 1940s, the CP refused to seek unity in action with this movement that had a large mass base, thus isolating itself. Today, however, now that ANAPO is little more than an empty shell, divided, and well on the way to extinction, the CP seeks electoral pacts from above with some of its marginal leaders. The Stalinists prefer to support the candidacy of an ANAPO leader with no prestige rather than present one of their own recognized workers leaders as the revolutionary socialists have proposed.

But facts are stubborn things—even though the CP persists in its search for progressive bosses of good will for an alliance against the imperialist bosses and their servants in the country; even though it puts large sectors of the workers movement at the service of this policy; and even though the two bourgeois parties have kept their control over large sectors of the population.

The barbarous superexploitation of the workers during the whole period of the National Front and during more recent governments that ended that arrangement—including a drop in real wages of 60 percent—is beginning to bear fruit. Exploitation calls forth rebellion, and oppression, resistance. Large numbers of workers reject the Liberal-Conservative system, but remain skeptical about joining any of the existing workers parties.

Much of the vanguard seeks a socialist alternative, but is held back by the CP and to a lesser degree by the Maoist MOIR (Movimiento Obrero Independiente y Revolucionario—Independent Revolutionary Workers Movement). One sector is beginning to break with centrism and the different variants of radical Maoism, and is moving toward the Fourth International.

The results of the recent elections in some ways reflect this evolution. The number of abstentions on February 26 reached 72 percent. The candidates of the left received 5 percent of the votes cast.⁵

5. Results made public are as follows: of 12.5 million registered, 3.7 million voted. The Liberals

On this occasion, as they did two years ago, the revolutionary socialists campaigned by addressing themselves to the masses, in opposition to the various popular-front schemes and the two bourgeois parties.

The campaign was waged under very special conditions—a big rise in working-class struggles. After less than four years of strikes, and despite its division, the workers movement played the leading role in the citizens' national general strike last September 14. This marked a quantitative and qualitative transformation of the class struggle in the country, a slow but sustained upsurge that gained the support of all sectors of the populace.⁶ Now, as the slogans say, "the hour of the workers movement has arrived."

The workers today are the motor of the class struggle in a country where for more than thirty years their protests have been ignored. This new situation is having its repercussions among the bourgeoisie. The two-party system is in crisis, and tendentious bickering has become the order of the day. A number of bourgeois politicians are discussing the necessity to reinvigorate the Liberal Party along Social Democratic lines. The first fissures have begun to appear in the stranglehold of the Liberal-Conservative oligarchy on political power.

Two Liberal Party candidates confronted each other in these elections: Lleras Restrepo, representing the interests of the old Liberal bourgeoisie; and Turbay Ayala, who reflected the needs of a new bourgeoisie nourished on government contracts, contraband, financial and commercial speculation, and other such sources of wealth.

Turbay also enjoyed the support of a multitude of intermediate sectors of the political bureaucracy whose social and economic privileges bring them into conflict with the closed circle of the traditional bourgeoisie and the rising technocrats.

The election also reflected the rise of the agricultural exporting sector, and the crisis of the older industrial branches that rely on the internal market.

Consequently, the problem faced by the candidates of the two-party system was one of presenting solutions that could accommodate the interests of both the old

received 2 million votes for their three candidates, against 1.5 million for the Conservatives. The three left slates (UNO, FUP, and UNIOS) received 175,000 votes, or not quite 5 percent of the votes cast. In these elections, votes were cast for bloc slates presented by the various parties or coalitions. Four elections took place simultaneously: Senate, Chamber of Representatives, departmental councils, and municipal councils. The elections also served as "primaries" for the Liberal Party.

6. See *Inprecor* No. 17 (November 24, 1977): "After the General Strike: a New Period Opens."

and the new rich, of the political bosses as well as the technocrats.

If the citizens' national general strike marked the renewal of workers and popular struggles, the November 18 mobilization opened a new phase in this process. It was held under the unified leadership of the union federations, which had already had a big impact in the citizens' national strike. The two bureaucracies directly linked to the ruling class—those of the CTC and the UTC—came under pressure from their ranks and reached an agreement with the Communist and Christian-Democratic federations. All appealed for a work stoppage that had some of the characteristics of a general strike.

Strike after strike was held, some lasting for more than a month.⁷ The coordinating committee of the four union federations has presented a list of joint demands that includes, most importantly, a wage increase of 60 percent. If the capitalists and the government fail to satisfy this demand, the workers will again take to the streets.

Meanwhile, inflation continues to mount. It reached 30 percent during the past year according to official statistics, despite repeated assurances from the government that it was under control. As for the present administration, five finance ministers have succeeded one another and none have been able to solve the problem of inflation. This is made still more serious by the fact that Colombia has the sharpest social inequalities in all of Latin America.

The ruling class is taking precautions to prevent a popular explosion. As President López Michelsen has said, within ten years the dividing line between Liberal and Conservative will be totally erased; the struggle will no longer be between them but rather between a national party and the revolutionary left. All the necessary repressive emergency legislation has been prepared in recent years and is written into the constitution.

A bloody repression is being carried out against revolutionary and mass-movement leaders—sixty CP municipal councillors have been murdered in the past year in various parts of the country. The bourgeoisie and its government responds with selective but systematic repression to the still embryonic and dispersed struggle of the masses. To land occupations, demonstrations, and strikes, the successive governments have answered in accord with the Biblical maxim: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

In the context of such an evolution of the

7. An example was the strike at Cartons de Colombia, a U.S. trust employing 3,000 workers. Despite labor legislation banning strikes longer than forty days, some strikes in the last four years have lasted from two to three months, and the big strike at Rio Pailla last year lasted four months.

state, the government is preparing to hold elections to a constituent assembly. This will be made up of notables from the two traditional parties, the goal being a constitutional reform of the judicial system and public administration. What is really involved is an open offensive on the democratic rights of the workers movement and its organizations. The "reforms" will create state institutions more adapted to the winds of rebellion and revolt now blowing in Colombia.

Revolutionary socialists have condemned this move and are appealing for unity of the workers and people's movement to defeat it. However, they are also taking advantage of the situation to struggle for a democratic and representative constituent assembly that could accomplish genuine reforms in the interests of the broad masses.

One often hears it said that in Colombia the bourgeoisie only really engages in politics on the occasion of an election. There is some truth to this, especially regarding the present contest. The government has suffered growing discredit and the abstentionist current is growing. For an entire year the traditional parties have been using their enormous electoral machines to mobilize the voters.

In this situation, one sector of the left chose to seek an electoral front. Others, adopting an ostrich-like policy, buried their heads in the sand and declared that nothing was happening. They made abstention into a principle and rejected participation in the elections on the grounds that this would only reinforce the ruling class's domination of the proletariat. Unfortunately, even some revolutionary-socialist currents held such a position. They judged that in the concrete political conditions of Colombia today electoral activity is inopportune since other more important tasks demand the attention of revolutionists.

How are the left forces participating in the election battle? To understand this, it is necessary to review the experiences of the past few years.

Workers and Socialist Candidates— The Fight for Class Independence

On September 22, 1972, the Communist Party signed an electoral agreement with three groups: the Movimiento Amplio Colombiano (MAC—Broad Colombian Movement, a split-off from ANAPO); a group calling itself Christian Democratic; and the Maoists of the MOIR. This alliance took on the pompous title Unión Nacional de Oposición (UNO—National Opposition Union). It adopted a minimum program with an anti-imperialist tone, seeking to remove the "obstacles" to the full development of Colombian capitalism.

A caricature of the Chilean Unidad Popular, UNO presented as its presidential candidate an old parliamentary Liberal

who, thrown out of his own party, had joined ANAPO. Only a few months after the 1974 elections this personage, then-Senator Hernando Echeverry Mejía, rejoined the ranks of the Liberals along with five other members of parliament who had earlier quit that party.

Two years afterward, a relatively new revolutionary-socialist organization, the Bloque Socialista (Socialist Bloc, now the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores⁸), rose above this old Stalinist policy and called on the workers to participate in the elections with complete independence. The Socialist Bloc put forward a policy of workers and socialist candidates.

This was based on an analysis of the national political situation which showed that all the grave defeats of the workers struggles resulted from their lack of political independence—either from the Liberals or from other sectors of the bourgeoisie. Thus it would not be possible to speak of socialism, let alone revolution, as long as the Colombian working-class vanguard had not attained political maturity. That is to say, as long as the workers were unable, whatever their forms of struggle, to maintain their independence from the bosses—however progressive the latter might pretend to be.

For the first time, the CP found itself answered and denounced for its criminal policy in the context of an active campaign. In the elections for the municipal councils in the summer of 1976, slates made up of socialist militants, workers leaders, students, and peasants recognized for their role in struggles opposed the UNO slates, which were supported by the CP.

The workers and socialist candidates received only 3,000 votes throughout the country, just 1 percent of the number attained by the UNO. But they gave a platform to the leaders of strikes, demonstrations, and land occupations; not to those who behind a leftist mask in fact supported the ones who were combating those very struggles.

The current elections opened with the February 26 vote and will close with the presidential election in June. The PST was certain that the Stalinists and their Maoist counterparts in the MOIR would stick to their popular-front approach and present another Echeverry Mejía.

Recognizing that the CP is the largest workers party in the country, the PST proposed unity of all the working-class political forces behind the candidacy of Pastor Pérez, who is president of the CSTC and a CP militant. The CP preferred to revive its popular-front coalition, the UNO, while the MOIR ran the risks and perils of creating the Frente para la Unidad del Pueblo (FUP—Front for People's Unity).

Both coalitions rejected a candidacy by

Pastor Pérez, instead presenting old worn-out figures from ANAPO: Julio César Pernía for UNO and Jaime Piedrahita Cardona (a member by marriage of the top Colombian oligarchy) for the FUP.

The PST then appealed to the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR—Revolutionary Communist League, also a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International) and to two centrist organizations, the Unión Revolucionaria Socialista (URS—Revolutionary Socialist Union) and the Organización Comunista Ruptura (OCR—Breakaway Communist Organization).

All four groups united behind the candidacy of Socorro Ramírez, general secretary of the Federación Colombiano de Educadores (FECODE—Colombian Teachers Federation) and an internationalist, socialist militant. The electoral bloc thus formed is called the Unidad Obrero y Socialista (UNIOS—Workers and Socialist Unity).

This campaign was greeted with enthusiasm throughout the country. More than 1,000 workers candidates were announced, and support committees for Socorro Ramírez sprang up throughout the country. More than 60,000 persons attended meetings to hear her speak. Such success can be explained in several ways. In the first place, Socorro Ramírez is recognized as a mass leader among the teachers, one of the most combative sectors of the Colombian working class. In addition, while still fairly new, the two organizations of the Fourth International have taken an initiative in showing the workers and all the exploited that politics is not an exclusive pastime for "professors," but is something that the workers themselves can engage in directly, since in their hands alone is the solution to their problems. What is more, the confidence the UNIOS candidates have inspired has given rise to long-dormant energies.

Finally, what UNIOS presents is an honest proposal—it does not promise the impossible but instead offers a perspective of struggle and the program of revolutionary socialism.⁹ The support committees that developed in the campaign were first centralized in regional conventions and then in the big national convention that took place in December. These show the possibilities for applying forms of direct democracy in the most varied situations.

In a recent speech, Comrade Socorro Ramírez expressed herself quite clearly on this subject:

"What we are doing with this campaign is speaking to all the deceived workers, seeking to turn their discontent into an alternative of their own class. We are turning the vote into an instrument of protest, because we know that the parlia-

8. Socialist Workers Party, a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International.

9. For an English translation of the election platform of the UNIOS, see *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 20, 1978, p. 208.

mentary bodies and councils are not going to solve the problems of the workers. We are appealing for reliance only on the forces of the exploited, so as to build a big revolutionary and socialist current in the working class.

To ensure that the true leaders of the workers—the leaders of strikes, workers and socialist militant—will be chosen, it is necessary to follow this road. We are not interested in agreements at the top, behind the backs of the workers, or in secret diplomatic deals. That is why, from the beginning, our party initiated the conventions where the leaders recognized by the workers themselves could be chosen as

candidates, and that is what has occurred."

To conclude, the revolutionary socialists' electoral campaign has not put the direct mobilization of the masses on the back burner. The campaign has provided a platform for denouncing the conditions working people face and for taking up their concrete problems; it has supported the strikes and struggles under way. From General Electric in Bogotá to Cartons de Colombia in Cali, Socorro Ramirez has untiringly toured the four corners of the country in support of the workers in struggle. □

which is dominated by the CPI(M) and has expanded considerably since Gandhi's defeat.

The pro-Moscow Communist Party of India (CPI), which supported Gandhi's state of emergency, has also suffered a decline in its fortune. Its recent shift, in which it admitted it made a "mistake" in backing the repression, has not improved its image.

Two weeks before the elections, CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad declared that his party would like the Janata Party to "continue at the centre and also to form the governments even in those states where it has adopted a high and mighty attitude towards us." The main idea, he said, was to see that neither "of the two Congress parties can stage a come back."

In fact, the state assembly elections turned into a fight between present and former Congress Party members, who are now divided among three parties: the two Congress parties and the Janata Party. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, two-thirds of the Janata Party candidates were formerly members of the Congress Party. In Maharashtra, about half were. The large-scale defections from the Congress parties to the Janata Party make a mockery of the CPI(M)'s thesis that the Janata Party is "democratic" while the Congresses alone represent authoritarianism.

The election results showed that Gandhi's Congress Party had registered a stunning success, winning absolute majorities in both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Even in Maharashtra, her party captured 62 seats out of 288, and it will join with the rival Congress Party to form a coalition ministry there.

The Janata Party failed to make any headway in the south and several regional parties also performed poorly. Gandhi's gains against the rival Congress leave her party and the Janata Party the major bourgeois contenders for power on a countrywide level.

Her "come-back" has become the subject of alarmed comments in the bourgeois press.

Arun Shourie, a sharp critic of Gandhi, provided a lengthy analysis of Gandhi's electoral gains in the March 3 *Indian Express*. He lamented the lack of any bourgeois party with a truly countrywide base. He noted a considerable demoralisation of the state bureaucracy. Concluding that there was an atomisation of political life, he warned the bourgeoisie, "Such a state of affairs bodes ill for the future."

The *Economic Times* editorialised March 2, "The future is full of imponderables."

A.S. Abraham, a well-known educationist, commented in the March 4 *Times of India* that the country was in a greater state of political flux than at any time since independence. He concluded, "We are in for troubled times." □

India Headed for 'Troubled Times'

What the State Elections Showed

By Sharad Jhaveri

JAMNAGAR—The five states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya, as well as the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh, went to the polls February 25 to elect new legislative assemblies. There was an average of more than five candidates for every seat.

Out of the five states, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam had been Congress Party strongholds for three decades. During the March 1977 general elections, when Indira Gandhi's Congress Party was swept from power on the federal level, it managed to retain its support in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and made a good showing in Maharashtra. Both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had been less affected by the repression under Gandhi's rule than many other states.

Morarji Desai's Janata Party, which now controls the federal government, failed to establish any significant base of support in southern India. With its emphasis on promoting Hindi as a countrywide language, it emerged as a party of the northern Hindi-populated states. So during the February 25 elections, it made a renewed bid to extend its base to the south.

Gandhi, who had split the Congress Party several weeks earlier, sought to use the assembly elections to stage a "come-back." Likewise, the rival Congress Party of Brahmananda Reddy wanted to prove that it was the "real" Congress.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), now the major Stalinist party in India, portrayed the elections as a battle between democracy and dictatorship. It described both Congress parties as representing the forces of authoritarianism and helped the Janata Party pose as "the

saviour of democracy."

Since capturing power, the Janata Party has been unable to come to grips with the major problems facing the country, and thus the euphoria generated by Gandhi's defeat had been largely dissipated. At the same time, the Janata Party's authoritarian tendencies have become more manifest.

The Congress Party entered the elections in a state of shambles. Having dominated Indian politics for more than ninety years, it was already beginning to show signs of inner decay during the state of emergency, when Gandhi and her coterie functioned as a virtual dynasty. The party's fall from power in March 1977 and the further setbacks it suffered in the July state assembly elections accelerated the process of disintegration, leading to the split in early 1978.

This split also had a deep impact on the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the labor federation dominated by the Congress. With a membership of about 3.3 million workers, it was perhaps the largest trade union organisation in India. It enjoyed the patronage of the Congress Party for three decades and its leadership acted as an agent of the Indian bourgeoisie in the working-class movement.

The split, however, has thrown it into utter confusion. Its leadership is reported to be divided over the issue of formally severing its links with the Congress Party. Some argue for an independent union organisation, some for supporting Reddy's faction, and some for retaining allegiance to Gandhi. Those who favor a break in ties view with concern the "growing menace" of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions,

Ireland—Statement by Editors of 'Socialist Republic'

[*Socialist Republic*, the new monthly newspaper of the Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish section of the Fourth International) and the People's Democracy, was launched at a public meeting in Dublin on February 3. The speakers included Bernadette (Devlin) McAliskey; Michael Farrell of People's Democracy, one of the leaders of the Northern Ireland civil-rights movement; and Tariq Ali, editor of *Socialist Challenge* and a leader of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

[The publication of a joint paper by the MSR and PD is a step in a process of fusion between the two organizations. McAliskey is a member of neither organization, but has spoken in favor of the greatest possible unity among the organizations adhering to revolutionary Marxism.]

[The statement of purpose of the new publication, printed in its first issue, dated February 1978, is given below.]

* * *

The struggle for national liberation in Ireland stands at the crossroads. Almost ten years after the first civil rights marchers swarmed onto the streets of the 6 Counties to sound the death knell of the corrupt, sectarian Northern statelet, the whole 32 counties of Ireland remain dominated and controlled by British Imperialism.

In the North, British Imperialism blatantly increases the repression of the anti-Unionist minority with the aim of destroying every remaining remnant of resistance. In the South, the bourgeois nationalists of Fianna Fail (who represent the interests of the Irish capitalist class) fill the prisons with republican and socialist militants while cynically pleading that Britain should go. Britain and its Irish collaborators together seek to thwart the democratic aspiration of the Irish people for the unity and control of Ireland.

Clearly, the Irish capitalist class have not got any interest in helping finish the national revolution. Indeed, the whole history of the 26 Counties shows that a capitalist Ireland cannot exist independent of imperialism. In reality this means that a capitalist Ireland cannot be independent of Britain, as Britain is the major imperialist power here. National independence, then, will only be achieved through a struggle which will challenge the existing class and economic relationships here, in other words—through the struggle for socialism.

Such a struggle should champion the cause of all oppressed sections of society, but it must be based on and led by the working class. Only the working class has no vested interest in maintaining the present system. Only the working class has the economic and mass power to change the system.

But for historical reasons the Irish working class lacks a revolutionary leadership, which is vital if a socialist revolution is to succeed. It is a part of the process of creating that revolutionary leadership that the present fusion between P.D. and the M.S.R. is taking place.

Both P.D. and the M.S.R. represent a layer of those who became involved in radical politics during the worldwide upsurge of the 1960s, and who have become Marxists. We have developed by different routes to a point where we have a high level of common experience and a common method of struggle.

There is not at this point final agreement between the two groups on all areas but there is a principled agreement on fundamental matters of central importance. Over the next few months we will be spelling out in detail the specifics of our agreement. Here we give a brief outline of the points on which we believe agreement exists.

We are agreed in our acceptance of the *central role of British imperialism* in the oppression of the Irish people. We are agreed in our acceptance of the *centrality of the need for resolving the national question* through the achievement of reunification, national and economic and political independence.

We are united in our rejection of the "2 Nations" theory [that is, that the Protestants are a nation with the right of self-determination], in our rejection of the claim that any lasting solution to the problems of the Irish working class can be found within a 6 County framework, and in our rejection of the right of the Loyalist minority to continue partition.

We believe that a crucial area of capitalist oppression is the *oppression of women*, and that this is especially so in Ireland given the history of clerical power here. While we believe that an end to this exploitation will only come through socialist revolution, we don't believe that women should wait for this or see the question as a side issue. Thus we support the *right of women to organize independently* to oppose their exploitation.

Socialist Republic aims to become a weapon for militants in the anti-

imperialist ghettos, in the trade unions, in the student and women's movements. Not only will it report their struggles but it will draw out the lessons of these experiences for the benefit of those militants now fighting on the streets, who are the nucleus of the broad mass movement which will have to be built for further success in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Socialist Republic is an internationalist paper that will fight to build solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples throughout the world. At a time when the imperialists and capitalists are uniting in defense of their stolen privileges it becomes extremely important that we too unite across countries and continents to put an end to all oppression.

We are Marxists and we believe that a social revolution is necessary to overthrow capitalism and imperialism, that the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a workers state, and that only the organised working class can provide the motive force for doing this.

We believe that it is necessary to be involved in both the *political* and the *economic struggle*.

We believe that the most effective weapon that the working class has is its ability to organise politically on a mass base combining its economic power and its strength of numbers.

We believe that the mobilisation of the *power of the organised working class* is superior to all other methods of struggle—including *armed struggle*.

We believe in the building of an organised and experienced leadership in a Marxist party based on the *Leninist theory of party organisation*.

We are *internationalists* and believe that Irish workers should actively support struggles throughout the world and learn from them. The M.S.R. are members of the *4th International*, an international Trotskyist organisation. P.D. has not such a clearly defined position, although we informally agree on the theory of *permanent revolution*, and on the fact that the *Russian Revolution has degenerated*.

This is one of the major issues around which discussion will take place during the fusion process and within the fused organisation.

The *Socialist Republic* will report these discussions as well as other aspects of the fusion process.

This is then the basis on which the *Socialist Republic* is founded.

The *Socialist Republic* stands unequivocally for an end to British interference and control in Ireland. It asserts the leading

role of the working class in the anti-imperialist struggle. It proclaims the primacy of mass action over all forms of struggle including the armed struggle.

Socialist Republic aims to be all this but something more. The forces of revolutionary socialism in Ireland are weak and divided. In many cases, differences of tactics make them hostile to each other. The proposed fusion of People's Demo-

cracy and the Movement for a Socialist Republic shows that tactical disagreement is no obstacle to principled unity. *Socialist Republic* will report on the development of our fusion, on the setbacks as well as the advances. In this way, we hope to promote the regroupment of revolutionary socialism that is so required by the big responsibilities that face us in the present phase of the struggle for a *United Socialist Ireland*.

them and furthers their mobilizations.

This program is based on fighting for the broadest *unity* of the working class, on the struggle for a united front of all working-class organizations against capital, on total *class independence* from the bourgeoisie.

A Decisive Period for the Socialist Revolution

The facts of recent years have shown that what we are faced with is an acute crisis of the capitalist system, one of exceptional gravity, coinciding with a social and political strengthening of the working class and a rise in working-class struggles. The sharpening of the class struggle on an international scale—from the so-called third-world countries to the bureaucratized workers states, including the advanced capitalist countries—is an undeniable fact.

The crisis of the bourgeoisie has been expressed in a particularly acute way in Southern Europe. In this area, which includes Italy, France, the Spanish state, and Portugal, the crisis of capitalist society and the change in the relationship of forces in favor of the working class are especially clear. This is reflected in the changing relationship of forces inside the workers movement itself: the reformist leaderships of the big parties and unions are being outflanked more and more frequently by the combativity of the workers.

However, there exists a discrepancy between the breadth of the social contradictions, which produces a growing politicization, and the present level of consciousness of the working class as a whole. In view of the present weakness of the revolutionary Marxists, this means a growing audience for the big workers parties, which appear as the only ones able to provide a political solution to the crisis, one favorable to the working class and the populace.

Social Democracy and Eurocommunism

With the exception of Italy, the Socialist parties are the principal workers parties on the electoral level. This is owing fundamentally to the fact that their reformist policy—and that of Stalinism as well—is most accessible to the broad layers of workers entering political activity for the first time. On the other hand, the Social Democrats have understood how to take advantage of the democratic sentiments inside the working-class movement, which have been strengthened through experiences with fascism and Stalinism. At the same time, they seek to identify this sentiment with the institutions of *bourgeois* democracy.

The growth of Social Democracy increases its importance as a factor for stabilizing the capitalist system. What will become apparent is the contrast between

Reunification of LCR and LC in Spain

[The following excerpts from a document entitled "The Political Bases for Reunification" appeared in the December 29, 1977, issue of the Spanish Trotskyist weekly *Combate*. The document was adopted at a December 17-18 joint meeting of the central committees of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR—Revolutionary Communist League) and the Liga Comunista (LC—Communist League).

[The meeting was another step in the process of overcoming a five-year-long split among Spanish Trotskyists.* The reunification of the LCR is scheduled to culminate at a fusion congress in March.

[The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

* * *

Reunification between the LCR and the LC is giving the lie to the myth of a "permanent division" in the Trotskyist movement. It is showing in practice that a correct conception of democratic centralism makes it possible to secure and maintain unity among revolutionary Marxists.

Both organizations are aware that differences exist. The scope and content of these differences will be elucidated through common work and through a debate with full freedom of expression for all positions. This debate will unfold during the remaining months before the congress.

This of course presupposes that the reunification is taking place on a solid basis: the programmatic principles of the Fourth International, along with fundamental agreement on the tasks of the revolution in the Spanish state. The unification will thus allow us to take a real step forward in building the revolutionary party.

The document "Political Bases for Reunification" was approved unanimously (with one abstention) by both central committees. It explains these bases in a succinct way.

The text first takes up the historical situation in which humanity finds itself.

The continued existence of capitalism and the unfolding crisis of that system can only end in barbarism. Faced with this prospect there is only one solution—socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The alternative of a socialist society can be fully realized only on a world scale, simply because capitalism is an international reality.

Need for New Revolutionary Leadership

Nevertheless, since the proletariat gained its first decisive victory in the October Revolution in 1917, the workers have been held back time and time again in the struggle for the revolution. This is not the result of their lack of combativity, but rather of the conciliatory, reformist, and even openly traitorous policies of the parties having most influence inside the workers movement—the Stalinists and the Social Democrats.

The bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers state—the Soviet Union—was extended during the second half of the 1920s to the entire Third International, conceived by its founders as the party of world revolution. Today, far from having achieved socialism, the workers states, where capitalism has been overthrown are dominated by a bureaucratic caste that is an obstacle to the international socialist revolution.

The workers movement can expect nothing from its traditional leaderships; a new revolutionary leadership is required. That is precisely the central strategic task that has confronted revolutionary Marxists since the Fourth International was founded in 1938.

Having the goal of overthrowing capitalism through the conquest of political power by the proletariat, the Fourth International upholds a program for mobilization of the workers. Starting from the conditions at each moment and the consciousness of the working class, this program leads the class toward taking on and realizing all its objectives. It is a program of immediate, democratic, and transitional demands that favors the development of anticapitalist and revolutionary consciousness on the part of broad working-class and popular sectors, forges unity among

*See "Reunification Under Way Among Trotskyists in Spain," *Intercontinental Press*, December 19, 1977, p. 1399.

the "democratic" image of the Social Democrats and the repressive practice they will be forced to carry out to achieve capitalist stabilization—"austerity" and related measures. In these conditions, opposition currents inside these parties and the unions they influence will grow. Revolutionary Marxists must pay close attention to such developments.

Eurocommunism, for its part, registers on the level of theory several decades of reformist practice by the Stalinist parties with mass influence. The policy of "historic compromise" demonstrates the Eurocommunists' willingness—no matter what the cost—to avoid a test of strength between the workers movement and the bourgeoisie. Such a compromise is based on respecting the essential political and economic interests of imperialism. Despite the evident tensions between these parties and the Kremlin, the links that join them have not been broken. The Communist parties uphold the essence of their Stalinist ideological heritage—a policy of respecting the bourgeois state. This coincides with the interests of the bureaucracy. In addition, links with the USSR constitute the principal factor that differentiates the Eurocommunists from their main competitors in the workers movement, the Social Democrats.

Favorable conditions also exist in the Communist parties for the development of much more important internal differentiations than in the past. These processes have and will have great importance for revolutionary Marxists.

Far from representing a retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers, the growth of the reformist workers parties reflects their growing politicalization. In addition, this growth is combined with significant outflanking of these leaderships by the workers movement.

Thus there exist exceptional possibilities for building a new revolutionary leadership. A solution of the present crisis favorable to the proletariat depends, to a great extent, on how revolutionary Marxists take advantage of this situation.

New Political Situation in the Spanish State

With the death of the dictator, the decomposition of Francoism was accelerated. The workers and popular movement immediately went through an unprecedented rise. This immense mobilization brought down the first government of the monarchy and won substantial gains. If it did not secure a complete victory, this is owing fundamentally to the policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie on the part of the majority leaderships—the PSOE [Partido Socialista Obrero Español—Spanish Socialist Workers Party] and the PCE [Partido Comunista de España—Communist

Party of Spain]. On each of the occasions when a general strike capable of putting an end to Francoism was at hand, these parties held it back, demobilizing and disorganizing the workers. This policy allowed the bourgeoisie to put its own stamp on the "political reform."

The capitulatory policy of the majority workers' leaderships before the Suárez government led to their failure to take advantage of the wide-open possibilities of the December 12, 1976, general strike. It led also to the virtual absence of opposition in the December 15 referendum, to the demobilization of the workers after the fascist crimes in Atocha, and to the isolation of the mobilizations in Euzkadi.

Nevertheless, the workers remain combative. If it is true that they were unable to achieve their main goals, it is no less true that important partial victories were gained: legalization of the workers parties and union federations, amnesty, and so on. Even in the elections, in which the bourgeoisie needed and was expecting an overwhelming victory, the workers voted massively for working-class candidates, almost achieving an electoral victory.

After the Fifteenth of June

The situation that opened June 15 is chiefly characterized by the growing *social polarization* between the fundamental classes and the mobilization of the left wing of the workers and popular movement. We are in a period of *profound political and social instability*, in which the bourgeoisie is seeking to change the relationship of forces. All its maneuvers

and political operations—the Moncloa Pact in particular—have that objective.

The Moncloa agreement represents the acceptance by the leaders of the PSOE and PCE of a true *social pact*. The main goals are to freeze wages and maintain (or even increase) unemployment. The political aspects of the agreement set substantial limits on liberties and keep the state strongly centralized. The repressive bodies, army, and a large part of the legislative arsenal of Francoism are to be preserved, along with the unquestioned continuation of the monarchy.

In such conditions, the task of revolutionary Marxists is to strengthen the organization and unity of the workers, and to present in the workers and popular struggles an alternative of unity and class independence—one capable of challenging the reformists for leadership and winning the working class for the socialist revolution.

We understand that we are only at the beginning of this task; a long road still remains ahead of us. We will have to win the best fighters of the workers movement, along with sectors of other parties that will evolve toward revolutionary Marxism, on the basis of agreement on the fundamental programmatic principles of the Fourth International.

But in the last analysis, the practical demonstration that the Fourth International is becoming a real alternative of revolutionary leadership is what will decisively influence the building of the revolutionary party that the proletariat in the Spanish state urgently needs. □

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Capitalism Fouls Things Up



World's Largest Oil Spill Hits Brittany Coast

During the night of March 16-17, the 233,000-ton supertanker *Amoco Cadiz* went aground on rocks three miles off the Brittany coast, near the fishing village of Portsall, France. The ship broke in half, several of its tanks burst open, and the 68-million-gallon cargo of light Arabian crude oil began pouring into the sea.

Efforts during the next week to bring smaller tankers alongside the wreck and pump out the remaining oil proved futile in face of thirty-foot waves and fifty-mile-an-hour winds. The *Amoco Cadiz* broke completely apart March 24, the last intact tanks ruptured, and all hope was lost of limiting what had already become the worst oil-spill disaster on record.

By March 25 the "marée noire"—black tide—covered beaches, harbors, and river estuaries along the northern coast of Brittany for more than 125 miles. A huge oil slick was heading toward the Normandy peninsula, and another smaller one threatened the British Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey.

The disaster came almost eleven years to the day after the biggest previous spill. The *Torrey Canyon* went aground on March 18, 1967, near the western tip of Cornwall, England, and dumped 29 million gallons of heavy oil onto the British and French coasts, including some areas now being polluted again.

The spill has brought economic catastrophe to Brittany. The region's main sources of income are fishing, seaweed harvesting, and tourism; all these industries have been wiped out for the immediate future and could be depressed for years to come by the fouling of the coast. Brittany's oyster beds, just beginning to recover from bacterial infections, have been especially hard hit by the oil.

Thousands of sea birds, dead from "thermal failure" brought on by the loss of their feathers' insulating capacity, were washed up onto the beaches along with the oil slick. More than half the twenty-five bird sanctuaries along the Brittany coast were polluted: ". . . few birds have been saved in any sanctuary despite the efforts of hundreds of volunteers," the *Washington Post* reported March 23.

The French government moved quickly to find scapegoats for the disaster, arresting Pasquale Bardari, master of the

Amoco Cadiz, on March 18, along with the captain of the West German tugboat that had attempted to rescue the ship. Bardari was formally indicted March 20 on charges of "causing pollution"; three days later French Prime Minister Raymond Barre declared both officers guilty of "serious negligence"—thus convicting them publicly in advance of a trial.

The French authorities allege that Bardari and the tug captain wasted precious hours arguing over a salvage contract, and that the delay led to the shipwreck. Conveniently overlooked has been the fact that the tug was summoned in the first place because the *Amoco Cadiz* had suffered a power failure and loss of steering. Owing to the high seas and the ship's huge mass, lines thrown to the tugboat snapped and the supertanker floundered onto rocks and broke up.

The real responsibility lies with the profit-hungry owners of the huge multinational oil corporations—in this case, Standard Oil of Indiana, which owned the *Amoco Cadiz* through its subsidiary, Amoco International Oil Company; and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group, which owned the cargo and had chartered the tanker from Amoco.

Since Israeli bombing closed the Suez Canal in 1967, the big oil companies have turned increasingly to "Very Large Crude Carriers"—tankers with a fully loaded weight of 200,000 tons or more. The highly unsafe nature of these ships was described by John Kifner in the March 23 *New York Times*:

"First, they are not easily maneuverable. Their great size gives them a powerful momentum, making it difficult for them to avoid collisions or obstacles, or even to be handled by tugs. Anchors cannot stop them. . . . it takes at least three miles and 21 to 22 minutes to stop a 250,000-ton tanker doing 16 knots. This situation is aggravated if the ship has lost power or, as in the case of the *Amoco Cadiz*, its steering.

"Further, their enormous length, 1,000 feet or more, means that the metal plates of the hull are under vastly more pressure as the ship flexes under the pounding of high seas. The effect of this pressure is greater if part of the ship is aground, and can easier lead to its breaking up. But even

the differences in weight that are encountered between one part of the ship and another during loading and unloading mean twisting that leads to metal fatigue."

After the *Argo Merchant* broke up in the North Atlantic fifteen months ago, spilling 7.6 million gallons of oil and threatening the rich Georges Bank fishing grounds, much was made of the fact that it was an aging, rusting craft with a long history of accidents, murky ownership, and a supposedly incompetent crew. But the *Amoco Cadiz* was only four years old, owned by a big American oil company with no major accident record, and equipped with a compartmentalized hull and double bottom—design changes introduced after the *Torrey Canyon* spill to improve safety.

The Brittany coast has been hit by tanker accidents and oil pollution four times since 1967. Despite repeated promises, the French government has done little to regulate oil shipping in its territorial waters. This inaction has been the target of protests that began soon after the *Amoco Cadiz* wreck.

Two thousand fishermen, seaweed harvesters, trade unionists, and environmentalists demonstrated in Brest March 17. Premier Barre was greeted in Landéda by a crowd of 500 protesters March 18, and on the same day 3,000 persons marched in Brest in an action called jointly by a number of trade unions; by the Socialist, Communist, and United Socialist parties; by the Revolutionary Communist League; and by the Democratic Union of Brittany, a Breton nationalist group. All these actions have demanded immediate compensation for the fishermen and others thrown out of work by the oil spill.

Hundreds of fishermen handed in their licenses to the government in protest on March 20. As of March 24, demonstrations by workers, students, and environmentalists in Brittany were continuing. □

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