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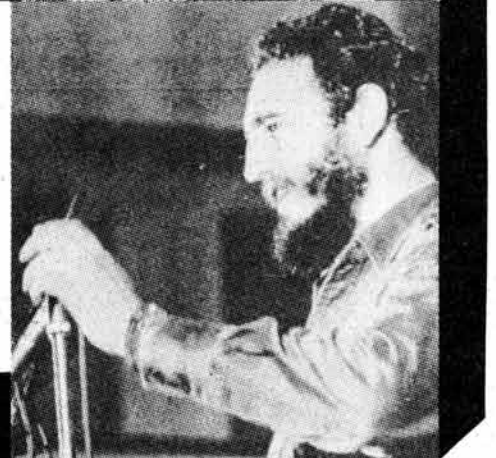
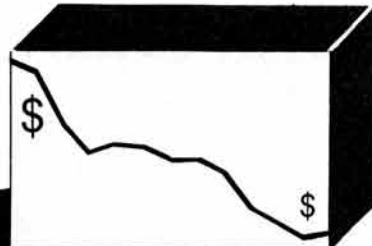
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1978: Year in Review

Year of Crisis for the Dollar

By Jon Britton

Recurrent crises of the dollar dominated world economic news in 1978. At the beginning of the year, again in April, and then in August, the Carter administration acted to halt an ever-steepening decline of the once mighty greenback in world money markets.

The measures announced turned out to be mere palliatives, however, until the beginnings of a genuine financial panic in late October forced Carter to approve more drastic actions, signaling a real shift in U.S. economic policy.

The growing tendency of international banks and multinational corporations, and even some governments, to dump dollars reflects the deepening contradictions of the world capitalist economy and the inability of even the most powerful imperialist power to overcome them. World overproduction and chronic unemployment exist side by side with soaring prices. Huge trade surpluses in Japan and West Germany have grown up alongside an even bigger U.S. trade deficit.

Competition between giant monopoly concerns and among industrialized and industrializing capitalist countries continues to intensify, leading to more calls for protectionist trade barriers and new efforts to "restructure" profit-threatened industries.

Most important from a political standpoint, the fall of the one international currency and the measures being taken to contain it signal a new and more severe wave of government-imposed austerity around the world.

In the United States, President Carter has escalated his drive to cut back social spending at the federal level. Here is how the November 27 issue of *Newsweek* described his intentions:

As a first step, Carter now hopes to amputate at least \$15 billion from the 1980 budget and \$5 billion from the budget for the remainder of the

1979 fiscal year. Eizenstat and other counselors have warned against the political dangers of slicing too deeply into social programs. But the evidence suggests that Carter intends to outdo even the Republicans in wielding his ax, winding up with a budget deficit as low as \$28 billion, \$11 billion less than the deficit for 1979. "A deficit that small based on spending cuts would be a really remarkable achievement," says American Enterprise Institute economist Rudolf Penner, a conservative who served as an economic aide to Gerald Ford. "I mean really impressive." [Beginning emphasis added.]

According to Hedrick Smith, writing in the November 19 *New York Times*, the cuts will affect "existing programs in health, education, urban aid, environmental protection and job programs."

He continued:

Even with unemployment hovering close to 6 percent, Administration officials said, the 1980 budget is slated to show a cutback of about \$1.5 billion in Federal spending on public service jobs. . . .

Other significant shrinkage is expected in the student loan program, aid to primary and secondary education, the foreign aid program, the Social Security disability income program, the water sewer program of the Environmental Protection Agency, Medicare, Medicaid and the Justice Department's assistance to local law enforcement agencies.

In some cases, the dollar amounts slated for the 1980 budget will rise from 1979 but not enough to keep up with inflation.

'Wartime Austerity'

Carter does not intend to cut military spending. On the contrary, it is slated to rise substantially:

The President still plans to make good on a vow to NATO to boost U.S. military spending by 3 per cent above next year's inflation rate. The Pentagon also hopes to wangle \$200 million in a supplemental appropriation for fiscal 1979 to push development of the mobile M-X missiles. . . . [*Newsweek*, November 27.]

Thus, it appears that Carter is taking steps to impose a kind of "wartime austerity" in the United States. Indeed, this is precisely what one influential Wall Street banker is calling for.

In a speech to fellow financiers at an elegant luncheon December 1, Felix Rohatyn issued a somber warning. Rohatyn, a senior partner in the investment-banking firm of Lazard Frères & Company, was the main architect of the drastic cutbacks imposed by the ruling rich on New York City during the 1974-75 slump. He now contends that the entire U.S. economy is out of control and requires similar

"surgery" on a nationwide scale. The *New York Times* summarized his speech as follows:

America's problems today, he said, parallel New York City's problems of 1975: increasing deficits papered over by accounting gimmicks, increasing reliance on borrowed money to finance those deficits, large hidden liabilities in the form of unfunded pensions and Social Security and the loss of private-sector jobs because of high taxes and low productivity.

Mr. Rohatyn said that what was needed was the equivalent of a wartime austerity program and coalition government, and he called on the President to "mobilize the country's dreams as well as its muscle and demand that the people and the Congress support" it.

"The hour is very late, almost as late for the U.S. as it was for New York in 1975," he said. "In the city, we fought against bankruptcy; in Washington they are fighting the same thing under different names. Controlling inflation, protecting the dollar, avoiding a recession." [December 3.]

The sharply escalated drive for austerity comes on top of Carter's propaganda blitz to get the labor movement to go along with a "voluntary" limit of 7% on increases in wages and fringe benefits combined.

But even according to the government's own statistics, the rate of inflation reached 10% in October. So what Carter is trying to impose are actual cuts in real wages.

The new offensive also comes on top of Carter's campaign to eliminate supposedly "unnecessary" health, safety, and environmental regulations that are cutting into capitalist profits.

Many workers who voted for Carter must be asking themselves the question: How is it that a Democratic president who ran for office on a platform of less guns and more butter, and of rapid economic growth to provide jobs for all, is now carrying out the exact opposite program?

The renewed decline of the once "as good as gold" dollar provides an initial answer. After all, it is in the name of "saving" the dollar and combating inflation that Carter is asking the American people to make sacrifices.

Overproduction—the Underlying Problem

To understand why the dollar has once again hit the skids requires an awareness of a more basic problem—namely growing overproduction (not in relation to human needs but to profit requirements), which has affected virtually all capitalist countries, although unevenly.

Generalized overproduction periodically hits unplanned, profit-oriented economies and the world capitalist economy as a whole. It initially takes the form of intensified competition, financial turmoil, soaring interest rates, and monetary crises, which herald the approach of an open overproduction crisis.

Such a crisis is invariably triggered by "tight money" in one form or another and is marked by excessive inventories of goods relative to sales and a sharp falling

1978 in Review

In this issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, the last one in 1978, we present a series of articles summarizing the major events and trends that typified world politics throughout the year.

After a two-week break we will resume publication with the issue dated January 15.

off of production as capitalists lay off workers and cut costs to the bone to try and avoid bankruptcy.

The U.S. economy is still in the pre-crisis stage of overproduction, and the same holds true for the world capitalist economy as a whole.

For the United States, the "healthy phase" of recovery from the 1974-75 slump came to an end in late 1976. That was when the dollar, after strongly rallying for a year and a half, began once again to depreciate relative to gold, the money commodity.

Since then the economic expansion has been artificially sustained by means of heavy government deficit spending and the easy credit policies of the U.S. central bank. In fact, Carter's budget deficits and the general expansion of credit have been unprecedented for a period when U.S. imperialism was not engaged in a war.

When Carter came into office in January 1977, the "financially prudent" course would have been to tighten fiscal and monetary policy and to carry through on his promise to reduce the military budget. Instead he proposed a series of tax cuts along with added government expenditures.

The tax cuts were aimed at keeping the economy expanding at a brisk pace. The increased spending had the same purpose and also reflected Carter's decision to go along with the Pentagon's requests for substantially increased arms outlays.

There were compelling reasons for Carter's attempt to imitate John F. Kennedy's effort in the early 1960s to "get the country moving again," among them the following:

Carter and the Democratic Party (the main vehicle of capitalist rule in the United States since the 1930s) did not want to jeopardize their coalition with the class-collaborationist misleaders of labor, Blacks, and other oppressed groups by sharply cutting back social spending and presiding over a new slump.

The ruling class as a whole was anxious to stop the erosion of U.S. imperialism's power and influence following its defeat in Vietnam. The rulers decided that on the military front this called for beefing up United States forces in Europe, including equipping them with the fiendish neutron bomb; developing the capacity to wage "limited nuclear war"; and taking advantage of the newest space-age technology to attain a first-strike capability against the Soviet Union*—all extremely expensive undertakings.

There were undoubtedly other international considerations behind Carter's expansionist course. The United States was seen as the main "locomotive" in the economic recovery worldwide. And contin-

*See "First Strike: The Pentagon's Secret Strategy," by Robert C. Aldridge, *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, May 22, 1978, p. 616.

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ued recovery was seen as important in view of the political instability in Europe, partially arising out of the 1974-75 economic crisis, and in view of the massive debts that had been built up by many semicolonial countries.

By April of 1977, however, the dollar had depreciated more than 30% against gold compared to the previous August. This meant that prices would soon be soaring once again, and Carter decided to drop most of his tax-cut proposals.

The government, it turned out, also underspent its budget in 1977 by some \$11 billion.

Nevertheless, the budget deficit hit \$45 billion in fiscal year 1977. And because of the underlying economic weakness, it had to be partially financed with dollars created out of thin air by the U.S. central bank.

This inflationary policy did in fact help to keep the U.S.—and the world—economy expanding, but at the cost of a further weakening of the dollar both in relation to gold and to currencies of countries such as Japan and West Germany, whose governments chose to follow “more prudent” financial policies.

Bluffs and Half Measures

The Carter administration held tenaciously to its expansionist course this past year in face of a weakening dollar. For many months, it prevented a major flight from the greenback through a series of largely symbolic actions that aimed to give the *impression* that Washington was shifting to a restrictive fiscal and monetary policy, without actually constituting such a shift.

One measure that did represent a real shift toward fiscal tightening—the big increase in Social Security payroll taxes that Carter signed into law last December—was not to take effect until 1979 and moreover was partially neutralized by a new tax cut passed this year.

This did not mean that the U.S. government had become indifferent to the dollar's fate. Top officials were perfectly aware that an all-out flight from the dollar, which finances 75% of world trade, would bring on an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions.

But the administration calculated that it could continue its expansionist policy at home, and help keep the world capitalist economy afloat, without triggering such a crisis.

Carter and his advisers expected that a modest decline of the dollar in relation to stronger foreign currencies would be at least partially self-correcting. That is, they hoped lowered exchange rates for the dollar would cut U.S. export prices in terms of the yen and mark, lead to an increase in foreign sales by U.S. corporations, and slice the massive U.S. trade deficit, thereby stabilizing the dollar at a new, if lower, level of equilibrium.

At the same time, Washington was pressing governments with relatively strong currencies to stimulate their economies so as to increase further their imports



Interlandi/Los Angeles Times

of American goods, in turn propping the dollar. The administration no doubt calculated that a modest decline of the dollar would not be bad in this regard either, since the resulting increased competition from cheapened U.S. exports would put added pressure on these governments to “reflate.”

Thus, for a time in mid-1977 Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal openly “talked down” the value of the dollar. He quickly shut up, though, when toward the end of the year the U.S. currency began to nosedive.

Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany were ultimately “convinced” to adopt strongly inflationary policies.

Moreover, there were signs by mid-year that the massive U.S. trade deficit was beginning to shrink and that Japan's huge trade surplus would begin coming down also.

Financial Panic

Still, the prospect of these apparently favorable changes did not prevent a near-panic on world money markets in August and the beginnings of a full-blown financial panic in October. Toward the end of October U.S. currency was falling a dizzying 1% to 2% *per day* against major foreign currencies. The dollar price of gold was jumping \$5, \$6, and even \$7 a day. And the stock market went into a deepening decline that saw the Dow industrial average fall 105 points in twelve trading days.

The rush to get out of dollars was accelerated by moves of the Common Market governments to try once again to create a zone of monetary stability by setting up a fixed-exchange-rate system. (A similar attempt in the early 1970s failed owing to

divergent domestic economic trends and political pressures.) If successful, even for a time, such a monetary union would make the weaker European currencies more attractive in relation to the dollar, since they would then be closely tied to the relatively stable West German mark.

The wholesale dumping of dollars and dollar-denominated stocks and bonds was a clear sign that the bluffs and half measures employed by Carter to stabilize the dollar, while economic pump-priming continued, were insufficient. The financiers were now insisting that these policies give way to credit-restricting “tight money” and sharply reduced government deficits.

On November 1, Carter responded by announcing a new package of measures, which had been secretly put together following the near panic in August. These included a full 1% rise in the Federal Reserve's discount rate, the interest charged on loans to member banks; an increase of \$3 billion in the amount that banks are required to keep in reserve against certain large deposits, cutting into their ability to lend; an expansion of the Federal Reserve's “swap” lines of credit with foreign central banks; and a redoubling of the monthly auction of Fort Knox gold, which had begun in May, to 1.5 million ounces.

Taken by themselves, these measures by no means prove that a basic change of course is occurring. But if Carter doesn't follow through with such a change, he will likely be faced soon with another, even bigger and more panic-stricken, flight out of the dollar.

Indeed the initial evidence is that such a policy change is under way. The dollar has rallied strongly on world money markets since Carter's announcement, gaining 16% in relation to the Swiss franc, 13% against the Japanese yen, 10% against the West German mark, and 7% against the British pound as of December 1. The dollar price of gold dropped more than 20%.

These gains partially reflect aggressive buying of dollars by the Federal Reserve in the currency markets, using borrowed foreign currencies. And they reflect the increased gold sales. In view of the fact that an estimated 500 billion U.S. dollars are on deposit abroad and could potentially be dumped on the market, it is unlikely that the government would be committing these resources to propping up the U.S. currency without at the same time initiating a real tightening on the monetary and fiscal front.

Carter's latest moves to slash social spending are persuasive evidence that precisely that is in the works.

The ruling class has actually been laying the groundwork for more severe austerity for a long time. Throughout most of the 1970s—and stepped up significantly this year—assorted mouthpieces for big business have carried on a campaign aimed at

convincing the American people to lower their expectations in regard to jobs, wages, working conditions, the environment, and government services.

Through California's Proposition 13 and other similar referendums, right-wing forces have mobilized to divert widespread anger over high taxes into support for reactionary swindles that state and local governments have then used as an excuse to cut back or put a lid on social spending.

Weaker Upturn

If Carter follows through with his plans, the change in fiscal and monetary policy would parallel a similar shift carried out by the Nixon administration in 1973, also forced by growing world overproduction.

This time, however, the underlying economy is weaker and therefore the federal budget is much deeper in the red, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the country's total output of goods and services.

This goes a long way to explain why Democrat Carter is now attempting to actually cut back social spending while under Republicans Nixon and Ford it continued to expand.

An additional explanation is that, just as in Europe the Social Democrats and Stalinists have been assigned by the ruling class to take the lead, in the United States it is the Democratic Party that has been given the main role in imposing austerity on working people. The editors of the *New York Times* put it this way:

As a Democrat, the President is well placed to reach [a social] compact. Just as Richard Nixon could more safely lead conservatives to China and into arms deals with the Russians, Mr. Carter can better persuade the poor and working-class constituents of his party to lower their expectations of Government. [November 19.]

However, one section of his "constituents," the coal miners, did not take kindly to Carter's attempt earlier this year to break their strike and force them to "give back" major gains won in earlier struggles. In fact the miners went on to win a victory.

A similar pattern could be repeated on a much bigger scale as Carter drives ahead with his new austerity offensive. The U.S. rulers are well aware of this possibility and they are deeply worried.

It has been reported, for example, that James McIntyre, the budget director, is trying to get Carter to scale back somewhat the 3% increase in military spending projected for next year so as to make the cutbacks in social spending more "politically saleable."

The editors of the *New York Times* are concerned that Carter's cuts may appear too much like decrees coming down from on high, rather than products of a "broad consensus" reached through "informed debate." Here is how they conclude their editorial:

If the nation has not yet learned enough economics to know exactly *what* must be done, we have surely learned from the debacles of Mr. Johnson's Vietnam, Mr. Nixon's [wage-and-price] controls and Mr. Ford's recession the political significance of *how* things are done. A President saying "I have decided" decides nothing for this huge society. A prescription of pain is not usually heeded until the patient accepts the diagnosis.

More 'Slumpflation'

The dollar crisis and Carter's response to it presage a new round of worldwide "slumpflation" in which millions may be laid off while the cost of living continues to soar.

While a modest boom could get under way in Europe and Japan as a result of increased government deficit spending, it is not likely to last long in the face of a stagnating or slumping U.S. economy. As it is, chronic joblessness and excess capacity plague such major industries as steel, textiles, and shipbuilding. Any substantial drop in exports of steel and other products to the big U.S. market will worsen the situation.

Even the new, more technologically advanced sectors such as computers and aerospace, which are supposed to be gradually replacing the older industries, will be hit hard by a U.S. slowdown.

In addition, there has been rapid growth of the money supplies of Japan and West Germany as Tokyo and Bonn have attempted to slow the dollar's decline by buying up the U.S. currency with newly created yen and marks. According to the December 6 *Wall Street Journal*, such purchases by "major central banks" amounted to some \$85 billion (gross) in the first three quarters of 1978 alone.

The huge deficits now being incurred by these governments are also tending to balloon their money supplies.

As a result, while monetary growth in the United States has fluctuated around 8% since late 1976, West German monetary growth has zoomed to 12.1% and Japan's to 11.6%. And that means that prices in these countries, which have been relatively steady, will very likely be shooting up in the period ahead, eventually pressuring these governments also to step on the monetary and fiscal brakes.

Most affected of all as the giant U.S. market and then the world market shrinks will be those countries such as Zaïre, Peru, and Egypt that owe billions to the imperialist banks and that have already been forced to slash living standards to qualify for new loans.

Even the planned economies of the workers states will not escape unscathed, for they must export in order to buy imported goods and to pay off the billions they have borrowed from Western banks.

Nor will New York City, Rome, Tokyo, and other cities already teetering on the financial brink be spared.

As the world slides into a new crisis of overproduction, the capitalist governments will, as Carter is already doing, step up their efforts to get working people to bear the main cost—through mass layoffs, accelerating inflation, and cutbacks in social spending.

But as the coal miners and railroad workers in the United States, the Ford auto workers in Britain, and now the steelworkers in West Germany and the oil workers in Iran have clearly demonstrated, working people are in no mood to just sit back and let that happen. □



MacNelly/New York Daily News

Year of Massive Protest Leaves Shah Hanging by a Thread

By Will Reissner

U.S. imperialism had good reason to feel optimistic about the Middle East at the beginning of 1978. The twin pillars of imperialist policy in the area, Iran and Israel, seemed stronger than ever.

Iran was arming itself at breakneck speed with the goal of becoming the dominant local force in the region. Israel was at the point of a breakthrough leading to a peace treaty with Egypt that would remove the risk of joint Arab military action against it.

But at the year's end the shah of Iran was barely holding on to power and the Israeli-Egyptian treaty remained stalled.

Since a 1953 CIA-engineered coup returned the shah to his throne, his regime had seemed a rock of stability. Merciless repression prevented the development of any open opposition, and the shah grandly talked of making Iran a world power in the 1980s.

But the entire facade cracked in 1978. Waves of demonstrations and strikes have swept Iran all year, decisively politicizing the workers, peasants, and students. The shah was able to remain in power only by turning his expensive arsenal against the Iranian people.

These struggles take place within a context of grave structural economic problems in Iran. Even before the upsurge, the agricultural sector of the economy was collapsing, the industrial sector had stopped growing, the balance of payments was running at a big deficit despite the growth of oil revenues, and a huge capital flight was taking place.

The first signs of open opposition to the shah appeared in late 1977. Antiregime poetry readings in mid-October drew as many as 10,000.

But the current campaign to overturn the monarchy can be traced to January 9, when mass street demonstrations in Qum protested government newspaper attacks on exiled religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni. Protests also took place in other cities, including Tehran.

Many demonstrators were killed when police attacked the protests. In a pattern that came to mark the protest movement, a new wave of demonstrations began forty days later, following the traditional Muslim mourning periods of the third, fourth, and fortieth day after a death. Large demonstrations took place February 18-20 in Tabriz, Shiraz, and Ahwaz. Again police fired on the protesters.

Since then massive demonstrations de-

manding an end to the monarchy have taken place every month, often sweeping the entire country.

The example of the demonstrators encouraged other layers of the population to protest their conditions. Prisoners in Qum went on a month-long hunger strike. Opposition lawyers protested the suppression of democratic and civil rights. Students called for the removal of the secret police from campuses and for the release of those arrested in earlier demonstrations. Ten thousand Kurdish nationalists attended the June 8 funeral of a leader who had spent a quarter of a century in the shah's jails.

As the scope of demonstrations grew, the shah clamped martial law on Isfahan in August. After a new outpouring of anti-shah demonstrations following an August 19 theater fire, which killed hundreds in Abadan, the shah promised to make reforms and shuffled his cabinet. But the demonstrations continued throughout the country.

In early September the protests reached new heights. Three to four million participated in demonstrations on September 4. A half million jammed Tehran's streets on September 7, fraternizing with the troops.

The government responded by imposing martial law and a curfew on twelve cities. At the same time the shah promised to lift censorship and curtail corruption.

But Iranians ignored the martial law, pouring into the streets on September 8. Thousands were mowed down in what came to be known as "Bloody Friday."

With the imposition of martial law, many opponents of the regime were arrested. The U.S. government stepped up its support for the shah, branding his opponents as "ultra-conservative" Muslim traditionalists who oppose the shah's attempts to "modernize" the country.

Throughout the summer and fall the Iranian working class participated in the opposition movement through strikes that tied up vital sectors of the economy. By the fall, strikes were taking place among telegraph workers, copper miners, dockers, textile workers, and workers on the railroads, buses, airlines, radio and television, and newspapers.

These strikes combined demands for higher wages with calls for an end to martial law, for release of the political prisoners, and an end to censorship.

The shah tried to contain the movement through a combination of concessions and repression. The government quickly gave

in to strikers' wage demands and the shah released 1,126 political prisoners on October 26. But at the same time troops were killing people in the streets.

The National Front, the main bourgeois opposition group, announced on October 19 that it was willing to form a cabinet under the shah. Religious leaders also stated their willingness to let the shah remain on the throne. But Ayatollah Khomeyni, from exile, denounced any compromise with the shah and vowed that anyone who compromised would be banished from the opposition movement. Because of Khomeyni's following, the National Front was forced to back down.

A nationwide oil strike on October 31 shook the regime. Strikers demanded an end to martial law, freedom for the prisoners, punishment of those responsible for the massacres, and removal of the secret police "security offices" from the refineries.

The next day the army occupied the refineries in an attempt to break the strike. But the workers held firm. During the strike workers committees were formed.

While the oil strike continued, on November 5 the biggest demonstrations seen to that point swept the country. A prerevolutionary situation had developed. The shah, whose power was rapidly slipping away, placed all of Iran under martial law and set up a military government.

The U.S. signaled its satisfaction, and reports circulated that the Pentagon had assembled a force of 100,000 troops to occupy the oilfields if necessary, prompting Soviet Premier Brezhnev to state that any foreign military intervention "would be regarded as affecting the interests of the security of the USSR."

The new military government imposed a nationwide curfew and arrested 2,000 opponents. The following day strikers cut off water and electricity in Tehran. Other strikes continued as well.

But the military was able to impose a temporary stalemate. No section of the working class had been decisively defeated, but the shah remained on the throne.

In the last week of November, 1.2 million people in a religious procession in Mashad raised slogans against the shah, as did 200,000 in Qum.

The stalemate was broken in early December. In the first days of the month thousands of people, wearing burial shrouds, took to the street to denounce the shah's rule. The ensuing repression is

believed to have been even bloodier than "Bloody Friday."

As the religious holiday Ashura approached, the government was forced to rescind its ban on street demonstrations. December 10 and 11 saw as many as seven million people take to the streets of Iran, delivering a stunning political defeat to the regime.

While the opposition movement is largely headed by religious figures, the demonstrations had a clearly political tone. Among the banners and placards carried by marchers were "U.S. imperialists pull out of Iran," "We will destroy Yankee power in Iran," and "We will kill Iran's dictator."

Oil workers went back on strike, crippling oil production. The central bank workers continued their strike. The bazaar merchants' shops have been closed since November 5.

The relationship of forces was clearly swinging against the government.

The U.S. government has heavily bolstered its intelligence operations in Tehran following December 10-11. U.S. agents are seeking to promote a coalition government, based on "moderate" opposition figures, that would leave the shah in control of the armed forces.

At the same time sections of the army, which is the shah's only remaining base of support, went on the offensive in dozens of cities beginning December 13. Troops were paraded through the streets in pro-shah demonstrations, beating and killing pedestrians and motorists who refused to join chants of "Long live the shah."

But an army in which draftees comprise 40 to 50 percent of the ground forces cannot remain totally insulated from the ferment in society. One indication of the mood in the ranks came on December 11, when three soldiers opened fire on an officers' mess, killing twelve and wounding fifty.

The mass opposition movement has already won significant victories. It has forced the shah to release hundreds of political prisoners, it has driven thousands of advisers from imperialist countries out of Iran, and has inspired people throughout the Middle East who suffer under dictatorial rule.

Even if the shah is able to keep his throne, the Iranian working class, peasants, and students have decisively entered the political arena, and have felt their power. They have won important gains. Workers organizations have sprung up in many places. There can be no return to the pre-1978 status quo.

The major setback imperialism has suffered in Iran has put the Carter administration in a much weaker position in its attempts to consolidate an Israeli-Egyptian treaty.

As the year opened it seemed a treaty would be quickly consummated. Near euphoria reigned in Jerusalem and Washing-

ton after Sadat's visit to Israel last December. Sadat and Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Sadat's initiative and the subsequent peace talks were a major victory for Israel. Prime Minister Begin had won Egyptian recognition of Israel without giving away anything in return.

But the talks broke down over the Zionist state's provocative attitude, as Begin categorically rejected any withdrawal from territories captured in 1967 and announced plans for new Israeli settlements on the occupied West Bank.

On March 14, 25,000 Israeli troops invaded southern Lebanon, supposedly in retaliation for a Palestinian commando raid on Tel Aviv three days earlier. The real purpose was to drive the Palestinians out of southern Lebanon.

At least 265,000 people were made homeless in the course of the occupation. More than 1,000 were killed, many by Israeli antipersonnel cluster bombs dropped on Arab villages.

Although the Palestinians were forced to pull back, they were not crushed and did not lose their sole remaining base of operations in the Middle East.

The worldwide outcry against the invasion of Lebanon produced sharp fissures in the Zionist establishment. At the same time, on the heels of Sadat's visit, a mass peace movement emerged in Israel, calling for an end to settlement on the West Bank. On April 1, 45,000 people demonstrated for "Peace Now" in Tel Aviv. Later in the month 4,000 demonstrators presented the government with 60,000 signatures on cards demanding "Peace Now."

The delay in achieving a treaty gave Sadat's Palestinian opponents more time to speak out against his betrayal. In response the Egyptian president began to whip up an anti-Palestinian frenzy in the Egyptian press, using a February 18 Palestinian attack on an Egyptian official in Cyprus as an excuse.

To break through the impasse, President Carter called Sadat and Begin together to Camp David. On September 17 a general agreement was announced. It constituted a major victory for Israel and the U.S.

The Camp David accords had two components. First Egypt agreed to a treaty with Israel, including diplomatic relations, in return for Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula.

The second part of the agreement was a "Framework for Peace in the Middle East," based on UN Security Council Resolution 242. This gives the general outlines of future, hypothetical peace treaties between Israel and Jordan and Syria. It sanctions at least five years of continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, during which the Palestinians will be allowed "administrative authority." The future status of the West Bank and Gaza are to be renegotiated after the five years are up, with no guarantee of Israeli

withdrawal even then. Sadat had rejected this same proposal in December 1977.

Sadat wanted this general framework in order to convince the Arab people he was not leaving the Palestinians and other Arab states to face the Israelis alone.

As a result of Camp David, Israel has neutralized Egypt without making any concessions to the Palestinians. The accords also make no mention of the Golan Heights or East Jerusalem.

Although Israel will return the Sinai to Egypt, the U.S. agreed to build Israel two new air bases to replace those it gives up.

The United States was able to shut the Soviet Union out of the peace talks and consolidated its position as the main outside force in the Middle East.

The accords were so favorable to Israel that the Knesset voted 4-1 in favor of acceptance.

The tenuous character of any peace in the Middle East was brought home, however, by the renewal of fighting in Lebanon in October. Four hundred people were killed and 1,200 wounded in fighting that followed an attack by Christian militias on Syrian troops in Beirut.

Israeli gunboats used the fighting as an excuse to shell Palestinian positions in several parts of Lebanon.

The December 17 deadline for signing a treaty, agreed to at Camp David, has passed. Two points of contention remain. Egypt wants to change a clause implying the treaty with Israel supersedes its previous treaties with Arab countries. And Israel refuses to provide a specific timetable for elections of Palestinian councils in the occupied areas.

The signing of the peace treaty would have contradictory effects in the Middle East. It would certainly strengthen Israel and weaken the Palestinian cause. The removal of the largest Arab military power from joint opposition to Israel effectively removes any military restraint on Israeli aggression against Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian refugees in those countries.

The accords also strengthened Begin's hand at home. The peace movement, which remained trapped within the framework of Zionism, collapsed in the wake of Camp David.

In Egypt the masses expect the end of the conflict with Israel to lead to rapid improvement in their wretched standard of living. But this will not happen. Already international lenders are demanding new austerity measures against the Egyptian working class as a precondition to further loans.

Sadat's economic "liberalization," with incentives for foreign capitalist investment, has not improved the economy. Instead it has led to the importation of luxury consumer goods for the rich.

The combination of austerity for the masses and luxury for the rich may prove an explosive mix. □

Nicaragua, Peru—New Rise of Latin American Revolution

By Fred Murphy

Nineteen seventy-eight was a year of mounting crises for the dictatorial regimes of Latin America.

A popular insurrection posed the greatest threat in the Somoza family's forty years of rule in Nicaragua. General strikes and deepgoing radicalization confronted Peru's military junta with a prerevolutionary situation. Brazil's generals looked on helplessly as the industrial workers of São Paulo asserted their right to strike in massive numbers. And the badly divided armed forces regime in Bolivia staggered from coup to coup.

Somoza Clings to Power

The year opened with the assassination of Nicaragua's foremost bourgeois oppositionist, publisher Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, on January 10. Tens of thousands turned out for his funeral, which became a protest march against the corrupt, dictatorial rule of President Anastasio Somoza Debayle.

Capitalist opposition sectors initiated a two-week shutdown of business and industry on January 23 in an effort to force Somoza to resign. When the dictator refused to budge, the opposition called off the lockout. They feared the movement might escape their control; thousands of workers and youth were beginning to take to the streets.

Growing frustration among the masses led to spontaneous uprisings in the poor, predominantly Indian districts of Masaya and León in March. There were a number of labor struggles in July, including a twenty-four-hour general strike.

On August 22, a commando unit of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) occupied the National Palace in Managua and took sixty congressmen and top officials of Somoza's regime hostage. The FSLN forced Somoza to free all Sandinista prisoners in his jails and pay a ransom of \$500,000.

Tens of thousands turned out to line the route from the National Palace and cheer the guerrillas as they drove by after winning their demands.

The opposition began another lockout on August 24. In the week that followed, youth under FSLN leadership routed the National Guard from the streets of Matagalpa—Nicaragua's third-largest city—and held the city for five days.

The Guard retook Matagalpa on August 31. But eight days later new uprisings broke out in Masaya, León, Chinandega, and Estelí. For two weeks there was an

open civil war between thousands of poorly armed youth led by the FSLN and the U.S.-trained, Israeli-equipped National Guard.

Only by ordering the wholesale destruction of four of Nicaragua's largest cities was Somoza able to put down the uprisings. Estimates of the dead range as high as 10,000. Young people were singled out for torture, rape, and cold-blooded murder in the reign of terror that followed the defeat of the insurrection. Entire families perished in the aerial bombardment and heavy artillery shelling of León, Estelí, Masaya, and Chinandega. Tens of thousands more managed to escape with their lives and flee to neighboring countries.

Before the September civil war, Washington was trying to take its distance from Somoza, who had outlived his usefulness as the most reliable U.S. puppet in Central America. The State Department was offering encouragement to the dictator's bourgeois opponents in hopes of blocking the increasingly popular Sandinista Front. But the U.S. rulers stood aside while the National Guard carried out its butchery.

Once the danger of Somoza's overthrow by the masses had subsided, Washington stepped up its pressure to ease the dictator out of power, going so far as to get the International Monetary Fund to postpone a \$20 million loan desperately needed by Somoza's government.

Maneuvers in the Organization of American States led to the sending of a team of "mediators"—diplomats from the United States, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic—who spent two months trying to convince Somoza to resign while pressuring the Broad Opposition Front (FAO)¹ to moderate its demands.

Washington's efforts were so transparently aimed at preserving "Somozism without Somoza" that the "Group of Twelve"—prominent businessmen and religious and academic figures closely linked to the Sandinistas—withdrawed from the FAO and the negotiations in late October. The remaining forces in the FAO appear to be willing to reach agreement with Somoza on a 1979 plebiscite to decide whether he stays in power—a laughable proposition given Somoza's demonstrated skill at vote-rigging.

Meanwhile, the Sandinista Front has reportedly obtained new arms and equipment, and its ranks have been swelled by

thousands of new recruits who flocked to the guerrillas after the September uprisings. It thus appears that the Sandinistas could soon pose a more formidable challenge to the National Guard than they did in the earlier fighting.

The biggest weakness of the anti-Somoza struggle, however, has been political and not military. No leadership has yet emerged that could mobilize the working class, peasantry, and unemployed youth independently of the capitalist opposition. The leaders of the Sandinista Front have blocked this crucial task by maintaining their political ties to the "Twelve" and, through them, to the rest of the opposition capitalists—whose fear of the masses runs deeper than their opposition to Somoza.

The imperialists are worried that the upsurge in Nicaragua could spread to other Central American countries.

There were big demonstrations by workers and students in Guatemala on several occasions this year, including a march of 60,000 on June 8 protesting the May 29 massacre of 114 Indian peasants by government troops at the village of Panzós. Public employees struck throughout the country in early October, joining actions by students, shantytown residents, and industrial workers against a 100 percent hike in transportation fares. Gen. Romeo Lucas García's government was finally forced to concede a fare rollback. The protests were followed by a wave of murders and kidnappings by right-wing paramilitary bands. (Amnesty International reported in February that "death squads" have killed more than 20,000 Guatemalans since 1966.)

President Rodrigo Carazo of Costa Rica has sought to head off the danger of what he calls "the proliferation of Sandinism" by denouncing Somoza and offering support to the bourgeois opposition in Nicaragua. Somoza's response has been a series of military attacks across the Costa Rican border, which led to a break in diplomatic relations between the two countries in November.

Carazo's government has arrested and deported scores of FSLN guerrillas, and has tried to keep the 30,000 Nicaraguan refugees in conditions of second-class citizenship. Nonetheless, owing to the tremendous support for the anti-Somoza struggle among Costa Ricans, Carazo has had to tolerate pro-Sandinista activities in the country. The presence of the refugees and the growing campaign on their behalf, along with the beginnings of an economic

1. Frente Amplio Opositor. Coalition of bourgeois parties opposed to Somoza.

crisis, promise to deepen the radicalization that is under way in Costa Rica.

Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos has also put on a big show of backing the fight against Somoza. He has thus managed to recover from a wave of protest against the new Panama Canal treaties earlier in the year.

As ratified in April by the U.S. Senate, the treaties include an explicit declaration of Washington's "right to take such steps as it deems necessary . . . including the use of military force" to keep the canal open. The biggest protest against this was in June, when 100,000 turned out to cheer ex-President Arnulfo Arias, who denounced the treaties, government corruption, and the Torrijos personality cult.

In October, Torrijos turned the government over to a protégé, Aristides Royo. But he kept his powerful post as commander of the National Guard. Torrijos has promised presidential elections for 1984; he is organizing his newly formed Democratic Revolutionary Party to be ready for them.

Revolutionary Upsurge in Peru

The biggest mass mobilizations in a number of years in Latin America took place in Peru in 1978. General strikes swept the country February 27-28 and May 22-23. There were continual city- or province-wide work stoppages, along with explosions of protest in the shantytowns, land seizures by peasants, factory occupations, and mobilizations by high-school and university students. Teachers carried out a nationwide eighty-day strike, and there were big struggles among miners, health workers, bank clerks, and metalworkers—to name just a few. Public employees organized a union for the first time and struck throughout the country on several occasions.

The regime of Gen. Francisco Morales Bermúdez has tried to halt this upsurge—unprecedented in Peruvian history—with both political concessions and military repression. But the depth of Peru's economic crisis and its \$8 billion foreign debt compel the government to impose harsher and harsher austerity measures—calling forth still more protests.

The July 1977 general strike that opened the present upsurge showed that the military had lost its credibility. Few illusions remained in what was left of General Velasco's "revolution" of the early 1970s; the masses hated the dictatorship but no longer feared it. In hope of gradually installing a civilian regime better able to impose austerity, the military called elections for a Constituent Assembly.

The vote came on June 18 of this year. This was less than a month after the May general strike, at a time when nine leftist candidates had been deported, all independent newsmagazines had been closed down, and political gatherings were banned.

Despite all this, and despite the fact that

some three million "illiterate" Indian peasants could not vote, workers parties took 25 of the 100 seats in the assembly. Hugo Blanco and four other Trotskyists were among the twelve deputies elected on the slate of the Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front (FOCEP). The pro-Moscow Communist Party (*Unidad*) took only six seats, and most of the other workers deputies came from forces to the CP's left that had been playing leading roles in the mass movement.

By the time the assembly opened July 28, the regime had been forced to readmit the deportees, release most political prisoners, and allow the independent press to resume publication.

At the opening session of the Constituent Assembly, Hugo Blanco and other workers deputies introduced a motion declaring the assembly sovereign and abolishing the dictatorship. The bourgeois parties, which had all campaigned demagogically against military rule, voted this down without debate, making it clear they would not challenge the ruling junta and would confine themselves to their assigned task of writing a new constitution.

Meanwhile, the working-class and popular upsurge continued. The government was able to break a nationwide miners strike in September only with brutal repression and the military occupation of the mining districts. Fresh struggles broke out in October and November, involving students, public employees, bank workers, metalworkers, peasants, and other sectors. The movement even spread to Peru's vast Amazon region, with general strikes in the jungle cities of Pucallpa and Iquitos. By mid-December miners were again on strike in the South, and pressure was building on the leaders of the main union federation, the CGTP, for a new general strike.

Independent forms of organization—usually called "people's assemblies" or "fronts for defense of the people"—are springing up more and more in the course of the upsurge in Peru. These are based on the trade unions, but go beyond them to involve peasant and shantytown organizations, student groups, parents associations, and political parties. These formations could develop into organs of workers and peasants political power at a future stage of the fight against the dictatorship. The Peruvian Trotskyists are seeking to popularize the "people's assemblies," and in some areas have played an important role in organizing them.

While the Communist Party (*Unidad*) remains in control of the apparatus of the CGTP union federation, its influence among the ranks of the workers is waning. Trotskyist or centrist forces already play leading roles among the miners, metalworkers, teachers, and peasants, and are gaining influence in many other unions and popular organizations.

The rulers' efforts to prevent the consolidation of a revolutionary leadership have thus far come to naught. In late August they launched an experiment in extraofficial terror—a wave of bombings and kidnappings aimed primarily at the Trotskyists and carried out by the "Peruvian Anticommunist Alliance" (AAP). The independent press almost immediately published evidence linking the "AAP" to the military intelligence apparatus. Demands rose for a halt to such activities, a full investigation, and the punishment of those responsible. The government offered no response, but the shadowy organization has not been heard from since.

Next the military and the right wing tried a slander campaign against Hugo Blanco, charging him in their press with everything from failure to support his children to absconding with funds collected in Sweden for fired Peruvian unionists. These slanders found little echo in the population, owing to Blanco's long-standing reputation as well as to the fact that a number of corruption scandals involving top officials were coming to light at the same time.

The Constituent Assembly, with its bourgeois majority, may eventually produce a repressive constitution aimed at excluding the radical left from the general elections that are planned for 1979 or 1980. But things have reached a point where this might backfire, helping the workers and peasants to shed more of their already fading parliamentary illusions.

Neither is the military in any position to launch a frontal assault on the masses and their organizations. The capitalists have largely lost confidence in the officer corps' ability to administer the country; moreover, they are divided among themselves. At the same time, the middle classes are moving sharply to the left under the impact of the economic crisis.

Bigger class battles are clearly on the agenda for Peru in 1979, and the prospects are bright for building a revolutionary working-class party. A big step toward this goal came in October with the fusion of five Trotskyist groups to form the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party). The PRT is seeking to carry the unification process forward with the other two Peruvian Trotskyist organizations, the PST and the POMR.²

Strike Wave in Brazil

The Brazilian working class emerged

2. PST—Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party); POMR—Partido Obrero Marxista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Marxist Workers Party). The PRT and the PST are sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International; the POMR is affiliated to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.

dramatically from ten years of quiescence in 1978. A series of well-organized strikes by metalworkers in the industrial suburbs of São Paulo hit plant after plant in May and June, eventually involving some 200,000 workers. After direct negotiations with management—formally illegal—wage increases of 10 to 15 percent were won at most plants. The Geisel regime stood aside, perhaps recalling the wave of student protests that had swept Brazil the previous year in response to the arrest of eight workers and students.

The strike wave continued from July through September, involving tens of thousands of teachers, bank clerks, doctors, oil workers, and others in cities throughout the country. Then on October 30, 350,000 metalworkers downed tools in the city of São Paulo itself and in other suburbs that had not been affected by the earlier strikes.

The basic demand of the Brazilian workers is a raise in pay. Real wages have been stagnant since 1969, and before that they had dropped considerably from their 1964 levels. Strong opposition currents have emerged both within and outside the government-controlled unions, raising demands for trade-union rights as well as for a general amnesty and an end to the dictatorship.

One of the biggest street demonstrations in Brazil since 1964 took place August 27, when 20,000 persons gathered in front of the São Paulo cathedral to protest the high cost of living. On July 7, 5,000 Blacks rallied in São Paulo against racial discrimination—the first such action since the 1930s.

The growing opposition to the fourteen-year-old military regime was reflected in a distorted way in the November 15 elections to Brazil's powerless Congress. Of 34 million votes cast, more than 5 million were spoiled or blank, and 17 million went to the only legal opposition, the bourgeois Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). The government's ARENA party retained its majority in Congress, however, owing to extreme gerrymandering.

Banzer Dumped; Pinochet in Trouble

The seven-year rule of Bolivian dictator Gen. Hugo Banzer came to an inglorious end in 1978. Banzer had planned to hold a rigged election in July and install his handpicked successor, Gen. Juan Pereda. But in January a hunger strike by 1,300 persons and a one-day general strike called by the miners union forced Banzer to declare a full amnesty and allow his leading opponents to return to the country and participate in the elections.

Even with massive vote fraud, General Pereda emerged from the contest with less than a clear majority. Former president Hernán Siles Suazo ran second at the head of the Democratic People's Union (UDP), a popular front backed by the pro-Moscow Communist Party. As protests mounted, the elections court annulled the vote.

Pereda then launched a coup d'état and deposed his patron Banzer.

Pereda failed to establish a strong regime, and was in turn ousted by army chief Gen. David Padilla on November 24. During his brief rule, Pereda was forced to abolish all controls on the press, repeal the draconian Internal Security Law, and reopen the universities.

General Padilla has promised new elections for July 1, 1979. He has the enthusiastic backing of Siles Suazo's UDP, which turned out 50,000 persons in La Paz to greet the new military rulers on November 24.

Washington expressed satisfaction with Padilla's coup and election call, and is now hoping that Siles Suazo can repeat what President Antonio Guzmán has accomplished so far in the Dominican Republic—install a bourgeois-democratic regime with a minimum of social unrest.

The Bolivian workers may disrupt the State Department's plans, however. And while not as well organized as their Bolivian comrades, the Dominican workers could have some surprises in store for Guzmán. Both countries face economic crises, and the workers will be pressing to recover what they lost under Banzer and Balaguer.

Chile's Gen. Augusto Pinochet is facing a serious erosion of his regime owing to revelations linking top secret police officials to the murder of exiled opposition leader Orlando Letelier in Washington in 1976. The U.S. government has indicted ex-DINA chief Gen. Manuel Contreras and two other Chilean intelligence officers for murder—an object lesson to Pinochet and other dictators on the impropriety of extending their terror campaigns to American soil.

Thousands of Chilean copper miners at Chuquicamata boycotted lunchrooms in August to demand a wage increase. The regime's hard line and the workers' militancy forced even some progovernment union officials to speak out against Pinochet's economic policies.

Argentine dictator Gen. Jorge Videla whipped up war hysteria in a border dispute with Chile, so as to draw attention away from rising unemployment, a 160 percent inflation rate, and the military's failure to achieve its long-promised "national reorganization." Although trade-union leaders fell in behind Videla's campaign, there were still some important labor actions: a month-long overtime ban by dock workers in July and August, and a strike by rail workers in November.

Feeling the heat from a burgeoning amnesty campaign, Mexican President López Portillo admitted in September that his regime holds political prisoners. He declared a limited amnesty, but took no steps to disband the Brigada Blanca (White Brigade) or similar paramilitary bands.

Human-rights activists were not deterred

by López's token concessions. They turned out 100,000 persons for an October 2 demonstration in Mexico City commemorating the 1968 student massacre and demanding the release of all political prisoners and the presentation of the more than 300 "disappeared."

Mexican socialist Héctor Marroquín's name was on a list of "amnestied" exiles released by the government in November. But the criminal charges against Marroquín in the state of Nuevo León still stand. Thus he is continuing his campaign to gain political asylum in the United States.

An antirepression movement is also under way in Colombia, focused against the draconian Security Statute that newly elected President Julio César Turbay decreed in August.

'Dialogue' Among Cubans Worries Carter

Cuban leader Fidel Castro took steps in 1978 to open a "dialogue" with Cubans living abroad. While most emigrés have been quite hostile to the Cuban revolution in the past, a mood of greater openness toward Cuba has developed in recent years. To encourage this, Castro held a series of talks with exile delegations beginning in September. On November 21, he announced that his regime would release some 3,000 Cubans still being held for counterrevolutionary activities—virtually all of Cuba's political prisoners.

The only condition placed on the prisoner release was that the United States accept all those who wished to go there. Castro cited Washington's "moral obligation" to admit those it had sent to carry out attacks on Cuba.

The Carter administration's response was to try to disrupt the Castro government's new relations with the exiles and to seek new pretexts for attacking Cuba. A story about nuclear-armed Soviet jets was cooked up, spy flights were resumed, and naval "maneuvers" were held only fifty miles from Cuban shores.

In trying to explain why the Justice Department was dragging its feet on "screening" the prisoners who wanted to go to the United States, spokesman John Russell declared: "We just don't want a bunch of pimps and whores coming in." If this was not an outright racist remark it was a belated admission of the types the CIA recruited to do its dirty work.

Washington's attitude has served only to expose its hypocritical "human rights" rhetoric, while enhancing the Cuban regime's standing among the exiles. Castro said at a November 21 news conference that the new U.S. threats "will not affect in the least our program of dialogue with the representatives of the Cuban community abroad and neither will it affect in the least the matter of releasing prisoners."

At the same time, he termed the issue of the Soviet jets a "farce" and a "pseudo-crisis." "What we should be asked," Castro

said, "is if we are not concerned over the fact that the United States has hundreds of B-52s, thousands of strategic planes and bombers and tens of thousands of atom bombs." He concluded by reiterating that

the lifting of the U.S. economic blockade is a precondition for any improvement in relations between the two countries. A growing number of Cubans in the United States are beginning to raise this demand.

China—Teng Charts a New Course

By Leslie Evans

If 1977 was a year of hinted changes and veiled polemics against the abstractions of Maoist dogma, 1978 was the year when China's post-Mao leaders finally decided what to do with the economic and political wreckage bequeathed to them by the Great Helmsman.

In Mao's day, in the name of an isolationist policy of "self-reliance," the Chinese government had no foreign debt, bought nothing on credit, accepted no loans, and disparaged Western technology. This prolonged experiment with the Stalinist theory of building socialism in one country proved to be injurious to China's development in every sphere.

Ultimately the losses suffered owing to this autarky—as well as popular revulsion at the extreme repression required to sustain the Maoist hierarchy over such a stagnant backwater—became so glaring that something had to be done. Operating from the same narrowly nationalistic and nonrevolutionary framework as the Maoists, China's present rulers have shifted to a strategy that stakes everything on military, economic, and cultural collaboration with the advanced capitalist powers.

The one asset Mao left to his heirs was a spotless credit rating, since he never bought anything on time. Between 1974 and 1977, Peking spent less than US\$1.5 billion total on foreign plant and equipment. In the first half of 1978 alone, it spent upwards of US\$5 billion for plant and machinery, and this was only the beginning of the buying spree. By the end of the year, Chinese trade and military delegations had options or contracts signed for everything from steel mills to color television factories and from sophisticated military equipment to a \$500 million deal with an American chain to build a string of luxury hotels in China.

In the first week of December, Peking announced that for the first time it would permit Western and Japanese firms to open offices in China; that it would accept foreign loans, and even "foreign aid," and that contracts would be signed with foreign capitalist companies on a profit-sharing basis that would give them long-term interests in the plants they would help to construct in China.

The biggest payment Peking is making for access to capitalist technology is not

financial but political. It includes open support to the shah of Iran in the midst of his bloody confrontation with the Iranian masses; endorsement in June of the Belgian-French intervention on the side of the brutal Mobutu dictatorship in Zaïre; and public alignment with Washington against Cuba.

While these policies had been initiated by Mao, at least from the time of Nixon's visit in 1972, the new regime's eagerness for imperialist support has led it to a more blatant expression of this counterrevolutionary line. This in turn has produced some further shifts, such as the open rupture with Vietnam in April, which had come to the verge of open warfare by year's end, as Peking backed Pnompenh in its deepening conflict with Hanoi. In July, the long-strained relations between Peking and Tirana reached the breaking point and China, with echoes of the Soviet government's behavior toward Peking in 1960, abruptly withdrew all aid and technicians from Albania.

The Albanian Party of Labor (CP) responded with an open letter to the CCP on July 29, which pointedly remarked that "The implementation of the theory of 'three worlds' led the Chinese leadership to unite even with the 'devil' . . . Pinochet and Franco, former nazi generals of the German Wehrmacht and the Japanese imperial army, dyed-in-the-wool criminals like Mobutu and bloodthirsty kings, American bosses and presidents of multinational companies, became its allies."

If China's foreign policy has been unmitigatedly reactionary, domestically the post-Mao government, more and more dominated by twice-purged Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing, has faced a different problem that has driven it further down the road of an uncomfortable liberalization.

Mao's relentless persecution of those with even the smallest reservations about his own omniscience left a heritage of enormous bitterness. By the time of his death the jails and labor camps were filled to overflowing; scientific and cultural work had long ground to a halt; and the government faced a populace that no longer believed in its truthfulness.

The scope of this disaffection can be

gauged from the numbers released from detention—not to mention the excruciatingly long time the new government took before deciding to go ahead with a course of release and "rehabilitation." In Shanghai in March, 10,000 people were declared not guilty of counterrevolutionary crimes during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. In the first week of June it was announced that 110,000 were released from detention after twenty-one years, the sad remnant of those who had dared to voice their criticisms of the Mao regime in the ill-fated "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" campaign of 1957. And in the first week of December, following rallies of thousands in Peking requesting democratic rights and reforms, Chinese sources informed the Kyodo news agency of Japan that 300,000 people from the city of Wuhan who had been branded "anti-party elements" in 1967 were to be cleared.

During the unique ten days of the "democracy movement" in Peking at the end of November, some Chinese openly spoke to Western reporters and compared Mao's last years, and particularly the suppression of the April 1976 demonstrations in Peking's Tien An Men Square, with the Watergate scandal in the United States that brought down the Nixon government.

This is an apt comparison and helps in understanding what the "democracy movement" was all about. That it was authorized, and to some degree even controlled and directed from the top there should be no doubt. As recently as six months before there were still reports of public executions in China for so minor an infraction of party regulations as the unauthorized distribution of oppositional leaflets.

And to a degree, the Peking wall posters—some at least—served as a vehicle for Teng's faction to tarnish the reputations of all those in the current leadership, including party Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, who benefited from Mao's last decade and helped to twice drive Teng from office in disgrace.

But a deeper problem for Teng is the risk of losing his current reputation as an opponent of Mao and a liberalizer. Thus, when the government sought to clamp down on the rallies and wall posters at the end of November, it also wanted to avoid a direct confrontation. It flooded Tien An Men Square with plainclothes police, put up its own wall posters, and appealed for discipline, but did not arrest anyone. Yet the bureaucracy is in no position to give in to requests, however politely made, for free elections, an end to censorship, and a reduction of the pay of officials to the level of ordinary workers.

Teng Hsiao-p'ing has greatly strengthened his position in the CCP leadership, and has won a significant following among the Chinese masses. But he has done so by acceding to a revolution of rising expectations. Sooner or later the piper will have to be paid. □

Asia—New Step Forward for World Revolution

By Dan Dickeson

In the spring of 1978 the Vietnamese government took sweeping measures to abolish capitalism in the south. Masses of workers were mobilized to enforce economic policies that paved the way for the establishment of a unified, planned economy throughout Vietnam.

The accomplishment of this key socialist task of the Vietnamese revolution was carried out under the pressure of economic disruption caused by hoarding and speculation in commodities by private merchants. Abolition of the old South Vietnamese currency wiped out the illegally hoarded wealth of southern capitalists in one stroke.

In addition to the widespread destruction caused by years of imperialist aggression, the Vietnamese people also had to contend with natural disasters that wreaked havoc with food production and reconstruction. The severe drought of 1977 was followed by the worst flooding in recent history during the monsoon season in 1978. A substantial part of Vietnam's rice harvest was lost in the floods.

The nationalization of commerce in southern Vietnam was bitterly denounced not only by French and American imperialists, but also by the Stalinist regime in China. Peking charged that the anticapitalist measures were actually acts of racial discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. Most of the expropriated merchants in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) were Chinese, and tens of thousands of them sought to leave for Hong Kong, Taiwan, or China. Even while conducting a propaganda campaign about the plight of these "refugees," Peking refused to accept any after July.

By the end of the year, tens of thousands of Vietnamese emigres had made their way to Hong Kong, Malaysia, or Thailand, where they waited to be allowed into other capitalist countries. The major imperialist powers, while churning out anti-Vietnamese propaganda about these "refugees from Communist persecution," refused to admit more than a small part of them.

The Chinese propaganda offensive around the "refugees" was accompanied by a cutoff of badly needed economic aid to Vietnam, and a buildup of troops along the Sino-Vietnamese border. Clashes were reported at points along the border, and visitors reported that the northern region of Vietnam was being placed on a war footing.

In this context, Hanoi moved to firm up

its diplomatic and economic relations with neighboring capitalist countries. Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong traveled to Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Hanoi also sought to restore diplomatic relations with Washington, even dropping its insistence that the U.S. provide the \$4.75 billion in reconstruction aid promised by Nixon in 1973. The U.S. government rejected these overtures, however, renewing its trade embargo in September.

At the end of October, Vietnamese leaders traveled to Moscow, where they signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union.

The long-simmering dispute over the border between Vietnam and Cambodia broke out in a major military clash at the end of 1977. Each side accused the other of launching an invasion. Independently verifiable information is lacking, but radio broadcasts by both sides indicate that sporadic clashes have continued throughout 1978. Radio Hanoi claimed in November that large numbers of Cambodian troops had mutinied and set up a "rebel government" in parts of eastern Cambodia, and in early December it reported the formation of a "Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation."

Peking lined up behind Pnompenh, providing economic and military assistance and publicizing Cambodian reports of the fighting.

There were indications that Peking urged Pnompenh to break its extreme diplomatic isolation, so as to counter the widespread reports of brutal repression in Cambodia. The Cambodian regime established diplomatic relations with Japan in September, and Foreign Minister Ieng Sary visited the Philippines, Indonesia, and Japan the following month. He also addressed the United Nations, and invited UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim to visit Cambodia.

Capitalists on the Offensive in Japan

1978 saw a continuation of the slow recovery of the Japanese economy. But it was a recovery only for the major capitalists; for Japanese workers the 1974-75 recession never ended.

The decline of the U.S. dollar against the yen combined with protectionist measures abroad caused Japanese exports to fall off in the latter part of the year. But the impact on Japanese corporations was cushioned by a dramatic decline in the

prices of key raw materials such as crude oil (which are tied to the dollar), and by the expansionary fiscal policies of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government. The second half of 1978 saw record corporate profits, and a speculative boom on the Tokyo stock exchange.

To defend its profits, the ruling class had to carry out a wide-ranging offensive against the rights and living standards of working people in Japan. The government provided incentives for corporations affected by declining exports to close less profitable plants and invest their capital elsewhere. By the end of 1978, Japan's five major steel corporations had shut down twenty-three out of sixty-six blast furnaces, and plans were announced to eliminate 35% of the country's shipbuilding capacity.

Unemployment reached a nineteen-year record level of 1.25 million in September. "Surplus employment" (i.e., the number of workers who will not be replaced when they retire) was estimated at 4.6 million. For college graduates seeking jobs at the end of 1978, there were only an estimated 58 openings for every 100 applicants.

The ruling class offensive sought to exacerbate the deep divisions within the working class. Unemployment hit hardest at the most oppressed layers—women, Koreans, the Buraku people, and youth.

Thousands of small firms were driven into bankruptcy by major corporations, which maintained their own permanent employees as a relatively privileged sector of the working class. Although the system of "lifetime employment" was never formally revised, in fact fewer and fewer workers were hired into permanent positions in recent years, and permanent employees who retired were increasingly replaced by casual or part-time employees.

Faced with rising unemployment, crippled by internal divisions, and saddled with a class-collaborationist leadership, the Japanese labor movement beat a disorganized retreat in 1978. The spring labor offensive resulted in wage raises averaging only 5.4%, although prices had risen at least 7% in the previous year. Union leaders claimed wages had to be sacrificed to ensure job security. Among the more corrupt unions in basic industry, many openly agreed to company rationalization plans in an attempt to save the jobs of the most privileged workers, and some urged even permanent employees to accept offers of "voluntary" early retirement.

Another part of the ruling class offensive was the ongoing attack on the quality of the environment. The LDP government relaxed pollution controls in the name of "aiding depressed industries," opened the unfinished New Tokyo International Airport at Narita, and pressed ahead with a reckless program of nuclear-power development. (With the start-up of its sixteenth nuclear power plant in November, Japan became the world's second largest user of

nuclear power.) Environmental activists, farmers, and fishermen waged numerous struggles against these and other dangerous projects, but in most cases they received little active support from the labor movement, and victories were few and far between.

The ruling class also intensified its attacks on democratic rights. Police violence, special repressive laws and judicial frame-up attempts were used against opponents of Narita Airport. There were continued attacks on the right of public workers to strike and to engage in political activity, and a Supreme Court decision gave the government broad arbitrary powers to victimize immigrant workers for their political views.

The most serious attack on democratic rights was a proposal to give the Japanese military (the "Self-Defense Forces") extraordinary powers, including to suspend constitutional rights, in the event of a "national emergency." The proposal began to be discussed openly by LDP politicians and military officials in July, in an apparent attempt to prepare public opinion for specific legislation later on. But this "trial balloon" was shot down, at least for the time being, by a massive response from the workers' movement. A coalition including the Socialist and Communist parties, along with two trade-union federations, organized protest rallies throughout Japan in October. The total participation in these rallies was estimated at 240,000.

Although LDP politicians subsequently toned down their public statements about emergency powers, the government proceeded to increase the budget for the Self Defense Forces, and began to pay part of the costs of stationing American troops at bases in Japan.

The Japanese government also moved toward playing a more active role in imperialist diplomacy. In September, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda went on a tour of Middle Eastern capitals (including a stop in Tehran at the height of the upsurge). The long-delayed "peace and friendship" treaty with China was finally ratified, and Teng Hsiao-p'ing visited Tokyo in October.

For Japanese capitalists, the treaty opened the way for vastly expanded trade with China. In addition, Teng's unabashed statements in favor of Japanese rearmament had a demoralizing effect on the supporters of the Japanese SP and CP. And most importantly, the treaty pledged the Japanese and Chinese governments to work together to achieve "peace and stability in Asia." This didn't mean there would actually be peace or stability, but rather that Japanese and western imperialists would be free to pursue their class war against the peoples of Asia without fear of interference from China.

Poverty and Repression in the Semicolonies

The recovery of the world capitalist economy provided little relief to the semi-



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colonial countries of Asia. These countries' subordinate position in the world market also assures that they will bear the brunt of the next downturn.

The economy of South Korea, which is most closely linked to Japanese capitalism, saw a year of rapid expansion, led by the growth of export industries. Since 1976 the per capita GNP in South Korea has actually surpassed that of the North Korean workers state, although this has been accompanied by severe inflation (at an annual rate of 25.6% in the first quarter of 1978) and a rising foreign debt which could lead to a crisis if export earnings fall off.

But while dictator Park Chung Hee was boasting to the world about his "economic miracle," he couldn't seem to convince South Korea's growing working class of the virtues of his regime. Open opposition to Park's repressive rule spread from the churches (the only places where public meetings could be held) to the campuses. 1978 saw an upsurge of antigovernment protests by students, including the largest demonstrations since Park assumed "emergency" powers in October 1972. On the sixth anniversary of Park's emergency decree, the regime had to stage an "air raid drill" and impose a blackout in the city of Seoul to prevent demonstrations that had been called by students to protest the fake parliamentary elections scheduled for December.

Other capitalist countries in Asia fared less well economically. The market prices of many of the raw materials they export were held down by imperialist monopolies, while the prices of imported manufactured goods kept rising. Government officials from the five ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore) failed in their attempt to negotiate an agreement with Japan on stabilizing their export earnings.

With the exception of Singapore, all of

these regimes faced opposition from guerrilla movements in one part or another of their countries. In Thailand in particular, large areas were reportedly under the control of anti-government rebels.

The sense of panic that gripped these dictatorships after the liberation of Saigon continued to subside, as the Vietnamese and Cambodian regimes both sought to mend diplomatic and economic ties with the ASEAN countries.

In an effort to diffuse opposition both at home and internationally, the Marcos regime in the Philippines staged elections for a powerless "national assembly" in April. But the election campaign itself became the vehicle for a massive outpouring of antigovernment sentiment, and the vote counting was marked by such blatant fraud that even many members of the U.S. Congress had to publicly denounce it.

Similarly, the Thai and Indonesian military juntas both tried to improve their images by releasing a small fraction of the political prisoners they hold. But Amnesty International estimated that there are still some 3,000 political prisoners in Thailand, and even if the Indonesian government released 6,000 prisoners, as it claimed, that would still leave at least 50,000 alleged "subversives" in jail.

In India, the regime of Prime Minister Morarji Desai continued to lose support during 1978. Desai's Janata Party government had been swept into office in 1977 by a massive vote against Indira Gandhi's dictatorial regime. But although the new government tried to win mass support by eliminating certain of the most brutal features of Gandhi's state of emergency, it has had to use increasingly repressive measures in its defense of capitalist interests.

In Afghanistan, one of the poorest and most backward countries of Asia, a radical nationalist faction led by Noor Mohammad Taraki seized power in a coup in April, and began to implement a series of important social reforms.

The new regime launched a campaign to eliminate the grip of usurious moneylenders over the workers and peasants, and decreed a new law aimed at allowing women to participate in social life. To cope with an illiteracy rate estimated at 80%, the government began building new schools throughout the country. It also put out more publications and radio broadcasts in the languages of the Baluchi, Uzbeki, and Turkemani national minorities, which had been suppressed under the previous regime. Taraki promised to implement an agrarian reform in 1979, claiming that a lack of competent administrators precluded an earlier date.

The new regime established closer diplomatic and economic ties with the Soviet Union. This drew an angry response from American ruling circles, who are fearful of losing their grip on that entire region as a result of the upsurge in neighboring Iran.

Western Europe—A Year of Erosion of Capitalist Stability

By Gerry Foley

In 1976 and 1977, the key fact in West European politics was the success of the CP and SP leaders in holding back the mass radicalization provoked by the general economic crisis, and by the breakdown of the old forms of capitalist rule in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy.

In 1978, the most important fact is that the SPs and CPs are starting to crack under the strain of trying to get their mass following to accept more and more unemployment, deepening cuts in buying power, a steady deterioration in social services and the quality of life, and growing insecurity in general.

Italy—CP Pays a Stiff Price

The weakening hold of the reformist leaderships can be seen on the largest scale in Italy. In the first stage of the breakdown of capitalist stability, the CP began to move forward rapidly. In 1976, the capitalist press in the U.S., as well as in other leading imperialist countries, was filled with scare stories about increasing Communist influence in Italy.

It was feared that the combination of crises and scandals shaking the main bourgeois party, the Christian Democrats; declining living standards; and the CP's assiduously cultivated new democratic image would carry it to victory in the June 1976 elections.

The CP leaders, however, sought gains sufficient only to convince the Christian Democrats of the need to include them in the government. They were partially successful. Following the elections, the CP began to be brought into the ruling coalition *de facto*, although not yet formally.

The CP gave tacit support to the Andreotti government and tried to pretty up austerity as a means for "transforming society."

This policy almost immediately caused tensions in the Italian CP, which were reflected in the raising of alarm signals by the traditional "left" figures in the leadership. By December 1977, the austerity policy was being challenged openly by major forces in the labor movement. The steel workers demonstrated against it under the slogan "We have had enough."

By the end of 1978, the opposition to the CP's austerity line had become so strong that even those elements in the leadership that had identified themselves most enthusiastically with it, including CP Secretary Berlinguer, were feeling the need to start talking out of the left side of their mouths.

At the same time, the union bureaucrats'

inability to hold back strikes, by public workers in particular, prompted the secretaries of the three main federations to raise a cry of alarm. Their joint statement said:

"The south is a powderkeg. The whole body of public workers, beginning with the hospital workers, has become uncontrollable. If the government does not do something, we are going to have to resort to a general strike."

The Italian CP also suffered electoral setbacks this year. Its percentage of the vote in the May 16 regional elections dropped sharply below the 1976 level, and the results of the June 11-12 referenda on state financing of political parties and the Reale "antiterrorist" law showed that it was losing its grip on important sections of the electorate and its own traditional base of support.

Spain—A Slap in the Face for SP

The referendum on the new Spanish constitution held December 6, 1978, indicated that similar erosion in the credibility of the reformist parties has begun there. All the parliamentary parties campaigned for a "yes" vote on the constitution, one of the few that explicitly guarantees the "rights of business."

Nonetheless, about a third of the Spanish electorate abstained. Moreover, in the Basque country, which was in the forefront of the struggle against Franco and remains the vanguard of the fight against his heirs, a substantial majority either abstained or voted "no."

The Basque fighters have been, and are still, the main inspiration to revolutionary-minded youth and workers throughout Spain. No bourgeois government in Madrid can hope to consolidate "stability" as long as the Basque people continue to mobilize in the struggle for their national rights.

The Basque vote was a particularly sharp rebuff to the Socialist Party of Felipe González, which had emerged from the first parliamentary elections as the strongest by far of the reformist parties in the electoral arena. On the basis of the June 1977 elections, the SP could claim to have the largest following of any single party in the Basque country, where the CP's long record of betrayal of the national struggle had reduced it to a marginal position.

Now, the SP's ability to deliver sufficient Basque support for any government in Madrid, even one in which it participates or plays the leading role, has been placed

in doubt. Thus, its usefulness as a government party has already been undermined, even before it has gotten close to gaining governmental positions.

This rebuff to the SP leadership came at a critical time. Since the June 1977 elections, it has been trying to prove to the Spanish capitalists that it could offer an acceptable alternative to Premier Adolfo Suárez and his bourgeois coalition. It has been rapidly dumping its left rhetoric and purging radicals from the party and the organizations it controls, including the General Union of Workers (UGT).

The SP has also been backpedaling on its promises of self-government for the oppressed nationalities. The new constitution that it supported upholds the traditional Spanish state as the "indivisible fatherland of all Spaniards."

There is a historical precedent for the fading of the SP in the Basque country. At the beginning of the 1930s, it was the strongest party there. But within a few years, as a result of its failure to support the national aspirations of the Basque people—which reflected the party's subordination to the Spanish bourgeoisie—it had been pushed to the sidelines by nationalist forces. Today, this process is likely to move more rapidly.

Moreover, the Spanish SP leaders can see how quickly their sister party in Portugal became discredited by trying to run a government for the bourgeoisie. Now this declining party has been cast aside by the Portuguese capitalists and is being plunged into a deep crisis.

In fact, after staging purge upon purge of those in the party who balked at each succeeding move to the right, the Portuguese SP tops are now being compelled to experiment with making a left turn.

For example, the SP leaders made some efforts to recover a radical image among the landless laborers in Alentejo before the November local elections. But they had already driven out of the party practically everyone who had any credibility. So, the SP vote was cut in half.

France—Blowup of Union of Left

In France, the SP and CP tried to avoid becoming caught in the same vise by throwing away their chance for victory in the March legislative elections.

At the opening of the electoral campaign, after every indicator had pointed to a left victory for months and the workers had suspended their struggles in expectation that they would soon have a govern-

ment of their own, the CP and SP contrived to split the Union of the Left.

Despite the CP and SP's pledges that they would continue to defend bourgeois interests in government, the French capitalists were not prepared to accept a Union of the Left cabinet. They saw clearly that in the existing conditions, such a government would not be useful as a means of controlling the struggles of the masses but rather would have the effect of unleashing them. They made their attitude clear in the capital flight that was gaining momentum in the months before the elections.

This pressure prompted the bourgeois component of the Union of the Left, the Left Radicals, to touch off a crisis in the alliance. In fact, the SP and CP were more than happy to break up the bloc. The attitude of the bourgeoisie had made it clear to them that the time was not ripe for a class-collaborationist government. Furthermore, they feared having to take governmental responsibility at a time of rising unemployment and declining living standards.

In this situation, the CP and the SP jockeyed to try to shift the blame on each other and gain points with the workers at each other's expense. This is not the first example of such a backstabbing contest by the rival class collaborationist parties, in which the main sufferer has been the workers themselves.

The French CP had a particularly acute problem. The new radicalization, which crystallized around the perspective of a left government, had gone mainly to swell the sails of the SP. It threatened to put the CP in the position of being a minority party in the working class for the first time since World War II.

All the big European CPs face the problem of being bypassed by newly radicalizing layers. Their following is mainly a historical one, which they have not won and held by their actual politics. It was consolidated in the period of the fight against fascism and the cold war, on the basis of the impression that the CPs were the main enemy of capitalism.

However, the newly radicalized layers have a better idea of what Stalinism represents, and are repelled by it. Thus they tend to seek other alternatives on the left. This problem has forced the big CPs to make their so-called Eurocommunist turn, that is, to try to disassociate themselves from Stalinist dictatorship and present themselves as democratic and pluralist parties open to new ideas.

At one point, the possibility that mass workers parties offering a perspective of socialism with democracy could come to power in a number of major European countries prompted a worried editorial in the *New York Times*. On July 1, 1977, the *Times* editors warned that such a development could precipitate mass uprisings against the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and "destabilize" the entire continent.

In 1978, in contrast, another voice of U.S. capitalism, *Business Week*, published an article in its November 13 issue crowing over the fact that the luster of Eurocommunism was fading. But this magazine, written for businessmen, revealed its shortsightedness even from the standpoint of capitalist interests.

The West European workers are no less



BERLINGUER: Finds few buyers for "austerity" as means for "transforming society."

interested in socialism with democracy or any less determined to fight for it. In fact throughout 1978 in nearly all the West European countries, the radicalization deepened. Even a growing section of the SP and CP ranks realize that their leadership has been sabotaging their struggle. They are beginning to think about what kind of leadership they need. And this in itself puts pressure on the existing leaderships and makes it more difficult to do what the capitalists expect of them.

The French CP and SP leaders did not get away with scuttling the chance of a left victory in March. Their moves touched off a profound crisis in their parties, one that is particularly deep in the CP.

The crumbling credibility of the mass workers parties has given rise to a certain cynicism about politics and a certain demoralization. But it has also started a process of reflection that can lead to removing the roadblock to the struggle for socialism represented by the reformist leaderships.

Ironically, in view of the fears about the "Mediterranean belt" in 1974-76, the growing rejection of class collaboration by the masses was expressed most dramatically in 1978 in a Scandinavian country—Denmark. Toward the end of 1978, tens of thousands demonstrated against the Dan-

ish SP forming a coalition with a bourgeois party. Moreover, a network of organizations began to form in the factories as an alternative leadership.

Austria—Voters Squelch Nuclear Power

Even in what has been considered the most stable of the Western European countries—Austria—the continent's strongest Social Democratic party suffered an unexpected defeat in a referendum on the issue of nuclear power. An overconfident SP leadership had thrown its full weight behind defending nuclear power plants as essential for solving the country's economic problems.

In Sweden, two years ago, the SP lost the elections, mainly on the issue of nuclear power. This fall, the bourgeois government that replaced it fell on the same issue.

In 1978, the struggle against nuclear power plants emerged clearly as a mass movement throughout Western Europe. This is an indication of the fact that class-collaborationist workers parties trying to administer capitalism face new problems, in addition to the well-known ones created by economic downturns.

More and more the question is being posed of the way capitalist society is organized and of the way its priorities are determined. This is a problem especially for the SPs in the relatively prosperous countries of northern Europe.

In West Germany itself, economically by far the strongest capitalist country in the area, growing unemployment has forced conservative union and SP leaders to go along with a demand challenging the basic laws of capitalism.

Tens of thousands of German steelworkers went on strike in November for a thirty-five-hour workweek with no cut in pay in order to expand the number of jobs. This example is spreading already to other north European countries.

Moreover, at the same time that labor militancy is on the rise in West Germany, SP national and local government leaders are finding it expedient to try at least to moderate the witch-hunting "antiradical" regulations imposed earlier in this decade.

These repressive regulations were imposed at a time when the West German authorities were able to convince most of the public that those opposing the established order from the left were extremists or terrorists. The decrees are more and more clearly untenable in a society where a mass opposition movement has developed on the issue of nuclear power and in which labor militancy has begun to appear on a large scale.

Almost everywhere in Western Europe over the past year, there was more and more rapid erosion of the bases of capitalist political and economic stability. And the class-collaborationist workers parties were less and less in position to prop the sagging systems up. □

British Workers Fight Callaghan's Incomes Policy

By Rich Palser

LONDON—The one issue on which Prime Minister James Callaghan has staked the life of his Labour government is his pay policy.

Despite the opposition of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Callaghan has made it clear he will stick to his 5% limit on pay rises. Chancellor Denis Healey has threatened the unions that failure to observe the 5% limit will lead to the use of "fiscal" and "monetary" policies. In plain language this means cuts in social services and higher unemployment.

Callaghan's policy means that every major workers struggle in defense of living standards takes on major political significance. This is true not only of major struggles such as the recent Ford strike, but also of sectional struggles like the parity claims of skilled workers at British Leyland, since these become a test of the ability of the trade-union bureaucracy to control the membership.

The difficulties facing the bureaucracy were already clear by mid-1978. The continued combativity of the rank-and-file union membership has been illustrated by a series of sectional and localized disputes. Workplace organization, in particular the shop-stewards system, remains well intact, despite the ability of the bureaucracy to draw sections of the stewards behind its class-collaborationist projects.

Fully aware of the growing resentment of the workers toward the incomes policy, the TUC were unable to openly endorse a fourth round of pay limits. This was particularly the case since Callaghan gave them no room for maneuver. He announced the 5% limit without consultation, giving no concessions which the bureaucracy could sell to the membership. No sooner had the TUC rejected the 5%, however, than they embarked on a campaign to persuade the government to be more "flexible."

Then the Ford strike broke out. The Ford workers had demanded a £20 increase in pay, a five-hour reduction in the work week, and 80% layoff pay. In response to an offer of 5% plus a productivity deal, the rank and file began to walk out. The bureaucracy quickly made the strike official so as to retain some hope of controlling it.

Before long Ford agreed to negotiate above the 5% limit. On November 22, 57,000 workers at twenty-two Ford plants voted to accept a 16.85% pay rise.

The impact of the Ford strike should not be underestimated. It had the direct effect of making impossible any subsequent en-

dorsement by the bureaucracy of the 5%. The calls of one union leader for a recall TUC congress to back the 5% were ignored by the rest of the bureaucracy. The blocs of union votes at the Labour Party conference were cast not only against any pay policy, but also for Labour's National Executive to *campaign against* the 5% limit.

The Ford workers have won more than three times the ceiling Callaghan had sought to impose. With over one million public-sector manual workers submitting claims which include a £60 minimum wage and a thirty-five-hour week, Callaghan sorely needs to reimpose his authority.

But the meaning of the Ford victory should not be overestimated either. The *political* obstacles erected by Callaghan and the bureaucracy did not seem that great to the Ford workers. Ford UK had been making massive profits, and the workers saw it as only right that they receive their "fair share."

In crisis-ridden British Leyland, on the other hand, Director Michael Edwardes is publicly threatening that to grant the workers' wage claims will mean that jobs will be lost. The Leyland workers want to know the alternative—and wages militancy alone appears increasingly inadequate.

Ford workers have strong union and shop-steward organization, and considerable economic impact when they strike. But workers in the hospitals and schools, whose low pay prevents them drawing on financial reserves during a long strike, do not feel so confident about their union strength—especially when it is the government itself that they must confront.

It is Callaghan's political offensive, helped along by the union bureaucracy, that remains the biggest obstacle to a generalized working-class offensive to restore living standards. While we are seeing a change in the situation from the past three years, we have not seen a return to the rising wave of workers struggles in 1972-74 that swept the Tory government out of office. Callaghan has thrown a political challenge in the face of the unions: "Tell me another way to beat inflation. What alternative is there to me other than the Tories?"

There has been no adequate response from the union leaderships to this challenge, other than to declare that despite TUC policy opposing the 5% limit their overriding concern was to see the return of a Labour government in the next election.

From the "lefts" in the bureaucracy the story has been very similar. Not a murmur in opposition to the talks which could only result in a collaborationist deal, while in the meantime they do nothing to widen the breach opened by the Ford workers.

The capitulation of the "left" bureaucrats to the government has paralysed the traditional left-wing leaders in the unions, notably the Communist Party. Unable to break from its strategic alliances with the "left" bureaucracy, the CP has failed to launch a fightback for the past three years.

Nor has the "Rank and File Movement" sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party (formerly the International Socialists) been able to overcome the crisis of leadership. The notion that the chief problem lay in rank-and-file organization received a cruel blow in 1977 when the Rank and File Conference called a one-day solidarity strike with the firemen that it had no capacity to organize. Since then the organization has lacked a clear perspective, and took no initiative in the Ford strike.

The need for political solutions is becoming clear to an increasingly broad layer of worker militants. One expression of this has been the development of "workers plans" to fight redundancy and plant closures. Best known is the Lucas Aerospace plan to maintain jobs and production by changing to production of socially useful products such as kidney machines. If taken up along with demands of nationalisation under workers control, such plans could represent a real step toward providing a political alternative.

The socialist weekly *Socialist Challenge* is organising a conference for trade-union militants with a speaker from Lucas on "workers control and workers plans." The newspaper's supporters in the unions are organising to fight within the Broad Left and rank-and-file movements for a unified, democratic left wing that is politically independent of the bureaucracy—one that would campaign for a class-struggle alternative to Callaghan and TUC leader Len Murray. □

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East Europe—A Year of Reflection and Bitter Experience

By Gerry Foley

1977 was the year when open opposition to bureaucratic dictatorship emerged throughout Eastern Europe, encouraged by the "Eurocommunist" turn of the Western CPs and the victories won by Polish oppositionists after the 1976 general strike.

In 1978, most of the opposition groups showed signs of a certain crisis of perspectives. But this is not because the situation, in general, has changed for the worse but rather because as the movement develops the political problems they face are more complex.

Indications appeared in fact of growing opposition almost everywhere. And in nearly every country, victories were scored for the movement against bureaucratic dictatorship.

For example, in Poland, still the most advanced point of the antibureaucratic struggle, a new and important layer of society began to organize independently and speak out collectively in defense of its interests—the farmers.

But at the same time, the Stalinist bureaucracy has kept up police pressure on dissidents everywhere, with varying degrees of brutality. This year also, the Bulgarian bureaucracy showed the lengths to which it was ready to go to prevent the emergence of open opposition by assassinating an exiled opponent of the regime.

On October 1, Jaroslav Sabata, the main spokesman of the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia, was arrested. After being beaten by the police, he was charged with "assaulting an officer." However, a group of prominent Czechoslovak defenders of human rights, including Petr Uhl, whom the regime describes as a "Trotskyist," have launched an appeal for an international defense campaign on his behalf.

The seriousness of the Czechoslovak bureaucracy's threat to dissidents is indicated by the publication of an attack on Petr Uhl in the magazine *Signal* in August that was reminiscent in its charges and style of the Stalinist purge trials of the 1930s and 1950s.

Nonetheless, in 1978 Uhl and other leading human-rights fighters managed to give a number of interviews to reporters from Western Europe. Uhl in particular expressed confidence that the movement was spreading and beginning to break down the pall of totalitarian intimidation.

In fact, a strike reportedly took place November 11 at the CKD machine factory in Prague in protest against price rises.

However, as the Charter 77 movement has grown, a debate has developed over

how to win the active support of the workers. Some reportedly favor taking up the lack of democracy and inequities in the organization of the economy. Others oppose this on the grounds that it goes beyond demanding application of the formal guarantees of human rights included in the Czechoslovak constitution and treaties binding the regime.

In Poland, there is evidently questioning about where the movement for democratic rights can and should go after forcing the regime to release the workers imprisoned as a result of the 1976 strike.

In 1977, the movement against bureaucratic dictatorship in Poland divided into two wings. One places primary emphasis on the need for national independence from the Soviet Union. The other stresses the need for democratic organization of the workers, students, and farmers. However, they have not developed distinct programs. And the relationship of national demands to the movement for workers democracy has not yet been clarified.

At the same time, nationalistic feeling seems to be growing. With the Polish bureaucracy on the retreat, apparently the Kremlin is looming larger and larger in the minds of Poles as the obstacle to achieving greater democracy and social justice.

On November 11, for example, four thousand persons demonstrated openly in Warsaw in support of the Polish people's right to determine their own destiny.

The picture of the general social situation that emerges is one of a smoldering crisis in which the bureaucracy in Poland has been able to stave off new explosions only by shuffling its increasingly inadequate resources from hot spot to hot spot.

In 1978, there were more indications of unrest growing in East Germany, where the level of economic development and education is highest in the Soviet bloc. Moreover, since the German nation overlaps the border between capitalist Europe and the Stalinized workers states, East Germany is the least isolated of the bureaucratic dictatorships.

In 1977, a book by an East German economic planner, Rudolf Bahro, was published in West Germany. It exposed the irrationality of Stalinist economic management. Bahro was immediately imprisoned. In 1978, he was sentenced to eight years in jail, as a "spy."

However, Bahro clearly based himself on Marxist principles and a socialist perspec-

tive. As a result, protests against his persecution have been particularly strong, and the Western European CPs and CP-controlled unions have been obliged to participate.

About 3,500 persons, including representatives of unions, CPs, and SPs, attended a rally in West Berlin in November, which launched a campaign in Bahro's defense.

The problem of international alliances became more acute for the antibureaucratic fighters in 1978. It is the key question in carrying forward the fight against totalitarian repression.

The Soviet bureaucrats continued their persecution of the groups defending human rights in 1978, sentencing more of their members to long prison terms. The campaign of vilification against the entire Crimean Tatar people was revived.

But at the same time, the Kremlin bureaucracy showed that it could be forced to retreat by the forces able to open up its contradictions. It was compelled to drop its attempt to abolish formal guarantees of the language rights of Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis by large public protest demonstrations, a new development in the Soviet Union. These actions showed that the peoples of the Soviet Union will mobilize in defense of those gains that survive from the revolutionary period.

The stance of the West European CPs has continued to offer opportunities for the antibureaucratic fighters to bring stronger pressures to bear on their rulers. But the fading luster of the Eurocommunist parties, because of the role they are playing in their own countries, tends to reduce the impact of the support they give the defenders of human rights in Eastern Europe. At the same time, the limitations of the West European CPs' interest in democratic rights have become more evident, disappointing some dissidents.

The developing campaign for Bahro, on the other hand, shows that the possibility for mobilizing effective support for dissidents in the left and workers movement is actually growing.

So, the general political picture in East Europe paralleled that in the neighboring West. It was a year of deepening political reflection, spurred by some bitter experience. But such relative pauses are inevitable, marking a stage at which the fighters are learning how to deal with the more complex problems posed by an advancing crisis. □

Upheaval and Imperialist Intervention in Africa

By Ernest Harsch

The new rise of the African revolution that began more than four years ago shows no signs of abating. To the contrary, in country after country, the African masses have stepped up their struggles against class and national oppression. Demonstrations, strikes, and uprisings are becoming the order of the day.

During 1978 alone, mass ferment swept virtually every corner of the continent:

- A general strike and urban uprisings in Tunisia.
- A determined struggle by Sahraoui fighters for the independence of Western Sahara from the Moroccan and Mauritanian rule.
- Student demonstrations and factory occupations in Ghana.
- A sharpening civil war in Chad, accompanied by direct French military intervention.
- Student protests in Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria.
- A successful Ethiopian counteroffensive against an imperialist-backed invasion by Somalian troops; an attempted coup in Somalia; and a continued struggle by Eritrean liberation forces for Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia.
- An insurrection in Zaïre's Shaba Province, which was put down only after a direct French and Belgian military intervention.
- Escalating struggles for independence and Black majority rule in Zimbabwe and Namibia; and the extension of the fighting in those countries into Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola.
- Continued displays of opposition by South Africa's Black masses against the apartheid system, despite a ferocious repression.

Not since the early 1960s has Africa been wracked by such widespread political turbulence. While the imperialists and local reactionaries were successful, by and large, in containing that earlier wave of the African revolution, the situation now is much more explosive.

The struggles of today reflect a more pronounced dynamic toward socialist revolution, as shown by the greater frequency with which demands are raised and by the growing attractiveness of socialist ideas. This tendency has been strengthened by the rapid increase in the size of the African proletariat over the past two decades and by the continued weakening of the world capitalist system.

The presence on the continent of tens of thousands of anti-imperialist fighters from

Cuba is another factor adding to the combustibility of the African tinderbox.

These upheavals pose a serious threat not only to the local capitalist regimes and ruling classes, but to the fundamental interests of the major powers. These include control over the mineral and agricultural resources of the continent, unfettered access to the large potential markets in many African countries, and maintenance of the high profit rates accruing from the superexploitation of the Black labor force.

In a bid to safeguard their stakes, Washington, London, Paris, Pretoria, and the other imperialist centers have launched a concerted offensive aimed at halting and turning back the unfolding African revolution.

War and Revolution in the Horn

One of the major prongs of that offensive has been a military and political campaign against the gains of the Ethiopian revolution. The imperialists fear that the upheavals there—which have already led to the destruction of Ethiopian feudalism, the enactment of a sweeping land reform and widespread nationalizations, and the strengthening of the Eritrean independence struggle—could advance toward the overthrow of capitalism itself.

As the year opened, the armed thrust against the Ethiopian revolution carried out by the Somalian military regime was still in progress.

Somalian troops had seized large areas of the eastern part of the Ethiopian state the year before. To try to mask the true nature of the attack, the Somalian junta of Gen. Mohammed Siad Barre claimed that it was only aiding the national struggle of the oppressed Somali population in Ethiopia.

In actuality, the Somalian army went into Ethiopia on behalf of imperialism, to strike a blow against the Ethiopian revolution. Initially, Siad Barre had received Washington's encouragement and blessing to go in. During the course of the war he also obtained some significant military and financial backing indirectly from Washington, Paris, and Bonn, and directly from such pro-American regimes as those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran.

Despite this assistance, the Somalian forces were unsuccessful in consolidating their position in Ethiopia. Beginning in late February, the Ethiopian military, aided by several thousand Cuban troops, launched a counteroffensive that routed the Somalian army within a few weeks.

The Somalian defeat represented another setback to the imperialist drive against the Ethiopian revolution. And the involvement of Cuban troops in the war provided one more example of Cuba's anti-imperialist role on the continent.

The Ethiopian junta, known as the Dergue, sought to take advantage of the Somalian defeat, not to advance the revolution, but to help consolidate its own position. It had come to power in 1974 on the crest of the revolutionary upheavals and had carried out a number of radical measures under mass pressure. While these measures deserve support, the Dergue itself stands as an obstacle to a furtherance of the revolutionary upheaval, and even to an effective defense of the existing gains. By attempting to crush and derail the mass movement and keep the revolution within a capitalist framework, the Dergue now plays a basically counter-revolutionary role.

One of the most glaring examples of the Dergue's reactionary course has been its opposition to the Eritrean independence struggle, a massive movement that has won the support of virtually the entire Eritrean population.

In July, the Dergue launched a major military offensive against Eritrea. By the end of November, it had recaptured all of the major cities. The Eritrean forces retreated but said they would wage "a protracted people's war." As for Havana, although its political position toward Eritrea has been contradictory, it has nevertheless resisted the Dergue's efforts to draw it directly into the war.

Paris Jumps In

Nearly 4,000 miles away, in Western Sahara, the French imperialists intervened more directly and openly than their American counterparts were able to in the Horn of Africa.

Polisario's struggle for Western Sahara's independence from Morocco and Mauritania had proved increasingly effective, especially against the weaker of the two regimes, that in Mauritania. To check Polisario's advances, French-piloted Jaguar jet fighters were sent in to bomb and strafe guerrilla columns.

While inflicting some casualties among Polisario's ranks, this French intervention did little to lessen the domestic pressures on the Mauritanian regime. Popular sentiments against the war and in favor of the Sahraoui freedom fighters grew considerably. This was one of the factors underlying

the coup in July that toppled President Moktar Ould Daddah, who had ruled Mauritania since the country gained its independence from France in 1960. The new military rulers, while seeking to stall on Polisario's demand for independence, nevertheless felt compelled to bend to these antiwar sentiments and declare themselves in favor of "peace."

In Chad, another former French colony abutting the Sahara Desert, French military forces also intervened, but in much greater strength. In addition to French bombers, more than a thousand French troops were dispatched in April to prop up the tottering dictatorship of Gen. Félix Malloum, who had suffered some serious reverses in face of an offensive by guerrillas of the Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad (Frolinat—Chad National Liberation Front).

The French aggression was a severe blow to Frolinat, halting its advance toward the Chadian capital of Ndjamena. It continues to control most of northern Chad, however, and has won some support from the inhabitants of the south. The widespread disaffection toward the neocolonial Malloum regime was also reflected in a series of demonstrations in the heavily populated south against the French military presence.

Realizing that French backing alone might not be sufficient to save his regime, President Malloum hammered out a deal with Hissène Habré, leader of a Frolinat splinter faction, and brought him into the government in late August as prime minister. The main Frolinat forces, however, vowed to continue their opposition to the regime as long as French troops remained in the country.

Aggression in Zaïre

French troops intervened yet again in Zaïre in May 1978, this time side by side with Belgian paratroopers and with the political and logistical backing of Washington and London. It was the second time in a little more than a year that the imperialists had rushed in militarily to help put down rebellions in Zaïre's Shaba Province.

Both times, the uprisings were initiated by the guerrilla forces of the Front National de Libération du Congo (FNLC—Congo National Liberation Front), which calls for the overthrow of President Mobutu Sese Seko, a longtime ally of imperialism. Although the uprisings were local, they threatened to seriously disrupt the exploitation of Shaba's extensive mineral wealth and to spread to the rest of the country.

To save the Mobutu regime, the French and Belgian troops killed hundreds of Africans and terrorized thousands of others. As a cover for this massacre and for the intervention as a whole, the Western press played up lurid and racist accounts of killings of whites in Kolwezi by the

rebels. President Carter also sought to justify the operation by claiming that Cubans had armed and trained the FNLC forces, a claim that Havana vehemently denied and that was soon exposed as a complete fabrication.

The uprisings in Shaba were put down, but discontent against the Mobutu regime remains as high as ever, raising the possibility of yet another massive eruption.

Smith in a Corner

Of all the regions of the continent, however, it was southern Africa that continued to offer the greatest challenge to capitalist stability. The struggles of the Black majorities in Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa objectively threaten the survival not only of white supremacy itself, but also of the economic system that thrives upon racist rule.

The crisis of white racism is the most acute in Zimbabwe, where the Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith faces a rapidly escalating upsurge of the African masses.

The pressures on Smith were already so great by the beginning of the year that he felt compelled to bring several prominent Black figures into the regime in a bid to defuse the national liberation struggle. Although Smith's internal settlement with Abel Muzorewa, Ndabaningi Sithole, and Chief Jeremiah Chirau promised to lead to Black rule by the end of 1978 (now "postponed" indefinitely), it sought in actuality to cover over Smith's attempts to perpetuate white dominance for at least a decade longer.

Confronted by this white intransigence, thousands upon thousands of Zimbabwean youths flocked to join the guerrilla forces of the Zimbabwe African People's Union and the Zimbabwe African National Union, which are allied within the Patriotic Front. The Smith regime has lost effective control over large sections of the countryside to the freedom fighters.

In addition, the urban masses began to stir. Shortly after the signing of the internal settlement, tens of thousands participated in a series of antigovernment demonstrations in Bulawayo and other places.

Frightened by the potential power of these mobilizations, the major imperialist powers, especially Washington and London, have continued efforts to arrange a negotiated transfer of power to a Black neocolonial regime, which they hope would be better able than Smith to rein in the masses.

The leaders of the Patriotic Front have shown themselves amenable to negotiations, but Smith has repeatedly torpedoed the proposed talks by his refusal to concede the substance of power. In fact, he has dramatically escalated the war by ordering repeated air and ground strikes into Zambia and Mozambique, where Zimbabwean refugee camps and guerrilla bases are located. Thousands have been massacred in these attacks.

A somewhat similar situation prevails in Namibia. A mineral-rich and sparsely populated country, Namibia has been a de facto South African colony for decades. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), now the largest Namibian nationalist group, is waging a struggle for independence, and has won the backing of much of the Namibian population.

To turn back the independence struggle, Pretoria has mobilized tens of thousands of South African troops. It has also sought to isolate SWAPO through an "internal settlement" of its own, in which a number of small, tribally based groups have been offered a degree of political power, together with local whites, in a formally "independent" Namibia still under South African dominance.

Like Smith, South African Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha has tried to give the impression that he is open to negotiations with SWAPO. Also like the Rhodesian regime, Pretoria has at the same time sent troops and planes across the Namibian border into Angola to massacre hundreds of Namibian refugees and freedom fighters. The biggest such raid took place in May.

To head off a revolutionary explosion that could endanger imperialist interests in Namibia (and in South Africa itself), five Western powers—the United States, Canada, Britain, France, and West Germany—have sought to negotiate a compromise. But their much-publicized "pressures" on Pretoria have been far outweighed by their collaboration with an encouragement to the apartheid regime. In fact, Washington is now more openly offering to improve relations with Pretoria if a negotiated settlement is successful in installing a neocolonial regime in Namibia.

South Africa—The Biggest Powder Keg

This Western attitude toward Pretoria is reflective of the centrality of the white supremacist state to the maintenance of capitalism throughout the subcontinent. Likewise, the continuing struggles of South Africa's Black masses can greatly encourage freedom fighters elsewhere.

Despite the bannings of most major Black political organizations, the frequent arrests of Black activists, and the generalized terror tactics employed against the entire Black population, the Black struggle in South Africa has not been beaten into submission.

First of all, the Black Consciousness movement still survives and its ideas retain a strong influence among young Blacks. While some leaders and activists have been detained, killed, or driven into exile, others continue to function in clandestinity. In addition, a few new Black Consciousness groups have been formed, such as the Azania People's Organisation, and have tried to operate openly.

In Soweto, one of the major centers of

resistance, virtually the entire population boycotted two "elections" held earlier this year. They were expressing their opposition to Pretoria's attempts to install a puppet community council to administer the township.

In other open acts of defiance, thousands

of Blacks turned out to commemorate the death of Robert Sobukwe, the former leader of the Pan Africanist Congress who died in February while under government restriction; and to mark the second anniversary of the initial June 16, 1976, protests in Soweto that signaled the begin-

ning of the massive uprisings of 1976.

Because of South Africa's importance to capitalism and because of the social weight of the more than eight million Black workers in the country, the struggles there remain a central key to the African revolution as a whole. □

Fraser's 'Triumph' Turns Sour

Australia—A Year of Increasing Working-Class Militancy

By Allen Myers

SYDNEY—At the beginning of 1978, the Australian ruling class seemed to have good reason for confidence that it could make big strides in solving its economic problems at the expense of working people. After two years of attacking the living standards of the working class and its allies, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and his Liberal-National Country Party government had been reelected in December by a margin virtually identical to that achieved in their landslide victory of 1975.

But Fraser's triumph did not reflect a significant demoralization, or even lack of combativity, on the part of workers and their allies. Fraser had not won the election so much as the Australian Labor Party had given it away. Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam frittered away an early lead in opinion polls by putting forward a program designed to show how "responsible" Labor could be. On an issue such as income tax, Fraser was actually able to adopt a demagogic pose to the left of Whitlam.

A more reliable indication of the real mood of the working class at the end of 1977 was the ten-week strike by power workers in Victoria's Latrobe Valley, which brought industry throughout the state to a virtual halt.

In 1978, as in the previous two years, the ruling-class offensive led by Fraser has concentrated on two main goals: reducing real wages and reducing the power of organized labor.

The attack on wages has consisted of savage cutbacks in social welfare spending and attempts to confine all wage claims within the "indexation" system.

Indexation was introduced in 1975 by the Labor government as a system of quarterly hearings before the Arbitration Commission which would, supposedly, grant workers wage increases equal to the rise in the Consumer Price Index in the preceding period. In exchange for this concession, unions were expected to make

no wage claims outside of extremely restrictive "guidelines."

The operation of this system has proven extremely valuable for the capitalists. Indexation increases, in addition to lagging behind price increases—which are not accurately reflected in the Consumer Price Index—are *not* automatic. In the big majority of cases so far, the Arbitration Commission has awarded wage rises smaller than the increase of the CPI.

The indexation system has already wiped out the real wage gains won by a working-class upsurge in 1973-74, and the Fraser government openly states its intention to roll back real wages even further, to pre-1973 levels. As a step in this direction, indexation hearings have been changed from quarterly to semi-annual.

The erosion of real wages has produced an increasing militancy and willingness to challenge the indexation guidelines on the part of more and more workers. Because the Australian Council of Trade Unions (the blue-collar federation, headed by ALP reformists) continues to support the indexation system, union challenges to the guidelines are usually formulated in such a way that they pretend to remain within them.

One of the most militant and successful challenges to the guidelines this year was the strike of miners in central Queensland. After a six-week stoppage, the miners in late July won a direct wage increase of \$12 plus bonuses that could go as high as \$83 a week.

Also in Queensland, Brisbane brewery workers struck from August 29 to November 28, winning a wage increase of \$5. The breweries had originally refused even to negotiate on the unions' demands, on the grounds that they were "outside the indexation guidelines."

The vitally important oil refining industry was on the boil throughout the year, with a whole series of strikes and go-slows by various unions seeking to recover what

they have lost through the indexation system.

The unions have begun to fight back not only on wages but also to protect jobs. Even on unofficial, understated, figures, unemployment in Australia is now about 6 percent and is expected to reach at least 8 percent in January, when the bulk of school-leavers enter the job market.

In August, technicians employed by Telecom Australia were locked out when they imposed work bans as part of a campaign against job-destroying computerization of telephone exchanges. Defying Fraser, who declared on nationwide television that the workers "must not be allowed to win, they will not be allowed to win," the technicians held on to force significant concessions, including a guarantee of permanency for employees with more than six months on the job.

In Sydney, paper mill employees went on strike in early October in an effort to force their employer to rescind the layoff of 403 workers. The Sydney strikers were supported by paperworkers in other cities through bans and brief strikes.

Postal workers too conducted a militant strike in March against "rationalization" plans designed to eliminate jobs and weaken their unions.

In an important development in October, a white-collar union representing bank employees decided to begin a campaign for a thirty-hour week without loss of pay in order to protect jobs threatened by automation. If taken up by other unions, this demand could become a focus for a major fightback against the bosses' offensive.

In an effort to undermine such a fightback, the Fraser government has put on the books a whole series of antiunion laws. In every case, the ACTU leadership has threatened dire consequences when the bill was introduced and then backed down when the government proceeded.

But at the same time, the government has not yet dared to use these laws. In fact,

penal powers have not been used against a union since 1969, when the jailing of a union leader touched off a virtual general strike and forced his release.

Government-backed efforts to break the union shop that prevails in nearly every industry also floundered in 1978, the most notable case being the Melbourne tramways conductors' defeat of an effort to force them to work alongside someone who refused to join their union.

The Fraser government thus failed to

live up to its high hopes in 1978, and ends the year weaker in many respects. An indication of this was provided by the New South Wales state elections in October, in which the state ALP government was returned with a 10 percent swing in its favor.

The unwillingness of the ALP and ACTU leaderships to conduct a real struggle has been the chief factor preventing the beginnings of a fightback from developing any further than it has so far. □

Year of Increased Labor Militancy in New Zealand

Muldoon Government Battered by Strikes

By Brigid Mulrennan

AUCKLAND—1978 has seen the culmination of three years of protest by working people against the National Party government of Robert Muldoon. The year ended with a general election in which the Labour Party won more votes than National, although because the voting system is effectively gerrymandered, National retains the majority of seats in Parliament.

In the three years since the previous election, Muldoon's government has made a determined effort to drive down workers' living standards in face of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, and has carried out attacks on the rights of Maoris (the indigenous people), Pacific migrant workers, and women. Civil liberties were also threatened, the most significant instance being the giving of greater powers to the political police, the Security Intelligence Service, at the end of 1977. This produced the biggest demonstration the country has ever seen.

Labour's 1978 election campaign reflected some of the anger of working people generated by National, and in particular by their "bully-boy" leader Muldoon.

A central theme of Labour's campaign was their promise to "put New Zealand back to work," in response to the skyrocketing unemployment under National. Unofficial estimates of those out of work place the figure at more than 100,000—about 10 percent of the work force.

Another major issue has been abortion rights. In December of last year Parliament passed one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world, forcing most women who want abortions to travel to Australia—a 2,400 mile return trip. This has prompted massive opposition, including demonstrations in March and again in September, when 2,000 marched in Auckland. This was the largest such protest yet

seen. A petition calling for repeal of the new law was circulated, gaining the signatures of 10 percent of the population, although parliament simply shelved the petition when it was presented.

After years of avoiding taking a stand on abortion, the Labour Party conference voted for repeal of the law, and Labour campaigned in the election for a popular referendum on the question.

On May 25 the government used hundreds of police to end the eighteen-month-long occupation of Bastion Point by Maori descendants of the original owners. This was ancestral Maori land in the heart of Auckland, which the government planned to turn over for luxury housing. Over 200 defenders of this land were arrested, and the Maori occupation generated massive public support. In the election Labour promised to return Bastion Point to its original owners, the Ngati Whaatua tribe.

1978 also saw the defeat of the government's strategy of dealing blows to the unions. Muldoon had passed legislation declaring many forms of strike action illegal, and has taken steps to try and break up union closed shops, through government ballots of union members as to whether compulsory union membership shall remain in force.

But when the government tried to take on two of the country's most powerful unions, they were forced to retreat.

A six-week strike starting in March at the Kawerau wood pulp and paper mill resulted in the workers punching a hole in one of Muldoon's new laws, which had allowed employers rights to sack large numbers of workers if any strike occurred.

But the biggest blow dealt to the govern-

ment by the unions came in September, when it was forced to withdraw the prosecutions it had ordered against 192 meat workers for an "illegal" strike in 1977. New Zealand's meat-export industry is a vital one for the capitalists, with meat and allied products constituting about one-third of all exports. A large part of this is sent to Great Britain, in a killing season starting in October, and if pay agreements have not been settled by that stage it can mean disastrous disruption of production.

The meat workers union simply refused to participate in these pay negotiations until the prosecutions were lifted, and the government backed down. Not only were the prosecutions dropped, but the government was forced to revise its own industrial laws, and remove its own power to prosecute in such cases.

Following this victory, a militant spirit spread to other workers' struggles. Nationwide strikes, including well-supported picket lines, by bakers and journalists won victories.

It was this spirit, too, which was reflected in Labour's election campaign and the enthusiasm it generated among Labour's working-class supporters. The vote was a further slap in the face for Muldoon.

Coming out of the elections the National government faces a difficult time. Workers are in no mood to be pushed around, particularly by a minority government. As one Labour MP put it: "The government is going to get into terrible trouble, it has no moral authority at all . . . we have a government which a lot of people are not going to obey."

Responding to the increasing radicalisation of working people in recent years, the Socialist Action League (New Zealand section of the Fourth International) took a decision in the middle of the year to push ahead and base itself in key industries, particularly in the meat industry. A conference in December is to review the significant progress already made in getting the majority of members into industrial jobs, and to look at the tasks and opportunities facing the League in this new situation. □

Correction

Two errors crept into our review of and document from Valentin Campa's *Memorias de un comunista mexicano*, in last week's issue.

On p. 1396, the first full sentence should read: Campa boasts of the political successes of the Mexican Communist Party just before the assassination of Trotsky.

And the footnote in column one, p. 1397, should read: 1. Campa leaves out Trotsky's stay in France, and mixes up Sweden and Norway.

Canada—A Year of Rising Class and National Conflict

By Richard Fidler and Judy Rebick

TORONTO—For Canada 1978 was a year of deepening economic crisis, rising class conflict, and polarization around the Québec national question.

As the year came to a close, the economy was slowing down. Real output increased by 3.6% in the third quarter, far short of the federal government's 5% growth target. Unemployment rates are the highest among major imperialist countries—officially more than 8% of the work force, in fact as high as 30% in some regions. Capital spending projections are dropping sharply. The Canadian dollar is now worth only US\$0.85, yet the cheaper dollar has failed to bring about the anticipated rise in exports. With a slump expected next year in the United States, Canada's largest market, economists are making gloomy predictions for 1979.

The wage controls initiated by the Trudeau government in 1975 were phased out during 1978. But the antilabor offensive continued in the form of an intensified drive by employers and all levels of government against wages, working conditions, union rights, and social welfare programs. And Ottawa pressed forward its offensive against the national rights of the Québécois.

Rising Labor Militancy

But the ruling class achieved little success on any front.

A new wave of labor combativity began to develop in 1978 as workers sought to make up for losses under the controls. August (the latest statistics available) registered the highest monthly level of strikes since the October 14, 1976, Day of Protest against wage controls. And while most wage settlements were below the official inflation rate, the pattern began to shift in the third quarter, as militant strikes—especially in the manufacturing sector—yielded higher base-pay rate increases.

Ottawa is spearheading the antilabor offensive through a hard-line approach to public-sector unions, symbolized by a federal bill that would limit public-sector wages to average pay levels in the private sector, and effectively deprive them of the right to strike.

In these conditions, isolated struggles are harder to win, and the need for labor unity and union democracy comes increasingly to the fore. This was illustrated most clearly by two major strikes in 1978.

When the 23,000-member Canadian Union of Postal Workers shut down the Post Office in October (major demands of the strikers were defense of a cost-of-living index, control over automation, and a thirty-hour workweek), Parliament swiftly ordered the union to return to work. The postal workers stayed out for almost a week in heroic defiance of this assault on their hard-won right to strike.

There was broad public sympathy for their cause; the country's largest public-sector union turned over its offices to building the strike. But leaders of the 2.3-million-member Canadian Labor Congress, the central labor body, refused to provide support, and the major industrial unions failed to mobilize the strategically crucial force of their members behind CUPW's struggle. Consequently the strike collapsed, and CUPW leaders now face trial for defying Parliament. The CLC leadership's capitulation sparked major debates at the conventions of the Ontario and British Columbia labor federations in November; the latter voted unanimously to defend CUPW and to denounce the CLC betrayal.

As the year ended, militants across the country were mobilizing support for another important struggle, by the Inco nickel miners and smelter workers in Sudbury, Ontario. The 11,700 members of the Steelworkers union, the largest industrial local in Canada, walked out in September to protest a wage freeze and poor health and safety conditions. They voted to strike in face of company claims of a seven-month stockpile of unsold nickel, and opposition from the union's national and international leadership. The Inco workers' combativity (the long strike comes on the heels of massive layoffs earlier this year) is a source of inspiration to other sectors of labor facing key struggles in 1979, such as the railroad workers.

An especially significant feature of the Inco strike is the solidarity it has won from women. A wives' support committee is mobilizing community support. Although there are only thirty-five women in the local, the union has placed paid maternity leave high on its list of demands; the local endorsed the March 8 International Women's Day action.

In fact, women militants were in the lead in many labor struggles in 1978. The successful strike for union recognition by women auto workers at Fleck Manufacturing, and the long strike by Parkland

Nursing Home workers in Edmonton have had a major impact on the women's movement.

Québec: Sparring Before the Match

The year opened with Trudeau's threat, in a New Year's interview, that "I'm not going to be shy about using the sword" if Québec were to declare independence unilaterally. Soon after, the directors of Sun Life, the country's largest insurance company, announced they were moving its head office from Montréal to Toronto because of Québec's political instability. As the year came to an end, the Québec Appeals Court disallowed key sections of the Parti Québécois government's language-law reform, and the Cadbury-Fry corporation terminated 500 jobs by closing its Montréal plant, transferring production to new facilities near Toronto.

Economic blackmail and political intimidation by big business and the federal government have been successful in forcing the PQ government to retreat from its proclaimed goal of Québec sovereignty. It now appears that the expected referendum in 1979 may ask voters for nothing more than a mandate to negotiate "sovereignty-association," with the emphasis on association with English Canada.

But there is no evidence of increased support for the federal regime. Opinion polls indicate that a substantial majority of French-speaking Québécois will protest their oppressed status in the Canadian confederation by voting yes in the referendum.

The economic crisis, which aggravates the effects of national oppression, encourages skeptical views among Québécois about the advantages of remaining in the federal regime. Another factor is the continued flow of revelations of crimes by Canada's political police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the bulk of them directed against Québec nationalists and trade unions. In January the federal solicitor general revealed that it was the Mounties who had forged a widely publicized "terrorist" communiqué in 1972 containing a provocative call to arms. Later disclosures documented the use of provocateurs in immigrant and Native Indian organizations.

The Trudeau government's attempt in April to deflect criticism of the Mounties' Security Service by drumming up a "Soviet spies" scandal failed to attract more than passing interest. Ottawa was more suc-

cessful in using the Supreme Court to strip the powers of Québec's Keable inquiry into the RCMP. But public opposition forced the federal government to abandon a bill that would authorize police mail-opening. And in Québec, civil liberties organizations and unions joined forces in Opération Liberté, a campaign to expose the undemocratic activities of the police.

The PQ's "sovereignty-association" strategy relies heavily on its ability to convince imperialism that it can assure "social peace." During 1978 the Québec government adopted tough restrictions on the unions, especially in the public sector. Leaders of the Montréal transit workers union (including members of the GSTQ,* one of the two Trotskyist organizations in Québec) were jailed for encouraging their members to defy strike-breaking injunctions. These antilabor moves were facilitated by sectarian inter-union rivalry and by the support that leaders of all three main union federations give the PQ.

But 1978 also saw growing criticism of the PQ by sections of the labor movement and the beginning of a debate in the unions over the relation between independence and socialism. In April the Montréal council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions voted (against opposition led by a strong contingent of Maoist delegates) for independence, linked national liberation to the struggle for socialism, criticized the PQ for its unwillingness to break with imperialism, and called on Québec workers to found "their own independent political organization."

These issues will be widely debated in Québec unions in the coming year; all the federations have scheduled special conventions to define their position on the national question before the referendum.

New Debates in Unions

The Québec national question is a key issue in the labor movement in English Canada, too. During the past year major pan-Canadian and U.S. unions like the Steelworkers and Auto Workers, as well as provincial labor federations, have adopted statements of support for Québec's right to self-determination. At the CLC convention in April, about one-third of the delegates voted likewise. These motions indicate the federalists' lack of success in whipping up opposition to Québec's rights among workers in English Canada. However, the unions have yet to play an active role in countering the federalist offensive.

Nor have the unions come up with an alternative strategy to fight the capitalists' economic offensive. The CLC's proposal for "tripartite" institutionalized boss-labor-government collaboration—the bureaucracy's answer to wage controls—was

*Groupe Socialiste des Travailleurs du Québec—Quebec Socialist Workers Group, affiliated to the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.

dumped at the Congress's April convention, following its rejection by local unions and provincial labor federations. However, it was replaced by a nationalist and protectionist "industrial strategy" essentially similar to the manufacturing development and productivity plans being touted by governments and industry.

Most significant was the appearance at



LEVESQUE: Backpedals on independence.

the CLC convention of an opposition current led by the postal workers and supported by several hundred delegates, which fought for an "action program" based on the need for labor's independent mobilization against the employers.

The economic and national crises have thrust forward the question of what labor should do about the New Democratic Party, the mass reformist labor-based party in English Canada. The bureaucracy campaigned increasingly this year for the membership to strengthen the NDP. But the NDP's record, especially the role of NDP provincial governments in Western Canada in enforcing wage controls and cutbacks, has posed for many militants the need to find an alternative to the NDP's procapitalist program. Many unions debated these questions in 1978.

While labor and the Québec nationalist movement held the spotlight, other social layers continued to mobilize.

On International Women's Day, for the first time women across English Canada and Québec united to protest their oppression. In several cities the March 8 actions,

initiated by independent feminist organizations, were strengthened by the participation of contingents of union women. In Québec, women posed a major challenge to the PQ government in their fight to get it to recognize their right to abortion on demand.

In the spring students in English Canada staged the biggest wave of protests in five years against cutbacks and tuition fee increases. In November students across Québec shut down close to 30 junior colleges to protest the PQ's cutbacks and reneging on promises of free tuition.

Gays and lesbians responded to attacks on their rights with the largest and most militant demonstrations to date.

French-speaking minorities in English Canada, inspired by the rise of the Québec independence movement, mobilized in defense of their own language and cultural rights. In New Brunswick the Parti Acadien, which fights for autonomy for the province's substantial French-speaking population, doubled its vote in the October election.

The increasing class and national polarization was reflected in fifteen federal by-elections held across Canada on October 16. The ruling Liberals lost every seat contested in English Canada; the opposition Conservatives lost one of the three seats they had held in Québec. The NDP made modest gains.

Seriously undermining labor's political struggle is its lack of a binational governmental perspective. The NDP's failure to defend Québec's rights has cut it off from serious political influence in Québec. The failure of the labor bureaucracy to launch a mass labor party in Québec disarms Québec labor in face of the PQ challenge. Consequently, the working class in both nations is unable to pose a serious political challenge to the main seat of governmental power, the federal state. The negative effects of this situation are evident in every major conflict—such as the postal workers' strike, in which the repressive role of the federal government, Parliament, courts, and police was so clearly exposed.

Overcoming these problems remains the crucial challenge facing the entire labor movement.

Members of the Revolutionary Workers League, the section in Canada of the Fourth International, worked to build solidarity with the postal workers and other labor struggles; they were instrumental in initiating and building the International Women's Day actions; they played a prominent role in struggles against repression and in defense of Québec's right to self-determination. As they completed the first year of their new fused organization, they faced big opportunities to benefit from the developing class struggle in English Canada and Québec by moving to root their party in the key sectors of the working class, including the industrial unions. □

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