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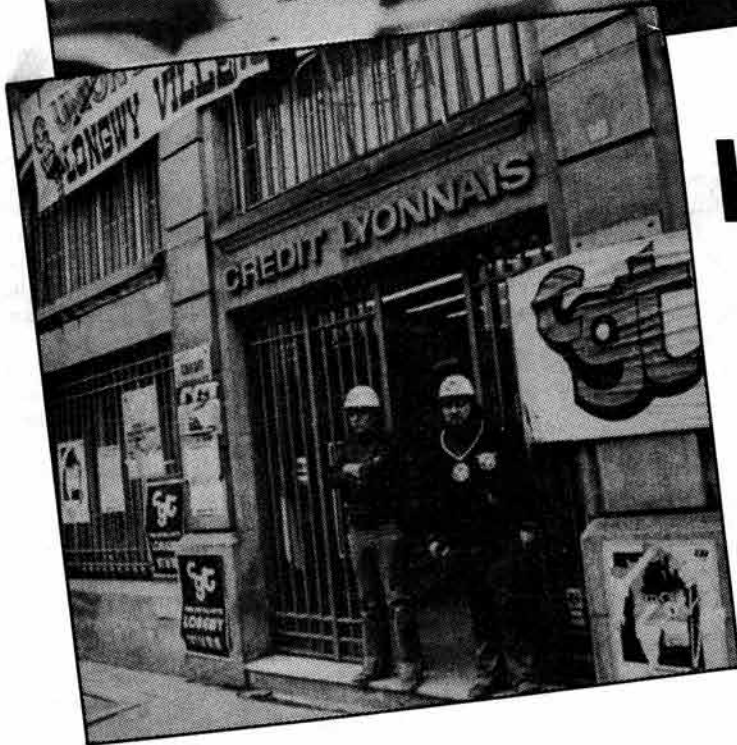
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## **WORKERS UPSURGE DEMANDS HALT TO FRENCH STEEL LAYOFFS**

### **Washington's New Mideast War Pact**

### **Imperialism's 'Opium War' Against Laotian Regime**

## Washington's New Mideast War Pact

By David Frankel

Amid promises of peace, both Washington and Tel Aviv are driving ahead with preparations for war in the Middle East. The Israeli-Egyptian agreement announced by President Carter March 13 has already given a further impetus to the imperialist military build-up in the region.

Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman arrived in Washington March 16 and asked for \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion in military aid, over and above the nearly \$2 billion a year already being provided to the Zionist regime by Carter.

"We went down a specific list of high-priority needs that the Administration is prepared to submit to the Congress," said U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown.

Weizman's list, submitted under the pretext that it will be needed to prevent Syria and Iraq from threatening the new "peace" plan, includes additional tanks, armored personnel carriers, navy weapons, missile systems, and speeded-up deliveries of seventy-five F-16 jet fighters already ordered by the Israelis.

Meanwhile, trial balloons about the possibility of a formal U.S.-Israeli military pact, and the establishment of U.S. military bases in the Sinai, are becoming more frequent.

More arms than ever for the Zionist state—to help preserve "peace."

U.S. troops and bases in the Mideast—to help preserve "peace."

The Egyptian-Israeli deal engineered by Carter is in fact a war treaty, not a peace treaty.

Carter's response to the outbreak of fighting between North and South Yemen February 24 has made his real aims especially clear. "You've got to understand," said one White House aide quoted March 18 by *New York Times* reporter Richard Burt, "that our actions in Yemen and the Middle East peace process are intimately linked. Both form part of a wider policy of salvaging American influence in the area after Iran."

Just what such a salvage operation might entail was bluntly spelled out by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Crawford March 12. Speaking before a House Foreign Relations subcommittee, Crawford declared that the Carter administration is prepared to go to war over its interests in the oil-rich Arabian peninsula.

With a U.S. naval task force already stationed off Yemen, and with massive shipments of U.S. arms being airlifted into North Yemen, Crawford announced that

300 U.S. "advisers" would also be sent.

As was the case in Vietnam, the Pentagon has issued assurances that the advisers—whom they now prefer to call "training teams" or "military instructors," in order to downplay such memories—will not be involved in combat.

These assurances have rightly met with considerable skepticism. As *New York Times* columnist William Safire commented March 15, "we know that in a pinch, our advisers—and those who follow—will be flying the planes and driving the tanks, or else hightailing it out of Yemen while Communists grab our expensive new equipment to use against the Saudis."

In pouring tanks, jets, and advisers into North Yemen, Carter is making a calculated move to establish a wedge that can be used to widen U.S. involvement. He made it a point to use, for the first time, his presidential "emergency" authority to bypass congressional review of arms shipments.

At the same time, the administration is publicly talking about the creation of a U.S. "Fifth Fleet" in the Indian Ocean, Carter has raised the war budget to a record \$135 billion, and a congressional debate on the possibility of reintroducing the draft has been opened.

Carter's policy was explained in a nutshell by the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* March 9 when they said: "If we want to insure the stability of the Middle East and the security of our friends, there will be no substitute for an actual U.S. presence in the area."

When the *Wall Street Journal* talks about "stability" and "security," it is talking about "securing" U.S. corporate interests—above all Mideast oil supplies—and "stabilizing" pro-imperialist regimes against opposition from their own people. That's what the U.S. government went to war in Vietnam over. That's what it was unable to do in Iran on behalf of the shah, thanks to the American people's opposition to any more foreign military adventures.

What Carter fears is first of all the possibility of a rebellion of the masses in the Arabian Peninsula similar to the one in Iran, and secondly, the possibility that imperialist attempts to crush such a rebellion might be countered by Cuban troops, which are already stationed in South Yemen.

In Saudi Arabia itself, Dan Dorfman reported in the March 14 *Washington Post*,

the regime has been shaken by the "little-known defection of a garrison commander and 27 soldiers who refused last month to obey government orders to quell unusual labor strife, including strikes, in the northern city of Dhahran."

Although the capitalist media has reported the conflict in Yemen as an invasion of the North by the South, the only correspondent who was actually there says there was in fact a popular rebellion in North Yemen.

Helena Cobban, in an article in the March 14 *Christian Science Monitor*, reported the account of a Lebanese journalist who had been in North Yemen:

"During his tour, which included two distinct rebel-held areas, including the towns of Baydah, Qatabah, and Harib, the correspondent saw no members of the South Yemeni armed forces, and no foreign advisers or fighters.

"Rebel fighters described themselves as coming from three main groups: NDF [National Democratic Front] fighters who had retreated to nearby mountains after the failure of a previous rebellion in 1972; supporters who had remained 'underground' in the towns since then; and former members of the North Yemeni armed forces who had defected since the beginning of the current fighting."

American imperialism is trying to intervene in the Middle East in the name of peace. But the Camp David accords will not bring peace and stability to the Middle East, even within the imperialist framework that Carter is seeking to safeguard.

Under the phony autonomy plan proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with more than a million Palestinians, will be legalized, and the Zionist regime will be able to proceed with the de facto annexation of these areas.

In essence, the treaty provides for the return of the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, in return for Egyptian recognition of the Zionist state and full diplomatic and economic relations between Israel and Egypt.

"This is a separate agreement between Israel and Egypt and not an overall solution to the problem," said Fahad Kawasme, the mayor of Hebron, March 14. "The treaty does nothing to fulfill the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

Palestinian demonstrations against Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's sell-out have swept the West Bank, despite Israeli repression. On March 15, Israeli soldiers and settlers opened fire on unarmed demonstrators in Halhoul, killing Rabaya Shalda, a seventeen-year-old woman high school student, and Masri Anani, a twenty-one-year-old worker. A sixteen-year-old student was wounded.

Four days earlier, four other Palestinian youths were shot and wounded by Israeli troops during a demonstration in Bir Zeit.

In the face of continued conflict with the Palestinians, the Israeli regime will—as it always has—lash out at the civilian population across its border.

Since the treaty will effectively neutralize the Egyptian army insofar as Israel is concerned, it will encourage the Zionist regime in new military attacks against Lebanon, Syria, and possibly Jordan. Even as Carter was being hailed in Washington March 13, Israeli artillery and gunboats were shelling towns in Lebanon.

But no treaties, pacts, deals, or agreements can stop the class struggle. The Palestinian people are not going to stop fighting for their rights because Sadat and Begin sign a piece of paper.

The Egyptian people, who have gone along with Sadat on the basis of his false promises that the pact with Israel will result in peace and prosperity, are not going to stand quietly by when they realize they have been betrayed.

The peoples of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and other Arab countries are not going to give up their aspirations for democratic rights and economic progress because they are not in accord with Carter's vision of a stable, i.e. imperialist dominated, Middle East.

And in the long run, the Jewish working people of Israel as well are not going to stand for the imperialist status quo Carter is trying to preserve. Maintenance of the Zionist state forces them to live with an arms budget that gobbles up 23 percent of Israel's gross national product every year, and an inflation rate of 40 percent.

Jewish workers are going to look at upheavals such as the one in Iran and ask whether their future does not lie together with the masses of people in the Middle East, rather than with imperialism. □

## Mao Zedong. . .

With this issue, *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* is going over to the "Pinyin" system for spelling of Chinese names, adopted for official use by the People's Republic of China in January. Although it presents some initial difficulties for the Western reader, the Pinyin system for spelling the Chinese ideographic characters comes closer to their real pronunciation than previous systems.

The older, Wade-Giles, transliteration method arbitrarily used an apostrophe to indicate the difference in sound between *b* and *p*, *d* and *t*, *g* and *k*, and *j* and *c*. By this method, for example, *T'eng* would be pronounced *Teng*; but, spelled without the apostrophe, it is pronounced *Deng*. Since most newspapers did not use the apostrophe, it was usually impossible to determine the actual sound of Chinese names from newspaper spellings. Pinyin corrects this, spelling the name of China's present

central leader as it is pronounced, *Deng*, and giving China's capital its correct pronunciation: Beijing, not Peking. There are, however, three sounds in Pinyin that are used arbitrarily: *x*, *zh*, and *q*. Just remember that *x* is pronounced like the *sh* in *she*; *zh* like the *j* in *jump*, and *q* like the *ch* in *cheek*.

By the new rules Mao Tsetung becomes Mao Zedong; Teng Hsiao-p'ing becomes Deng Xiaoping; and the present chairman of the Chinese Communist Party changes from Hua Kuo-feng to Hua Guofeng.

For a period of time, where necessary, we will include the old spelling in parentheses after the Pinyin spelling.

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## France—Workers' Upsurge Demands Halt to Layoffs

By Michael Baumann

Following weeks of struggle spearheaded by steelworkers, French workers are planning a march on Paris March 23 to demand a halt to layoffs.

Strikes, demonstrations, and factory occupations have spread across the country, reaching the point of pitched battles with police in the northern steel centers of Longwy and Denain.

French Premier Raymond Barre, chief government spokesman for the hated austerity program, has compared the protests to the insurrectional general strikes of the postwar upsurge of 1947.

In an interview March 9, Barre condemned industrial workers for "returning to the methods of action they used thirty years ago."

French workers are fighting drastic cut-backs scheduled for the steel, chemical, shipbuilding, and textile industries, as well as for the postal, rail, and utility systems.

In steel alone, the trusts plan to eliminate more than 21,000 jobs in the next two years, reducing employment in the industry by nearly a quarter.

In short, French capitalists are provoking a massive confrontation with some of the most powerful sectors of the working class. The repercussions of this cold-blooded move are already shaking the country.

On February 16, French workers gave a clear sign of their readiness to fight the layoffs. On that day one million demonstrators, led by striking steelworkers and supported by auto, rail, mine, power, postal, maritime, and municipal workers, paralyzed the heavily industrialized north and east of the country in a one-day general strike.

On February 20, more than 80,000 demonstrated in the Loire region, shutting down all major industry in protest against unemployment. According to the union federations that called the action, it was the region's "biggest demonstration since May 1968," when general strikes across the country nearly toppled French capitalism.

On February 23, steelworkers occupied the Eiffel tower for two hours.

On February 24, in the northern industrial center of Longwy, thousands of steelworkers and their supporters, armed with iron bars, a bulldozer, and paving stones, fought a pitched battle with the CRS riot police sent in to crush demonstrations. At immediate issue was control over the local television station, which steelworkers had taken over to assure that programming

supporting their fight against layoffs would be shown.

On February 28, more than 10,000 striking bank, insurance, and television workers demonstrated in Paris against layoffs. To show their solidarity with the steelworkers, a popular chant was "Paris-Longwy; to win we must unite!"

### Steelworkers Battle Police in Denain

On March 7, a major clash with the national police occurred in the steel center of Denain, a small town near the Belgian border that served as the setting for Emile Zola's novel *Germinal*. The incident, completely provoked by the riot police, sent shock waves through the boardrooms of Paris.

The initial confrontation with the riot police occurred March 6 when steelworkers, returning to Denain in two chartered buses from a demonstration at the Belgian border, were stopped by the CRS.

Without warning, the police blocked the bus exits, smashed in the windshields with rifle butts, and fired in tear-gas canisters. When the choking and coughing steelworkers were finally allowed to leave the bus, they were heavily roughed up by the CRS thugs.

A meeting of the entire day shift at the Usinor-Denain steel plant was held the next morning to discuss how to respond to the vicious police assault.

A decision was taken to block the main highway north to Brussels. Five hundred workers left the plant with sufficient scrap iron to erect a barricade. Their numbers quickly swelled to more than 5,000.

An immediate confrontation ensued with the riot police, who were now guarding the local police station. In a battle with these club-wielding professional strikebreakers that lasted until past midnight the next day, steelworkers armed with iron bars, a bulldozer, and flaming automobiles tried to batter down the doors and walls of the police station.

Barricades went up in the center of town, an attempt was made to seize the local armory, and gunfire from an unknown source wounded seven of the riot police.

The owners of the plant, more than 100 miles away in Paris, issued an order by telephone in the middle of the fray, temporarily suspending all scheduled layoffs. Local union officials quickly circulated a leaflet announcing this and asking the workers to return to the plants. The March 9 *Le Monde* reported what happened next:

"The distribution of the leaflet produced astonishing scenes. Demonstrators refused even to look at it. Instead, they crumpled it up and trampled it underfoot, shouting, 'This is not the time to discuss, but to act.'"

The confrontation continued until 1 a.m. March 8, with the unions announcing plans for a demonstration in Denain two days later to protest the continuing provocations by the riot police. More than 20,000 took part in that action.

On March 14 the bosses announced they would not retreat. The Denain steel complex would in fact be shut down.

### March on Paris Called

All eyes are now on Paris, the political and financial center of the country, where steelworkers and others threatened by layoffs plan to demonstrate on March 23.

The leaders of the Communist and Socialist parties and the two big union federations they control are doing everything in their power to limit the size of the demonstration. They prefer instead such diversions as the "special session" of Parliament, hurriedly called under pressure of the mounting protests to "discuss" the issue of unemployment. As if it were not the government itself that is driving through the layoffs!

Nevertheless, it is clear that workers throughout the country would welcome the chance for a massive and united response to the bosses' offensive. They have shown this with a steady increase in strikes in recent weeks:

- For the first time since 1953, France's entire rail system was shut down March 6-8 in a thirty-four-hour action jointly called by all seven rail unions. At issue is the government's plan to cut at least 13,000 rail jobs.

- Shipbuilders blockaded the shipyard at La Seyne March 6 to back up their negotiators in talks then under way in Paris. The government pulled back, temporarily suspending planned layoffs.

- A twenty-four-hour dock strike March 5, demanding better working conditions and benefits, shut down virtually all French ports.

- An average of twenty-five strikes a week on the local level against speedup and deteriorating working conditions have tied the French postal system in knots for months. Particularly militant have been workers at the bulk-mail centers in the working-class suburbs surrounding Paris, where the average age of the work force is twenty-two.

- Rotating strikes are under way in the banks, where workers are demanding a thirty-five-hour week to counter unemployment. Their slogan is, "Let the bankers pay!"

- Sixty thousand insurance employees are out on rotating strikes for higher pay. Actions have included occupations of sev-

eral main offices in Paris.

- The 2,800 employees of the Paris Bourse (stockmarket) have been out on strike since February 27 to protest a scheduled wage cut.

- The 24,000 employees of the state income tax bureau began ten days of rotating strikes March 12, demanding

better pay and shorter hours.

- Production workers in the state-owned television network have been out on strike since February 8, protesting funding cuts and planned layoffs.

Each and every one of these workers has an interest in making the march on Paris a day the bosses will not soon forget. □

## U.S. Speeds Military Buildup in Asia

# Imperialism's 'Opium War' Against Laotian Revolution

By Fred Feldman

Twenty-seven days after the start of the U.S.-inspired invasion, Peking announced March 15 that it had withdrawn from Vietnam's border regions.

Hanoi denies that Peking's troops have completely withdrawn.

According to the March 16 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the invading forces "intend to hold on to scores of small but strategic positions on the mountainous border. . . ."

Meanwhile, the capitalist regimes in Southeast Asia (Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia) have not been trying to hide their pleasure over Peking's attack on Vietnam. Like their masters in Washington, they agreed that "Vietnam had it coming," Henry Kamm reported from Bangkok, Thailand, in the March 14 *New York Times*.

"The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia sent shudders through Southeast Asia; the Chinese counterthrust helped to calm the non-Communist countries," Kamm went on.

The "shudders" stem from the specter of the Vietnamese revolution. The semicolonial rulers fear that the overturn of Pol Pot in Kampuchea could lead to the same kinds of mass mobilizations that wiped out capitalism in southern Vietnam last year. And this could inspire mass challenges to their own regimes.

"Thailand, for example, considers itself a front-line country facing Vietnamese forces on its borders with Laos and Cambodia," Kamm said. "This heightens Bangkok's thinly disguised satisfaction over the Chinese thrust without diminishing its deep concern."

The concern expressed by the military dictatorship in Thailand was heightened by Hanoi's capacity to sustain its defense of the new regime in Kampuchea despite Peking's invasion. U.S. imperialism is using the Thai regime as a conduit for arms and supplies to the rightist forces in both Kampuchea and Laos.

The Vietnamese leadership obviously anticipates further imperialist pressure in Laos and Kampuchea and along the Chi-

nese border. On March 4, the Vietnamese Communist Party declared a "war of national resistance against the reactionary Chinese aggressors." A general mobilization was decreed the next day, shortly before Peking announced its plan to withdraw. Large-scale movements of Vietnamese troops and supplies have continued.

In a March 14 report from Washington, *New York Times* correspondent Richard Burt placed the Chinese border invasion in the context of a supposedly new "broad strategy for Asia" that the U.S. rulers have developed. The alleged goal is to "limit the impact of Communist fighting on American security interests in the area."

Actually this "quarantine strategy," as Burt's informants term it, is aimed at stepping up U.S. military intervention and attempting to seal off the contagion of socialist revolution in the region. There is nothing new about it. As Burt admitted, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam is but a convenient cover for announcing the policy decisions already made.

"Even before the recent outbreak of fighting in Indochina," Burt said, "the Administration had decided against any further major cutbacks in the American presence in Asia."

The "new" strategy includes cancelling plans to reduce the size of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, which patrols Southeast Asian waters; halting the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea; the decision to "help Thailand develop armed forces capable of deterring a Vietnamese attack"; and the readiness to respond sympathetically "to weapon requests from members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. . . ." Meanwhile, "Japan would be encouraged to continue its air and naval buildup."

### New Pressure on Laos

As part of its drive to contain and roll back the Indochinese revolutions, Washington is signaling Peking that it would not be averse to increased military pressure against Laos as well. The Laotian regime hailed the fall of Pol Pot and

supported Vietnam during the border war with China.

The March 11 *Chicago Tribune* quoted a "Western diplomat" in Bangkok as saying, "The Vietnamese may quickly forget what the Chinese have taught them and the Chinese may be back soon."

"If the Chinese do return," the *Tribune* reporter added, "it is likely to be through Laos. . . ."

On March 12 the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported that the Chinese government had stopped all aid to Laos. At the same time, Peking denounced as "fantastic fabrications" recent Laotian charges that China had massed troops along the border and was providing arms to rightist bands fighting the regime.

On March 15, however, the Laotian government charged that Chinese army battalions penetrated Laos on March 7 and March 10, occupying territory "one to two miles deep and six miles wide inside Laos." The Pathet Lao regime ordered Peking to remove thousands of construction workers who have reportedly been building roads in northern Laos since 1962.

Two days later, 10,000 people rallied in the Laotian capital of Vientiane to support the government, according to the official Laotian news service.

Chinese officials did not respond immediately to the new charges, but Washington sprang to Peking's defense. "Administration officials said they had no information to indicate that Chinese troops had crossed into Laos, and they described the reports of such an incursion as a ploy by Moscow to distract attention from China's withdrawal of troops from Vietnam," the March 16 *New York Times* reported.

An invasion of Laos on the scale of the border war with Vietnam would not be a simple rerun, even though Laos is far weaker than Vietnam militarily. It would entail new complications for both Washington and Peking. American working people remained skeptical of Washington's claims of benevolent neutrality during the

Chinese invasion of Vietnam, and an invasion of Laos now would only deepen suspicions of U.S. involvement.

In addition to the diversion of precious scarce resources, Peking faced popular opposition to its invasion of Vietnam, and in the midst of the war publicly admitted the existence of deep rifts in the bureaucracy. An attack on tiny Laos would risk even greater popular disgust and growing domestic divisions.

Nonetheless, Washington's determination to increase the pressure on Laos is evident. The tension between Laos and Peking coincided with an escalating propaganda campaign against Laos in the U.S. capitalist press, the main theme being that Laos is a Vietnamese "colony" or "puppet." And Peking chimed in March 11, charging that Vietnam is "enslaving the Laotian people" and clamping down "on the Lao people's resistance." The target of this big lie is the Laotian revolution.

### The Laotian Revolution

Laos is a long strip of landlocked territory bordering on Kampuchea, Thailand, Burma, China, and Vietnam. Subsistence agriculture provides its 3.4 million people with an annual per capita income of \$90. After years of U.S. saturation bombing of the countryside and the subsequent cutoff of U.S. food shipments, the Laotian people live on the edge of starvation.

The country is inhabited by at least forty-two different nationalities and ethnic groupings, speaking at least five languages. Laos has no railroad, few roads, and a primitive communications network.

No Laotian regime independent of imperialism could hope to survive under these conditions without a close alliance with the Vietnamese workers state. U.S. imperialism's use of Peking against the Indochinese revolutions made this more imperative.

Over the last thirty years, the course of the Laotian revolution has been closely intertwined with the Vietnamese. The Pathet Lao (Laotian for "Lao state") is a Stalinist formation with deep indigenous roots in Laos going back to the formation in October 1945 of a nationalist government in Vientiane, marking the opening of the liberation struggle against French imperialism. The Pathet Lao won mass support among rebellious peasants. It has always maintained close ties with the Vietnamese Communist Party.

After American troops were forced to withdraw from Indochina, a capitalist coalition government including the Pathet Lao and proimperialist forces came to power in September 1973. Popular mobilizations in the towns precipitated the break-up of the coalition, and the Pathet Lao took the reins of government alone in December 1975.

During the subsequent three years, the regime—whose most prominent figures are Kaysone Phoumvihane and ex-Prince

Souphanouvong—followed a vacillating but increasingly anticapitalist course.

The royal army was disbanded and the monarchy abolished. The privileges of the parasitic caste of Buddhist monks were trimmed, although freedom of religion was maintained. Land was given to many landless peasants and some initial steps were taken to introduce cooperatives in agriculture. A state-controlled system of rationing necessities was introduced, side-by-side with a sizable sector of private trade. Foreign firms were expropriated, and state or joint state-private ownership was introduced in businesses owned by Laotians. Public education was vastly expanded.

### U.S. Imperialism's 'Opium War'

At the same time, the regime has had to fight a continual war against the reactionary mercenary armies that French and U.S. imperialism have fostered over the long years of anti-imperialist struggle and civil war in Laos.

The government is also trying to end opium cultivation, which the private armies seek to defend or restore. Opium was formerly Laos's principal export.

The stiffest resistance to the regime is being waged in northwestern Laos, where members of the Meo nationality were organized into a mercenary army by the CIA in the 1960s. Before 1975, this part of Laos was "one of the largest heroin-producing centers in the world," according to Alfred W. McCoy in *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. Thousands of Meo earned their living by growing, refining, transporting, and selling opium.

Over the decades this trade has linked the Meos tightly to Thai and Burmese capitalists, to Chinese Kuomintang forces operating in northern Burma, and to U.S. imperialism. The opium trade represents the most serious internal threat to the anti-imperialist course now being followed by the Kaysone government.

Meo fleeing to Thailand are placed in refugee camps near the border, from which mercenary units are organized and raids are launched into Laos. The Meo refugees are watched over by an American, Edgar Buell.

In close collaboration with the CIA during the 1960s, Buell helped organize the U.S. "secret war" against the Pathet Lao. Buell was also involved in opium growing.

McCoy states in his book: "Buell utilized his agricultural skills to improve Meo techniques for planting and cultivating opium. 'If you're gonna grow it, grow it good,' Buell told the Meo, 'but don't let anybody smoke the stuff.' . . . Thus, more opium than ever was available for the international markets."

According to McCoy, "Buell played the innocent country boy and claimed his work was humanitarian aid for Meo refugees." In a recent segment of the CBS News television program *60 Minutes*, Buell

appeared in just that guise—appealing for "humanitarian" help for Meos fleeing Pathet Lao "persecution."

In line with its progressive social policy—which has wide mass support despite the antidemocratic policies of the Pathet Lao—and because of the need for Vietnamese help in fighting the mercenary armies, the Laotian regime signed a twenty-five-year military and economic pact with Hanoi on July 18, 1977. The agreement pledged both countries to collaborate in constructing "socialism."

The agreement did not make the Laotian regime a "puppet" of Vietnam. It basically extended the anti-imperialist alliance that took shape during three decades of struggle against French and U.S. domination.

Vietnam has provided Laos with skilled workers and technicians. It is building a road linking the city of Savannakhet to the Vietnamese city of Quang Tri, easing dependence on Thai trade and ports, which are often closed to Laos. The Vietnamese are also providing 30,000 crack troops to help Pathet Lao forces fight the U.S.-backed mercenary armies. And they help patrol Laos's borders against imperialist-inspired encroachments.

Fearing that the fall of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea will strengthen the drive of the Lao workers, peasants, and plebeian masses to do away with the remnants of capitalism, U.S. imperialism is seeking to weaken the Laotian revolution. The U.S. rulers fear that new advances in Laos will deepen unrest in Thailand, where a major peasant insurgency is threatening the dictatorship of Kriangsak Chamanand. Some 8 million Lao people live in northeastern Thailand—five times as many as in Laos itself. They are a major force in the peasant movement.

Military moves by Peking in Laos would provide U.S. imperialism with a smoke-screen behind which to funnel more aid through Thailand to rightist bands, particularly to the Meo army.

The U.S. imperialists know full well, however, that the Meo opium-growers and the Thai rulers cannot stand up in the long run against the spread of the Indochinese revolution. And they have even less confidence in the ability of the bureaucratic caste in Peking to block the course of history.

The imperialists' central goal is to win public toleration for a vastly increased U.S. military presence and activity in Southeast Asia. Along with Black Africa and the Middle East, this area of the world, with its 350 million people and its vast resources, is a prize the imperialists will never abandon.

Our answer is clear:

Stop the imperialist offensive against Indochina!

For massive U.S. aid to reconstruct the countries of Indochina, with no strings attached!

U.S. out of Southeast Asia now!



Striking crew members aboard freighter "Kuwait Horizon."

## Egyptian Sailors Block U.S. Arms for Thailand

By George Dolph

[The following article appeared in the March 23 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newspaper published in New York.]

\* \* \*

RALEIGH, North Carolina—Twenty Egyptian crew members of the freighter *Kuwait Horizon* apparently wanted nothing to do with Washington's stepped-up support to the right-wing military dictatorship in Thailand.

On March 2, they refused to load a shipment of U.S. armaments bound for Bangkok, Thailand, and for Singapore. The freighter was docked at the Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal near Wilmington, North Carolina.

U.S. officials prevented any media communication with the crew. But William Harris, an attorney for the shipowner, met with the crew and later characterized the protest as a "moral issue." Harris said the crew objected to the cargo, 20- and 40-millimeter artillery shells, and to the ship's destination.

The Carter administration has significantly increased military shipments to the Thai regime, which supplies right-wing guerrillas in Kampuchea and Laos.

The crew reportedly detained the captain aboard ship. Citing a breach of contract by the shipowner, they demanded that the contract be terminated and that they be paid in full and flown home to Cairo.

Col. H.K. Stevenson, director of the terminal, denied reporters access to the

base as soon as word of the protest leaked out. According to the March 10 *Raleigh News and Observer*, the shipowners hired a private security firm to keep reporters away after the ship was moved from Sunny Point to Wilmington.

When three crew members beckoned to

reporters on a nearby dock, the head of the security force ordered the sailors below deck. He told reporters that he was under orders not to let the crew talk to them.

Washington, too, was clearly eager to avoid publicity for its flow of arms to Southeast Asian rightists. The Immigration and Naturalization Service immediately revoked the crew's shore permits and ordered them detained and deported.

U.S. officials attempted to deny any political motivation in the dispute. David Winn, desk officer of Kuwait Affairs at the U.S. State Department, told the *Wilmington Morning Star* that "the most important thing is that it has no political overtones. A strike is what I call it, although they are holding the captain."

The capitalist press labeled the crew's protest "a mutiny." To the extent the event was reported outside North Carolina, the nature and destination of the cargo, and the crew's aims, went unmentioned.

Negotiations between the crew and representatives of the shipowner and Kuwaiti and Egyptian embassies ended March 9. Thirteen members of the crew were awarded back pay and flown home at the shipowner's expense. News of the other seven has still not been reported.

As of March 10, efforts were under way to hire a new crew. □

## Grenada Rebels Oust Sir Eric Gairy

Armed rebels brought down the neocolonialist regime of Sir Eric Gairy on the Caribbean island of Grenada on March 13.

The insurgents launched predawn assaults on the island's radio station and main police barracks. The deputy prime minister appealed to the government's forces to give up, and police stations were soon flying makeshift white flags.

The rebels detained about 100 government officials and supporters, including several members of Gairy's cabinet. One person was reported killed in the uprising.

Prime Minister Gairy himself was in New York for a visit to the United Nations when his government was overthrown. A spokesman for his entourage said Gairy was requesting help from the UN and from the U.S., British, and Canadian governments to "reinstatate in Grenada the legitimate government."

Washington is apparently still evaluating how to proceed. A Carter administration official quoted in the March 14 *Washington Post* said Gairy had been given "a vague response" and that for the moment "we're just trying to figure out what the facts are."

Gairy ruled Grenada for most of the past two decades, first becoming prime minister when the island was a British colony. The

bases of his power were British support and a gang of about 500 thugs. This secret-police unit was originally known as the Night Ambush Squad, but was rechristened the Volunteers for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights when Grenada was granted independence from Britain in 1974. The nucleus of this personal army was a criminal gang known to Grenadians as the "Mongoose Squad."

Maurice Bishop has proclaimed himself Grenada's new prime minister. He is the leader of the New Jewel\* Movement, which was founded in 1972 by young Grenadians returning to the island from universities abroad. From then on it played a key role in mobilizing opposition to Gairy's domination of the country.

At the time of independence in early 1974, the NJM spearheaded a general strike by dockworkers and other workers against Gairy's rule that shut down commerce throughout Grenada for more than a month. Solidarity strikes took place among dockworkers on the neighboring islands of Trinidad, Barbados, and Curaçao.

The program of the new Grenadan government has not yet been reported in the press. □

\*Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation.

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## Iran—Women, Oppressed Nationalities Fight for Rights

By Fred Murphy

The unprecedented demonstrations for women's rights that began in Tehran on International Women's Day, March 8, continued for five days and found echoes in other cities across Iran.

The upsurge of protest was touched off by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's March 7 declaration that women government workers "must be clothed according to Islamic standards." During the months of mass mobilizations aimed at bringing down the monarchy, many Iranian women had worn the Islamic veil (*chador*) as a symbol of opposition to the shah, but they recognized Khomeini's statement for what it was—an attempt to deepen the oppression of women.

Twenty thousand women turned out the day after Khomeini's statement for previously scheduled International Women's Day activities at Tehran University. At one of these rallies, called by the Ad Hoc International Women's Day Committee of Iran, 1,200 women were present. The speakers included a nurse, a teacher, a Palestinian woman, and American feminist Kate Millett. The Committee to Defend Women's Rights was initiated at this rally.

Big street demonstrations, spearheaded by high-school women, followed the rallies. On March 10, tens of thousands of women workers walked off their jobs, 7,000 women held a sit-in at the Justice Ministry, and 10,000 marched again from Tehran University.

The women's protests were attacked by well-organized thugs throwing stones and shouting verbal abuse. They arrived at the demonstrations in buses. The government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan offered little protection to the marchers, but the women, with the help of male supporters, organized to defend the actions. Large crowds of spectators gathered and watched the protests with interest.

The most recent actions in this initial wave of women's rights activity in Tehran drew 15,000 women to the university on March 12. Some speakers advocated ending the street demonstrations and placing trust in the Bazargan government, but representatives of the Committee to Defend Women's Rights urged women to stay in the streets to win their demands. The crowd agreed, and a march was held to the Liberty (formerly Shahyad) Monument, the site of many of the huge rallies that preceded the overthrow of the shah.

Bank workers, hospital workers, students, and teachers participated in the March 12 actions, as did a contingent of

radio and television workers protesting government censorship and the firing of women in the media. The regime's television network had refused for three days to carry news of the women's protests.

Despite the news blackout, however, word of the protests in Tehran reached other parts of the country, sparking rallies, strikes, and demonstrations by women in the industrial center of Isfahan, the Azerbaijani city of Tabriz, the Kurdish city of Sanandaj, and the main Persian Gulf port, Bandar Abbas.

The public protests subsided after Khomeini backed down from his declaration on the veil, saying it was a "duty" but not an "order," and after Labor Minister Darius Forouhar declared that women workers are entitled to equal rights on the job and the right to participate in trade union elections and hold office in the unions.

Even these concessions won by the powerful mobilizations of women are a challenge to the deep-rooted oppression of women in Iran, where imperialism and the monarchy, buttressed by religious institutions, have trapped women in backwardness for centuries. But Iranian women have now begun to discuss and act against their oppression, and in doing so they are setting an example for their sisters throughout the semicolonial world and in the imperialist centers as well.

The women's movement also adds a powerful new component to the Iranian revolution. Together with workers and peasants committees and mobilization of

the oppressed nationalities, the women's struggles are helping to drive the revolution forward, against the attempts of Bazargan's cabinet and Khomeini's entourage to consolidate a stable proimperialist regime.

An important test of strength is shaping up over the rights of the nationalities. Khomeini, Bazargan, and company have been making threatening noises against those who seek to exercise the right to self-determination; above all, against the Kurds, who now almost completely control the western province of Kurdistan. In February Khomeini branded the Kurdish struggle "an uprising against the Islamic revolution." Foreign Minister Karim Sanjabi, also referring to the Kurds, declared in an interview printed in the March 11-12 *Le Monde*, "Whatever the cost we will defend the independence, integrity, and unity of Iran."

But the shaky and divided central government lacks at present the military ability to make good its threats. Now, in addition to the Kurds, other oppressed nationalities have begun to make their demands heard:

- On March 10, 10,000 Arabs demonstrated in Ahwaz in oil-rich Khuzestan Province. They demanded a larger share of oil revenues for Khuzestan, preferential hiring of Arabs, and the adoption of Arabic as the province's main language. Before Reza Shah's "Persianization" drive in the 1930s, Khuzestan had been known as Arabistan. Arabs make up more than half the population of the province and



Women's movement: A challenge to deep-rooted oppression.



form an important component of the work force in Iran's oil fields.

• Turkmeni workers in the city of Gonbad-e Qabus east of the Caspian Sea carried out a general strike on March 11. They struck in solidarity with the Turkmeni population of the nearby Caspian port of Bandar-e Shah who were protesting an attempt by the Persian minority there to change the town's name to Bandar-e Islam. The Turkmenis, who adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam, saw that move as part of an effort to preserve the domination of the Persian oppressor nationality, which is Shi'ite in its vast majority.

The Turkmenis are also demanding that their language be taught in the region's schools, greater investment by the central government, and a single Turkmeni province with its own governor-general. At present, the Turkmeni population of 500,000 is divided between two predominantly Persian provinces.

• Some 4,000 Baluchis rallied in the southeastern city of Zahedan on March 12. Similar rallies took place in other Baluchi cities. Baluchi leaders who spoke with Jonathan C. Randal of the *Washington Post* said the gatherings were to express "anger and loss of respect for the revolution." Randal continued:

The anger was blamed on a Khomeini statement last week that the Baluchis interpreted as re-establishing the primacy of the majority Shi'ite sect of Islam despite the ayatollah's earlier promise to their leader that their minority sect of Sunni Islam would enjoy equality.

The Baluchi nationalists sent protest telegrams to Khomeini, Bazargan, and the press, demanding local autonomy, a federal constitution, full representation in a constituent assembly, and a written affirmation of earlier pledges made to the Baluchis by representatives of Bazargan's government.

The Baluchi struggle for self-determination could be particularly explosive because of the close ties between Iran's estimated 800,000 Baluchis and the 5 to 10 million Baluchis in neighboring Pakistan, who also suffer national oppression.

From 1973 to 1977 a Baluchi guerrilla army of 50,000 fought a large-scale war against the Bhutto regime in Pakistan. The Pakistani rulers eventually were able to put down the rebellion with aid from the shah, whose helicopter gunships—piloted by Iranians—were instrumental in turning the tide against the Baluchis. The shah also imposed a virtual military occupation on Baluchistan Province in Iran during that period.

Randal of the *Washington Post* also reported March 13 that Baluchi nationalists have been contacted by their counterparts from Kurdistan. This is the first indication in the Western press that coordination may be beginning among the various national struggles in Iran. □

## 'Forum on Democratic Rights' Will Protest Torture

### Colombia—More Threats Against Left

By Eduardo Medrano

BOGOTA—Preparations are under way for a Forum on Democratic Rights to be held here March 30-April 1. Numerous trade unions and several left parties, including the Firmes movement and the Trotskyists of the PSR and the PST,\* have joined in building the event. Support also is coming from Liberal Party politicians and independent figures—in particular, from the well-known Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez. International human-rights organizations have also been invited to participate.

The forum will be the biggest response yet to a wave of repression against the Colombian left that has been under way since the "Security Statute" was decreed last September. Arrest figures multiplied in January when Army Intelligence launched a frenetic witch-hunt throughout the country on the pretext of seeking to capture members of the urban-guerrilla group April 19 Movement (M-19).

Hundreds of persons have been detained. The vast majority of them are members or sympathizers of legal organizations on the Colombian left, or else priests, intellectuals, or trade unionists.

At a meeting of 500 persons in Bogotá on February 20, where representatives of trade unions and of the Committee of Families of Political Prisoners spoke, the arbitrary acts committed by the secret army units were denounced in the following terms: "What disturbs us greatly are the diverse forms of torture practiced on the detainees—mock shootings, electric shocks, extinguishing cigarettes on the body, blows to the abdomen, sharp objects used to wound the chest and back and introduced beneath the fingernails, blindfolding for several days without food or water, and so on. All this is being denied in the government's informational reports."

Hundreds of messages protesting the arrests and torture have reached President Turbay from supporters of human rights in the United States and Europe. The international protest has received publicity in the press here and is making the government nervous.

On January 31 Professor Paul Hochstim

\*Partido Socialista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Socialist Party); Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party). Both are sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International in Colombia.

of Central Connecticut State College in the United States wrote Defense Minister Camacho Leyva to ask the immediate release of the prisoners—"whose only crime," Hochstim wrote, "has been to express moral criticism of certain events in the political life of the country."

Camacho Leyva scoffed at this, declaring that Hochstim "doesn't know Colombia, neither its people nor its institutions." For the defense minister, the international outcry in defense of human rights in Colombia is nothing less than "a plan to offer international protection to the subversion that at present is confronting our country and its democratic institutions."

A generalized struggle against official repression takes on greater urgency with each passing day. International pressure remains a necessity, especially since there are ominous signs that the tortures and raids may be complemented with even worse developments. For instance, a February 1 editorial in the army newspaper *Fuerzas Armadas de Colombia* openly threatens any person who dares to write or express an opinion against the regime:

Subversion is recovering and has to try something. The armed forces and citizens must remain constantly alert. The spokesmen of subversion (undeclared, but spokesmen nonetheless) are now waking up and are already writing. . . . They prefer to use the pen, and in that they are strong. They use slander, subterfuge, and defense of the human rights of criminals, so as to bring about the discreditment of the armed forces. . . . To do this they must besmirch the armed forces' image, and make it appear to be an institution of torturers. . . .

The struggle against subversion must be permanent. . . . The government is prepared to apply proper treatment to subversion, employing without quarter all the means at its disposal.

What might this "proper treatment" be? When the actor Carlos Duplat was jailed, his torturers warned him that they would be using illegal methods on him since it was a question of "organization-to-organization treatment"—evidently alluding to a secret body inside the army itself. A few days later news appeared in the bourgeois press of a clandestine right-wing organization that had been formed to murder leftists.

Letters and telegrams demanding the release of the political prisoners, due process of law, and an immediate halt to torture should be sent to Colombian embassies or to Julio César Turbay Ayala, Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia. □

## Fresh Attack on British Workers' Right to Strike

By Dodie Wepler

LONDON—Just how long Britain's Labour government can remain in office will depend on two key factors. The first is its ability to enforce the Concordat, an agreement drawn up by the government with trade union leaders in February, in an attempt to re-cement relations between the two.

The second is Labour's handling of the results of the March 1 referendum on devolution, which would have given Scotland and Wales their own assemblies, with limited powers.

In both these areas, the government will have to carry out some fairly adroit maneuvers.

Despite a limited upturn of the British economy in 1978, long-term prospects are poor. Britain today has the lowest growth rate of industrial production of all the major advanced capitalist countries. It also suffers a severe trade deficit. Unemployment in Britain is as high as in the United States, and inflation is running at 8% to 9%. (*The Economist*, February 17.)

All these indices add up to one harsh fact for Labour: the government must continue trying to enforce severe austerity measures if it is to reassure the British ruling class that it can deal with the present crisis. At the same time, it faces the fundamental fact that no British government can escape: the trade-union movement here remains among the strongest in the world. And the present context is one of a working class upsurge in which the number of days lost in labor disputes now matches the figures for the post-war high years of 1971 and 1972.

The Ford workers, in defiance of the Labour leadership, notched up a 19% wage settlement in their strike. The lorry drivers followed, winning a 22% settlement. When the 1.5 million public-sector workers started to take action, a 16% wage increase was rapidly granted to the strongest section, the water workers. Although in each case the unions agreed to certain "productivity" agreements, they left the Labour government's 5% wage guideline in tatters. (See *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 26, p. 176.)

### The Concordat

The Concordat was the Labour leadership's response to tremendous pressure from the ruling class in this situation. The agreement itself has two aims. It is designed to help put the bureaucracy back on the offensive within the trade unions,

rather than simply reacting to rank and file initiatives.

It also attempts to demonstrate to the ruling class that a special relationship still exists between Labour and the union leaders. In other words, it tries to reassure the bosses that Labour continues to be a better governmental option than the Tories because it can keep the working class in line through mutual agreements, not confrontation.

The most important part of the Concordat is its guidelines for industrial action. These have the general aim of forcing annual wage increases down to a 5% level by 1982. This is to be accomplished through the collaboration of trade-union

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### **"Left" union leaders have made the government's job easier . . .**

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leaders in a campaign for some of the harshest anti-working-class measures proposed by Labour in recent years. These measures are not statutory, but that doesn't mean Labour leaders won't go all out to enforce them. Indeed, their voluntary character is what makes the Concordat appear more acceptable to the British labor movement.

Among the most serious aspects of the guidelines is the call on trade-union leaders to make arrangements "in advance of any industrial action to continue the provision of services and supplies where the health or safety of the community is involved." In other words, the fundamental right to strike of a very wide range of workers is under attack.

On the question of picketing—a central theme of the Tory-led campaign for law and order—the Labour leaders have utterly succumbed. The Concordat calls on pickets to confine their actions to the premises in dispute, or to its suppliers. This would have totally undermined the effectiveness of the so-called secondary pickets in the lorry drivers' strike, where flying pickets controlled the flow of goods on the docks, for instance. The Concordat warns trade unionists that they stand to be sued for trespass—or even conspiracy—if they dare to place pickets on private property.

The general thrust of the Concordat is to move decision-making to higher and higher levels of the trade union structures. For example, it reiterates that before ac-

tion is taken in any interunion dispute, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) should be called in. It also calls on trade-union leaders to consider, when dealing with disputes at the factory level, whether they couldn't be better handled on an industry-wide basis.

Another policy in the guidelines concerns the closed shop, which covers 5 million British workers. Tory leader Margaret Thatcher has made a lot of noise about this issue, and the Concordat is a measure of her success. It urges the trade unions to avoid any rigid arrangements in regard to the closed shop, and even advises a "flexible" approach to "conscientious objectors" who refuse to abide by the democratic decision of the majority of workers to operate a closed shop!

Finally, the Concordat provides for this wages policy to be policed by an annual tripartite arrangement involving the government in office, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), and the Trades Union Congress, which will decide the general level of wage settlements. The Concordat's declaration that "we are all part of a community of interest" must be welcomed by Thatcher—it is a sentiment she has often expressed.

The government wants to project one simple message with the Concordat—Labour *does* have answers to every concern raised by the Tories and the CBI. In some cases, Labour has completely stolen Tory clothes.

### Trying to Stem the Upsurge

Will the Concordat be successful? Most of the capitalist press has responded with skepticism, although some grudgingly back it as the only existing alternative.

But the Concordat's fate does not lie exclusively in the hands of capitalist commentators. It very much depends on how rapidly the current trade-union struggles can be resolved. If Labour is to prove that its special relationship with the unions means anything, it has to pass one burning practical test: end the wave of industrial action.

The performance of left labour leaders in relation to the Concordat has made the government's job that much easier. There were no voices against the Concordat in the TUC General Council. Not one member raised the call for recalling the TUC to stop what represents a blatant reversal of the policy, adopted at last year's TUC Congress, of opposition to wage restraint

of any kind and for the thirty-five-hour week.

Moss Evans, a left leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, whose lorry driver members had put the flying picket to such good effect in their strike, endorsed the Concordat—including its anti-picketing clauses. Communist Party member Ken Gill was quoted in the *Morning Star* the day after the Concordat was signed as saying that “because the General Council has expressed its determination not to allow this [Concordat] to be used as an excuse to introduce an incomes policy, it was not necessary to oppose the document.”

Left members of Parliament went even further. *Tribune*, the weekly paper of the Labour Party left wing, actually rushed to support the Concordat, saying that within it “could lie the seeds for a real and lasting cooperation between the Labour Government and the unions.”

If this complicity hasn't put the government off to a good start, then acceptance by the miners' union executive of the National Coal Board's wage settlement at the end of February certainly has. The union leadership decided to settle for an estimated 10% wage increase, which the bosses quickly agreed to since some sections of miners had won up to 40% last year. This decision will have a profound effect on other sectors whose claims are yet to be negotiated. The railway workers, power workers, and engineers, for instance, will now seriously consider before they engage in struggles for their claims.

Having managed to rush through the miners' settlement, Labour is now concentrating on the action being taken by the public sector workers, especially the National Union of Public Employees. This involves four different sections: local government manual workers, ambulance workers, hospital ancillary workers, and nurses. This striking force of militant, predominantly women workers, has been traditionally one of the lowest-paid sections of the labor movement. They are fighting for a national minimum wage of £60 and a thirty-five-hour week.

It is still not clear whether the government will be able to gain the upper hand in these struggles. But in any case, British workers are not returning to the early days of the Social Contract. They are no longer prepared to accept the belt-tightening arguments. The government and the ruling class have yet to impose a solution to the capitalist crisis on the backs of the working class.

#### Results of the Referendum

What is more, any respite for Labour on the industrial front will be tempered by the way the government responds to the outcome of the devolution referendum.

Labour's decision to act on its policy of granting limited autonomy to Scotland and Wales was an attempt to defuse a

major political crisis in Scotland. The bourgeois Scottish National Party (SNP) had begun to make important inroads into Labour's votes. It grew from irrelevant obscurity to become the second largest party in Scotland, with eleven members of Parliament at Westminster, hundreds of local councillors and thousands of members. In recent years, it was the fastest-growing party in Europe.

Labour took up the issue of devolution as a way to roll back this growing popularity. And its traditional working-class supporters were won back to its ranks when they saw that Labour was equally prepared to give more control to Scotland as a solution to the acute economic and social difficulties. This orientation has paid off, and the Labour bureaucracy has scored an important victory against the SNP. On the national level, Labour's commitment to a referendum has helped it remain in power through an alliance with SNP M.P.s at Westminster.

The results of the referendum spell further crisis for the government. Although the 52% “yes” vote demonstrated that a clear majority were in favor of devolution in Scotland, Labour has to contend with an amendment tacked on to the Scotland and Wales Acts during the heated debate in Parliament. The amendment stipulated that 40% of the entire population on the electoral rolls must cast “yes” votes in order for the legislation to be enacted. Calculated on this basis, the “yes” votes for an assembly in Scotland amounted to 32.85%, while 30.78 voted “no.”

Thus the government is obliged to annul the vote for a Scottish assembly because the required 40% was not attained. On the other hand, it may well try to overturn this extraordinary requirement. In either case, the present SNP-Labour parliamentary alliance is under severe strain.

In addition, the government will have to face the repercussions of this outcome in the ranks of the working class. The returns show that despite an enormous campaign by British bosses for a “no” vote, every working-class district in Scotland polled a solid “yes” majority.

Labour's failure to get the vote it needed and expected in Scotland is due in part to the action of the left Tribune Labour M.P.s who campaigned for a “no” vote, arguing that devolution would split the working-class movement. But it can also be explained by the fact that Scottish workers were not fully convinced that the proposed assembly provided the radical solution needed to solve the problems faced by the working class north of the English border.

Nevertheless, a majority came out in favor of devolution, and now it needs to be organized to continue the fight, without relying on Labour's parliamentary moves.

The resounding defeat for the assembly in Wales will not give rise to such a severe



Hospital workers: “Enough is enough.”

political crisis. This is partly because of the weakness of the Welsh nationalist forces, and more importantly because the powers offered to the proposed assembly were even more limited than in the case of Scotland, so that even the Welsh working class remained unconvinced of its merits.

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All of these developments point the way toward an earlier election rather than one at the end of Labour's term in November. And one factor in determining the precise date is undoubtedly how the ruling class judges Labour's performance in ending the wave of industrial disputes. The most significant sections of the bourgeoisie are behind the wing of the Conservative Party that stands for the more “moderate” industrial policies promoted by James Prior, the shadow employment minister. But the Tories' central leadership remains deeply divided on several key policy questions, both in relation to industrial disputes and regarding devolution.

In the very short term the ball is in Labour's court. If it can successfully implement the Concordat and hold off further strikes once the public-sector workers have settled it may hope to win back some favor with the ruling class. But whether this will be sufficient to put Labour back in office is doubtful, especially in view of the savage attacks on the working class that have been the hallmark of Labour's record.

March 4, 1979

## Working Women of the World Begin to Break Their Chains

[The following statement was issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International for International Women's Day, March 8.]

\* \* \*

"The twentieth-century woman has come of age politically, and she is demanding her rights as a citizen in a determined way."

Thus began the appeal distributed by the tens of thousands in Germany on the first International Women's Day in 1911. "Arise, working women and girls! Rise and begin the battle for the right to vote! March 19 is your day, the day when you will show that you are tired of having the same duties without enjoying the same rights."

On Clara Zetkin's initiative, a call for an annual day to celebrate women's struggle for emancipation had been voted the previous year at the second Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen. While the battle for the vote was on the agenda of the first International Women's Day, it was in protest against rising prices and low wages that the women textile workers of Petrograd decided to call a one-day strike in March 1917. We know what role this played in detonating the wave of strikes that was to lead to the overthrow of the tsar.

Nearly three-quarters of a century later women are still struggling to exercise their rights, and they know that they have a bitter battle to fight. In spite of all the talk about ending inequality, women still suffer discrimination in all areas. "Underpaid, last hired, and first fired"—that statement has never been truer than it is today.

Like young people, immigrant workers, and members of oppressed nationalities, women are the first to pay the price for the economic crisis. In France, the female unemployment rate has risen faster in the last two years than the rate for men. Not one of the countries in the European Economic Community implements the guidelines on equal pay. In Britain, for example, almost ten years after passage of the equal-pay law, women still earn only 65 percent of what men earn, on the average.

The austerity policy imposed by the bourgeoisie on the working class takes the form not only of wage curbs but of drastic cutbacks in the funds allotted for social services. Closings of schools, child-care centers, and hospitals are among the measures that primarily affect women, particularly working women, since they are considered responsible not only for household chores but for the care of children, the aged, and the sick.

With all these inequalities remaining, the tendency for the number of working women to increase, both in the capitalist and in the semicolonial countries, is nonetheless an irreversible phenomenon and one that is full of explosive contradictions.

It was in 1978 that 100,000 women were forced to take to the streets of the United States to shout their determination to win constitutional guarantees of equal rights.

It was in 1978 that the women workers at the Fleck plant in English Canada went on strike to win recognition of their right to organize and to obtain a labor contract.

Finally, a few weeks ago, after sermons by the pope and bishops threatening to excommunicate anyone who "violates Christian values" by showing disrespect for the "right to life," 7,000 Italian women gathered in Florence to demand implementation of the new abortion laws and the right to freely decide whether or not to have children.

One of the clearest signs of the spread of radicalization among women is the appearance of an independent women's movement in many colonial and semicolonial countries.

In North Africa, Central Africa, and Asia, we have recently seen the rise of women's groups—still few in number, of course—which testify to the impact of the women's struggle around the world. In particular, in several countries of Latin America, we have seen groups capable of working together and waging battles in common formed out of the first few struggles around feminist demands. Witness the first national gathering of women in Colombia, which was held in December in Medellín. This meeting was attended by nearly 300 participants from several cities and from several recently formed groups.

There can be no doubt that the revolutionary process in Iran, which has seen women in the front ranks of mobilizations, will help strengthen the radicalizing women's movement there, and will lead women to question the most reactionary aspects of Islam, which justifies the worst aspects of women's oppression, at the same time that they are questioning the oppression that exists in class society.

The most important development of the past year for the women's liberation struggle was the growing interpenetration between the struggles of women and those of the working class.

In 1978, in the capitalist countries, we saw stepped-up attacks on the standard of living and rights of all workers, particularly women, youth, and other specially oppressed layers. At the same time, the past year also brought a growing reaction

to these attacks from the most powerful sectors of the workers movement, such as the coal strike last year in the United States, the Ford strike in Britain, and the strikes by steelworkers in West Germany, and more recently in France.

The rise of struggles by the most powerful sectors of the working class around the world has given a new perspective to the women's liberation struggle. It will give working women greater confidence with which to fight for their own demands on the job and in the trade unions. And it can also raise the level of consciousness within the independent women's movement, by showing the possibilities for an alliance between the women's movement and a fighting, reinvigorated labor movement, which can lead the working class to power based on the demands of all the oppressed.

An example of this growing interpenetration can be seen in the recent developments that have occurred within the Italian metalworkers union, the FLM. The FLM was in the front ranks of opposition to the capitalist austerity policy, having organized a demonstration of 100,000 workers against the government in Rome in early December.

Under the influence of the women's liberation movement and women trade unionists, the FLM refused to allow part-time work to be made a part of the contracts negotiated between the union leadership and the bosses. At an FLM conference, the women delegates explained that "part-time work cannot be the first step toward this goal (shortening work hours for everyone), precisely because it divides the workers instead of giving everyone a chance to take part in the debate over the relationship between working time and leisure time."

The alternative solutions these delegates suggested included the demand that women be allowed to enter all types of trades, and that they be given special job training.

For their part, the women shop stewards of the Spanish Workers Commissions led the same kind of fight last year. They succeeded in opening a debate at the trade-union congresses on the body of demands that they were raising, on the need for the leadership to promote the setting up of women's commissions in the trade unions everywhere, and on the need for ties between the trade-union movement and the independent women's movement.

Another example of this growing interpenetration is the United States, where for years the labor movement appeared monolithic, conservative, and hostile to the independent women's movement, as well

as to the interests of its own members. The militancy of the miners' strike began to break down this image and to inspire other sectors of the labor movement, by showing the possibility for the unions to play a new role.

The unrest in the ranks of the U.S. working class led trade-union bureaucrats like Donald Fraser of the United Auto Workers to call for an alliance between the labor, women's and Black movements.

Even though this speech was designed only to polish Fraser's image, it reflects the changes in consciousness taking place both within the labor movement and within the women's movement. A particular illustration of this change is the decision of the National Organization for Women, the largest women's organization in the U.S., to call a national conference in 1979 on the problems of women in the trade unions and organizing in the workplace.

Another aspect of the radicalization of working women is the fact that their struggles are not concerned only with economic problems but with much broader issues connected with the special oppression of women.

Thus, the Women's Rights Committee of the British Columbia Federation of Labor got a resolution passed at the federation's last congress in November which takes up the union's tasks in fighting the sexual harassment that working women face daily.

Pointing out how hard it is for women, especially if they are unskilled and afraid of losing their jobs, to fight back against sexual abuse by the boss or foremen, the document underscored the union's responsibility to expose specific cases in which working women are the victims of sexist attitudes, and to educate its own members on the subject.

This consciousness on the part of working women about the need to fight against their oppression is beginning to have an impact on the workers movement as a whole. Isn't this what we saw a few months ago in Britain, when 500 delegates—men and women—attended a conference on abortion organized by the National Abortion Campaign and the LARC (a grouping within the Labour Party fighting for abortion rights)?

This conference—endorsed by five national unions and many trade-union branches, and including delegates from such diverse sectors as health care, social services, the engineering industries, public transportation, education, journalism, tobacco, and even mining—mainly discussed what kind of campaign would be necessary to fight cutbacks in health services and force the government to open centers where women could safely obtain a suction abortion, with or without anesthesia, without delay and without hospitalization.

These are some of the examples that show that the radicalization of women is

no longer the exclusive prerogative of a small layer of relatively privileged intellectuals, as was the case ten years ago when the women's liberation movement first emerged. Today, there are tens and hundreds of thousands of working women fighting against everything their exploitation and special oppression are based on.

This fact, along with the growing struggle against the bourgeois offensive being led by the most powerful sectors of the working class, opens up new possibilities for revolutionists to discuss what strategy is needed to win the liberation of women.

Women can now more clearly see how it

is possible to transform the trade unions into organizations of struggle that could ally with the battles of all the oppressed. The strategy to follow to win liberation for women must be an alliance between the women's movement and a fighting labor movement.

Working women are the future leaders of the women's liberation movement, and it will be their role to forge an alliance—and to be the center of it—between the great power of the labor movement and the independent organizations which up to now have spearheaded the fight around women's demands. □

## Against Sexual Harassment on the Job

[Following are major excerpts from a resolution adopted by the November 1978 convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labor. More than 1,000 delegates, representing a quarter of a million Canadian workers, were present. The resolution was submitted by the federation's Women's Rights Committee.]

\* \* \*

Sexual harassment is difficult to define. It may range from sexual innuendo made at inappropriate times, perhaps in the guise of humour, to coerced sexual relations.

Harassment at its extreme occurs when a male in a position to control, influence, or affect a woman's job or career uses his authority and power to coerce the woman into sexual relations, or to punish her refusal.

Because the male is in a position of authority, as a supervisor, a woman, therefore, may be at great risk if she objects to the behavior or resists the overtures. It is this context which underlies the gravity of the problem of sexual harassment.

A woman cannot freely choose to say yes or no to such sexual advances. The fear of reprisal looms formidably for many women when deciding how to react to sexual harassment. To refuse sexual demands may mean jeopardizing her future or her career. In the case of working women, the decision to simply quit a job is a luxury she may not be able to afford.

Like rape, sexual harassment has been a hidden problem, treated as a joke, or blamed on the victim herself. Because of a long history of silence on the subject, many women feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or ashamed when they talk about personal incidents of harassment. They are afraid that it will reflect badly on their character, or that they will be seen as somehow inviting the propositions.

When women do speak out they are often ignored, discredited or accused of "misunderstanding" their superior's intentions. A study conducted on this subject in 1975,

showed that in 50 percent of the cases where complaints were registered no action was taken. In one third of those cases where the complaints were filed, negative repercussions resulted.

Many of these women are organized and we have a responsibility to protect them from this very real threat to their livelihood. Unfortunately, in many instances they do not believe that anything can be done or that the union would be willing to protect them. The labour movement must clearly demonstrate that it is not prepared to allow any of its members to be intimidated or coerced. To this end the Women's Committee makes the following recommendations:

### *Internally*

—affiliates should adopt policies opposing sexual harassment.

—stewards and officers should be trained to deal with this type of problem in an effective manner.

—the membership must be advised that the union is opposed to sexual harassment and that union officers and stewards are trained to handle the problem.

### *Externally*

—negotiate language in collective agreements to provide protection against sexual harassment.

—develop a separate grievance procedure if necessary for these complaints to ensure protection for the members.

—insist that the employer issue a statement prohibiting sexual harassment on the job and post this on bulletin boards.

—issue a pamphlet advising women of their rights and warning male supervisors of the repercussions of incidents of this nature.

Sexual harassment is not a joke. It's an issue that will not go away. The labour movement must recognize the seriousness of the problem and effectively represent our members who are its victims. □

## Working-Class Militancy on the Rise in Brazil

By Fatima Oliveira

SAO PAULO—Leaders of the metalworkers unions of the state of São Paulo, representing more than 1 million workers, took a big step toward independent working-class political action at their Ninth Congress, held in the town of Lins January 22-26.

Delegates overwhelmingly approved a proposal calling for formation of a workers party, and called for a national commission to begin preparations for building such a party.

The union representatives declared that they could no longer trust Brazil's two existing legal bourgeois parties—the government-controlled ARENA and the opposition Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). "History has shown us," the unions' document says, "that the best instrument the workers can use to carry out their struggle is their own party. Therefore, in organizing this party, which will include the entire proletariat, workers are struggling for effective liberation from exploitation."

Benedito Marcílio, president of the metalworkers union of Santo André—which presented the proposal for a workers party—declared during the congress that the two-party system does not satisfy the interests of the majority of Brazilian society because it props up the arbitrary military dictatorship.

Marcílio—who was himself recently elected to the federal Congress as an MDB deputy—said that the MDB is a front that groups all kinds of people, including the bosses. He said the party of the working class should emerge out of the needs of the rank and file without any interference from the bosses. Marcílio suggested creating a commission to organize representatives from other states to discuss the new party's statutes and program. He said his opinion was that these should be based on socialist principles.

The union leader also asserted that all segments of the opposition should continue the struggle to win democratization by calling for the convening of a constituent assembly.

When asked about the trade-union congress by the socialist monthly *Versus*, Santo André metalworker José Maria de Almeida commented: "The time to build this party is now. If we didn't do it before it is because the dictatorship wouldn't let us. It has always been the right time to fight for workers independence from the bourgeoisie and the bosses. Those who say it isn't the right time never went to the

factories and asked the workers."

"This party," de Almeida continued, "has to be understood as a party of all wage-earners, working class and middle class, from the city and the countryside—and not simply as a 'metalworkers party.' Its functioning and program are what will guarantee its unity on the national level and keep it out from under the control of the bureaucrats and opportunists who are coming out in favor of it all of a sudden.

"Now is the time to build our party. As the president of the Campinas metalworkers union said, 'You only have to put the stick in our hands and we'll kill the snake.'"

The Socialist Convergence, a broad-based movement that has been calling for formation of a socialist party, has given full support to the trade unionists' proposal all along. In a recent editorial in *Versus*, the leaders of Socialist Convergence hailed the proposal for formation of a workers party and pointed to the need for a declaration of principles "through which we can struggle not only for democratic demands but for a society that eliminates capitalist exploitation once and for all."

The editorial went on to call for a program that would not only defend the standard of living of the working class, democratic rights, and true national independence, but would also have a clear objective—a workers government.

The call for a workers party marks a new stage in the growing radicalization of the Brazilian working class, and comes in the wake of a gigantic upsurge in trade-union activity. During the Geisel government, and especially in the past two years, the workers organizations have succeeded in breaking a long period of silence and have reappeared as a major force in Brazil. The revival of the workers movement has brought forward new leaders who want to transform the unions, which for years were reduced to entities for social services and recreation under tight government regulation and intervention.

The massive strikes that began in greater São Paulo in May 1978 and involved tens of thousands of metalworkers were a watershed in this process. They caught almost everyone by surprise—capitalists, the government, and even a large part of the working class. Only the 3,000 metalworkers at the Saab-Scania auto plant in São Bernardo do Campo knew that on May 12, 1978, they were to go into the factories, punch their time cards,

and stand with crossed arms without starting up their machines.

Despite vacillations and apprehensions owing to the fact that few workers had gone through such an experience before, the strike at Saab-Scania opened a wave that spread slowly to other plants in greater São Paulo, Brazil's main industrial center, and to various other cities throughout Brazil. For the first time since 1968, workers reached a level of mobilization that made it possible for them to go on strike.

The past year's actions by various sectors of the working class have had mainly an economic character. However, they have emerged at a moment in which other sectors of Brazilian society have already begun a process of politicization. There were big student mobilizations in 1977, growing demands for amnesty and democratic rights by various sectors of society, and the growth of the movement against the high cost of living, which has been organized mainly by the Catholic Church.

In this context, the strike movement ended up taking on a political character. The Regional Labor Tribunal of São Paulo ruled the May 1978 strikes illegal, but the workers ignored the court's decisions.

In doing so they rejected the antistrike legislation decreed by the government after the 1964 military coup that virtually wiped out workers' rights. After stepped-up repression against all opponents of the military regime in 1968, the traditional trade-union leadership was completely dismantled. The unions went through a long period of very low-key activity, marked by timid spontaneous demonstrations of dissatisfaction—brief work stoppages, slowdowns, and petition campaigns.

By 1968 the unions were already bound up in red tape and saddled with bureaucrats. But the situation became even worse with the imposition of the *pelegos*, or bureaucrats with direct ties to the military regime. So from 1968 to 1977 the workers movement remained under tight government control and the unions were dominated by people without any kind of identity with the workers. But the recent strikes have shown that new leadership has arisen to encourage greater participation by the workers.

"The hour has come to say enough to this situation," said Luis Inacio da Silva, or "Lula," as he is commonly called, to 10,000 metalworkers who met in São Bernardo do Campo in April 1978. "It's time for everyone to assume the responsibility

not to believe in the politicians who only come to our houses in search of votes, not to believe in the authorities who don't leave their offices, and not to believe in the bosses of the companies. We have to believe in the courage of each worker and in the power of the struggle of the working class."

Twice president of the metalworkers union of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema, with a large membership of auto workers, "Lula" is part of a small but growing group of leaders who are trying to rebuild the trade unions. These officials, along with new rank-and-file leaders at the point of production, have played a key role in the new mobilizations of the Brazilian working class.

This group of militant union leaders, known as the *autênticos* (authentic), first gained prominence in August 1977 when they announced that the government-determined cost-of-living index for the years 1973-74 had been manipulated by then-Minister of the Interior Delfin Neto. A union-supported research organization issued a study indicating that manipulation of the index had resulted in a decline in real wages for all workers.

The unions of greater São Paulo were the first to begin a campaign for wage readjustment. In September 1977 they held a number of assemblies and were able to mobilize support from dozens of other unions in other parts of the country. All wanted the back wages owed them.

Also in 1977, the metalworkers in São Bernardo initiated a wage-increase campaign with the decision that they would no longer accept the inadequate government-imposed across-the-board wage increases but would seek to negotiate directly with the bosses.

At the end of 1977, several working-class leaders began to openly demand union autonomy and freedom of expression. Along with specific union demands, they joined the struggle for democratic rights. The recent call for an independent workers party is the latest demonstration of this growing radicalization.

The São Paulo Metalworkers Congress, besides calling for a workers party, laid out a plan of action for 1979. This encompassed:

- Unification of the campaign for the yearly wage increases.
- Promotion of a large-scale unionization drive among unorganized workers.
- National distribution of the resolutions adopted at the congress.
- Preparation for a united May Day demonstration with the main demands to focus on the struggle against retaliatory firings and in favor of job security and trade-union unity.

The two principal demands in the current wage-increase campaign by the São Paulo metalworkers are for a 34.4 percent pay hike over and above the standard



Assembly of striking metalworkers in São Paulo.

Veja

government increases, and guaranteed job security.

The campaign has met with stiff opposition from the employers. The São Paulo State Federation of Industries (FIESP) has issued a document to all its members urging a unified strategy to counter the strikes that are expected later this year. It includes suggestions for forced overtime in order to stockpile products, unified wage negotiations, and firing and blacklisting militant workers.

Automobile workers at the Ford assembly plant in São Bernardo, where the Corcel and Maverick are assembled, are already complaining of speedup. "The bosses are making time studies of the most essential production sectors, where the most important parts are made and which therefore take longest to produce," an auto worker explained in a recent interview in *Versus*.

"We produce 505 units a day right now and they are talking of increasing that to 560 cars. We are forced to work eleven hours a day—one hour is already extra, and they could increase it by one more hour. You can't even think about Saturday as a day off because we've been working Saturdays since September 1977 when the Corcel II went into production. There is talk of massive firings right before contract time with a blacklist that would affect a lot of people."

Two thousand workers in greater São Paulo have already been fired without just cause in accordance with the FIESP's suggestions. In São Bernardo, Volkswagen has fired almost all the workers who

participated in the union's third congress, many of them with fifteen years or more job experience.

The unions have countered the attacks with a call for no overtime during the wage-increase campaign. They have also been denouncing the firings of militant workers and working to build trade-union unity with a series of meetings and workers assemblies.

One metalworker told *Versus*: "Not one hour of overtime during the wage campaign and not one extra piece produced. That is the only way we are going to have the strength to beat the bosses this year."

### French Stalinists Demand More Nuclear Plants

On a recent trip to Brittany, French CP head Georges Marchais declared on at least two occasions that the northern coastal region "cannot escape nuclear energy," and that "if the location is favorable," a nuclear plant should be built in Plogoff.

The March 2 *Le Monde* reported that Marchais's forthright statements of the CP's position "elicited sharp comments from antinuclear groups and Breton SP leaders, and caused some embarrassment to local CP representatives."

In its March 1 issue, *l'Humanité*, the French CP daily, published a long article reaffirming the Stalinists' opposition to "any form of a nuclear moratorium." This halfway measure, proposed by the SP, would halt new construction but leave existing plants in operation.

## The European Monetary System

By Winfried Wolf

[To counter the impact of an increasingly volatile world economic situation, a new monetary system was set in operation in Europe March 13. Under the scheme, the governments of West Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Denmark are pledged to step up austerity and pool part of their reserves to keep the exchange rates of their currencies from fluctuating by more than 2.25% against each other. For Italy, the rate has been set at 6%.

[The following article traces the background for this move and the underlying contradictions it does nothing to solve.]

The discussions among the imperialist governments regarding economic policy at present focus on questions of monetary policy—the crisis of the international monetary system and the varied responses of the imperialist powers to it.

Karl Marx often noted that monetary phenomena are simply reflections of the overall evolution of the capitalist economy. The causes of monetary transformations, he noted, must be sought in the sphere of production and not in the surface movements of economic life. This approach to monetary questions is as valid today as it was one hundred years ago.

In light of the general economic crisis of 1974-75, this method has again shown itself to be the only valid one. At a time when the bourgeois economists and politicians are concentrating almost exclusively on monetary problems, as they also did in 1972-73, and while they discuss recipes such as the EMS (European Monetary System) to surmount the crisis of the world monetary system, a reexamination of the world economic crisis of 1974-75 is particularly appropriate.

The 1974-75 crisis was preceded by changes in the monetary realm that were similar in more than one way to the changes that are now taking place. And during the 1972-73 period there was discussion, as there is now, of different "models" for overcoming the "monetary crisis"—while largely ignoring what was taking place in the realm of production.

There is, of course, one "small" but significant difference between the monetary discussions of 1972-73 and those of today. Then discussion focused on the question "How do we create a new world monetary system?" Now discussions focus on regional solutions—especially within the framework of the Common Market, in partial relationship to Japan. They have

practically abandoned the attempt to find an overall solution.

The international capitalist economy is much more shaken than it was in 1972-73. Despite a limited upturn, the economic evolution as a whole is marked by structural crises, deepening interimperialist competition, growing protectionism, and an

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### Bourgeois policy has to be reactive rather than active . . .

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increasingly pronounced inequality between countries and economic sectors.

The increasingly distinct possibility of a new recession in the United States threatens the international capitalist economy with a new generalized economic recession. The growth in the rates of inflation since mid-1978 and the growing disturbances in the currency markets are the initial signs of this.

#### A New Start for Capitalist Europe?

At the moment we are between two economic crises. Since 1976 the principal imperialist powers have been in a "restrained economic upturn"—the two principal restraints being the accumulated difficulties in increasing exports and the relative lag in the purchasing power of the masses.

The European capitalist powers, in particular, have gained some maneuvering room in terms of moving toward the economic and political integration of capitalist Europe.

From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, it is certainly to the credit of the Helmut Schmidt-Giscard d'Estaing duo that they have tried to use this interlude before the next recession to move toward economic and political integration by proposing a European Monetary System.

But their initiative is also explained by the *special interests* of the West German and French capitalist classes. It is not due, as some bourgeois newspapers would have us believe, to Schmidt's "genius in economic policy" or to the "ease of discussion" between Schmidt and Giscard.

We should not forget that there had already been a previous attempt to respond to the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system (which had established fixed currency exchange rates using the dollar as the principal reserve currency of all the other capitalist currencies). This previous

attempt was the famous "European snake."

In 1972 West Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark set up a sort of "monetary alliance" within which the fluctuations in currency exchange rates were strictly limited to no more than a 2.5% rise or fall.

But this attempt to set up a "European Monetary Union" immediately revealed its fundamental contradiction. As long as there is no real supranational European state, as long as there are sovereign national bourgeois states developing at uneven rates (especially in terms of production, productivity, rates of inflation, and balances of payments), from the outset such a "monetary alliance" bears the seeds of its future decomposition.

The French franc proved too weak in comparison to the deutsche mark, precisely because of the uneven development just mentioned. Pompidou had to pull France out of the "snake" in 1974. What remained was a "residual snake" or "small snake."

Although Norway then joined this "small snake," the Benelux countries plus Norway and Denmark simply don't have the weight to stand up to West German imperialism. The "small snake" was and remains essentially a "deutsche mark monetary zone" with satellite currencies of the relatively stable small capitalist countries.

The other "great" powers of the Common Market—France, Britain, and Italy—did not feel they could join the "snake" in the ensuing four years. In fact, the very survival of the "small snake" through the recession years was the best the European bourgeoisie could hope to accomplish during that period.

It is in the nature of the capitalist mode of production that bourgeois policy—and especially bourgeois economic policy—has to be *reactive* rather than *active*. It represents a reaction to the evolution of real economic relations that are spontaneously transformed behind the backs of the producers and other so-called "economic agents," especially the bourgeoisie.

The same holds true for the EMS. This model is just a reaction to the precipitous decline of the dollar that began in the middle of 1977. In the course of this decline the rate of exchange of deutsche marks to dollars went from 2.34 to the dollar in June 1977 to 1.99 in August 1978, and to 1.77 in the beginning of November. This decline of the dollar was the starting point for Helmut Schmidt's monetary initiative.

While the majority of bourgeois commentators do not understand—or do not understand fully—the *real causes* of this decline,\* they all agree on its *consequen-*

\*See "Outlook for the World Capitalist Economy in 1979-80" by Ernest Mandel in the January 22, 1979, *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, and "Carter Announces 'Bitter Medicine' to Halt Plunge of Dollar" by Jon Britton in the November 20, 1978, issue of *IP/I*.



ces. Since the dollar continues to be accepted as the main medium of international payment, the United States can cover its enormous balance-of-payments deficit by throwing an additional quantity of paper dollars into international circulation.

This leads to a vicious circle. The more the inflation rate in the United States exceeds the rate in West Germany and Japan, the more the deficit in its balance of payments grows, the more the quantity of dollars in international circulation increases, the more the exchange rate of the dollar falls, the more the inflation rate in the United States increases, and so forth.

This vicious circle is further aggravated by two factors—speculation in anticipation of future declines in the dollar's exchange rates, and the bourgeoisie's increasingly pronounced flight toward "tangible assets" (gold, diamonds, art works, furnishings, etc.). This further accelerates the loss of the dollar's purchasing power. (According to the September 7, 1978, *Blick durch die Wirtschaft* and the August 4, 1978, *Wirtschaftswoche* the value of diamond exports from South Africa went from 95 million rand in 1976 to 155 million rand in 1977 and 300 million in 1978.)

This confirms Karl Marx's "orthodox" analysis, which says that the measure of the value of all commodities is the socially necessary labor time that went into producing them, and that in an economy of generalized commodity production this value can only be expressed through an exchange value. This exchange value—precious metals—is itself a commodity, a special commodity used as a general equivalent of that value.

In a period of prosperity the practical function of gold may effectively decline because, when the currency is stable, capitalists are not afraid that if they hold unsold commodities and paper money (or bank deposits), value will be slipping through their fingers.

But when the economy goes through successive periods of crisis, and people expect the crisis to worsen—a phase like the one we are now in—gold and other "real values," which are the direct product of human labor and not scraps of paper, mere symbols of replacement of gold, increasingly regain their original function in capitalist circulation, accumulation, and hoarding.

But these changes in the monetary realm, the flight from the dollar to gold and "tangible assets," can have a deflationary effect on international commerce. It is as if you kept decreasing the oil and grease in a giant machine. This would cause the machine to overheat through friction until, one after another, all the gears broke down. The principal West German bourgeois daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, laid out an almost apocalyptic scenario of this danger in its August 9, 1978, issue:



Giscard d'Estaing and Schmidt at Bremen conference.

The risks of a further decline (of the dollar) would be terrible. . . . The holders of dollars throughout the world are losing patience. A massive flight toward gold—a real value—has already begun. The price of gold has reached record levels. If the fear of an uninterrupted decline of the dollar takes shape, if the dollar's exchange rate continues to fall, the point of no return could be reached. . . . At the end of this road lies the isolation [of the American economy], the economic isolation of all nations, the death by asphyxiation of world free trade.

That was the international economic and monetary situation in July 1978, on the eve of the "summit meeting" of the nine European Economic Community (EEC) chiefs of state in Bremen. That is what was behind Helmut Schmidt's initiative. The outline of the EMS that had been secretly negotiated with Giscard d'Estaing was a response to this situation and to these dangers.

#### The Original Model of the EMS

The European Monetary System that the nine EEC countries had "in principle" decided in July 1978 to set up, and which was later "concretized" (meaning severely weakened), at first represented an attempt, in the sphere of monetary policy, to set up a united capitalist Europe that can deal with its American and Japanese competitors.

In the original model, the currencies of the nine EEC countries would have been closely tied to each other. The permissible fluctuation in their rates of exchange would have been limited to 1%. Any additional fluctuation in a currency was to be countered by that country's central bank through massive currency purchases or sales. A European Monetary Fund of \$32

billion was to have been constituted, to be backed by currency reserves of \$100 billion (440 billion French francs, or about 200 billion deutsche marks).

This fund would not have the power to put out its own European currency, but it could grant credits to the central banks of each country. Since West Germany holds 84 billion deutsche marks worth of foreign exchange, more than 40% of the total foreign currency reserves of the Common Market countries, it would provide the lion's share of this European Monetary Fund—and would also exercise preponderant influence in it.

At the outset, Schmidt's initiative ran into criticism from many sectors of the West German bourgeoisie. The reactions of the European bourgeoisie were not all that positive either, although it is true that *Le Monde* did respond to the proposal with praise:

West Germany, disappointed by the egotistic and rather irresponsible character of the economic policy of the United States, is now practicing an active European policy under the resolute leadership of the chancellor. . . . The birth of a powerful European monetary bloc represents a danger to the dominant position of the dollar, and also to the commercial dominance of the United States [July 9, 1978].

In reality, however, Schmidt's plan is not solely motivated by the immediate economic situation. It also fits the medium-range interests of West German capitalism.

West Germany is now the world's leading trading nation. But in contrast to its principal competitor, the United States, West Germany suffers from a double handicap. It does not have a large internal

market. Because of this it is much more dependent on exports (which represent 25% of the West German gross national product and only 6% of the GNP of the United States).

This handicap could become the achilles heel of the West German economy. In the event of a future recession, which would lead to increased protectionism even within the Common Market and to a pronounced contraction of world trade, the extent of West Germany's exports would be transformed from a factor of "relative strength" to a source of "absolute weakness."

Schmidt is more or less conscious of this situation. Comments on "the world economy" are the preferred theme of his speeches. The only solution to this dilemma is for West Germany to assure itself a "large domestic market" through the consolidation of the Common Market, which already absorbs more than 60% of West German commodity exports, and nearly 60% of its capital exports.

A similar possibility is opened by the EMS or, in more general terms, by any step in the direction of a West European supranational state. From the economic point of view, West Germany cannot help but be the unquestioned leader in a consolidated Europe.

But *politically*, it would be on thin ice if it took on this role. The alliance with France allows West Germany to stifle the criticism that this is a plan to assure West German dominance. Schmidt has therefore deliberately chosen to play up this alliance with France. His proposal for the EMS should be seen primarily as a *political* proposal, whose "subjective" and "objective" goal is to strengthen the march toward an "integrated capitalist Europe" based on the joint dominance of two allied powers—West Germany and France.

In addition to this overriding political objective, there is also a supplementary aim. West Germany is trying to increase pressure on the other powers in the Common Market to increase the coordination of their economic policy within the Common Market, and especially to fight harder against inflationary tendencies through a "stabilization policy." In particular this means getting the British and Italian governments to deepen their anti-working-class austerity policy, which, it should be noted, is in accord with the intentions of the Italian government itself.

In addition, the initial plan for the EMS began from the somewhat justified hypothesis that a reciprocal linkage of all the currencies of Western Europe would make it possible to build a *more solid dike against the devaluation of the dollar and the currency speculation that causes*. But such a dike would clearly be of particular benefit to the strongest European economies, which are the ones most threatened by the decline of the dollar.

A reciprocal linkage of all European

currencies and the creation of the ECU (European Currency Unit resulting from a balanced mix of the nine currencies) would moderate the rise of the deutsche mark, the Dutch florin, the Belgian franc, and even partially the French franc against the dollar because these strong currencies would be mixed with the weaker currencies in the basket. In this way the EMS *aids West Germany's exports* by keeping down the value of the deutsche mark without having to resort to inflation.

The fact that, primarily as a result of the increased strength of the U.S. economy, West German exports have not yet suffered from the decline of the dollar (which makes American products cheaper on the world market), has done nothing to calm the uneasiness of the West German capitalists, who worry that this *could* happen in not too distant future. If, as part of the EMS, the deutsche mark and the franc rise less against the dollar than they would if they were autonomous, then the export industries of these two main participants in the Common Market could only profit from the move.

The EMS would also serve as a prudent brake on the expansion of West German (and European) capital exports to the U.S. This export of capital has been one of the main tendencies in the European capitalist economy over the past five years. Capital exports would, instead, be reoriented toward the member countries of the EEC.

Undoubtedly this reorientation is not in the direct and immediate interests of the large trusts and banks. But it does not go against their interests, at least their medium- and long-range interests, if it reflects actual increased opportunities for the export of capital to member countries of the Common Market.

Moreover this reorientation would strengthen the tendencies toward European interpenetration of capital, which would strongly stimulate European integration.

Looking back to the moment Schmidt pulled the plan for the EMS out of his pocket, one will note that the "Bremen summit" took place one week before the Bonn "world economic summit." President Carter had already announced concrete demands that he would raise in Bonn. These did not please Schmidt and the West German bourgeoisie. Carter called on the West German government to present specific figures for the projected growth of the GNP (4% for 1978) and for economic pump-priming. West Germany was again to take the role of "locomotive" of the world economy, "in conformance with its strength."

In practical terms this would mean the Schmidt government would have to eliminate basic aspects of its "stability policy" in order to carry out an inflationary reheating of the economy, particularly through increasing its budgetary deficit and relaxing credit policy.

The United States was not alone in making these demands. They also correspond to the interests of all the weaker imperialist powers, especially Britain and Italy. But by setting up a "European bloc" at the "Bremen summit," Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing were able to prevent Carter from successfully concentrating his fire in Bonn on West Germany's economic policy.

The fact that in the end West Germany presented a moderate program of economic pump-priming allowed Carter to save face, as long as he closed his eyes to the fact that Schmidt basically agreed only to tax reductions, which is the complete opposite of an expansion of public expenditures.

#### July to November 1978— Economic Disorder Gets Worse

"The Bonn summit was not a success for the dollar," the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* said in September. Two months later it added, "the foreign exchange markets have lost all restraint" (November 1, 1978). In fact, the dollar again fell sharply after the announcement of the EMS plan. While it had still been fluctuating around 2 deutsche marks to the dollar in July, it fell to 1.7735 deutsche marks on the Frankfurt exchange on November 2, 1978.

It is possible that the announcement that the EMS would start functioning on January 1, 1979, directly exacerbated the decline by feeding speculation against the dollar, which was expected to deteriorate further against the ECU that would be created. But the fundamental causes of this deterioration remain what they were for the past few years.

But while Carter had been content to make hollow declarations about the decline of the dollar in the preceding phase, on November 1 he announced a more substantial support program. A \$30 billion fund to support the dollar was established. A more restrictive credit policy was established in the U.S., with the prime lending rate being increased to 9.5%.

As yet too little time has elapsed to draw a balance sheet. But two conclusions seem justified. These measures will not suffice to stabilize the dollar over the medium term, even though at present it has risen to a little less than 2 deutsche marks to the dollar (which, in itself, cannot yet be considered a stabilization). Secondly, these measures increase the chance of a new recession in the United States.

Another event clouded the monetary horizon in October 1978. On October 19 the deutsche mark had to be revalued upward an average of 3% against the other currencies of the "small European monetary snake": those of the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway, as well as against the Austrian shilling. The Deutsche Bundesbank, the West German central bank, had had to spend DM10 billion over the previous weeks to try to maintain the

exchange rates of these currencies (i.e., it spent this amount to buy florins, Belgian francs, and Danish and Norwegian kroner). Since it feared that this would inflate the money supply in circulation in West Germany itself, which would reheat inflation, it had to take restrictive measures that were very similar to those decided on at the beginning of November by the Carter administration, especially the restriction in the volume of bank credits.

The Deutsche Bundesbank was careful to make the point that this was simply a question of "prudent tidying up," which in no way signalled "a change in the credit policy." It wanted to avoid giving the impression that the West German monetary authorities were in the process of applying the brakes to the economy. This might be true up to now. But the situation gave rise to uneasiness. If even the "small snake" leads to such monetary disturbances, with more or less automatic repercussions on West Germany's economic policy, what might be the inevitable consequences of the EMS for the central bank and Bonn's economic policy, and eventually for other strong-currency countries?

Finally we should take note of a third monetary event that followed the announcement of plans to establish the EMS. At the end of September 1978 the International Monetary Fund increased its lines of credit for its 135 member countries by 50%. This increase must be linked to the increase in shares that was decided upon in 1977. The two increases *doubled* the volume of IMF "special drawing rights," which have now risen to \$58.5 billion or DM146 billion (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 6, 1978). This massive growth in "international liquidities"—which the West German government opposed in vain—will inevitably lead to a new soaring of international credits and international inflation.

The IMF is trying to reassert its importance—the importance of international *public* credits as against the growth in the international *private* credit of the large banks and the holders of "petrodollars." This, then, was a measure designed to transfer to the public credit institutions some of the risks that the private banks had taken during past years in dangerously extending credits to the weakest imperialist countries, the semicolonial countries, and the bureaucratized workers states—often without adequate guarantees.

These private loans had been made without forcing concessions in terms of economic and monetary policy. But when the IMF extends credits, it generally imposes rigorous conditions. It forces governments that require loans to carry out "stabilization" and austerity measures.

Nonetheless, the overall effect of these IMF decisions is a worldwide expansion in the volume of credit. In this way they

increase the explosive potential of a future recession.

The shadow that these three monetary moves cast on the capitalist economies of the United States, Japan, and Western Europe objectively reduces the maneuvering room of the European economic and monetary union. Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing are therefore involved in a real race against the clock.

It is clear that a European monetary union would be difficult to set up on the eve of a new international economic recession, and would be impossible in the midst of such a recession. That is the conclusion that the West German and French governments draw from the experience of the 1974-75 crisis and the fate of the "large snake." This reduced maneuvering room and the threat of a new recession explain Schmidt's feverish attempts to establish the EMS before the end of 1978.

#### Italian, Irish Resistance and British Rejection

Schmidt was ready to go quite far to get the EMS off the ground. Given the massive resistance of the British and Italian governments to the initial proposal, he first announced that he was determined to go ahead with the plan even without including Italy, Britain, and Ireland "at the beginning." He added that if the British government tried in the EEC Council of Ministers to block the plan to create the EMS, the West German government would be ready to reach an agreement on the question "outside the framework of the Community" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 30, 1978). This would have subjected the EEC to a serious political test.

The Italian and Irish resistance or opposition to the EMS had been rather moderate and ambiguous. The EMS would, in fact, have somewhat contradictory consequences on the weaker economies of these countries. They would be subject to stronger pressure to carry out a so-called "stabilization" policy, meaning austerity. But this pressure would come from *outside* and it would therefore be easier to "sell" such a policy of wage restraint.

However, as compensation for this austerity program, there would be supplementary aid and credits from the European Monetary Fund, as well as the possibility of an influx of West German and French capital in the underdeveloped regions.

As a concession, the Italian lira was granted a supplementary fluctuation range within the new "snake" (its value could go up or down 6% instead of 2%). As regards Ireland, Dublin was not entirely displeased over the possibility of severing its currency from the British pound sterling for the first time since it won independence after the First World War. This was true even though the operation entailed risks owing to the fact that more than 40% of Irish exports go to Britain.



Strikers in Britain. Union militancy forced Labour government to go slow on EMS.

In Britain the question of joining the EMS was the subject of serious controversy and political disputes. In September 1978 the Labour Party congress came out against joining. This did not prevent Callaghan from going to meet with Schmidt at Aix-la-Chapelle to negotiate supplementary concessions that would permit British participation.

But Healy, the chancellor of the exchequer, remains an opponent of participation under the present conditions, and he expresses the view of the technocrats at the Treasury who, in a secret report, asserted that "joining the EMS would have dangerously deflationary consequences for Great Britain." In addition the report suggested that the rate of inflation, output, and employment might all be adversely affected if Britain went in.

This position however is not unanimous in Britain. A faction of the British bourgeoisie fears that by staying out of the EMS, capitalism will continue to be more unstable in the United Kingdom than in the other countries of Europe. For example, the president of the Lloyds Bank, Sir Jeremy Morse, came out unambiguously in favor of Britain's participation in the EMS (December 5, 1978, *Le Monde*).

#### Toward an Inflationary Community?

But the biggest objections to the EMS were formulated in West Germany itself, particularly by the central bank and other sectors of finance capital. These objections concern the following points:

1. There is a risk that the EMS could transform the EEC into an inflationary community. If the Bundesbank has to continually intervene to prevent the weakest currencies from falling below the fixed limit of fluctuation, the higher inflation rate of the partners is in effect "imported" into West Germany since these purchases of community currencies put an additional quantity of deutsche marks in circulation. This dangerously increases the money supply without a corresponding increase in the quantity of goods on the West German market.

2. To a large extent the foreign exchange reserves of West Germany have to be placed at the disposal of the European Monetary Fund, which removes them from the German bourgeoisie's exclusive control. This could even lead to a situation where these reserves might be used to support a "loose" credit policy that the West German government rejects.

3. This would limit the Bundesbank's ability to carry out its so-called stability policy, and would make the West German economy increasingly dependent on the ups and downs of the EMS, over which the West German government has no direct control.

The objections of the West German bankers are not without foundation. Their vehemence surprised Schmidt, who had to make concessions to them and "remodel" his EMS proposal. It is clear that in some ways the creation of the EMS is an attempt to put the cart before the horse. Rather than first developing a common economic and commercial policy within the EEC, they begin with a common monetary system that will be subjected to sharp tests because of the disparity in the *economic policies* followed by the nine governments, not to mention the disparity in the *economic situations*. This is particularly striking with respect to the differences in the inflation rates:

Inflation Rate for 12 Previous Months	
W. Germany	2.0% (Oct.)
Netherlands	4.0% (Oct.)
Belgium	3.8% (Oct.)
Britain	8.5% (Sept.)
France	9.2% (Sept.)
Denmark	9.1% (Sept.)
Italy	12.0% (Sept.)

It is impossible to develop a common trade and economic policy without taking decisive steps toward a *common government*—that is, a supranational state. Schmidt understands this quite well. But the obstacles on this road remain formidable. When Schmidt launched a timid trial balloon in the beginning of November, suggesting that the European parliament elected by universal suffrage could take on supplementary powers, the furious reaction of the Gaullists and the French "national Communists" forced Giscard himself to respond by also saying

"no" to his "friend" Schmidt.

The evolution of the inflation rates appears, moreover, to be moving in the direction of a *rise* in inflation, which does not necessarily mean that the spread between the lowest and the highest rate—which is already 1 to 6—will also expand. The projected rise in inflation rates can create multiple problems, especially if *Italian inflation* again becomes uncontrollable.

In addition, today West Germany holds more than 40% of the foreign currency reserves of the EEC countries.

In terms of the present model of the EMS that is being projected, the West Germans would provide it with \$10 billion, which is nearly DM20 billion, or a quarter of its foreign currency reserves. But in return the Bundesbank would undoubtedly have preponderant influence within the European Monetary Fund.

Thus, on this point the criticism has less basis and is preventative rather than corrective.

But the third criticism is more serious. Unless there is a unification of commercial and economic policies within three years—which no one seriously expects to happen—the differences in these policies would in effect require the Bundesbank, as financially the most powerful member, to make the strongest contributions to halting the disparity in the exchange rates. This in turn would probably lead to more rapid expansion of the money supply in West Germany than what those responsible for the economic policy of the country feel is desirable.

#### 'New Model' and 'Probable Model'

The British, Italian, and Irish criticisms, and the "corrective measures" added under the pressure of the West German bankers, have given birth to a "new model" of the EMS. It is a real mongrel.

1. There is to be a "hard core" of the EMS and a "fringe." The "hard core" will include the countries that are members of the "monetary small snake" as well as France. This simply means that France is returning to the "snake." The lira will be allowed a large margin of fluctuation. "Conditions for the progressive integration" of the pound sterling, which will

remain outside the EMS for now, are provided.

2. The provision for obligatory intervention when currencies either rise or fall past the projected limits of fluctuation has been dropped. These limits have already been enlarged to 2.25% from the original plan's 1%. This should both discourage speculation and leave a larger margin for revaluations and devaluations of currencies before the central banks intervene.

The only thing that remains from the original plan is the creation of the European Monetary Fund—which is itself surrounded by difficulties stemming from the fact that the other elements of the initial plan have been dropped. The West German bankers have in effect called for guarantees that "the system will be able to resist crises for at least two years." The new version of the EMS offers no such guarantees.

With the tacit abandonment of the idea of a real zone of monetary *stability*, the EMS no longer even offers the capitalists the advantage of fixed exchange rates within the EEC that could "jointly digest" the effects of the devaluation of the dollar and the revaluation of the yen.

Thus the EMS throws light on the real character of the Common Market. Given the international capitalist economy's growing tendency toward crisis, the Common Market is not in a position to move effectively toward a supranational state. This means that in the context of the increasing interimperialist competition it cannot respond as a common front to American and Japanese imperialism. Its member countries have been hit too hard by the germs of the capitalist crisis to be able to completely abandon economic nationalism and protectionism.

At the Brussels meeting, the (momentary) refusal of Italy and Ireland to join the EMS was a bombshell. The blame was placed on the sharp opposition of the Italian CP to Italy's joining. But the real reason for the last minute difficulties is more likely found in Giscard's refusal to grant the "financial quid pro quo" requested by Ireland and Italy, respectively \$1.3 billion and more than \$2 billion in grants over a five-year period.

The French refusal—which contrasted to Bonn's more conciliatory attitude—will

#### Foreign Currency Reserves of the EEC in mid-1978

Country	Holdings in billions of dollars	% of total
West Germany	40.7	40.1
Britain	17.3	17.6
Italy	13.2	13.2
France	11.6	11.4
Netherlands	8.0	7.9
Belgium-Luxembourg	5.9	5.8
Denmark	2.7	2.7
Ireland	2.0	2.0

(Frankfurter Rundschau, October 20, 1978)

have strongly negative consequences on the French economy. Without the Italian lira, the "mean" level of the "snake," around which the franc's fluctuation is limited to 2.25%, will be higher. This threatens to harm French exports. Perhaps, in the guise of a compromise, the British pound, the Italian lira, and the Irish pound could be included in calculating fluctuations with respect to the ECU, even if these do not participate in the "snake."

Andreotti can, moreover, reverse the decision not to join. There is very strong pressure on him from the Italian bourgeoisie to do this. And we should remember that the UNICE, the employers' association of the EEC, has come out unanimously in favor of the EMS and of strict community monetary discipline (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, November 8, 1978).

### The Meaning of the EMS for the Class Struggle

At the first glance the debates over the features of the EMS may seem like purely intercapitalist disputes. But these debates pose certain dangers for the working class and the workers movement—dangers that are linked to the tendencies toward the capitalist unification of Western Europe and that underlie our rejection of the Common Market.

Just as changes in exchange rates are the result of uneven development among capitalist countries, the new EMS will accentuate this inequality of development. It will aggravate interimperialist competition not only between the U.S. and the EEC, but also within the EEC. At the same time, it will accentuate the pressure to equalize profit rates and access to markets at the expense of the working class. The EEC's projected "opening" toward Greece, Portugal, and Spain is an attempt to assure enlarged "backward areas" for the Common Market's heavy industry. At present these areas are made up of southern Italy and Ireland.

The European Monetary Fund itself plays an important role in the class struggle. Grants of credits to member countries would, to a certain extent, be tied to the conditions of economic policy, as is already the case with credits from the International Monetary Fund. Thus big business is trying to kill two birds with one stone.

On the one hand it wants to push forward the "stabilization" of the weaker imperialist countries (where the workers movement is generally more militant than in West Germany), by pushing them to step up their attacks on the standard of living of the working class, to boost the level of unemployment resulting from "modernization" of the economy, and similar measures.

On the other hand the EMF makes it easier for the governments to carry out this kind of policy against the resistance of

the unions by making it appear that these policies stem from anonymous sources in the EEC and not from the governments themselves.

This model has already been applied with partial success through the IMF's loans to Italy and Great Britain.

Finally, the establishment of the EMS will mean a strengthening of the imperialist power of the EEC countries and of the

## Li Yizhe Group Freed

## Protests Win Release of Chinese Dissidents

By Dan Dickeson

The developing dissident movement scored an important victory when three of China's best-known political prisoners were released and rehabilitated after protests on their behalf.

The official Xinhua News Agency reported February 8 that Li Zhengtian (Li Cheng-t'ien), Chen Yiyang (Ch'en I-yang), and Huang Xizhe (Huang Hsi-che), whose writings have appeared under the collective pseudonym Li Yizhe (Li I-che), were freed in December 1978, and officially cleared of the charges against them at a public meeting in Guangzhou (Canton) February 6.

The three had been arrested for putting up a wall poster in December 1974 condemning bureaucratic privilege and calling for socialist democracy. They were former Red Guards, who like millions of other Chinese youths had been attracted by egalitarian rhetoric of the Maoist leadership during the mid-1960s, only to be victimized later, once Mao had prevailed over his factional rivals in the government and the army.

Li Zhengtian, once a leader of the Red Guards in Guangzhou, spent two years in jail after his group was suppressed in 1969.

After his release, Li and his two friends tried to think out, discuss, and write about what had gone wrong. Even while maintaining illusions in Mao himself, they formulated an extensive critique of the bureaucratic political regime in China.

Their ideas were circulated in an underground pamphlet entitled *Concerning Socialist Democracy and the Legal System*.

The pamphlet traces the lack of democracy in China to the material privileges of a bureaucratic elite, and proposes a series of specific reforms. These include a written legal code to replace the arbitrary judicial system, punishment of government officials who violate the rights of citizens, the right to recall any official, and restrictions on special privileges.

The authors pasted up a copy of their

European bourgeoisie. The strongest factions of this bourgeoisie, with the West German bourgeoisie at the head, would profit the most. All this would weaken the European workers movement and would make it easier for the bourgeoisie to unleash more massive attacks against the workers movement when future, deeper, crises develop.

December 6, 1978

pamphlet on a wall in the center of Guangzhou in December 1974 on the eve of the Fourth National People's Congress. They were soon arrested, and tried before a "mass tribunal." The citizens assembled as a jury refused to vote to convict the three dissenters and they were arbitrarily ordered to undergo a term of "reform through labor" in a Guangzhou tungsten mine.

Their case was reviewed by the new regime after the toppling of the Mao faction in late 1976. The three were declared "counterrevolutionaries," and court notices posted in Guangzhou in mid-1977 said that Li Zhengtian had been sentenced to indefinite imprisonment.

Nevertheless Li Yizhe became widely known among dissidents throughout China. Their case was often referred to in wall posters on Beijing's (Peking) "Democracy Wall" in November 1978. Western diplomats reported that writings by the imprisoned authors, smuggled out of Guangzhou, had appeared on walls in Beijing. The January 15 Toronto *Globe and Mail* reported that there had been "a week of intensive poster campaigns in Canton demanding information about the three. . . ."

According to the February 10 *Le Monde*, their release was finally ordered by the Guangdong (Kwangtung) Provincial Committee, which also issued a self-criticism for having framed them up in 1977. This represents a remarkable concession by the regime. Although thousands of victims of the Cultural Revolution period have been rehabilitated since 1976, in nearly all cases the Hua-Deng regime has simply claimed to be rectifying injustices perpetrated under the "Gang of Four."

The fact that widespread protests have forced the regime to back down on one of its own repressions and release three of China's most articulate antibureaucratic fighters bodes well for the growing dissident movement. □

### Angola—Behind the Ouster of Nascimento

By Claude Gabriel

During an extraordinary session of the Central Committee of the MPLA-Labor Party<sup>1</sup> in December 1978, a decision was made to abolish the post of prime minister and to dismiss Lopo do Nascimento from that position.

At the same time, an important government reshuffle was carried out. Heads rolled. Carlos Rocha Dilolwa resigned from his positions of responsibility in the party and government. Nascimento himself was deprived of political power, although he retained his place, for the moment, on the Central Committee.

Publicly, the regime presented this important decision as a strengthening of the party. But behind these so-called readjustments lies a serious warning for the regime.

It should be recalled that Luanda still faces blackmail from UNITA,<sup>2</sup> which is supported by South Africa, indicating that at least part of the country is under a war economy.

The civil war that destroyed most of the country's resources was followed by a policy of so-called economic "reconstruction," which included a state sector based on the nationalization of formerly Portuguese-owned industries, together with development projects involving imperialist capital and aid from Eastern European countries. Such an economy, whatever its specific features, remains a market economy. The balance of payments is dependent on sectors such as oil, diamonds, and the Benguela railway, in which foreign capital or imperialist markets play the central role.

As a result, the Angolan economy is marked by severe inflation, exacerbated by speculation carried on by the local petty bourgeoisie and bureaucrats.

In May 1977, the Nito Alves faction was ruthlessly eliminated after it had attempted a desperate putsch.

This faction of the regime had been known for its "defense" of the organs of "people's power." But in reality, Nito Alves had climbed to the top in 1976 when the task was to smash the class independence

of the neighborhood committees and to repress the nascent far left. His policy consisted of stabilizing the regime and lending some legitimacy to the MPLA through a network of rank-and-file bodies devoid of any subversive content. Partly because of this, he won the support of the Soviets for a time.

The defeat of the reactionary coalition of the FNLA,<sup>3</sup> UNITA, Zaïre, and South Africa, however, opened up a new period for the petty-bourgeois leadership of the MPLA. Nito Alves's populist projects lost their usefulness and even threatened to put obstacles in the way of some of the majority's plans.

The downfall of this "left" faction was in reality a result of reducing the neighborhood committees to empty shells. As early as June 1976, the "Nitistas" threw their weight behind the "election" of representatives of People's Power. But only 10 percent of the voters turned out for this demagogic operation, while the MPLA proclaimed the "institutionalization" of People's Power, that is, its liquidation.

Alves, by relying on what he had helped reduce to nothingness while he was one of the regime's leading figures, was himself destined to be brought down by the majority of the MPLA.

That was the first phase of the crisis of the regime—a regime born out of fifteen years of armed struggle under the leadership of a nationalist petty bourgeoisie.

If the policy of the new state was to maintain a market economy, the MPLA regime had to preserve its legitimacy by taking on a pronounced Bonapartist character. But the Angolan economy is not the Algerian economy. Such an objective, steeped in contradictions, could at any moment cause a split in the weak, divided, and ossified leadership.

The present phase of the crisis in the MPLA developed against the background of the social and economic crisis. Clearly, it was necessary to adjust the wage policy in order to head off strong popular discontent and to try to rebuild a social base. But it was also necessary to find a scapegoat.

That role was played by Nascimento, in order to lay the blame on the government and not the party, while at the same time strengthening President Agostinho Neto's role. If Bonapartism generally excludes a division of powers, then Angolan Bonapartism could not survive a challenge to

Neto's leadership.

After having struck a blow at the left, the bureaucratic apparatus of the MPLA now had to appear to be striking out at the right. But Nascimento, even though he had made overtures to the West, could not be presented as a "pro-Western rightist" opposed to a "progressive line." Essentially, Nascimento had to pay the price for the regime's sudden need to refurbish its image and to create a charismatic aura around the figure of Neto.

The economic crisis is so serious and chronic, however, that this operation will not be enough. The next stage will involve an even greater opening toward Western capital. At that point, Agostinho Neto will gamble his future.

Meanwhile, in Luanda, they talk of "democratizing the state" by bringing back the People's Power committees. They denounce the bureaucratism of the state (and not the party?) and the lack of dynamism of the outgoing government. Neto has gone on a crusade to solve "the problems that the people face." He has announced a revision of the economic plan. He has criticized the violation of democratic rights and has announced a modification of salary grades.

The regime is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is doing away with bonuses for government officials in order to raise certain industrial wages. It is easing conditions for small merchants and trying to revive the rural market, which will certainly involve a redefinition of the agricultural cooperatives.

By thus attempting to rebuild a mass following and to inject new life into the Bonapartist institutions, the regime is looking for a second wind. But it would be wrong to see this as a radicalization.

To the contrary, the class nature of the Angolan state pushes the leadership team naturally toward an economic overture to the West, in order to respond to greater pressures. Even though Neto reaffirmed his friendship with Moscow and Havana during the latest developments, imperialist investment projects are nevertheless multiplying and the MPLA is eyeing the Lomé accords.<sup>4</sup>

Confronted with popular discontent, the MPLA can only look for a solution in the form of a rapid penetration of capital. If that is still not enough, it will return to direct repression against the workers. □

1. The Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) adopted the formal name of MPLA-Party of Labor in December 1977.—IP/I

2. The União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) is still carrying out sporadic guerrilla actions against the MPLA regime in the southern parts of the country.—IP/I

3. Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (Angolan National Liberation Front).—IP/I

4. The Lomé accords cover economic relations between the European Economic Community and forty-nine neocolonial countries.—IP/I

# Irish Government's New Attack on Right to Contraception

By Betty Purcell

DUBLIN—The Irish government's proposed new Health (Family Planning) Bill will have the effect of tightening the present restrictions on the availability of contraceptives. It will hand over control on this matter to the highly reactionary medical profession.

Under the present law it is illegal to "import or sell" contraceptives. However, a case taken to the High Court in 1973 established that individuals had the right under the constitution to import contraceptives for their own personal use. Since "personal use" is a term that is difficult to define, no one has been prosecuted for importation for "public use." So in effect, contraceptives may be freely imported.

By a legal anomaly, then, the family planning clinics that have sprung up throughout the country in the past seven years have been able to function unimpeded—importing contraceptive devices and making them available for a voluntary subscription fee. The clinics have responded to growing public demand for contraceptives. Many of them operate a free service for patients who hold a medical card (those entitled to free care on grounds of income—40 percent of the population).

It is these clinics that are in the greatest danger from Health Minister Charlie Haughey's new bill. Birth control is to be taken out of the sympathetic hands of the clinics and placed under the control of general practitioners, who are to decide whether the contraceptives are being requested for "bona fide family planning purposes."

Haughey has used the term "bona fide," but what he really means is that contraceptives should not be given to unmarried persons. He uses this vague term because the constitution declares that all citizens—married or unmarried—are held equal before the law. But the first effect of the new bill will be to deny single women control over their own fertility.

The effect of this can be seen from just one statistic. In its annual report for 1978, one of the big Dublin clinics showed that half its patients were single. These 700 women would be made into criminals under the new law.

A prescription will be required even to buy a packet of condoms, which are to be distributed only by chemists' shops. This clause will prove highly restrictive for young people, since few will brave facing their "family doctor" to request a prescription. Even for those who do, the cost will be prohibitive—about \$7 to consult the doctor, \$2.50 for a dozen condoms, and another \$1 or \$2 for the chemist's fee. This means a total cost of about \$1 a condom!

Contraception has been a major priority

for the Irish women's liberation movement since the early 1970s. United campaigns have been organized, drawing in sections of the trade-union movement, social workers, doctors, the family planning clinics, Labour politicians, and so on. The Contraception Action Programme (CAP), established in 1975, has maintained a constant barrage of criticism of the government for refusing to legalize contraception.

Birth-control campaigners have been quick to respond to the proposed restrictions in the present government's pretense at solving the problem. Even before the terms of the bill were announced on December 15, the CAP defied the current law by selling contraceptives openly in a Dublin shop, Contraceptives Unlimited. This has been the most successful challenge to the government on the issue.

In its first days the shop sold more than £200 worth of contraceptives. The first sale was to a soldier in uniform.

CAP leader Anne Speed has declared that restrictions of any kind will be unacceptable. The CAP, she said, will campaign at every level for legislation that

would give the maximum freedom for people to choose in this area of their lives.

Many expected that Contraceptives Unlimited would be raided by the police in the first weeks of its existence, since it was in flagrant breach of the law. But no action has been taken thus far. It would appear that the government does not want to arouse any controversy on the issue until the bill has been quietly passed.

But even without the government making any rash moves, the campaign is well under way. A mass rally was held in the streets of Dublin just before Christmas and another was planned. Smaller meetings have been held in many local areas, and in housing estates in the Dublin suburbs. In the country towns, too, meetings have been held, and surveys show that the majority of rural dwellers favor liberalization.

Postering and leafleting continue throughout the country, and in the colleges young people have demonstrated to show that they realize where the attack is primarily aimed—toward them and anyone else who wishes to express their sexuality without a certificate of marriage from the Catholic Church. □

## Puerto Rican Patriot Andrés Figueroa Cordero Dies

By José G. Pérez

[The following article appeared in the March 26 issue of *Perspectiva Mundial*, a revolutionary-socialist fortnightly published in New York.]

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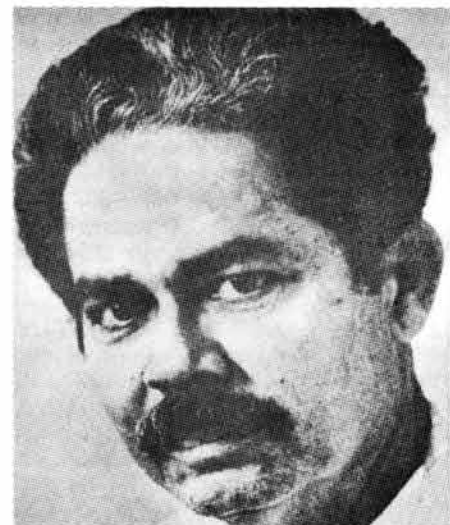
Andrés Figueroa Cordero, member of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico who served almost a quarter of a century in prison for armed actions against U.S. colonial enslavement of his homeland, died March 7 in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. He and three compatriots were imprisoned after a 1954 attack on the House of Representatives.

What kind of man was he? I met him and spent a couple of hours interviewing him in October 1976, while he was interned at the prison hospital in Springfield, Missouri.

Although he knew he was dying, he didn't want to talk about his own problems. "I've lived enough. Why worry so much about dying when in Latin America 375,000 babies die of hunger each year?"

Figueroa Cordero didn't call himself a communist or socialist. "I will call myself a nationalist until we have achieved freedom for my people," he said. But for him,

the cause of the working class and the independence struggle weren't different things. He told me that if he were freed, he would continue fighting "with the firm-



FIGUEROA CORDERO: Devoted life to cause of Puerto Rican independence.

ness and strength of a man who has served twenty-two years in jail for the workers."

"I've only been a very oppressed

worker," he told me reticently but with pride when I asked him about his background. And he had the same confidence in the destiny of his class as in that of his people: "Even in the United States, the workers will triumph."

He joined the youth organization of the Nationalist Party in 1939 at the age of fifteen. They buried him wearing the insignia of his party. If he ever wavered for a moment, he didn't say so. He did tell me that at the most desperate moment, at the end of the 1950s when it seemed as if the United States had definitively swallowed Puerto Rico, the Cuban revolution hap-

pened. "I thought, 'If Cuba can free herself, so can we.'"

For him, revolutionary Cuba had become Puerto Rico's "mother country."

"We salute all the Cuban workers for the sacrifices they are making for the liberation of the people of Puerto Rico and the peoples of Africa. . . . I don't have the words to express this," he said.

The newspapers say that he died of natural causes—cancer. This is a lie.

He was murdered by prison authorities who turned a deaf ear, until it was too late, to pleas for adequate medical treatment from a man completely at their mercy. And President Carter refused to free him until

he was *liquidado*—finished, to use Figueroa Cordero's own word.

The example of this patriot's unbreakable courage should inspire us to continue the fight to which he devoted his life. And that is the struggle for Puerto Rican independence, and more immediately the struggle to free Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Oscar Collazo, and Irving Flores, comrades of Figueroa Cordero who, like him, have been imprisoned since the early 1950s because they fought for Puerto Rican independence. We should stop Washington from committing against them the same crime it committed against Andrés Figueroa Cordero.

## Some Facts for the Attorney General

### Mexico—Present the 'Disappeared'!

[The following article appeared in the February 5 issue of *Bandera Socialista*, the weekly paper of the Revolutionary Workers Party, Mexican section of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

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At a [January 23] news conference on the topic of those who have "disappeared" for political reasons, Attorney General Oscar Flores Sánchez made an important offer. In the words of the attorney general: "The government will be open to continuing the investigation in each and every one of the cases where a relative requests it and can offer facts or proofs." (*Proceso*, No. 117, p. 18.)

Even though we are not relatives, we have every interest in helping to clear up the whereabouts of the "disappeared." Therefore, on the basis of Flores Sánchez's statements, we have decided from now on to devote a section of our paper to political prisoners and the "disappeared."

In this section, we intend to publish names, dates, places, and all other information relative to the detention of a number of persons. In particular, we are interested in making it known that these persons were *captured alive*. Furthermore—and most importantly—in a good many cases they were arrested by agents of *official* police divisions, in other cases by soldiers, and in still others by the "nonexistent" White Brigade [an extreme right-wing paramilitary group widely believed to have close ties to the police and army; the government denies its existence].

According to the attorney general, the Mexican police do not torture prisoners, even though he admitted some "police excesses" such as "two or three" slappings. It would be very interesting if the attorney general would explain what is meant by those other "excesses," since

that is the only way to explain the physical condition that some persons have wound up in. (See the case of Antonio Hernández, *Bandera Socialista*, No. 92.)

The facts and figures are self-explanatory, Mr. Attorney General. If these persons were captured *alive* by elements of the police or army—as we intend to prove—then their physical condition is the sole responsibility of the government you belong to.

Finally, the last thing the government can hope for is that the case of the "disappeared" can be easily resolved with one or two press conferences. Nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout the whole past year, and particularly in the last few months, we have seen the growth of a movement in which ever greater numbers of people take an interest and participate. The reason is obvious—the disappearance of these persons constitutes a threat hanging over the head of any citizen who dares to dissent politically.

In many cases, it is not even necessary to be politically active. It is enough to be an outstanding trade unionist, to lead a strike, or to participate in a struggle for higher wages. Other reasons are still more trifling, such as the mere fact of being the father, spouse, or child of a "suspect." This is sufficient to turn you into one more candidate for swelling the lists of the "disappeared."

Therefore, we can guarantee that the struggle to find out the whereabouts of the "disappeared" is not going to end. To the contrary, it is going to grow until it succeeds in its objectives.

So, we present the nine cases with which we would like to begin this series:

*Ignacio T. Herrera, Cristina Rocha de Herrera, and Juan de Dios Herrera.* Ignacio, his wife Cristina, and Juan were arrested in the state of Sinaloa, in the town of San Blas. This fact was recorded on July 1, 1976, at 5:00 a.m. Their arrest

was carried out by federal judicial agents and members of the army. At the head of this squad was Jorge Arroyo Hurtado, a colonel of the Twenty-Third Cavalry Regiment. Colonel Arroyo gave the relatives of the prisoners his calling card.

Ignacio and Cristina were students of agriculture, while Juan de Dios was a high-school student.

*Teresa Estrada Ramírez.* Teresa "disappeared"—if it can be called that—in a most improbable way. On September 1, 1974, she went to *visit* some political prisoners in Lecumberri Prison. But she never came out again.

*Francisco Mercado Espinoza.* Francisco was arrested in the city of Juárez, Chihuahua. *This news was published* in the local papers on February 12 and 13, 1977. His family lives in Guadalajara. His mother received word from a public official that "your son is alive and you will see him soon." It is believed that he is being held in Military Camp No. 1.

*Victor Arias de la Cruz.* Victor was detained on November 28, 1977, in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

*Abel Estrada Camarillo.* Abel, age twenty-nine, was detained on October 22, 1978, in Acapulco, Guerrero.

*Domitilo Barrientos Blanco.* Domitilo, age forty-five, was detained by the army in the state of Guerrero. This took place on June 30, 1972.

*Angel M. Herrera Alvarez.* Angel, age nineteen, was kidnapped by the Judicial Police. The incident occurred on July 29 at 10 a.m., while he was on his way to the Regional Technological Institute of Culiacán to pick up his electrical engineering diploma.

A few days later, the offices of the juvenile authorities were moved to another building, and the one formerly occupied by these offices was renovated for use as a school. There, some students found a photograph of Angel, which we have reproduced. It was turned over to his family. This photograph makes it plain that Angel was subjected to much more serious "excesses" than those referred to by the attorney general. It's obvious that more than a few "slaps" were involved. □