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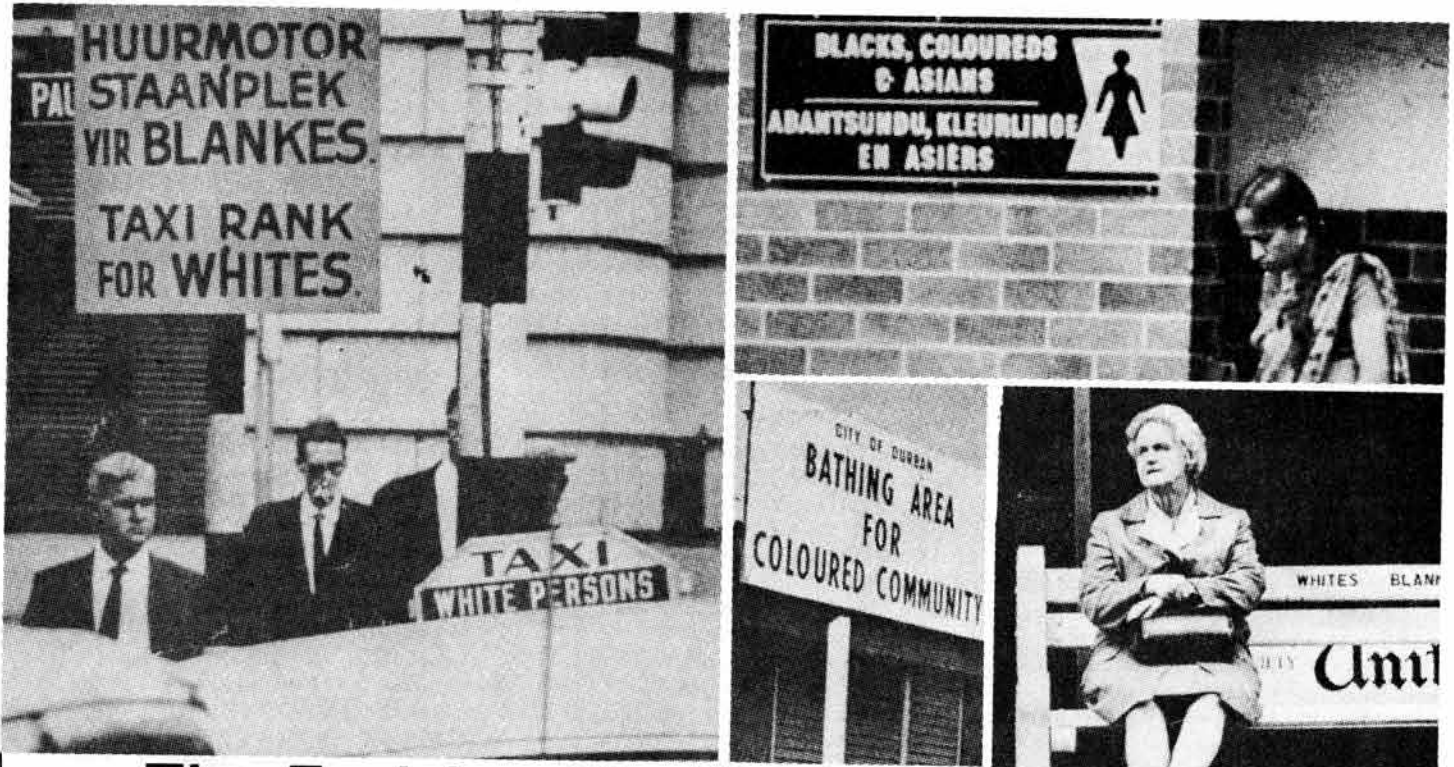
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What Will Thatcher's Victory Bring?



Ernest Mandel: European Workers' Response

What Will Thatcher's Victory Bring?

By Dodie Weppler and John Ross

[The following article appeared in the May 10 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the weekly newspaper sponsored by the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

So far, no tanks have been spotted on the streets of Great Britain; Margaret Thatcher has not brought generals into the cabinet; the unions have not been declared illegal.

The Tory victory is a setback for the working class but that's not the entire story, nor the end of it. There's the world of difference between talking politics, be they right, left or centre, and carrying them out.

The working class and the oppressed may find themselves on the defensive in the next couple of months but their capacities to resist remain impressive.

So what is in store for the Tories?

First, there are severe economic prospects for the new government. Certainly no "honeymoon" period is in sight. The international economic situation will undoubtedly pull the British economy into a downturn by 1980 whatever temporary "recovery" we may see in the rest of 1979.

And, of course, the Tories will try to make the working class and oppressed bear the brunt of the crisis.

The Thatcher government is out to turn back the clock on the gains notched up by the working class in the post-war period. Living standards will fall with Tory increases in indirect taxes. They will attempt to end the right to a wide range of social services.

The Tory government will step up an ideological offensive to get women back in the home—probably beginning with an attempt to lower the time limit for legal abortions. State attacks on black people will be stepped up. There will be no let-up in the attacks on the Catholic masses in the North of Ireland. A more right-wing and well-armed foreign policy will be the order of the day.

Above all, Thatcher's government wants

to weaken the working class by attacking its mass organisations—with its first target as trade union militants and strikers.

When it comes to all these major policies promoted by Thatcher there are no serious objective differences of interest within the ruling class or Tory Party. The so-called divisions between Heath and Thatcher are of no importance for the working class.

Some ruling class representatives are worried about whether Thatcher will be able to carry through her policies without uncontrollable working class resistance, but that's quite a different question.

On issues where there have been some differences in the ruling class—for instance, incomes policy, aspects of monetary policy, on state subsidies to major industry—Thatcher will easily be brought into line.

In order to implement her policies, however, Thatcher will adopt different tactics than Heath did immediately after he formed his government. He ventured to openly proclaim his desire to attack the working class. He refused to meet the TUC for the first year and a half after he came to office, for instance.

However, his policy of confrontation with the working class was not even minimally prepared on a political level.

Thatcher will not make a similar error. She has learned from both the defeats of Heath and from the victories of Callaghan and Wilson. Thatcher wants to turn the consciousness created by capitalism into a weapon against the labour movement, and the Labour Party itself. And because of the relation of class forces she is forced to actively involve the labour bureaucracy in her project, rather than taking on the unions outright.

The familiar appeals from Callaghan to rally behind the nation will continue to be echoed by Thatcher. Equally, Callaghan's rallying calls on a variety of other themes fit in with her project: calls to unity, not conflict; for the erosion of classes, not class conflict; to Parliament and common interests, not wreckers; and so on.

This kind of ideological offensive, coupled with direct sabotage and collusion with the bureaucracy of working class organisations, will be used to try and derail and weaken the working class and oppressed.

The economic, social and political policies of Thatcher form a coherent and potentially powerful reactionary plan. She maintains that the only way to inflict a

genuine shift in the class forces on the working class is through a challenge to post-war political assumptions.

In other words, the working class and oppressed must begin to reject the idea that they have the "right" to a job, to have their illnesses treated, or to have a home. Furthermore, it has to be drilled into popular consciousness that the rising numbers on the dole queues are really "work-shy scroungers." "Mothers" or "homemakers" will become the order of the day, rather than women trade unionists.

And when the working class merely exercises its democratic rights to organise in defence of its living standards through effective picketing, Thatcher will try and present them as "hoodlums and thugs."

To achieve this kind of change in popular consciousness, an intensive ideological campaign will be whipped up. Its beginnings have been evident in recent months. At every level, Thatcher will try to promote policies of divide and rule.

Heath's attacks were launched on a different basis. He did not fundamentally challenge the political basis of post-war years: the "consensus" on the welfare state; "full employment"; Keynesian economic strategy; "liberalising" the legal system; and maintaining existing nationalisations.

Indeed, the response of the working class to Heath's administrative and organisation measures was fuelled by existing Labourist policies.

The scope of Thatcher's goals is far broader. And for all these reasons she represents a more formidable opponent in the political field than did Heath. She could well try and enhance the use of traditional class methods by using new innovations for reinforcing her attacks.

For instance, it would not be at all surprising if she began to use referendums to gain a "democratic mandate" for moves against union struggles and the labour movement. A change in the voting system if the government fails is almost certain.

Having recognised the dangers represented by this coherent political attack, it would be quite wrong to think it can be carried through by the ruling class without meeting major struggles and resistance. The dark mood of despair and pessimism sweeping sections of the left has no basis if it rests on an assessment that the election represents a fundamental change in the relation of class forces.

Thatcher has not yet notched up any qualitative successes in the political offensives she chose to launch first. True, the political debate has seriously shifted to the right. In fact, the election campaigns waged by both the ruling class parties and the Labour Party have been further to the right than in any previous post-war election.

But this does not mean these policies have won wholesale acceptance from the working class.

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For instance, Thatcher's notion that "trade unions have too much power" may well have won some support amongst backward layers in the working class, but this is a far cry from agreeing to the full-blooded assault on working class organisations she is after.

Similarly, more may agree there are "scroungers" in growing numbers, but this doesn't add up to a general acceptance that wide sections of the welfare state should be dismantled.

If there is one thing the election re-asserted it is the fact that combativity of the class has not been fundamentally defeated, and the existing commitment to defend basic gains and rights has not been broken. Some sections of workers were even involved in struggle during the election campaign.

The Tories became defensive when they were accused of aiming to lower living standards through indirect taxation, to dismantle the welfare state, and so on.

This kind of response indicates the limits of Thatcher's victory. It is true that the working class experienced set-backs in 1975-78. But there has been no qualitative defeat. The unions have grown in membership—evidence that they continue to be seen as organisations of basic defence.

Despite defeats in sectors hit seriously by unemployment—construction, ship-building and so on—active militants haven't been smashed or integrated into the bureaucracy.

Ford workers and lorry drivers showed that the bosses could be defeated by serious struggles waged by strong groups of workers. In the public sector, setbacks were inflicted but new struggles around comparability are on the agenda. The bourgeoisie has no confidence that it can win a major confrontation which would involve groups of workers like the miners.

Furthermore, there have been big social forces—especially amongst youth—organised by the Anti Nazi League and the anti-racist struggle. And while women's gains have been under attack, the one sharp move to limit the 1967 Abortion Act was met with rapid mobilisations.

It is this class relation of forces which determines perspectives for struggle. Ultra-left bravado that the Tory victory is irrelevant is useless. The fact that the working class was unable to overcome the effects of its leadership and prevent Thatcher forming a government will be felt by sections of the working class as the setback it is.

The Tory victory gives confidence and clear advantages to the ruling class. Nevertheless, the recent struggles of the working class and oppressed, and their general political consciousness, combined with the rapid unpopularity which Thatcher will meet, all create a tendency towards struggle. In Scotland, where the Tories have no mandate whatsoever, this can only be reinforced.

It would be idle to speculate on the exact form and tempo of the coming struggles. But the general perspectives are clear: whatever the initial delays while Thatcher collaborates with the union leaders, tens of thousands of workers and oppressed will enter into struggle against Thatcher's policies. Revolutionaries should prepare now for struggles which will finally involve central sections of the working class.

This dynamic clearly does not call for the shift to the right in political approach

which is apparent in the left—from the Labour left through the Communist Party, to the far left. Thatcher's victory is a setback but not at all the end of the war.

Any rightist political stance based on an analysis that a fundamental defeat has been suffered cannot be justified. And it certainly won't provide the fighting lead that is needed for the confrontation between the classes which is clearly on the agenda. □

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Workers in Europe Begin to Respond to Austerity Offensive

By Ernest Mandel

In all the countries of capitalist Europe, the bourgeoisie has reacted to the generalized recession of 1974-75 by launching an austerity offensive against the workers. The basic aim of this offensive is to make the workers shoulder the burden of the crisis and pay the cost of restructuring the capitalist economy. The main avenues of attack are the following:

- A clear effort to block any increase in real wages, to reduce them in fact, under the pretext of fighting inflation. Considering the rapid increase in productivity in most of the imperialist countries, the abrupt halt in the rise of real wages and even their decline is being translated into a considerable increase in the rate of surplus value. All else remaining equal, this means a significant rise in the rate of profit. That is the main goal of the austerity drive.

- A no less brutal assault against the gains of the workers movement in terms of social security and public expenditure for social services. In all the imperialist countries, especially in capitalist Europe, these benefits and services represent an important portion of workers' wages, in the basic meaning of the word (as "the costs of the reproduction of the labor force"). The term "indirect wage" (or portion of social wage) captures this meaning.

All cuts in these expenditures, whether they are carried out under the guise of reducing the budget deficit, of "improving public finances," or even at times of "fighting inflation," result in a lowering of the standard of living of the working class as a whole. This especially affects certain strata of the proletariat, such as the ill, the retired, apprentices, and the youth in general. One roundabout method of lowering indirect wages consists of displacing part of the costs of financing social expenditures from the shoulders of the bosses and the state onto those of the wage-earners themselves.

- A systematic reduction of employment in all industrial branches particularly hard hit by the crisis. This includes shutting down entire sectors or subsectors of industry (with especially painful consequences for those areas or regions where these sectors are located).

Steel, naval construction, textile, and footwear are typical examples. Regional developments exacerbated by this explain in part the reappearance or growth of some regionalist ferment, even the rediscovery of regionalist "national identities" in various European countries.

This capitalist restructuring is intended to eliminate those companies that are working at a loss and at the same time to raise the average rate of profit. The goal is a coordinated reorientation of some industrial activity toward the world market, that is, to improve the competitive position of "national" industry in a situation in which the crisis has sharpened inter-imperialist competition.

This restructuring at the expense of workers and jobs (massive layoffs, plant closings, a halt to hiring, early retirements, and so on) is intended to permit each imperialist economy to concentrate on "advanced" industrial activities at the expense of "backward" sectors. It is supported by a policy of state subsidies to benefit the "advanced" sectors, subsidies paid for through the relative reduction in social expenditures.

- A drive to erode trade-union rights and the ability of the workers movement and the working class to vigorously respond to this generalized antilabor offensive. Within this category fall such measures as the lengthening of contract periods (Denmark), attacks against militant strike pickets (Britain), the first threats of restrictions on the right to demonstrate (France), attempts to reduce the rights of factory delegates, including their right to modify the results of national negotiations in terms of wages and working conditions (Italy, Spain, Britain, and others).

This generalized antilabor offensive takes specific forms according to the country. Among the most striking examples are the policy of the Wilson and Callaghan governments to limit the rate of increase of nominal wages in Britain, the austerity plans of the Andreotti government in Italy and the successive governments in Portugal; and the Barre Plan in France.

Capitulation by Reformist Leaders

Surprised and unnerved by the economic crisis and its consequences, bogged down in their general strategy of class-collaboration, refusing to envisage any global anticapitalist alternative (a break with the logic of profit), the reformist leaders of the Communist and Socialist parties and of the big trade-union organizations have in general capitulated to big capital's offensive.

In a number of countries, above all in Britain, West Germany, and Denmark, but also to an extent in Belgium (under the second Tindeman government and under

the Van den Boeynants government), Portugal (under Soares), and Finland, they have even played the role of the main initiators of austerity. They have provided capitalism with "crisis management."

In other countries, their position in favor of "social pacts" has given cover to the austerity policies launched by the bourgeois parties, allowing those policies to be carried through at an early stage.

That was the case, for example, with the policy followed by the Italian Communist Party (aided as well by the Italian Socialist Party) under the Andreotti government.

That was the case of the Moncloa Pact in Spain.

That was also the case in Finland, where the CP completely covered up the austerity plan initiated by a government led by the Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie.

The French Communist Party still verbally opposes the austerity measures of the Barre government, but the CGT,¹ which it leads, is completely immersed in its "policy of negotiation." As for the Maire leadership of the CFDT,² which is linked to a wing of the Socialist Party, it has in fact accepted the capitalists' austerity plan under the guise of "returning to the center."

The reformist leaderships have used various arguments to justify their capitulation to the antilabor offensive.

Some plead economic fatalism. In an "open economy" (read: within the framework of the world capitalist market), no government can avoid the "rules of the game," often imposed by the International Monetary Fund (especially in Portugal and Britain, but also to an extent in Italy and Spain), without leading to a halt in international credit, severe import restrictions, and even to a total paralysis of economic life.

Others maintain that the choice is between a moderate austerity policy implemented by the reformist leaders and a more severe and aggressive policy implemented by the bourgeois parties. Therefore, it would be better to choose the lesser evil.

Yet others cynically proclaim that austerity can be used to the benefit of the workers movement, if in exchange for

1. Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labor).

2. Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor).



Lutte de Classe

Militant strikes have won wage concessions in Britain and West Germany.

sacrifices in the present consumption of some of the workers, the workers movement can wrest important concessions, such as a "broadening of democracy" and "structural reforms." Such arguments have been put forward in an especially clear way by the Italian and Spanish Communist parties.

Finally, there are some who argue that wage concessions have to be made in order to fight unemployment.

An initial balance sheet of the first two years of austerity (in general the years 1976 and 1977, but with important variations by country) has shown the illusory, even deceptive, character of these justifications.

Real wages have been eroded, especially in Portugal, Britain, and West Germany. Unemployment has not fallen anywhere. It has even tended to increase. The famous "structural reforms" are nonexistent, or are nothing but vulgar measures to "rationalize" the capitalist economy.

As for the "broadening of democracy," that has occurred only in the imaginations

of the Eurocommunist leaderships. In reality there has been an increase in marginal attempts at repression (with the obvious exception of the winning of key democratic rights by the workers movement in Spain during the transition from the Francoist regime to the regime of Juan Carlos, won thanks to a significant rise in the mass movement that the bourgeoisie feared would grow into a truly revolutionary explosion).

The Workers' Response

The working class, in its majority, did not respond rapidly to the generalized capitalist offensive.

The workers had emerged from a prolonged period of relative "full employment" and of relative increases in their standard of living. The propaganda of the bourgeoisie, strongly reinforced by the leaderships of the Socialist and Communist parties within the workers movement, had led them to believe that things would continue that way for an indefinite period.

The Common Program of the Union of the Left in France was based on the hypothesis of a regular annual rate of economic growth of 5 percent.

Those who warned the workers that under any capitalist regime economic crises were inevitable and that a series of recessions would come were laughed at as incurable "dogmatists" who have not understood the changes that have taken place since World War II in the functioning of the "mixed" economy (the word "capitalist" itself was increasingly dropped from usage).

The workers were thus taken by surprise by the crisis, thrown off balance by the growth of unemployment, and disoriented by the reformists, especially in those countries where the reformist leaders themselves squarely took charge of implementing austerity measures. It took time to figure out which way things were going and how to react to the new conditions.

It must be added that in several European countries, especially those of southwest Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, France), the turn in the economic situation came either during a full political crisis, as in the prerevolutionary or revolutionary crises in Spain and Portugal, or during a developing crisis, as in Italy and France. The workers focused their attention on those problems and on an overall political solution, without immediately realizing the need to promptly respond to the economic offensive of the employers and the bourgeois state (that was especially the case in Portugal in 1976 and in France in 1977).

The fact must also be taken into account that at first, at least in certain countries, the bourgeoisie initiated a policy of partial or technical unemployment, which had the effect of dividing the workers. When the capitalists were compelled by their need to restructure the economy to begin massive layoffs and factory closures, this objectively helped pave the way for a united response by the working class.

After a period of hesitancy, the broad outlines of the workers' response have begun to emerge, especially during 1978 and the beginning of 1979 (again, with significant differences from country to country in terms of the timing and breadth of the response). In general, that response has taken three forms:

- Determined wage struggles aimed at breaking through the limits imposed on increases in nominal wages. These struggles have been aided to an extent by conditions of moderate economic recovery in a number of imperialist countries and by the spectacular jump in capitalist profits. They have met with clear success in West Germany and Britain, and to a lesser extent in Spain, where they were militant and broad. The present explosion of workers struggles in Ireland is in the same category.

- Considerable pressure even within the workers movement to break with the policy

of "social pacts" that has allowed the implementation of austerity. It was such pressure that capped the victory in Spain, where the Moncloa Pact has not been revived. It has begun to be felt in Italy. In Denmark, it resulted in a general strike in 1978.

• Partial, but very explosive, struggles against layoffs and factory closures. The struggle of the steelworkers in Nord and Lorraine in France is typical of these.

If a balance sheet is to be drawn of the three years since the beginning of the austerity offensive, then one can state that with the exception of Portugal the gains of the bourgeoisie have been modest. In a number of countries, the workers' response has completely neutralized the loss in real wages the employers had previously been able to wrest from them. Trade-union militancy remains very high. The possibility of locking the workers movement into a straitjacket of restrictive rules is almost nil.

The bourgeoisie cannot impose its solutions and the proletariat does not yet have an adequate leadership for imposing its own. The crisis will thus be a long one, marked by many abrupt turns.

No important change in the overall class relationship of forces has taken place. Even the bourgeoisie's success in throwing 7 to 8 million workers out of their jobs in capitalist Europe has not been able to modify the relationship of forces.

The reason is that unemployment has not yet touched the "heavy battalions" of the organized workers movement (except in steel). Its effects have focused on the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of the working class—immigrant workers, women, and youth.

However, precisely because these strata are less organized than the "heavy battalions" (which in part explains their vulnerability), the blows they have suffered have not yet undercut the potential for combativity of the organized workers movement. But it goes without saying that over the longer term, this evolution carries the seeds of division and other dangers for the working class, if the organized workers movement fails to strongly defend the weakest strata of the class.

Limitations of Semispontaneous Struggles

Although we can note a clear change in climate in 1978 or 1979 in various countries and the evident beginnings of a response by the working class of capitalist Europe to the generalized austerity offensive, we must nevertheless be aware of the limitations of this response.

Above all, it has been a semispontaneous response, "led" by factory or local trade-union militants and by the broad workers vanguard, and supported by the left and far-left political tendencies within the workers movement. But nowhere is it yet based on an organized left-wing trade union tendency on a national level that

could have any real effectiveness against the bureaucracies, much less based on revolutionary parties beginning to acquire some mass influence.

Under such conditions, the response has by its nature been disjointed. The workers have launched some determined strikes (like the Ford strike or those by some public workers in Britain, like the steelworkers actions in Nord and Lorraine in France), but they are scattered and do not automatically extend to other sectors or other regions, even though they have obviously encouraged other strata of the working class to fight back as well.

These actions are useful and should be supported enthusiastically and energetically by all revolutionaries and all vanguard workers. They have not been.

These struggles clearly show that the working class retains a high level of combativity, that it is capable of reacting with vigor, and that it is fed up with austerity and the compromises of the reformists. They show the rising anger of many sectors of the European working class, involving, as in the case of France, a large part of the entire proletariat. These partial explosions thus prepare the way for a united response and improve the conditions for its launching.

When the trade-union leaderships are compelled to take these struggles into account, if only to maintain some control over them, the results can be spectacular. Witness the recent mobilization of 60,000 Walloon workers at Namur in Belgium (out of a total population of less than a quarter million). Witness the unexpected and spectacular tenacity with which the Ruhr steelworkers fought in late 1978 and early 1979 for a thirty-five-hour workweek, the first effective strike for that demand by any workers in capitalist Europe.

It is one thing, however, to stress the importance and scope of these semispontaneous explosions. It is another to exaggerate their "automatic" dynamic. Here another factor enters, one that will grow increasingly important as the capitalist crisis drags on.

The workers realize instinctively that they are not confronted with a passing "mishap" of the capitalist economy but with a deep structural crisis. They also realize instinctively that neither the bosses of a failing company nor the bosses of an entire branch of industry can reestablish full employment, even under the pressure of a very determined and prolonged strike. It is only on the level of the economy as a whole that effective solutions can be found.

However, to speak of the "economy as a whole" is in reality to speak of the "government," the "state," and "political power." The search for overall anticapitalist solutions to the crisis must lead in the direction of political solutions.

In this regard, while the class-collaborationist "solutions" of the reform-

ists are becoming increasingly unsatisfactory in the eyes of many layers of workers, credible alternative political solutions remain to be presented, largely owing to the relative weakness of the revolutionary forces. At the same time, the leaderships of the Socialist and Communist parties frequently follow a deliberate policy of fragmentation and division—including sectarian political divisions—that make alternative political solutions appear even less credible.

All these factors tend to place limits on the potential of these semispontaneous struggles of the masses.

The answer of revolutionary Marxists to the austerity drive of capital and the bourgeois state comprises five essential elements, which are simply the application to a concrete situation of the general strategy of transitional demands.

1. As immediate goals of struggle, we raise specific demands that provide solutions to the worst aspects of the offensive:

To counter unemployment, a thirty-five-hour workweek with no reduction in pay, with proportional hiring, and with workers control over the pace of work.

To counter factory closures, nationalization without payment or compensation, and under workers control.

To counter layoffs, workers' veto power; no layoffs without the prior placement of workers in other jobs at the same pay and in the same region.

To counter the erosion of standards of living, a sliding scale of wages and social benefits based on a cost-of-living index determined by the trade unions.

To counter the prolonged economic crisis, an economic development plan based on the complete nationalization of finance, key industries, and the big corporations without compensation (except for the smallest shareholders); a democratically determined plan directed toward the priority of satisfying the needs of the working masses and the "Third World" peoples. International coordination—at the level of factory, local, and industrial trade-union delegates—of working-class action in all the affiliates of the same multinational companies. International unity through trade-union action in those branches worst hit by the crisis (steel!).

2. United struggles to attain these objectives through extraparliamentary action: ever larger demonstrations; general strikes in branches of industry and in those local and regional areas hardest hit by the crisis; systematic propaganda and agitation for a general strike to end the austerity measures; propaganda (in words and in practice) to establish democratic structures for the self-organization of the masses (democratically elected strike committees, central strike committees, a congress of strike committees, and so on).

3. Systematic defense of overall political solutions, including at the level of the government, which can only be unifying

solutions. Propaganda, and at times systematic agitation, in favor of a workers government, governments of the workers' organizations (labor, SP-CP, SP-CP-trade union governments, depending on the country and the concrete circumstances) to be placed in power to satisfy the main demands of the working masses.

Systematic propaganda in favor of unity of the working class and its allies, a united front of all the organizations that claim to be part of the workers movement, and the organization of such a united front by unified committees, from the ranks to the top, that can control the activity of the projected government. No illusions in the capacity of the reformist leaders to really break with capitalism.

4. Systematic action to build broad alternative leaderships within the mass organizations. A struggle for trade-union unity and democracy, for militant trade unionism, and for the construction of left-wing union tendencies that seek to win the control of the unions away from the bureaucracies, especially during and after big struggles. Fraternal discussion and unity in action with the left-wing tendencies that are slowly crystallizing within the Communist and Socialist parties.

5. Systematic work to build and strengthen the nucleus of the revolutionary party, the growth of which is key, not only to encourage the emergence of an alternative leadership within the unions and the factories, but also to orient the mass struggles in a clearly united and anticapitalist direction.

The relationship of forces is such that there is nothing that blocks the transformation of the semispontaneous actions of the working masses into a generalized assault against the capitalist regime. But nor is there anything that can yet guarantee such an outcome.

For this transformation—the only possibility for a positive outcome to the crisis—to be realized, the whole program of action that we have outlined must be taken up in struggle, both nationally and internationally.

April 15, 1979

Washington Edges Behind Rhodesian Regime

By Jesse Trumbull

The U.S. Senate voted 75 to 19 May 15 to call on President Carter to openly support the Rhodesian regime by lifting formal economic sanctions against it. In an effort to give the reactionary move a "democratic" cover, the senators resorted to the boldface lie that the elections organized by the Rhodesian authorities in April had been "fair."

The lopsided Senate vote is a further sign of a shift in the American ruling class's policy toward the conflict in Zimbabwe. It is increasingly looking toward the proimperialist regime being set up by Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa as a basis for its efforts to contain the Zimbabwean revolution and to maintain imperialism's fundamental economic and political interests in the region.

Among the other signs of this shift are the following:

- An increase in covert arms shipments to the regime in Salisbury, including more than thirty American helicopters and reconnaissance planes.

- A deliberate toning down of criticism of Smith. The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* observed May 17, "Administration spokesmen have already begun backing off from the pronouncements they used to make about the moral heinousness of the Smith regime. . . ."

- Statements by Carter himself that the Rhodesian elections—which were marked by widespread intimidation of Blacks—were "a step in the right direction."

- Comments by Andrew Young, the American representative to the United Nations, that Washington should support the new regime headed by Muzorewa, despite what he concedes were "rigged" elections. He stated May 3, "I would hope that we would have the kind of relationship [with the Muzorewa regime] that would try to help that government survive by entering into negotiations with other

parties, and moving toward elections conducted either by the British or the United Nations" (emphasis added).

The new Conservative government in Britain has made little effort to conceal its sympathy for the Rhodesian regime. On May 18, the Thatcher government announced that it would post a full-time envoy to Rhodesia, a significant move toward recognition of the Salisbury regime.

The South Africans have been even more open in their backing for Muzorewa and Smith, and Muzorewa has publicly stated that he would accept South African assistance.

Thus far, the Carter administration has sought to disguise its backing for the Salisbury regime under a cloak of official "neutrality." The major capitalist press has gone along with this fiction by portraying the Senate vote as a "threat" to Carter's Africa policy, one that could undermine his self-assumed image as a "mediator."

If there are any differences between the White House and Congress, they are not over whether to back Muzorewa and Smith—they are agreed on that—but on *how* to do so.

In trying to implement Washington's counterrevolutionary policies in southern Africa, Carter has to weigh numerous factors, some of which were raised in the debate over the Senate resolution.

If formal sanctions against Salisbury were immediately lifted, how would the Patriotic Front, which is currently leading the liberation struggle, react? Would its leadership be forced to compromise, or would it seek to further mobilize the Zimbabwean population? Would it be prompted to appeal for greater Cuban assistance (a particular worry in the White House)? How would open support for Muzorewa and Smith be viewed by some of Washington's more important allies in Black Africa?

One of the biggest obstacles the White House faces in trying to intervene directly against the Zimbabwean revolution is the deep opposition among Americans, especially Blacks, to any support for the racist regimes of southern Africa.

A survey conducted in February and March by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that 86 percent of those polled condemned South Africa's white supremacist policies, while only 2 percent supported them. There was strong sentiment against the sending of American troops to southern Africa.

It is this political atmosphere within the United States that has compelled Carter to move cautiously, while trying to hide his administration's real policy. □

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The Gasoline Swindle in United States

[The sudden "gasoline shortage" in the United States is real at the consumer level. Deliveries to filling stations have been cut drastically. Most stations are closed on Sundays. During the week pumps open late and shut early. In California, the state hardest hit, working people are forced to wait on line for hours to obtain the necessary fuel to drive back and forth to work.

[At the level of production, the "shortage" is a fake and a fraud. The oil trusts are simply holding back supplies to drive up prices and boost profits even more.

[The following editorial outlines the measures proposed by American Trotskyists to meet the crisis. It has been reprinted from the May 25 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

* * *

President Carter says the energy crisis is "the moral equivalent of war."

That's the way the oil trust sees it—as a war against American working people. The gasoline crisis now gripping the country is the latest offensive in that war.

The rip-off at the gas pump has outraged workers. That anger has even forced some sections of the government to lift a bit of the curtain on what's going on:

- Sen. Thomas Eagleton said May 15 that sixteen major oil companies had made profits on domestically produced crude oil ranging from 144 percent to 389 percent of the cost of production.

- The Federal Trade Commission admits it has evidence that oil companies have not made full use of available supplies of crude oil and that "the current gasoline shortage may be contrived."

But Carter insists that working people are to blame for the crisis and that the only thing to be done is to give the oil giants the profits they are demanding. Workers should "use less and pay more."

Complaining May 15 that "the American people refuse to face the inevitable prospect of fuel shortages," Carter even had the nerve to scold us for "frivolity."

Working people in California, who have had an extra day of waiting in gas lines tacked onto their weekly schedules, aren't frivolous, they're angry. People who can't get to recreational areas on their few days off, who are told to sit at home without an air conditioner in summer or heat in the winter aren't feeling frivolous either.

During the winter of 1977, when the country was hit by a sudden shortage of natural gas, Carter also urged the American people to "sacrifice," "waste less energy," and turn down our thermostats. He blamed the shortage on our failure "to

take energy conservation seriously."

But it turned out there was plenty of natural gas—once the corporations got their price.

Is it any wonder that the American people don't believe Carter and are convinced the gas shortage has been contrived by the energy monopolies?

Despite the refusal of the government to act, the measures needed to meet this crisis are simple.

The first thing we need to do is to find out the truth about what is happening.

How much oil and gas are really in the ground?

How much oil and gas are in the pipelines or storage tanks right now?

What is the real capacity of oil refineries already in operation?

What are the real profits the industry is making?

Under the code of capitalist secrecy, working people—and even the government—are expected to take the word of the companies on these vital facts. Every statistic the Department of Energy has is provided by the oil industry—often on the condition that it not share the data with other government agencies.

Instead of challenging Exxon, Mobil, and the other energy giants, the government is protecting their secrets and covering up their massive frauds against working people.

Refinery Workers: 'So Much Oil, It Spills'

Oil workers are particularly inclined to be skeptical about the gas shortage. They see what's going on from behind the scenes.

Debby Leonard works at the Arco refinery, the second largest in Houston. She says everyone at her plant—and even the foremen—knows the crisis is phony.

"On the one hand, you've got the two main gasoline refinery units operating at reduced rates. The heaters are not fired up, so you can tell the units are not running to par. On the other hand, the company is renting tanks all over the area to store their excess crude oil.

"They're stockpiling it, and this excess causes a lot of problems and miscalculations. The tanks of oil we work with are filled higher than usual. When we try to change the oil from one to another, oil spills all over. Because they're so full, the oil comes from the

The labor movement should demand that the books of the energy corporations be opened to public scrutiny. Let's place every aspect of their operation under a magnifying glass!

Labor should call on the government to take the industry out of the hands of the Rockefellers, Gettys, DuPonts, and other private owners and place it under public ownership.

The gas shortage is brought to us by the same system of private profit and public misery that brought the skyrocketing meat prices in the spring of 1973; the gas lines in the winter of 1973-74; the natural-gas shortage in January and February 1977; and most recently, the nuclear nightmare at Three Mile Island.

Shortages, breakdowns, and catastrophes are becoming more and more a part of the American Way of Life.

Now the giant oil companies are again holding working people for ransom. They will stop at nothing in their blind drive for profit. Taking the industry out of private hands has become a matter of life and death for the American people.

In demanding that the government nationalize the energy industry, labor can place no confidence in Carter or any government bureaucrat to administer it in accord with our needs.

The fight for public ownership should include putting the energy industry under the management of an independent board directly elected by and responsible to the American people.

Workers in the energy industry itself would police the functioning of such a board, making sure that it operated in the open and made all the facts about the

tanks fast, and if you don't catch it there's quite a mess."

The oil workers are particularly angry about the fantastic profits that Arco is making. In the first quarter of this year, profits were up 61 percent. Yet the oil workers were among the first ones this year to be stuck with the 7 percent wage guideline. They didn't even receive a cost-of-living allowance.

A common complaint at the refinery is, "Oil workers can't afford our own products."

In Houston, stations are beginning to close early and the smaller ones stay closed. Furthermore, prices have gone up. "A couple of months ago," Leonard said, "we were paying in the low fifties for a gallon of regular—one of the lowest rates in the country. Now we're up to seventy-five to eighty cents a gallon. And we know we'll be paying even more in the future, when decontrol comes through."

industry known. It is these workers, after all, who are in the best position to know when refining capacity isn't being used, when storage tanks are overflowing, and when pumping rates are being kept down.

Labor's program to meet the energy crisis cannot be implemented without a struggle. The oil trust represents the single most powerful sector of the American ruling class. It is backed to the hilt by the capitalist government. Against that power, it is necessary to mobilize the power of the organized labor movement.

Workers on the job are already discussing the issue of nationalization of the energy industry. They are looking to their unions to take a stand, to take the lead in this fight for the interests of the working masses.

The labor movement can campaign first of all to get out the truth about what is

going on to the American people. It can organize discussions in union locals. It can publish literature, set up speaking tours, organize picket lines, and help build demonstrations.

Such a campaign will be opposed by the Democratic and Republican parties, which are owned from top to bottom by the oil barons. The unions will find it necessary to confront these capitalist politicians in the political arena as well—by running independent labor candidates.

If the union movement stands up to the oil trust and fights the energy blackmail, it will inspire millions both inside and outside of the labor movement. If it utilizes the full power of labor—by forming a party of the working class based on the unions—it can take another giant step in the fight for a society based on human needs, not for profits.

In December the CGTP's Stalinist leaders called a general strike for January 9, 10, and 11. But this was done in a perfunctory fashion, with little organization. The bureaucrats blocked all attempts to form a unified strike committee with the various unions outside the CGTP. The date of the strike was set arbitrarily, coming immediately after the year-end holidays rather than as the culmination of a rising wave of struggles.

The regime and the bourgeois parties whipped up a propaganda campaign against the strike, stressing a sudden "threat of war with Chile" and the alleged danger that the work stoppage might thwart the promised return to civilian rule. (In earlier strikes, some of the bourgeois parties—the APRA¹ in particular—had lent verbal support and their followers had participated.)

Because missing three consecutive days of work is grounds for dismissal under the dictatorship's labor laws, a three-day work stoppage would have threatened participants with summary firings. In their majority, the workers chose not to take this risk.

The obvious disunity among their leaders and the near-total lack of direction for the strike; the fear of heavier repression than on previous occasions (the regime put up a massive show of military force in the days before January 9); and the realization that few economic gains had resulted from earlier work stoppages led many workers to go to their jobs on January 9 and most others to return on January 10. The CGTP leadership called off the strike in the middle of its second day.

The Dictatorship's Counteroffensive

The military rulers pressed their advantage after the strike collapsed. The state of emergency was extended until March 6. So long as it was in force union meetings and political gatherings were banned and persons could be arrested and held without charge. (The latter provision remained in effect even after the emergency was lifted.)

Seven independent newsmagazines were ordered shut down just before the strike, and three others were banned shortly thereafter. Only in April were some of them allowed to resume publication. (Such periodicals are the main source of news in Peru because of the tight control exercised over the government-owned dailies.)

Repression was stepped up against workers and peasants struggles. On February 4 the police launched a brutal assault on the Cromotex textile factory, which had been occupied by its workers since December 28. Three workers were killed, ten were wounded, four disappeared, and fifty-seven were arrested.

A reign of terror was imposed on the

1. Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American People's Revolutionary Alliance), Peru's main bourgeois party.

But Rulers' Grip Remains Precarious

Peruvian Masses on the Defensive

By Fred Murphy

The failure of the masses to join a three-day general strike in January of this year marked the end of the prerevolutionary situation that opened in Peru in July 1977. The turning point in the situation came in September 1978 with the crushing of a nationwide miners strike.

That strike by the key sector of the Peruvian proletariat—the 48,000 workers at Peru's copper, iron, and other mines—came on the crest of a wave of struggles in which the masses resisted the military government's austerity drive. For more than a year there had been continual local and province-wide general strikes, three nationwide general strikes, factory occupations, peasant land seizures, student mobilizations, and uprisings in the huge shantytowns that ring Peru's cities.

In the course of that upsurge—which began with a twenty-four-hour general strike throughout the country on July 19, 1977—the masses won important political concessions from the regime. Martial law, in force since July 1976, was lifted. A constituent assembly was convened and a return to civilian rule promised. Political prisoners and exiles were amnestied. A measure of press freedom was restored, and leftist groups were allowed to function more or less openly.

In contrast to these victories in the political sphere, however, the workers and their allies were unable to wring any significant economic concessions from Peru's crisis-ridden capitalists. In fact, just

the opposite occurred. During 1978 alone—the year in which mass struggle was at its highest pitch—real wages dropped a full 37% and the number of persons without fulltime employment rose by more than 100,000. Over half the work force remained "underemployed." By the end of 1978 it was estimated that 60% of the population lacked sufficient income to guarantee the proper caloric intake of food.

By the time the miners strike began in August 1978, such deepening misery was taking its toll on the militancy of the masses. The main cause of the strike's defeat lay elsewhere, however. The Communist Party-controlled General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) failed to offer timely solidarity to the miners union. As soon as it was clear that the CGTP bureaucrats had no intention of calling a general strike to back up the miners' demands, the military mobilized its troops and tanks. The mining districts were put under martial law, and a protest encampment set up by 3,000 miners and their families in central Lima was brutally routed.

The miners were forced back to work with none of their demands met. In October, November, and December, fresh struggles broke out among students, peasants, public employees, metalworkers, bank clerks, and residents of several towns in the Amazon region. But these battles remained isolated, and in the absence of any centralized mobilizations, the masses were forced into retreat.

peasants of Alto Piura between February 6 and 12. To put an end to seizures of unused land, Civil Guards attacked peasant encampments, killing one and wounding thirty-two, destroying huts and stealing tools and livestock. Seventeen peasants were arrested and charged with "sabotaging the agrarian reform!"

On February 28, the political police raided a meeting at the Lima headquarters of the SUTEP, Peru's teachers union. SUTEP leader Abel Callirgos was murdered by the cops and thrown out of a fourth-floor window. Several dozen SUTEP leaders were jailed. The regime is seeking to head off a resumption of the nationwide teachers strike that was suspended July 27, 1978, after the government pledged to recognize the union and grant its demands. That pledge remains unfulfilled.

Cops even raided the Lima Cathedral on March 20 to dislodge the editors of several of the banned magazines. The journalists had chained themselves inside the cathedral crypt and begun a hunger strike to protest the closure of their publications.

The military sent heavily armed troops back into the mining districts in mid-March to crush a renewed strike against the Southern Peru Copper Company. Hundreds of miners were arrested, and about fifty were held for trial by military courts.

The miners were forced back to work at the beginning of April. The government and the company then collaborated in firing dozens of union leaders, evicting them from company-owned housing along with their families, and deporting them to remote areas of the country.

Leaders of unions of hospital, bank, and university workers were also jailed in April and May.

Trade-Union Unity and Independence Threatened

Other unions have been attacked in a less direct way. Working closely with the Ministry of Labor, the bourgeois APRA party has been trying to regain a foothold in the unions it once controlled. Aprista thugs took over the Callao fishermen's union on March 19, and the next day they also seized the headquarters of the Federation of Peruvian Fishermen. (A similar operation was mounted by the Ministry of Fisheries in 1971; the union remained under government control from then until the fishermen wrested it back in 1974.)

The Stalinists atop the CGTP have also weakened the unions by continuing their drive to split or regain control over federations led by forces to their left.² In April they held a rump congress of the powerful metalworkers federation, FETIMP, and gained official recognition for it from the government. The majority of FETIMP

locals, including those from the biggest plants, held a separate congress April 27-May 1. A bloc of Trotskyist and independent delegates managed to block moves by the Maoists and dissident pro-Moscow



Fred Murphy/IP-I

APRA Leader Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in Peru Constituent Assembly, July 1978.

Stalinists to take the FETIMP out of the CGTP.

Timely Aid From Imperialist Banks

By demonstrating its ability to hold the masses in check and enforce the austerity drive, the military regime has enhanced its standing with its imperialist creditors. A round of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the big banks and governments that hold the bulk of Peru's \$8.9 billion foreign debt enabled the regime to secure a "rollover" of some 90% of the debt payments that were to fall due in 1979 and 1980. This means that only 30% of Peru's export revenue during those years must go to debt retirement—down from a projected figure of nearly 70%.

At the same time, Peru's foreign-exchange reserves were boosted by the big rise in world copper prices that began in February. This will probably prove ephemeral, however, in that it does not reflect a rise in demand but only a speculative boom—brought on in part by buyers' jitters over the miners strikes in Peru.

Easing of its financial situation has enabled the regime to take a more sophisticated approach in imposing its austerity measures. Price increases and currency devaluations have been introduced in a more gradual fashion, thus camouflaging the continuing attack on living standards and staving off the explosions of mass outrage that accompanied past austerity decrees.

The government has also been in a position to grant selective economic con-

cessions to certain groups of workers, such as sugar, textile, telephone, and steelworkers. This has been done in conjunction with the APRA's drive to reestablish itself in the unions, allowing the Apristas to present themselves to the workers as the ones who can secure concessions from the government.

Elections in Doubt?

When the Constituent Assembly was convened last July, large sections of the masses looked to it for solutions to their problems. No such thing happened. The two-thirds majority enjoyed by the APRA and other bourgeois parties effectively blocked efforts by the workers deputies to raise the masses' demands inside the assembly. The APRA and its allies refused to take any measures that might challenge the dictatorship.

Illusions in the assembly have thus waned, but owing to the dead end reached by the extraparliamentary struggles and the persisting crisis of leadership in the workers movement, the masses are now looking to the elections promised for late this year or in 1980 as another vehicle for winning their demands.

The military's plans for restoring civilian rule have been based all along on using the APRA as both a safety valve for mass discontent and the guardian of capitalist stability. But a new obstacle to this aim has arisen with the deteriorating health of APRA's founder and "supreme chief" Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre.

The eighty-four-year-old Haya collapsed at the APRA headquarters in March and was rushed to a hospital in Houston, Texas. He is rumored to be suffering from cancer in both lungs, as well as kidney and circulatory ailments. There is no other APRA leader of Haya's stature, so the military fears that his passing would signal the end of APRA's hegemony in Peruvian politics.

The APRA may split into two or more contending factions, none of which would hold the allegiance among Peru's voters that the APRA has commanded since the 1930s under Haya de la Torre's leadership. Despite his many betrayals, Haya still symbolizes for many Peruvians the APRA's early anti-imperialism, intransigent opposition to military dictatorship, and commitment to social justice.

With Haya out of the picture, other bourgeois politicians see enhanced possibilities for their own ambitions. Ex-President Fernando Belaúnde Terry—ousted by the military in 1968—leads the pack. He is currently touring the country and trying to rebuild his People's Action Party.

Another contender is Luis Bedoya Reyes of the Christian People's Party (PPC). Having slimmer chances, Bedoya suggested in January that owing to the supposed Chilean war threat the elections might have to be suspended. This was

2. See "The Fight for Class-Struggle Policies in Peru's Unions," *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, November 27, 1978, p. 1326.

viewed as a veiled call for a coup and his own installation as a civilian fig-leaf for continued military rule. Bedoya's move incensed the Apristas, bringing on a shoot-out between his partisans and APRA thugs outside the Constituent Assembly.

The APRA and the PPC soon patched up their dispute, however. In recent weeks they have been working together closely on the final draft of the new constitution. The workers deputies continue to be blocked from playing any role in the debates.

There are conflicting reports as to when presidential and congressional elections might be called. The Constituent Assembly's term expires July 28. After that it will be entirely up to the military when to hold the vote, and they could of course choose not to do so at all if the outcome looked too uncertain.

The cloudy political prospects have caused the imperialists to show scant enthusiasm for stepping up investment in Peru. "We made our last important investment in Peru six years ago, and we still don't see any signs warranting another," one company manager told *Business Latin America* in February.

Such statements show how illusory the military's hopes are for an economic recovery based on foreign capital and increased exports. In reality, what lies ahead is continued stagnation and new disasters when the postponed debts begin falling due in 1981.

Rulers Fear Trotskyist Program

The only way out of Peru's deepening crisis is the socialist solution being put forward by the Trotskyists: repudiation of the foreign debt, expropriation of the big enterprises of the imperialists and the native capitalists, a state monopoly of foreign trade, and economic planning. The Trotskyists explain that only a government of the workers and peasants could put such measures into practice.

These proposals have gained a wide hearing in Peru, owing especially to the immense popularity of Trotskyist leader Hugo Blanco of the PRT.

Peru's rulers fear the growing support for revolutionary-socialist ideas. They know that the small Trotskyist forces could grow rapidly in a new upsurge, which despite the recent setbacks could come at any time. Thus the military has already made several probes aimed at

3. There are three Trotskyist groups in Peru: the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party), the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST—Socialist Workers Party), and the Partido Obrero Marxista Revolucionario (POMR—Revolutionary Marxist Workers Party). The PRT and PST are sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International and are currently planning to unify. The POMR is affiliated with the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International; discussions are also under way toward unifying it with the PRT and PST.

blocking the Trotskyists' progress.

Last September, right-wing terrorists widely believed to have been linked to military intelligence tried to kidnap Blanco. They did manage to seize two PST activists and a visiting journalist.

In March, the regime, the right-wing



Fred Murphy/IP-1

HUGO BLANCO

press, and the bourgeois parties all sought to blame the miners strike on the POMR, whose members are part of the leadership at the Cuajone mine.

In April, the political police raided the PST's Lima headquarters and jailed twenty-one activists, including three central leaders. (All were later released without charges.)

Further moves of this kind can be expected. After the Constituent Assembly adjourns, the parliamentary immunity enjoyed by Blanco and other Trotskyist deputies will be lifted. There is a danger that the regime might then seek to prosecute the Trotskyists on some trumped-up charges.

What Road for the FOCEP?

The rulers' campaign against Trotskyism has also taken the form of pressure on the Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front (FOCEP), the electoral front formed in December 1977 that includes the three Trotskyist groups plus a number of independent figures in the workers movement.

After the FOCEP gained 12% of the vote in the Constituent Assembly elections, outpolling all other working-class slates, the capitalists mounted a big drive through the bourgeois press—and the Social Democratic weekly *Equis* in particular—to induce FOCEP President Genaro Ledesma to break with the FOCEP's platform of working-class indepen-

dence and adopt a class-collaborationist stance. At the same time, the right-wing press carried on a slander campaign against Hugo Blanco and the Trotskyists. The whole operation was aimed at domesticating the FOCEP and isolating the Trotskyists within it.

The pressure on Ledesma, a lawyer widely known for his long record of defending victims of government repression, bore fruit. In February, Ledesma announced the formation of FOCEP-Independiente (Independent FOCEP), a formation led by himself, left-wing novelist Manuel Scorza, and ex-guerrilla leader Ricardo Gadea. They began publishing a newspaper called *FOCEP* (which was soon banned by the government).

The first issue of *FOCEP* carried a political declaration calling for "unity of the anti-imperialist, revolutionary, and democratic forces in a broad united front." It further declared:

Our final goal is the taking of political power through a vast alliance of the popular classes, under the leadership of the proletariat and in coordination with all the political parties and movements of the left. The taking of power and the socialist revolution will be the inevitable result of the unfolding class struggle.

In practice, it soon became clear that Ledesma and his allies were actually seeking to bring the FOCEP into a popular-front alliance with the Communist Party and the petty-bourgeois Revolutionary Socialist Party. Ledesma would be presented as the presidential candidate of this front.

Ledesma has also responded favorably to APRA leader Armando Villanueva's overtures to what Villanueva calls the "responsible left." Ledesma was quoted in the May 14 edition of the Lima daily *El Comercio* as saying that "it is more probable that the left forces grouped around the FOCEP would draw close to the APRA than arrive at an understanding or agreement with the Christian People's Party. . . ."

The Trotskyists are organizing inside the FOCEP to preserve its original character as a bloc for working-class political independence. "The FOCEP arose as a front for struggle against the dictatorship and the right-wing parties," Hugo Blanco declared in response to Ledesma's comments on the APRA. "One of its essential principles is class political independence." "Dr. Genaro Ledesma is free to make deals with whomever he wants," said FOCEP deputy and PST leader Enrique Fernández. "But he must not compromise the FOCEP, because all of us who are part of the FOCEP uphold class political independence."

The fight to preserve to FOCEP's original class-struggle platform will be the central aspect of the FOCEP congress now scheduled for late June. The Trotskyists and their allies will seek to defeat the capitalist-inspired drive to turn the FOCEP into a class-collaborationist front.

Babak Zahraie's Debate With Bani Sadr

The April 10 debate between Trotskyist leader Babak Zahraie and "Islamic republic" proponent Abu al-Hassan Bani Sadr had a dramatic political impact throughout Iran. Zahraie's clear and simple explanation of what a worker and peasants government would do aroused interest and sympathy from very broad sections of the masses, including those still under the influence of the Shi'ite clergy in other respects.

The debate, which was nationally televised, was viewed by an estimated 22 million persons—virtually the entire adult population of Iran.

The reaction to it showed that the masses were anxious to begin discussing how to build the new society that they had fought for, and that they were beginning to think about socialism. It also showed that Islamic religious belief was not a watertight insulation against socialist ideas.

The results of the debate apparently alarmed the new regime, which has little authority and can hope to survive only by hiding behind "Islamic" demagoguery. If a broad discussion of socialism took hold among the masses, the new rulers' attempt to restabilize capitalist rule in Iran could quickly become hopeless.

The editors of the major Iranian dailies thought that the interest displayed in the debate called for reprinting the text of it. *Ayendegan* printed it in full, in a series running in three issues beginning April 11.

What did Zahraie say that made such an impact on tens of millions of Iranians?

"I am happy that the victory of the third Iranian revolution of this century has given us the opportunity to discuss the fundamental questions," Zahraie began, "questions that not only intellectuals are preoccupied with but which concern the workers, the toilers, and the middle classes. . . ."

"When we discuss different economic frameworks, what we are discussing is first of all human society, relations among people. We live in an age of great scientific advances—when machinery and technology can reduce the working time required to produce the things we need, both in the cities and in the countryside. But in this century of great scientific progress, for seventy years, under the domination of imperialism and the monarchy, Iran's situation has gotten worse.

"There are very contradictory developments here. On the one hand, science has provided the technological means for improving the lives of human beings. On the other, the social realities have continually made life worse."

The old regime had promised that rising

oil prices would bring prosperity for the Iranian people. The new authorities also look to higher oil prices as the only hope they can offer for solving the country's economic problems. Zahraie said:

"It is exactly six years since the energy crisis appeared throughout the world, and the price of oil in Iran increased many fold. The country's leaders, the leaders of the despotic regime of the former shah, made a big fuss over this increase. This was all hoopla. The source of this developmental lay outside the country. . . ."

"What was its result? . . . The rich have become richer and the poor, poorer. Before the price increase, Iran was self-sufficient in agriculture. Five years afterward, Iranian agriculture was ruined. Food began to be imported at high prices. The peasants and small peasants were ruined. Hundreds of thousands of peasants became uprooted wanderers."

So, Zahraie explained, the solution to the country's economic problems did not lie in higher oil prices. The economic problems had to do with relations between different groups of people. And the road to solving them was indicated by the February rebellion. The only force that could solve these problems was the same force that overthrew the shah—the masses of Iranian workers and toilers.

Zahraie took up a point made by Bani Sadr about the weakness of Iranian capitalists:

"I want to say one thing about weak capitalists and strong capitalists. What is the difference between them? What you said makes the differences clear. You mentioned an American company, IBM. It has billions of dollars in capital. Not even the biggest Iranian capitalist has capital amounting to billions of dollars.

"And capitalism has its own laws, the law of gangsters. The stronger wins. It has no other law. . . ."

"One thing that I find interesting about this discussion is that although we say we are talking among ourselves, we see that everything depends on relationships with people outside the country. How is it possible to free ourselves from these debts? It is very simple. There are historical examples of how to do this.

"In the case of the Cuban revolution, after Castro took power, he denounced the unwarranted power exercised in Cuba by the United States. Castro said: 'To whom should I be loyal? To the working people of Cuba? Or to the obligations imposed by the relations that you say must be maintained internationally?' His conclusion was that he should put the needs of Cuba first. So, what did he do then?"

"He ordered that the land be given to the peasants. He nationalized 99 percent of everything the American companies owned in Cuba. The Americans had said that if he did thus and so, they would do thus and so in return. Castro's reply was that he would nationalize the imperialists down to the nails in their shoes.

"Expropriations are needed here. . . . This requires mobilizing the masses of working people. But instead of this, the political leaders are telling the people to go home. They should tell them to stay mobilized and stay on the alert so that we can carry forward the struggle to root out imperialism from Iran.

"There is a fundamental question here. The February uprising pointed it up. That is, it showed that the people are the ones who can solve this problem. . . . The people have the power to do it. They showed that they could overthrow any shah, that they could overthrow the monarchy with all its power. So the problems of Iran, from unemployment to underproduction, are not going to be solved by some economists sitting in a room. They can only be solved by the masses through their struggle.

"We are coming to the question of what an economic crisis is. One thing that is being talked about today in Iran is the crisis in agriculture, which is very deep.

"What is involved in this crisis? Insufficient food production. Revolutionary planning could solve this crisis in a couple of days. It's very simple. The first thing is to see how much is under cultivation. The second is to see how much is in storage. And the third is to find out how much has to be imported. Do you know how that can be done? Ask the farmers themselves, who are without work. The machinery that is being kept in storage by the landowners should be turned over to the farmers so that they can begin to do the work to get the crops ready. . . ."

"And the question of imports raises another question. The Socialist Workers Party proposes a state monopoly of foreign trade. What is imported should be determined by the needs of the country, not by those of personal enrichment, so the state should assume full control over foreign trade. What should be imported are tractors for agricultural work, machinery to increase production."

Zahraie took up some of the vague populist formulas in Bani Sadr's program for the Islamic republic:

"You say that the former government centralized things but that this did not bring order and regularity. But that is a contradiction. If you centralize, there is

one law. But you cannot centralize a capitalist economy.

"Of course, each factory is centralized. At Iran National, they can tell you exactly how much they produce and how long it takes. But when you take all the factories together, there is anarchy. That is the nature of capitalism and you cannot change it. . . .

"You say that the problem is that the economic centers are not in Iran, and that they must be brought into the country. Well, it's obvious that the centers are not in Iran. The country is not industrialized. . . . The problem is, how are you going to bring these centers into the country? The capitalists cannot industrialize Iran.

"You cannot point to a single semi-colonial country anywhere in the world that has industrialized, even though there have been a lot of insurrections in these countries.

"The only countries that have escaped from the jungle of imperialism . . . are those countries that have broken loose from the world market, broken those very relations that you say we must maintain. Only those states [the USSR, China, and other workers states] have been able to put the needs of their country above the laws of the imperialist jungle, above the greed of the imperialist companies, and begin a process of economic development."

At this point the moderator asked Zahraie and Bani Sadr to try to find points of agreement so that the discussion could be more "fruitful." Bani Sadr indicated that he thought they could agree on the need for the people to get back to work.

Zahraie responded:

"The question is what kind of work. Should the workers go back into the factories to work for the bosses? Or should they take control of production themselves? Should the peasants work for the landlords, or should they take the agricultural machinery and use it for the benefit of the country? That is the question. It is in this sense that we say that the country's problems could be solved in a couple of days. We don't say that Iran would be a paradise, but that all its potential would be utilized. . . .

"Who knows better than the peasants how the seed should be used? Who knows better than the workers how to run the factories, how to develop production? What the uprising showed was that the workers and the peasants should not only build the society but that they can and should direct this process. . . .

"What does the monopoly of foreign trade mean? It doesn't mean turning all foreign trade over to a few so that they can get rich. It means planning by the peasants themselves, for example. . . . It might be necessary to import some things for building roads. The government would import them.

"To whom should this task be delegated?

Only a government could do it. What kind of government? That is the nub of the question in my opinion. The old despotic government of the former shah could not do it. And the government apparatus of today is the same one that existed under the old regime.

"Although the dictatorship was swept away by the insurrection, the state apparatus remains. . . . You cannot do what needs to be done with this state apparatus. Perhaps you could carry out some reforms . . . cut down what is handed over to the

imperialist companies for a period. But the fundamental problems of the workers and toilers in Iran would not be solved."

In order to solve these problems, Zahraie concluded, the masses would have to have full freedom to discuss and examine all opinions. Only in this way could it be shown who was trying to deceive the people. He said that the debate with Bani Sadr was an example of the sort of discussion that needed to be carried on throughout the entire country, among the masses of working people. □

The Attacks on 'Ayendegan' and 'Kayhan'

Tehran Regime Seeks to Reimpose Censorship

By Gerry Foley

The Khomeini-Bazargan regime launched a new offensive against freedom of speech and the press on May 10. Khomeini's office in Qum announced that the ayatollah was so upset with the sort of articles that had been appearing in *Ayendegan*, the national morning paper, that he felt he could no longer read it. Therefore, no one else should either.

What Khomeini found intolerable, according to *New York Times* correspondent John Kifner, were two articles in *Ayendegan* offering evidence that no one on the left had anything to do with the May 1 assassination of Ayatollah Morteza Motahari. This killing had been used by rightists to try to whip up an anti-communist hysteria and witch-hunt.

One of the offending articles was reportedly an interview with Khomeini published in *Le Monde*, in which the ayatollah supposedly said "agents of American imperialism" were probably responsible for the assassinations of Motahari and General Gharani, who was killed a week earlier. The other article was a background piece on the Forghan group that had claimed responsibility for both killings. It reported that this group presented itself as a religious organization.

On May 11 *Ayendegan* and two other papers were attacked on Iranian national radio as "counterrevolutionary."

Kifner reported in the May 13 *Times* that following the denunciations by Khomeini and the government radio, *Ayendegan's* offices began to come under attack by rightist gangs. On May 12 the editors decided to stop publishing "until the Government takes a clear stand for freedom of press and speech."

The other two major dailies, *Kayhan* and *Ettela'at*, carried *Ayendegan's* statement along with blank pages indicating the return of censorship.

The right-wing Islamic group that dominates the *Kayhan* printing workers retal-

iated May 15 by expelling a group of twenty journalists they considered "leftists," prompting a strike by all the *Kayhan* journalists. On May 16, Khomeini commended the employees committee that organized the lockout.

Kifner reported in the May 17 *Times* that on May 15 and 16 *Kayhan's* "mechanical workers, along with management, put out a four-page paper . . . consisting of reprints from the state news agency and classified advertising."

A confrontation over censorship has been brewing in Iran for some time. Attacks on independent-minded journalists began almost immediately after the February insurrection.

But such attempts have not been popular with the masses. As a result, there have been some retreats and concessions by the new authorities.

Iranian radio and television was to have carried a series of debates between Khomeini's top ideologist, Abu al-Hassan Bani Sadr, and representatives of currents critical of the "Islamic republic." But the series was abruptly dropped after the first debate—with Trotskyist leader Babak Zahraie—aroused immense interest. (See accompanying article.)

A number of the top figures in the government have sought to put the blame for television censorship on the network director, Sadeq Ghotbzadeh. In late April both Khomeini's grandson, Sayed Hossein Khomeini, and Bani Sadr himself denounced Ghotbzadeh for imposing censorship. The latter went so far as to say that "censorship is the worst cruelty that can be inflicted on a people, so they have the right even to resort to armed struggle or *jihad* [holy war] to get rid of it."

This sort of pushing and shoving even in Khomeini's immediate circle indicates how much the new authorities fear the reaction of the masses to their attempts to reimpose censorship. □

1. The Evolving Straitjacket of Apartheid

By Ernest Harsch

It is a few minutes past noon, and the pilot announces that we are approaching Jan Smuts Airport.

Just a little while ago, as the clouds broke, we caught our first glimpse of the veld, the gently rolling fields of the Transvaal, portioned out into large pale-green or dun-colored rectangles, dotted with big, well-kept farmhouses, images of the prosperity of South Africa's white farm owners.

As the plane draws nearer to Johannesburg, the terrain below becomes more broken by railway lines, roads, power installations, factory complexes, and flat-topped, sandy "hills"—the overgrown slag heaps thrown up by decades of mining the Rand's fabulously rich gold veins. It is all the property of a few score white entrepreneurs, bankers, industrialists, mine

Despite the glaring inequalities of apartheid, the South African government is today trying to convince Blacks that it favors change, that it would like nothing better than to see the conditions of the country's Black majority substantially improved.

In fact, a few superficial facets of apartheid have changed since the massive Black rebellions of 1976.

Official terminology is different. "Apartheid," the term used to describe the massive segregation of the Black population, had already passed out of government favor a number of years ago (though it is still commonly used). Now even its substitute, "separate development," is no longer in vogue. The new government watchword is "plural relations." Likewise, the racist term "Bantu" to refer to Africans has been largely eliminated from official usage.

The regime has phased out some minor segregationist practices. It is considering some form of limited recognition of African trade unions. It has promised more funds for Black education. It has established "elected" community councils in many Black townships. It has granted limited leasehold rights to African homeowners. It is formulating a new constitutional plan that would set up token "parliaments" for the Coloured and Indian sectors of the population. It has pledged to "abolish" the hated passes that all Africans must carry.

Members of Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha's cabinet now constantly talk about change. Piet Koornhof, the new minister of plural relations and development, is prom-

barons—the rulers of South Africa and the "masters" of its twenty-two million Blacks.

Still closer to Johannesburg, we fly over residential areas. The economic and social disparities become more striking. We are still too high to make out people, but there is no need to. Even at several hundred feet, it is clear which neighborhoods are for Blacks and which for whites.

In some, the houses are identical squares, closely packed along unpaved roads of reddish dirt. They are uniformly bleak.

In others, all roads are paved. The houses are larger and farther apart; spacious green lawns and colorful gardens surround them. From nearly half the backyards, bright blue, kidney-shaped swimming pools stare up at the plane . . .

ising an "exciting era of reform." Even John Vorster, who resigned as prime minister last year to become president, has heralded a "new epoch" for South Africa.

But what kind of change? "Reform" to what end?

After spending several weeks in South Africa in November and December 1978, I could find no sign that any of the alterations now being enacted would fundamentally benefit Blacks.

In the three largest cities, Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town; in smaller towns like Germiston, Stanger, Balfour, and De Aar; in the Black townships of Soweto, Lamont, KwaMashu, Ntuzuma, Grassy Park, Dieprivier, Retreat, and Athlone; in the squatters' camps of Crossroads and Richmond; in the Bantustan of KwaZulu; in the rural areas of the southern Transvaal, of Natal, and of the Cape; everywhere I went Blacks were still being subjected to the same severe oppression and exploitation at the hands of the white minority that they have suffered under for many years.

Clearly, white supremacy still stands as the iron law of South African society.

At best, some of the "reforms" now being introduced are designed simply to gloss over this reality. In most cases, they are intended to better safeguard white profits and to intensify even further the national oppression and class exploitation of the Black population.

Still 'For Whites Only'

One of the more immediately transparent measures now being implemented is

the so-called phasing out of "petty-apartheid," the segregation of public and private amenities.

The "whites only" signs on park benches have been painted over, some beaches have been declared "multiracial," there are occasional mixed sporting events, and a few hotels and restaurants have been proclaimed "international," that is, they can cater to Black visitors from abroad, as well as to whites.

Even the government's minimal "desegregation" moves have been more apparent than real. Public toilets, airport lounges, liquor stores, sporting grounds, theaters, taxis, restaurants, beaches, and scores of other public and private facilities are still widely segregated, many of them bearing degrading signs reading, "Blankes Alleen—Whites Only" or "For Coloureds, Asians, and Bantu."

Except for a few bus lines in Cape Town, almost all public transport is segregated, generally with separate vehicles for Blacks and whites. On intercity trains, certain cars are set aside for whites and certain ones for Blacks. The former are labeled first and second class, the latter third class.

Almost all public facilities for Blacks are grossly inferior to those set aside for whites. Black buses and trains are generally the oldest and most dilapidated, leading to frequent accidents. Some commuter trains are so overcrowded that passengers often have to hang on from the outside (a practice known as "staff riding"). Black beaches tend to be situated along the more dangerous sections of shoreline.

. . . Sybrand van Niekerk, the administrator of the Transvaal, lashes out in a December 16 speech against any moves away from discrimination. If Blacks in Pretoria could demand to go to desegregated theaters, he warns his white audience, they will eventually demand residential rights "in Hillbrow and Sunnyside," two well-to-do white neighborhoods.

South Africa, van Niekerk stresses, must avoid "bastardization" . . .

From the regime's viewpoint, the retention of at least some "petty" segregationist practices is important as a reaffirmation of the Black population's inferior social status, as a symbol of the big gap that separates "master" from "servant." If

social and cultural segregation breaks down, the authorities reason, what's to keep Blacks from pressing even harder for equal political rights?

Residential segregation, one of the most visible features of apartheid, has not been diluted one bit. Urban Blacks live in hundreds of separate townships clustered around the major cities, their residence and movements closely regulated by a plethora of laws and ordinances. The Black townships are generally quite poor and stark, with few services and amenities, while many whites enjoy homes in lavish, spacious, and well-trimmed suburbs reserved for their sole use.

Segregation in housing is, in fact, becoming ever stricter. In those cities where some Blacks still live near the center of town or near white residential areas, the police and government officials are busy evicting them to more isolated townships, often many miles from where they work.

In Cape Town, for instance, those Coloured families who still live in District Six, in the heart of the city, are being kicked out to make room for new white neighborhoods. They either end up in the existing (and overcrowded) townships and squatters' camps, or are forced to move out to new housing projects like those at Mitchell's Plain and Atlantis, both of which are a long way from Cape Town proper.

... The Naidus, an Indian family of eight, lived in a rented home in Mayfair, a suburb of Johannesburg that is officially designated for whites. In late January, the Department of Community Development evicts them for living there illegally and piles their furniture on the pavement outside. With nowhere else to go, the Naidus erect a tent on the sidewalk to live in.

They turn down the council's offer of a gravedigger's cottage in the Avalon cemetery, insisting they have a right to a decent house . . .

Education for Servitude

Since the opening rounds of the Soweto rebellions in 1976, the racist character of Black education has been continually raised as a major grievance in the townships. Students have demonstrated and boycotted classes and teachers have resigned their posts to press for the scrapping of "Bantu Education."

Now that the protests have died down, the Botha regime, in an effort to tighten its grip over the schools, has introduced the new Education and Training Bill into parliament.

To an extent, the bill seeks to defuse some of the widespread anger among Black students, parents, and teachers over the lack of sufficient education for Blacks by pledging to make schooling "compulsory" for African students through the primary grades.



South Africa today.

Ernest Harsch/IP-I

Textbooks and supplies, which previously had to be paid for by parents and students, are now to be provided by the government. A single salary scale for Black and white teachers is to be established. And in a shift from the previous policy of allowing the construction of new African high schools only in the Bantustans, plans are now under way to build at least four new secondary schools in Soweto.

In most respects, however, the bill is extremely retrogressive. First of all, it retains the principle of rigidly segregated schooling for Blacks. And the bill makes no provision for any move away from the existing curricula and syllabi, which aim to mold young Blacks into acceptance of their subservient position in South African society.

Nor is there anything committing the government to significantly reduce the vast gap between expenditures on white education and on Black education. Only an average of \$65 a year is spent on each African student, while \$750 is spent on each white student. Black parents, moreover, must pay school fees, while whites do not.

Since funds for Black education are raised from taxes and fees levied on the Black community, the plans to increase expenditures somewhat will mean a rise in costs for Black parents. The West Rand Administration Board, which oversees the running of African townships in the Jo-

hannesburg area, has already proposed that school levies in Soweto be increased by more than 100% in 1979.

Under such circumstances, the regime's method of introducing compulsory education, if actually enforced, will lead to yet more economic hardships for Blacks.

The bill likewise stiffens penalties for various infractions. Parents can be fined for not enrolling their children in school. Anyone caught teaching African students without official authorization can be fined R500¹ or jailed for one year. Boycotts by students or teachers will be illegal, punishable by fines of R200. Teachers can also be penalized for disobeying instructions or criticizing the government or any government department.

Not surprisingly, most Black leaders oppose the new bill. Dr. Nthato Motlana, the chairman of the Soweto Committee of Ten, a broadly based community group, declared in November, "Any Act specifically designed and tailored for blacks is totally unacceptable."

The Reverend E. Tema, chairman of the Soweto Action Committee, underlined the same point. "We are not interested in ethnic education for South Africa," he said.

The Federal Council of Transvaal African School Boards sent a memorandum to the education department in December rejecting the bill and demanding that Black education be both compulsory and free.

New Shackles for Black Labor

The regime is also gearing up to make some adjustments in its labor policy.

On May 2, Labour Minister Fanie Botha announced that the government had accepted "in principle" the extension of limited trade-union rights to some African workers, who previously had no such rights under law. He presented the move as "a new dispensation in the labor history of South Africa."

The announcement marked the apartheid regime's acceptance of most of the recommendations made the day before by a government-appointed commission under Prof. Nic Wiehahn, which had been studying proposed changes in labor legislation since 1977.

On the surface, the move might appear to be a major concession. But as in the rest of the regime's recent alterations in policy, it is really designed to help maintain control over Black workers.

Despite numerous legal obstacles, continuous police harassment, and the outlawing of most strike action, Black unions were *already being formed*, on the initiative of the workers themselves. This has been especially true since the massive strike wave in Natal in 1973. Although African unions had no legal status, they

1. One rand is equivalent to US\$1.15.

were nevertheless successful in organizing at least 80,000 African workers and in some cases even in forcing concessions from employers.

Just two weeks before Botha's announcement, representatives of twelve Black unions met in Hammanskraal April 14-15 to launch the first Black trade-union federation since the destruction of all the existing ones in the 1960s. Called the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), it claims to represent 45,000 African and Coloured workers.

Most of the existing Black unions, including Fosatu, now have reformist leaderships. But the white ruling class and its government nevertheless fear that these unions could eventually become focal points of militant and massive working-class opposition—unless something is done to bring them under more effective control.

The extension of formal trade-union recognition to some African workers will mean that the unions they belong to will be registered in terms of the regime's industrial legislation. That will extend to them the same kinds of restrictions on the right to strike and negotiate with employers that now affect white, Coloured, and Indian workers. Compulsory arbitration, with the white regime playing a prominent and direct role on the side of the bosses, is a key element of those laws.

Among the "safeguards" that will be imposed on the new unions, according to a report in the May 5 Johannesburg *Star* weekly edition, will be "surveillance of the election or appointment of people in responsible positions, analysis of a trade union's financial affairs by inspector of the Department of Labour, and extension of provisions prohibiting political involvement of trade unions."

Some radical Black unionists reject "legal" recognition precisely because it would entangle their unions in the regime's legislative straitjacket and lead to more direct government interference in their affairs. One told me in December, "We don't care about government recognition. What is important to us is to build strong and independent unions. That will force the employers to deal with us."

The changes outlined by Botha also include other significant limitations. African migrant workers, who comprise more than a third of all African workers, will not be allowed to join unions. Nor will the growing number of Africans who lack permanent residency rights outside the Bantustans.

Legal "job reservation," in which specific positions are set aside by law for whites only, is to be scrapped, but in practice these legal reservations have affected only a few thousand jobs at most. Many thousands more are informally barred to Blacks, and the new legislation will make no effort to open them up.

The most revealing aspects of the Wehahn Commission report are those promis-

ing stepped-up repression against Black unions that refuse to register or that fail to meet the strict registration qualifications. They will not be allowed to negotiate with employers, nor even to organize, restrictions that could force many of them to shut down. In short, the commission proposed the crushing of any unions that conflict with "the ideal of orderly unionism within the law."

It is also certain that militants who attempt to use the recognized Black unions for class-struggle purposes will have to face the full wrath of the security police.

As the authorities see it, firm control over South Africa's Black working class is the most crucial factor in the maintenance of capitalism and white supremacy. The land acts, the pass laws, the Bantustans, the denial of democratic rights, all revolve around this one central issue.

The reason is not hard to see. The country's more than 8 million Black workers are the backbone of the South African economy. They are everywhere: perched on scaffoldings at Johannesburg construction sites, digging drainage ditches in Cape Town, hauling cargo on Durban's docks, harvesting Natal's sugar cane, drilling and breaking up rock in the Witwatersrand gold mines, assembling auto engines in Port Elizabeth.

It is this Black labor that built South Africa and keeps it running.

The Wages of Apartheid

Because Black workers (unlike white workers) are subjected to severe national oppression, the bosses have been able to *superexploit* them, to keep their wages at the barest minimum.

For example, the Volkswagen plant in Uitenhage, near Port Elizabeth, now pays a minimum wage of only R0.86 an hour, which works out to R148.78 a month. According to the Institute for Planning Research of the University of Port Elizabeth, the absolute minimum income to support a family in Uitenhage is R149.02 a month (such estimates, moreover, usually understate a family's real needs).

In 1978, Black miners were estimated to have received average monthly wages of R119 a month, while white miners earned an average of R840 a month, more than seven times as much.

Black women workers receive wages even lower than those of men. In Pretoria, domestic servants earn average cash wages of R36 a month, for working twelve hours a day during the week and somewhat less on weekends. In Pinetown, near Durban, unskilled women laborers earn R30 a month. In the Babelegi industrial area of the BophuthaTswana reserve, women workers are frequently hired for as little as R6.90 a week.

Working conditions for Black employees are abysmal. For farm workers or unskilled laborers in the cities, it can mean hours outside in the blistering summer sun

or bitter winter cold. For factory workers, it can mean an absence of some of the most basic safety precautions.

... Simmer and Jacks, near Germiston, is one of the oldest of South Africa's gold mines. One morning I take the hoist down several hundred feet below the surface to the workings. At that level, it does not yet become hot. But it is very damp, the rocks having been hosed down to eliminate some of the rock dust.

The slanted stope, a blasted-out area providing access to the gold seam, is only about three to four feet high, so cramped that the Black miners can barely sit up. Yet in that position they must wield the heavy and cumbersome drills for boring blasting holes.

The ear-shattering noise of the drilling rips painfully through the tunnels . . .

The International Labor Organization found in late 1978 that the conditions of Black gold miners in South Africa had actually worsened since the previous year. "The gold miners," the ILO reported, "are subjected to almost unbearable conditions of confinement, heat, noise and dust, making for an inevitably high accident rate."

Blacks suffer the most from inflation. According to the Department of Statistics, the inflation rate from October 1977 to October 1978 was 11.3% for the higher income groups (almost all white) and 12.8% for the lower-income groups (mostly Black). The recently imposed general sales tax likewise hit Blacks the hardest.

Unemployment among Black workers is staggering. For Africans alone it now stands at more than 2 million persons, growing at a rate of 10,000 a month. A report issued by the Senbank in early August 1978 concluded that "South Africa will be afflicted with unpleasantly high unemployment rates over the next few years and that the already grim unemployment situation among blacks will become even more serious."

Around the same time, a survey of unemployed Blacks in Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, and Durban, as well as the Lebowa and KwaZulu Bantustans, found that 80% of them had difficulty affording such basic items as food, clothing, and rent. About a third were either totally destitute, or not far from it.

... The train stops for a few minutes in Kraankuil, a small town in the Cape Province, near the border with the Orange Free State. Young Blacks, shoeless, in ragged shorts and tattered shirts, run along the tracks pleading with the passengers for a few coins.

Suddenly there is a commotion. A railway employee has collared a youth of about seven or eight years who had slipped

onto the train and had tried to run off with a donut.

As the train pulls out, the young Black, frightened and crying, is dragged off to the station house . . .

With its fabulous mineral wealth, its developed industrial base, and its productive farms, South Africa is considered to be the "richest" country in Africa. Yet poverty is everywhere.

In Soweto, some 80% of all households live on less than R200 a month, the current Minimum Effective Level, a common poverty indicator.

In the rural areas conditions are even worse. Hunger and disease are prevalent in the Bantustans, and Black agricultural laborers on white-owned farms are forced to live in the most wretched of hovels.

Apartheid's Profiteers

The superexploitation of South Africa's Black work force has made it possible for corporations operating there to rake in relatively high profits. That is the major motivation for the national oppression of Blacks.

The year 1978 was particularly good for some companies. De Beers Consolidated Mines, which is connected to the giant Anglo American Corporation, reported net profits in 1978 of R750.6 million, or 31.8% higher than the year before. Gold Fields of South Africa's net profits in the second half of 1978 jumped by 50% over the profits for the same period the previous year.

Profit rates in mining, manufacturing, banking, and most other sectors in South Africa are consistently higher than in most of the rest of Africa, and are among the highest of any advanced industrialized country. The basic reason, of course, is the particularly low wages that Black workers receive. A study by the South African Institute of Race Relations of a typical large South African company found that if the wages of its Black workers were raised to the bare subsistence level, profits would fall by 8%; if the wages were raised to a more "humane" poverty level, profits would drop by 21.9%.

Clearly, maintenance of an underpaid Black work force is central to the continued prosperity of South African capitalism.

An increasing number of the more important companies and banks benefiting from apartheid are South African: Anglo American, Rembrandt, Barrow Rand, Federale Volksbeleggings, Volkskas. But foreign interests are still prominent, their investments and loans in South Africa playing a crucial role in propping up the whole white supremacist system. Well-known names like Barclays, Ford, IBM, Kellogg, Siemens, Toyota, Volkswagen, Procter and Gamble, Gillette, Singer, and Mobil are visible everywhere.



Farm worker's mud hut in southern Transvaal.

Ernest Harsch—IP/I

Although foreign bankers and businessmen displayed a certain wariness in sinking additional money into South Africa in the immediate aftermath of the 1976 uprisings, they now appear to be regaining some confidence in Botha's ability to protect their investments—at least for the time being.

In mid-November, the South African Treasury raised a direct \$250 million loan from a syndicate of twelve leading banks in six European countries. The *Sunday Times* of Johannesburg reported November 19, "According to top level sources in Pretoria, a spate of firm offers of [other] foreign loans followed the signing" of the loan.

A month later, a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce found that American companies in South Africa planned to increase their capital expenditure by nearly 20%. "In the mining and smelting industry," the December 13 *Johannesburg Rand Daily Mail* reported, "spending is expected to nearly treble. About R50 million will be spent on projects mainly involving uranium and copper mining and recovery.

"In the manufacturing industries, US-owned companies will lay out double that amount—an increase of around 25%."

The total capital expenditure by American companies is expected to hit R240 million in 1979, up from R200 million last year. Direct American investments are about \$1.6 billion, or 16% of all direct foreign investments in South Africa. Another \$2 billion in American loans were outstanding to the South African government or to companies operating in South

Africa, as of 1976.

Virtually all the Blacks I talked to in South Africa were highly critical of the role of foreign firms, especially American ones, in propping up the apartheid regime.

"The trucks used by the police were made in the USA," one former student activist told me. "When reinforcements were flown to Cape Town during the '76 events, they used American planes."

Others stressed the exploitative nature of foreign companies' involvement in the South African economy, despite the "liberal" image that some have tried to adopt. "South African, American, they are all the same," one said. "They pay us as little as they can."

Although it is illegal in South Africa to call for the withdrawal of foreign investments, most made it clear that that was exactly what they wanted.

Referring to American businessmen, one young Black worker told me that the American people should help "get those bloody bastards off our backs."

[Next: *A People Divided, A People Ruled*]

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The 'Weber' Case—A Threat to U.S. Working Class

By Ernest Harsch

"The Weber ruling is an attack on the entire labor movement. *An injury to one is an injury to all.*"

—Machinists Local 685,
San Diego, California

One of the most important cases affecting the labor, civil-rights, and women's movements in the United States went before the Supreme Court March 28.

Officially known as *Brian F. Weber versus Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation and United Steelworkers of America, AFL-CIO*, the case began in 1974 when Weber, a white lab technician at the Kaiser Aluminum plant in Gramercy, Louisiana, filed suit to overturn an affirmative-action plan for Black and women steelworkers negotiated by the union.

Two lower courts have upheld Weber's suit, declaring the Kaiser affirmative-action program illegal. If the Supreme Court, which is expected to issue a ruling before the end of its current session at midyear, also upholds *Weber*, it would severely cripple affirmative-action plans around the United States. Such a setback to the fight for equality for Blacks, *latinos*, and women on the job would give a boost to the ruling class's offensive against the American labor movement and reinforce its attempts to divide and weaken the working class as a whole.

Although Kaiser Aluminum is supposedly a target of the suit in court, Weber boasts that top Kaiser executives are secretly cheering him on.

The specific plan that Weber seeks to outlaw was designed to help overcome the blatant job discrimination at Kaiser Gramercy. In 1973, before the program was introduced, only 5 out of 273 skilled jobs in the plant were held by Black workers—less than 2 percent of the total, while Blacks make up 39 percent of the work force in the area. Moreover, *not one* woman was employed in a skilled craft position.

As part of a contract negotiated by the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), the affirmative-action plan was instituted in 1974 to upgrade job positions for Black and women workers by stipulating that one-half of the places in a new job-training program be reserved for Blacks or women.

While no women were admitted to the training program in the first year of its operation, seven Black workers were, raising the number of Blacks in skilled jobs at

Kaiser Gramercy to 4 percent of the total.

The Myth of 'Reverse Discrimination'

Brian Weber charged in his suit that this modest gain for Blacks constituted illegal "reverse discrimination" against him and other white males, that the affirmative-action program gave skilled jobs to Blacks that whites would otherwise have gotten.

Weber is employing one of the favorite arguments of the ruling class to justify opposition to struggles for *equality* by women and oppressed national minorities in the United States. He and his backers are accusing the victims of committing the crime. They are seeking to cover up the racist and sexist discrimination that remains a fact of life in American society, and that affirmative action programs are designed to combat.

Those who try to use the myth of "reverse discrimination" as a bludgeon against the Black civil-rights movement claim that since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act everyone has been "equal." Therefore, according to this logic, any special measures to help Blacks or *latinos* or women means that they are getting "privileged" treatment and that everyone else—that is, white males—is being discriminated against.

A brief look at the reality of American society today punctures this myth.

The infant mortality rate for Blacks is nearly twice that for whites, a telling indicator of the low quality of health care available in the Black community. Forty percent of Black children live in families whose income is below the official government poverty level, compared to 11 percent of white children.

Black children go to schools that are frequently segregated in practice, and they receive far less money per pupil for education than white children do. A much smaller percentage of Blacks than whites have the opportunity to go on to college, and those who do receive less financial assistance.

According to official Labor Department figures for unemployment during the third quarter of 1978, 8.5% of Black men twenty years of age or older were out of work, compared to 3.6% for white males; 10.6% of Black women of the same age category were unemployed, compared to 5.4% for white women; and 34.8% of Black youths of both sexes aged between sixteen and nineteen were jobless, compared to 13.7% for white youths.

For those who get jobs, discrimination is just as rampant. Black and *latino* workers are generally relegated to the hardest, dirtiest, and lowest-paying jobs. Women find it difficult to get and stay in jobs that are not considered traditional "women's jobs." They are usually placed in a different job category and paid less than men even if they are doing the same work.

The Labor Department figures for average weekly earnings of full-time workers in May 1978 bear this out:

White men	\$279
Black men	213
Hispanic men	201
White women	167
Black women	156
Hispanic women	141

These low wages for Blacks, *latinos*, and women exist for one fundamental reason: they're profitable. The employer class uses sex and race oppression to ensure the superexploitation of those sectors of the working class, to extract even more surplus value from their labor than it does from white male workers.

The lower wages paid to oppressed nationalities and women are in turn used by the bosses as a club against the entire working class to drag down *everyone's* wages, including those of white males. All wage structures are built from the bottom up, not the top down.

At the same time, the employers seek to foster racism and sexism among workers as a method of divide-and-rule. By setting white worker against Black worker, male against female, they divide and weaken the entire labor movement. These race and sex cleavages hamper the construction of strong unions and weaken the existing ones, preventing them from effectively defending *any* of their members from the ruling class's assault on their standard of living.

Recognizing this reality, a fact sheet on the *Weber* case published by Machinists Local 685 in San Diego pointed out that "the companies profit from keeping workers divided and thereby driving down wages and working conditions for all. They are the only ones who stand to gain by pushing Blacks, women, and Chicanos down even further."

The situation in the American South shows how useful race and sex discrimination are in the hands of the capitalists. Although conditions are now changing dramatically, in the South, racism against Blacks was historically the most virulent

and extreme. In the past, this was an important weapon used by the employers to prevent union organization. In the South, the wages of all workers—including the “privileged” whites—are the lowest in the country.

Why Affirmative Action?

The fight for affirmative action arose as a response to race and sex discrimination, past and present, in the United States. It is a direct product of the changes in consciousness produced by the mass struggles of the Black civil-rights movement and the subsequent rise of the women's liberation movement.

The modest gains that they have won so far have been the result of determined struggles beginning with the large-scale incorporation of Blacks into industry in World War II.

It took the threat by Blacks of a mass march on Washington for jobs during the Second World War to force the Roosevelt administration to urge an end to discriminatory hiring practices in the military industries.

It took the civil-rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s—the large demonstrations in the South, the sit-ins, the freedom rides—to force passage in 1964 of the Civil Rights Act. It took struggles by Black and white students to compel previously segregated universities to implement open admissions policies and establish special study programs. It took long and concerted struggles by Black communities in the North to even begin the process of desegregating public schools.

It took the women's liberation movement that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s to win important gains in the areas of abortion rights and affirmative action—endangered though they are today. It will take more actions—like the July 9, 1978, march of 100,000 in Washington—to win passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. constitution.

The winning of simple *de jure* “equality,” however, is only a beginning, important as it is.

First of all, the legacy of past discrimination prevents women, Blacks, and *latinos* from actually having equal opportunities. Without adequate education, it is difficult to get more skilled jobs. Without higher incomes, it is impossible for many Black and *latino* families to be able to afford the privilege of sending their children on to college, where they are confronted with high tuition fees.

Secondly, despite what the ruling class's own laws state, discrimination is still the reality in all spheres of life. Racism and sexism are indispensable to the survival of American capitalism. Only in face of massive growing opposition by weighty social forces will the employers, the government, the university authorities, and others alter their discriminatory policies.

Against this background, oppressed nationalities and women realized that special measures were required to help them overcome the handicaps they continued to be shackled with and gain equality. They demanded “affirmative action”—special preferential programs—to ensure that they were hired for previously segregated or all-male jobs, received training for more skilled positions, or were admitted to universities and educational programs previously closed to them in practice if not by law.

They also realized that they would not be able to achieve their demands by relying on the promises or “voluntary” measures of the authorities. Compliance with affirmative-action programs would have to be assured through legal sanction and by laying down specific goals—quotas—against which progress toward ending discrimination could be measured.

Under the pressure of these demands for affirmative action (which often took the

form of legal suits against discriminatory practices by schools or companies and sometimes unions), the first real affirmative-action programs were instituted in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Universities were forced to reserve a certain number of openings for Black students and others from oppressed national minorities, especially in those departments that had been almost exclusively white, such as medicine and law.

Similar gains were made against discrimination on the job. One significant victory came in early 1973, when the communications giant AT&T was found guilty of discriminating against women and minority workers. It was forced to provide back pay to those workers who had been discriminated against; raise wages for women, Blacks, and *latinos*; and begin an affirmative-action program that was to guarantee a certain percentage of skilled jobs to women.

About a year later, the Steelworkers union negotiated affirmative-action agreements covering nearly a million USWA members, the most extensive in any industry thus far. The program at Kaiser Grangercy was part of that.

Coal mining is another area where blows have been struck against discriminatory hiring practices. Before 1973, there were virtually no women coal miners. Women workers, supported by such groups as the National Organization for Women, filed suit against a number of mining companies.

They won a court ruling against the Consolidated Coal Company of Tennessee in December 1978. As a result of this victory, an affirmative-action plan was instituted compelling the company to hire one woman for every four men hired, until women reach 32.8 percent of the work force.

Rather than face similar suits, other companies had “voluntarily” begun hiring women as miners. By 1978, the number of women in the coal mines had risen to more than 2,000.

These affirmative-action programs, however, have so far made only a small dent in the huge discriminatory barriers in education and employment. The percentage of women and Blacks in skilled jobs has risen by just a few points, at best.

The Stakes in 'Weber'

Despite the limited nature of these affirmative-action programs, the ruling class fears the gains that women and oppressed national minorities have already been able to wrest from them. It fears that the existing programs could serve as springboards for further struggles and more extensive gains. It fears the unifying and radicalizing influence that affirmative action is having on the working class.

For these reasons, it launched a concerted offensive against affirmative action



WEBER: Cheered on by bosses.

almost as soon as the first programs were implemented. Since the mid-1970s, literally hundreds of "reverse discrimination" suits have been filed.

Before *Weber*, the most important of these assaults was the *Bakke* case. In June 1978, the Supreme Court ruled that Allan Bakke, a white engineer, had suffered "reverse discrimination" because he had failed to gain admittance to the University of California at Davis medical school. The court declared the school's affirmative-action plan, which had set aside 16 out of 100 places for Black and Chicano students, unconstitutional.

In its decision, the Supreme Court, mindful of the pro-affirmative-action demonstrations that had taken place around the United States, took care not to explicitly reject the concept of affirmative action itself. Instead, it focused its attacks on the only real way to ensure implementation of affirmative-action plans: fixed numerical or percentage quotas that schools, employers, and the government must comply with.

Liberal capitalist politicians and a wing of the trade-union bureaucracy have taken a similar approach. They are unwilling to be seen as direct and open opponents of affirmative action. They prefer instead to try to render it ineffective through the outlawing of quotas.

Because of the Supreme Court's superficial nod toward affirmative action in the abstract, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the oldest and largest Black civil-rights group in the United States, did not initially appreciate the extent of the threat that the *Bakke* decision posed. It tried to portray the Supreme Court ruling as a victory for Blacks and women. But it soon recognized how serious it really was.

Noting the effect of the *Bakke* ruling on affirmative-action programs around the country in just six months, NAACP Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks stated in January that *Bakke* has had a "far more chilling impact than we thought it would have." Many programs, he said, had been "tampered with" or "uprooted."

These attacks against affirmative action are part of the overall offensive by the capitalists to roll back the expectations of women and the oppressed national minorities in the U.S. and soften up the working class as a whole.

The offensive has taken many forms: racist opposition to school busing and desegregation programs, reactionary restrictions on women's right to abortion, efforts to stall passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, attempts to undercut antiwar sentiment among American workers in preparation for new war drives, the imposition of wage guidelines, propaganda campaigns (such as the "energy crisis") to try to convince workers to shoulder the burden of inflation, drives to weaken the unions through strikebreaking injunctions and

open-shop "right to work" laws, and a generalized bid to drive down workers' living standards.

The *Weber* case is one of the key facets of this offensive.

If successful, it would scrap not only the affirmative-action program at Kaiser Gramercy, but immediately threaten the other programs negotiated by the USWA, which cover nearly a million workers. Since the program is part of the union contract, its overturn by the courts would mark a further infringement upon union bargaining rights.

Other affirmative-action programs, in employment, in education, and in other areas, would be seriously endangered. If the Supreme Court upholds *Weber*, it will be much more difficult to struggle for new affirmative-action programs.

The fight against *Weber* is thus a central part of the fight by the working class and its allies against the entire ruling-class offensive.

The NAACP, as virtually all Black organizations, and the National Organization for Women have both taken strong stands against *Weber*.

But especially significant has been the extent of opposition to *Weber* from the organized labor movement. This is one of the clearest indications of the changing consciousness and growing combativity of the American working class today. Among the unions that have gone on record against *Weber* are the United Auto Workers; United Mine Workers; United Farm Workers; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Electrical Workers; International Union of Electrical Workers; National Education Association; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; National Union of Hospital Employees; and International Woodworkers.

Even the conservative leadership of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which previously opposed affirmative action, was forced to come out against *Weber* (although the AFL-CIO leadership still opposes the use of quotas to enforce programs).

Rallies, meetings, and other actions against *Weber*, many with significant union participation, have been held in a number of cities around the country. Dozens of union locals have discussed and passed resolutions against *Weber*.

In Gary, Indiana, an important steel center, more than 500 persons packed a meeting hall in March. USWA District 31 Director James Balanoff told the audience of mostly Black steelworkers, "Our union has both the moral and legal responsibility to represent the interests of all workers. Our union is only as good as the services and protection it can provide the most defenseless member. Where discrimination exists, sooner or later it will affect us all."

The first USWA Civil Rights Confer-

ence, held in Pittsburgh March 27-29, also focused on the *Weber* case. More than two-thirds of the 1,000 delegates at the conference were Black, and several hundred of them were women, reflecting the increasingly active role that Black and women steelworkers are playing in the union.

Speakers pointed to the threat posed by the *Weber* suit, and also showed how the fight for affirmative action is linked to other labor issues, such as the efforts by steelworkers to organize a USWA local at the Newport News, Virginia, shipyards. "Civil rights and organizing go hand in hand," USWA organizing department director Elmer Chaddock told the delegates.

A couple weeks earlier, unionists at an anti-*Weber* rally in New Orleans stressed the need for more independent mass actions in defense of affirmative action. Ed Shanklin of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters told the rally, "Before this thing is over, we're going to have to do like we used to do and hit the streets again."

Rev. Isidore Booker, a leader of the New Orleans Committee to Overturn the *Weber* Decision and Defend Affirmative Action and head of the USWA Local 13000 Civil Rights Committee, told the same rally, "The object here is to unite working-class people. Let's let them hear it loud and clear: Overturn the *Weber* decision!"

A Working-Class Weapon

Some groups on the American left oppose affirmative action, claiming that it divides the working class. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, failure by the labor movement to fight for the special needs of women, Black, and *latino* workers would only play into the hands of the ruling class as it tries to perpetuate its divide-and-rule policies.

Affirmative action is an essential tool for building working-class solidarity. Struggles in defense of the most oppressed strata of workers actually strengthen the entire class. They break down the racist and sexist prejudices that impede workers' unity. They educate the working class to think in broad social terms. They help build the unions by winning greater confidence and participation from women and the oppressed national minorities.

One example of how affirmative-action struggles can strengthen the labor movement was provided by the Steelworkers union itself. Originally, the USWA bureaucracy was opposed to affirmative action. But it was forced to change its stance after persistent protests by Black steelworkers against job discrimination. This won the union greater confidence from Black and women workers.

Sam Thomas, Jr., a young Black member of the USWA's grievance committee at Kaiser Gramercy, said that the affirmative-action program there "gave Blacks more faith in the union. They felt they were being represented better by the

union both locally and nationally."

The fight for affirmative-action provides a natural framework for collaboration between the organized labor movement and other groups working to defend the rights of Blacks, *latinos*, and women. Likewise, winning labor to fight in defense of the most oppressed sectors of society helps orient organizations like the NAACP and NOW toward a more proletarian perspective.

Despite what Weber and other opponents of affirmative action claim, special programs to benefit the victims of discriminatory employment practices take nothing away from white male workers.

First of all, stronger unions and closer unity among the various strata of the working class help *all* workers fight for higher wages and better working conditions.

Secondly, white male workers have also benefited directly from affirmative-action programs. The program at Kaiser Gramercy, for instance, for the first time made it possible for unskilled white male workers in the plant—including Weber himself—to advance to higher-paid positions, which had previously been filled by outside hiring. When new admissions to

the training program were suspended in 1976 after Weber won a lower court ruling, these workers also suffered.

Struggles for affirmative action also serve to educate workers and raise their social and political consciousness. They lead to an increase in self-confidence among Blacks, *latinos*, and women and help them see more concretely the relationship between class exploitation and sex and race discrimination. Likewise they have a profound impact on the outlook of white male workers—especially younger ones—helping them to catch up to the greater radicalization among Black workers that has been one of the distinguishing features of American political life for the last quarter century.

By focusing attention on some of the most important questions in the United States—the racist and sexist nature of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie's divide-and-rule tactics, the role of the government in upholding discrimination—affirmative-action struggles teach workers to think in broader social and political terms.

Affirmative action, finally, is a crucial component of the fight to transform the unions into instruments of revolutionary struggle.

It does this in part by strengthening working-class solidarity and by orienting the unions toward broad political questions. It tends to weaken the positions of the class-collaborationist union bureaucracies, which base themselves on the most privileged strata of the working class. It aids the fight to democratize the unions. Especially important, it draws the most militant fighters into active leadership roles and begins to assemble those forces capable of leading the American workers forward.

The importance of affirmative-action struggles in the United States is a reflection of the impact of both the women's and Black liberation movements, but especially of the vanguard role of the Black struggle. As a result, American workers have learned vital lessons about the basis on which class solidarity is forged.

On this question of affirmative action, the American working class is more advanced than workers in any other country. Though they still have many other things to learn, this one particular acquisition helps arm them more effectively for the even bigger class battles that are already in sight. □

A Deceptive Calm

Tunisia One Year After Workers Upsurge

By Nabil Said

[On January 26, 1978, the Bourguiba government crushed a general strike that had been launched the day before (see *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 13, 1978, p. 164). In the article we are publishing below, Nabil Said brings us up to date on the situation in Tunisia one year after the massacre.]

* * *

TUNIS—It has escaped no one that January 26 was a conspiracy, one that was planned and carried out by the government against the workers and the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers), with the active support of imperialism. The massive repression aimed at the working class, and the elimination of the UGTT leadership, was intended to achieve social peace, to make it possible to implement an austerity plan, and to pave the way for the post-Bourguiba era. The setting of these goals came in a context characterized by an unstable situation in the region and a persistent economic crisis. What steps have been taken by the bourgeoisie to attain these objectives, and to what degree have they succeeded? How have the

workers responded? What are the major tasks of revolutionists in the present situation?

Instability in the Region

To begin with, the Tunisian regime, even if it is geographically distant, has felt the shock waves from the Iranian revolution. This revolution has been a pointed reminder that no regime can endure by repression alone, and that one cannot rule against the will of an entire people with impunity. It has given renewed vigor to the Movement of Muslim Brotherhood, which is rooted in the deep social crisis, and seeks to appear, in the image of the powerful Shi'ite movement, as a solution to that crisis and as a credible alternative. This movement is beginning to look like a force that might threaten the regime—hence the outcry by Sayah, leader of the sole legal party, against "forces seeking to destabilize the regime under the cover of Islam."

In terms of the situation in the Maghreb, Boumediene's death has ushered in a political crisis that has not been settled by the appointment of Colonel Chadli.

Finally, the Libyan regime's course in recent years, both at home and in the Arab world, is a source of worry for the Tunisian regime. The Libyan regime has never given up its project of a fusion between Tunisia and Libya, and is trying to relaunch it by all available means (economic pressure, support to Arab nationalist opposition groups in Tunisia, hijackings of aircraft, etc.).

Barely a few months after Tunisian Premier Hedi Nour's visit to Libya in June 1979, relations between the two regimes again became strained. A major source of friction was the Camp David accords, which the Tunisian government supported and the Libyan government condemned as the height of betrayal of the Arab cause. Moreover, the very evolution of the Libyan regime, marked by the proliferation of the People's Committees and the measures announced by Colonel Qaddafi on September 1, 1978, ("Land to the tiller, houses to those who live in them, factories to those who work in them") worries the Tunisian bourgeoisie. Such measures, despite their demagogic charac-

ter, could have an impact on the Tunisian masses.

These elements as a whole—growing instability in the Middle East as a result of the Iranian revolution; continuing instability in the Maghreb; the Libyan regime's decidedly anti-American stance—mean that the role of the Tunisian regime, which has been stable up to now, has become relatively more important. To isolate the Libyan regime, stabilize the Maghreb (while settling the Sahara issue and bringing Algeria tightly into its orbit), and counteract the effect that the Iranian revolution may have on the region's masses, imperialism needs a stable regime in Tunisia. It firmly supports the Tunisian regime, economically, politically, and militarily, and is seeking to maintain it more or less in its present form.

A Persistent Economic Crisis

Tunisia, a country on capitalism's periphery, continues to feel the effects of the generalized crisis of the world capitalist system which began in 1973 and is far from over.

We will try to draw a concise balance sheet of the economic situation and compare it to the projections of the Fifth Plan, whose first year of implementation was 1977. Statistical data for 1978 will not be available for several months. We should recall that the Fifth Plan has three objectives: a 7.5% annual rate of growth; self-sufficiency in food production; and full employment.

The Tunisian economy's growth for 1977 was estimated at 4.1% in a report by the Tunisian Central Bank (BCT), published in August 1978. However, in his speech introducing the budget to the National Assembly in November 1978, Nourira put forward a much lower figure—1.1%.

Nourira has announced that the growth rate reached 8.9% in 1978, although the year was not yet over at the time of his speech, and he did not have the figures for the first three quarters. Thus, the Fifth Plan's objectives for 1977 were far from met, and we can bet that the 1978 figures, put forward as a counterbalance to the catastrophic 1977 statistics, will also be revised downward when all the statistics are available.

In terms of jobs, the additional demand for employment rose to 55,700 in 1977, with women comprising 20%. The premier himself, in his speech to the National Assembly, declared that "the number of jobs created in 1979 will be lower than the additional demand, hence the projected deficit of 12,000 . . . but it should be possible to reabsorb this unemployment through employment abroad without too much difficulty."

A worsening of current unemployment (which is already very high) is thus officially and cynically expected, especially since "employment abroad" is experiencing the same difficulties. In the course of

1977, the BCT reports 27,000 workers emigrated to Libya compared to 1,500 to other countries, but the flow of emigration to Libya has slowed and may even stop.

For 1977, the BCT report estimated the number of unemployed at 106,000, and noted that: "the increased demand is ascribable not only to the fact that persons seeking work for the first time are entering the market. It can also be explained by the high number of persons seeking new jobs after having lost their jobs in branches of industry undergoing a slowdown, such as agriculture and textiles." It continued: "Taking into account younger job seekers, whose numbers are continuing to grow mainly as a result of school dismissals, the total number of persons in search of a job will be much higher."

Concerning self-sufficiency in food production, the plan's third objective, the failure is just as glaring. In 1977, the production of grain (the staple food in Tunisia) was only 7.5 million tons, a 35% drop from 1976. The government was forced to import an equivalent amount for nearly 40 million dinars (1 dinar=US\$2.50). In 1978, production increased to 9 million tons, but the important projections are the same as for 1977.

Moreover, as a result of deteriorating terms of trade, 1977 exports of phosphates increased by 6.1% in volume but decreased by 19.9% in value. As for oil, in the first quarter of 1978, revenues showed a drop of 4.5% over the same period in 1977, even though the quantity exported remained constant.

The balance-of-trade deficit continues to worsen. Although exports covered 80% of imports in 1974, they covered only 51.7% in 1977, and 48.1% for the first six months of 1978 (BCT report and *Bulletin Conjoncture*).

As far as foreign investments in Tunisia are concerned, the official statistics project that the rate of foreign investments would go from 33% of total investment in 1978 to 35.8% in 1979, which the Fifth Plan did not foresee (355 million dinars of total investment). And debt service in 1979 will represent 12.7% of export revenues, as compared with 11.4% in 1978 (Nourira's speech to the National Assembly).

Finally, a series of big projects contained in the Fifth Plan have simply been abandoned. These include expansion of the Bizerte refinery, the El Fouledh plant, plans for a second sugar mill, the SEPA II project for manufacturing nitrate fertilizers, and development of the natural-gas reserves at Miskar, and the oil reserves at Isis.

Thus, from the economic standpoint, the government's policy is a total failure.

The Bourgeoisie's Policy

After the crackdown on January 26, 1978, the regime's was conditioned by its desire to restabilize the political situation and patch up its instruments of rule. After

the phase of mass repression in January and February 1978, which enabled it to crush the UGTT, it turned to less massive, more selective forms of repression, aimed at specific sectors and geared to the degree of mobilization of the workers and masses.

After the massacres, arrests, torture, and firings, repression against the workers remained a constant feature of the regime's policy. A vast system of surveillance and repression against the working class was carefully prepared and painstakingly implemented in the factories. The institution of "plant security," the creation of Destour Socialist Party (PSD) cells and puppet trade-union locals whose purpose is to spy on the workers and prevent any mobilizations, testify that daily repression is still going on, even if it is less dramatic than in the immediate aftermath of January 26.

Besides the workers, the youth are a particular target of the repression. The civilian service law was not the kind that is hastily passed and soon forgotten. To the contrary, thousands of young unemployed are rotting in forced-labor camps. Police raids and brutality against the youth remain nearly a daily occurrence. Repression against the student movement is continuing—the campuses are still being patrolled, and the Public Order Brigades intervene when they see fit, as was recently the case following the revolutionary victory in Iran.

The regime tolerated some expression of bourgeois opposition and even trade-union opposition beginning in March 1978, in order to improve its tarnished image. But repression came crashing down again when mobilizations for the release of imprisoned trade unionists reached a certain threshold. Prosecutions of trade unionists are continuing. The bourgeois opposition and its mouthpieces have also been hit.

The regime (especially the Sayah clique) has been trying since January 26 to put the PSD back in the saddle. This party has lost the following it had in the 1960s, partly as a result of the development of the UGTT.

Major resources have been mobilized to implant cells of the PSD in all sectors (factories, schools, regions), to distribute membership cards free of charge, and to compel citizens to turn to the party to solve the daily problems of existence. Officially, 200,000 new members have been announced since January 26.

At the same time, the regime is trying to establish a social base. The policy favoring small businessmen that Nourira announced to the National Assembly is an example of this. But nothing has yet materialized in this area, particularly in terms of tax policy, and from the economic standpoint the margin of maneuver is extremely narrow, as we have seen. It would be surprising if small businesses were able to develop in the context of an economic crisis.

From a more political standpoint, we

should note the campaign being led by the PSD, particularly by the Noura grouping, to win over liberal intellectuals (college teachers, lawyers, etc.), to include them in the preparations for the next congress and in the ruling circles. But there, too, Noura's espousal of democratic principles, which is aimed at attracting certain intellectuals, is running up against the reality of the repression that he seeks to cover over.

After having housebroken the UGTT and kept the bourgeois opposition on the periphery, the ruling team is trying to take back the political initiative with the methods available to it.

The congress will be the framework in which the factional struggle developing within the regime will be settled. Two tendencies have emerged—one led by Noura and one by Sayah. To be noted is the fact that while they may diverge on secondary questions they were unanimous in carrying out the January 26 massacre and agree on all essentials.

The Noura grouping appears to favor limited expression for the bourgeois opposition. "We are not afraid of the Mestirites in the elections, we are a strong party," say his supporters (Mestiri is the leader of the bourgeois opposition political faction known as the "socialist democrats.") It reportedly also favors replacing Tijani Abid in the leadership of the UGTT with someone less compromised, so as to present a better trade-union façade both in the eyes of the workers and internationally. This does not mean that Noura intends to allow the UGTT to regain its strength of yesteryear. His grouping reflects the ambitions of the big-business bourgeoisie, which is friendly to the West and is concentrated especially in the capital.

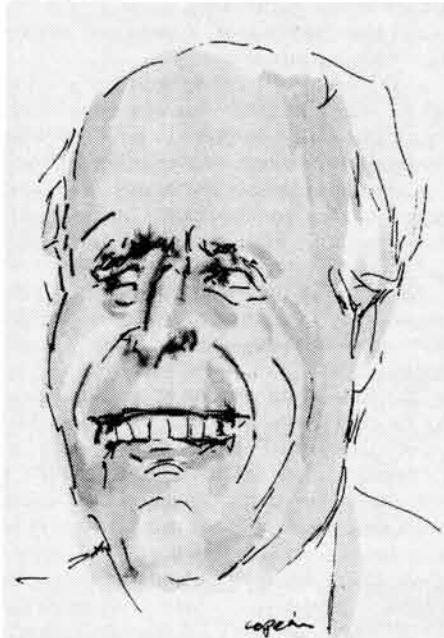
The Sayah group hopes to establish bourgeois political domination and ensure continuation of the regime by using the PSD's old recipes (banning of all demonstrations by the opposition, use of repressive forces, etc.). It reflects the ambitions of the parasitic bourgeois layers tied to the party and state apparatus, concentrated mainly in the interior.

Noura has the support of French and U.S. imperialism and of big business. It has a coherent economic program to which no bourgeois faction can offer an alternative (not even the Mestirites). The constitution provides that in case of the death of the president, he is to be succeeded by the premier. Noura is thus the crown prince.

Sayah has the support of the party, which is particularly important, and of Bourguiba. The most likely outcome of the clique warfare, as long as Bourguiba is still around, is the continuation of the present relationship of forces. Neither group is now in a position to eliminate the other once and for all.

Each of the two tendencies has its place inside the regime. Despite the blows they

aim at one another, elimination of either would spell a weakening of the regime. The ouster of Sayah would mean a weakening of the party apparatus. The elimination of



PRESIDENT-FOR-LIFE BOURGUIBA

Noura would irritate the imperialists and big business. The PSD congress can do no more than indicate the relative stalemate between the two groupings.

The Working Class and Its Prospects for Struggle

January 26 was unquestionably a major defeat for the workers. The UGTT, which was the vehicle for the working-class radicalization, has collapsed like a house of cards under the blows of repression. Demobilization and resignation have affected hundreds of thousands of workers who found themselves overnight without any means of defense. Part of the gains wrung from the government and bosses through the struggles of recent years have been nullified.

But while there has been a defeat, the working class has not been crushed. The "Trade-Union Resistance," despite its weaknesses and limitations, is a reality. It was expressed in several ways throughout 1978 (coordination among the resisting trade unions and in public statements, mobilizations against the trials, petitions signed by thousands of workers, strikes, etc.). Unfortunately, the Trade-Union Resistance was centered entirely around slogans of solidarity with the imprisoned trade unionists and repudiation of the UGTT puppet leadership. They neglected to connect these demands up closely with defense of the workers' immediate interests, which were gravely threatened by the bosses' offensive.

January 26 was not a magic wand that eliminated the economic, social, and politi-

cal conditions that gave rise to the upsurge of struggles. Quite the contrary. The working class is still there, with its potential for struggle; the economic crisis is still just as grave; and the regime's political crisis, while less acute, has nonetheless not disappeared.

January 26 did not mark the beginning of a long-term lull in mass struggles, but rather a short interlude that will be followed by a resumption of struggles. The latest news reaching us from the factories indicates that the downturn is about to end, and that we can expect a partial resumption of struggles (the strike at the Jerissa mine and the tense atmosphere and agitation in several plants in the working-class suburbs of Tunis are two examples).

Since January 26, the regime's social policy can be summed up in one word—*austerity*. The workers are faced with a dizzying price rise and are being denied any wage increase. Meanwhile, the capitalists are amassing gigantic profits, the company chairmen continue to bestow all kinds of bonuses on themselves, and the yes-men in the National Assembly have just voted themselves an increase in "benefits," now twelve times the minimum wage.

With this perspective, the regime has decided to refuse to meet any working-class demands, however minimal. The only scheduled increases are in the Social Pact, which gives official sanction to the reduction of the workers' standard of living. During the meeting between the PSD's Political Bureau and the "national organizations," Noura came out clearly opposed to any revision of Article 13 of the Social Pact, which stipulates that there can be no revision of contracts that entails any additional expenses for the companies.

In this context, it is clear what the function of the UGTT's puppet leadership is. There can be no question of resurrecting the UGTT, under Tijani Abid, as it was before the crisis, when, through the leverage of pressure and discussions with the bosses and the government, it managed to win satisfaction of certain demands. Discussion and dialogue between the "social partners" are over. No concessions will be made to the workers. Tijani Abid's UGTT has been assigned to carry out the regime's social policy, which prescribes austerity for the working class.

In the overall political framework we have outlined, two big battles are looming. On the one hand, the struggle against austerity, and the relaunching of mass actions, which is fundamental today, and which the trade-union vanguard should focus its efforts and energies on. On the other hand, the struggle for democratic rights, which can and should become particularly broad around the time of the October 1979 elections.

The Trade-Union Resistance has been incapable of offering the workers a per-

spective of struggle. It has ignored demands dealing with defense of the workers' immediate interests. Some have even gone so far as to find a theoretical justification for this, saying that "as long as the UGTT leadership is in prison, we will freeze our demands and concentrate exclusively on winning their release."

Such practices are leading the trade-union vanguard into isolation. One cannot ask workers who are facing daily capitalist exploitation to suspend their demands for any reason whatsoever. The preponderance of unions of intellectuals in the Trade-Union Resistance explains these limitations to a certain extent. But since October 1978, broader and broader sectors of the Trade Union Resistance have acknowledged the urgency of action around immediate demands.

In the present situation, the battle for the relaunching of mass action and the resumption of struggles is of paramount importance. On its success or failure depends the evolution of the relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class.

The two red-letter dates that the bourgeoisie has set for 1979—the PSD congress and the legislative "elections"—fall within the framework of its policy of restabilization and preparations for the post-Bourguiba era. The PSD congress must both give the illusion of popular support and establish a new relationship of forces between the cliques. This operation is to be topped off by the legislative "elections," designed to make it possible to assert that 99% of Tunisians support the PSD's policy.

Nevertheless, the "elections" will be an opportunity to run a broad campaign against the electoral farce and for democratic rights. That is the second big battle that must be waged in 1979.

In 1974, the regime appointed Bourguiba president for life and proceeded to a phony election without any significant reaction from the workers, students, or democratic intellectuals.

Since that time, things have changed. Mobilizations and struggles for democratic rights have developed considerably. The student movement was the first to initiate mass struggles around this issue. The workers movement followed in its footsteps beginning in 1977. Cracks appeared within the regime itself. A bourgeois tendency (Mestiri) is now lodged among the opposition and making demagogic statements on the issue. Democratic freedoms have become a demand of broad layers, whereas a few years ago only the campuses were mobilizing around them.

In a nutshell, the conditions exist for developing a broad campaign around the following issues:

- Amnesty for all political prisoners and for all trade unionists (special mention must be made of those imprisoned in 1968 who, after eleven years in prison, still face a triple wall of silence—from the regime

that imprisoned them, the Mestirites who directly participated in repressing them, and from their comrades of *El Amal Ettounsi* [the Tunisian Worker], who excluded them from their group and no longer acknowledge them).

- Total freedom of expression, assembly, and organization.

- Trade-union freedom and recognition of the right to strike without any limits. The right of the workers to have an independent trade-union organization.

- Abolition of all repressive laws and dissolution of the repressive bodies (DST, BOP, militias, State Security Court, etc.).

- Free election of a Constituent Assembly, with all parties having the right to run candidates and to have access to the official media (newspapers, television, and radio).

The student movement was conspicuous by its absence in the course of the last two years. Weakened by internal contradictions and led by ultrasectarian groups, it was incapable throughout 1977 of intervening politically alongside the workers to win the objective it has been fighting for since 1972—namely, a genuinely representative, democratic, and independent UGTT. After January 26, the same misunderstanding of political tasks and the same sectarian practices continued.

The student leadership recently proved unable to take advantage of the demagogic policy of the new minister of higher education in regard to student representation, the UGET (General Union of Tunisian Students), and the patrols. Instead of using this opening to once again put forward the main demands of the student movement—namely, departure of the patrols, reinstatement of the expelled students, an independent UGET, the fight against restricted admissions—and mobilizing tens of thousands around these demands, the student leadership was satisfied with saying that these slogans were "demagogy" and that "We are not concerned with them."

The Maoist groups that have led the student movement since 1976 bear a historic responsibility for its paralysis.

But the student movement is not dead. Its potential is still great. It can rise from its ashes faster than is believed and line up its forces with the workers in the struggle against the bourgeois regime.

The Muslim Brotherhood's growing influence among the youth as a whole, owing in part to the Iranian revolution, is a phenomenon that revolutionists must analyze in depth. What is involved is something relatively new that cannot be reduced to the usual perfunctory analyses—"a fascist movement manipulated by the regime." A discussion on the Brotherhood is necessary to provide some answers to the questions it raises, and work out a tactic for struggling against it.

The Iranian revolutionary process, the workers' struggle for their demands, the

fight for democratic rights, the struggle against women's exploitation and oppression are among the clarifying issues that can arm revolutionists for their confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The regime's austerity policy, one of the effects of which is unemployment and the relegation of women to the home, on the one hand, and the growth of Muslim fundamentalism on the other, raise the problem of struggling against women's oppression in a sharper way than before.

While some struggles were carried out prior to January 26, giving rise to an embryonic trade-union women's current (the strike by women workers at El Athir, conferences on women's on-the-job training, and so on), the fact remains that Tunisian working women have not yet acquired their own experience in struggle. Their development has been blocked by the blow that the working class suffered on January 26.

Among the student youth, on the other hand, conditions seem to favor the blossoming of an independent women's movement. Testifying to this, for example, was the way people flocked to the lectures given by Nawal Saadoui (an Egyptian feminist) in February. The birth of an independent women's movement would be an event of great significance. Revolutionary activists must be an integral part of this movement, to press for linking it up with the workers' struggles, and to get the trade unions to take responsibility for raising the problems and demands of working women.

The brutality of the crackdown on January 26 and the relative stabilization afterward should not fool anyone. The bourgeois regime has lost the domination it managed to establish in the wake of independence. It no longer enjoys any popular support. Only repression, and the lack of a socialist alternative are holding it up.

It is to building a socialist alternative to the regime that we must apply ourselves. Such an alternative will not be built in an ivory tower, but through the day-to-day struggles of workers, women, students, and peasants. The Iranian masses have shown us the way forward. The struggles that will be forthcoming in Tunisia in 1979 will be a step in this direction.

March 1979

Tip of the Iceberg

A U.S. Energy Department investigation of seven large oil companies, made public May 2, confirmed what everyone who drives an automobile already knows. They are being robbed blind.

Even this cautious peek at the books revealed that in the last six years Texaco, Gulf, Standard of California, Atlantic Richfield, Standard of Indiana, Standard of Ohio, and Marathon overcharged customers a total of \$1.7 billion—about \$6 million a week.