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**Thousands Join Offensive
Against Somoza Dictatorship**

IRAN
**Worldwide
Outcry
Over Arrests
of Oil Workers,
Trotskyists**

**CZECHO-
SLOVAKIA**
**Charter 77
Activist
Petr Uhl,
Nine Others,
Arrested**

PERU
**Demand
Charges
Against
Hugo Blanco
Be Dropped!**

Drop the Charges Against Hugo Blanco!

By Fred Murphy

Peruvian Trotskyist leader and Constituent Assembly deputy Hugo Blanco has appealed for an international defense effort to counter a growing wave of repression against workers and peasants and leaders of the workers movement in Peru.

Blanco himself is a principal target of the military dictatorship's attacks. On June 14, the regime filed a lengthy list of criminal charges against Blanco with the Executive Committee of the Constituent Assembly. These include "wrecking and sabotaging production," "attacks on public security and public tranquility," "labor agitation," "attacks against the state," and "sabotaging the agrarian reform." Blanco is alleged to have committed these acts in the course of his frequent travels around Peru between August 1978 and May 1979.

In fact, all of Blanco's activities have been carried out in his capacity as a deputy in the Constituent Assembly (to which he was elected in June 1978 with the third-highest vote in the country), and in particular in connection with his role as a member of the Assembly's Human Rights and Agrarian commissions. So the military is actually charging Blanco—and by implication all the workers deputies in the Assembly—with fulfilling the tasks the Peruvian workers and peasants elected him to carry out.

The regime's move is thus a clear attempt to intimidate the Peruvian masses and their organizations, which have just begun to recover from the blows dealt them in late 1978 and early 1979. By bringing charges against Blanco, the military hopes to silence one of the mass movement's most representative, articulate, and uncompromising leaders.

Blanco's arrest on June 8 in the Arequipa airport was ordered by Gen. Guillermo Schrott Carlin, commander of the Third Military Zone. The Trotskyist leader was transported under guard to the State Security prison in Lima, held there several hours, and then brought before the Executive Committee of the Constituent Assembly, which ordered his conditional release.

As a Constituent Assembly deputy, Blanco is supposed to be immune from prosecution unless the Assembly votes to lift that immunity. (A victory was won in a similar case June 12 when the Assembly refused to allow prosecution of Trotskyist deputy and miners leader Hernán Cuentas.)

The dictatorship stalled until June 14 before officially filing its charges against

Blanco with the Executive Committee. It is hoping to prevent the Assembly from holding a hearing on the charges until its term expires July 15. After that no deputy will enjoy immunity, and the military would be able to prosecute the Trotskyist leader.

In its stalling tactic, the regime is counting on the cooperation of the American People's Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) and other bourgeois parties that together hold a majority in the Constituent Assembly. APRA deputy and Rules Committee Chairman Enrique Chirinos Soto was quoted in the Lima daily *El Comercio* on June 14 as saying that a hearing on the charges against Blanco might take place "much later or never."

However, Blanco and his supporters hope to secure signatures of the required number of deputies (34 out of 100) on a petition ordering an extraordinary session to take up the charges.

When Blanco was arrested, he was on his way to meet with Indian groups in southern Peru and lend support to their demands for recognition of their native languages—Quechua and Aymará—as official languages in the new constitution the Constituent Assembly is preparing. A provision rammed through by the bourgeois parties declares Spanish to be Peru's only official language—a step backward even from the formal but unimplemented recognition granted Quechua by General Velasco's government in 1975. Blanco's arrest was also aimed at weakening the growing language-rights struggle; the Trotskyist leader is himself fluent in Quechua.

Some 300 leaders of the national teachers union, SUTEP, were jailed in late

May as the regime sought to head off a strike by Peru's 140,000 public-school teachers. But as the strike went into its tenth day on June 14, it remained nearly 100 percent solid. Private-school teachers joined in a forty-eight hour solidarity strike, and daily street demonstrations have taken place in Lima and other cities to build support for the SUTEP.

The cops have tried to break up the teachers actions with tear gas, and have arrested some 1,000 teachers and students throughout the country.

The SUTEP's 1978 strike became a focus for mass discontent and opposition to the dictatorship and its austerity policies. By carrying out massive arrests and stepping up persecution of well-known working-class leaders like Blanco, the regime is trying to prevent that from happening again.

On June 7, assailants later identified as agents of the political police tried to kidnap Maoist leader Rolando Breña Pantoja outside the Constituent Assembly. Breña managed to get into a car with deputies Genaro Ledesma of the Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front (FOCEP) and Javier Diez Canseco of the Democratic People's Unity (UDP). The three drove off, but shots were fired at them and they were pursued several blocks down a main street by a number of cars without license plates.

The operation was ominously similar to last September's kidnapping of two Trotskyist activists and a Colombian journalist outside a FOCEP headquarters in Lima. Hugo Blanco narrowly escaped being seized at that time.

Protests against the frame-up of Hugo Blanco and the new wave of repression in Peru are urgently needed. Send telegrams and letters demanding that the charges against Hugo Blanco be dropped and that imprisoned teachers, students, and union leaders be released to Peruvian embassies or to Gen. Francisco Morales Bermúdez, Presidente de la República, Palacio Presidencial, Lima, Peru. Please send copies to the U.S. Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners, 200 Park Avenue South, Room 812, New York, N.Y. 10003. □

Hugo Blanco's Appeal

[The following has been excerpted from a statement made by Hugo Blanco in Lima on June 15. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

In recent weeks in Peru repression and violations of human rights have been stepped up by the Military Junta. The Constituent Assembly, dominated by a bourgeois majority, has not come out against this repressive drive.

The workers at the Cromotex factory were shot at. The miners have suffered many attacks, even including having their

children kicked out of school by the Southern Peru Copper Company, the U.S. owner of the Cuajone mine. Teachers have been and still are under attack. Peasants in Alto Piura have been shot at for no other crime than being at work in the fields.

In face of all these attacks, the right-wing parties in the Constituent Assembly have placed themselves not on the side of the people, but on the side of the dictatorship. Furthermore, they have little by little allowed attacks to be carried out against members of the Constituent Assembly itself. Prime examples of this are the cases

of Víctor Cuadros and Hernán Cuentas, both leftist deputies and leaders of the miners, who have come under government indictment. Although the Assembly threw out the charges against them, it did not protest the attacks.

The same is true in my case. At the time of my arrest I was not "caught in the act of committing a crime," which is the only situation in which the police are authorized to detain a member of the Constituent Assembly. Even the police do not claim that I was committing any crime at the time.

Now, however, they say that I have been committing crimes ever since last August, although they *never once* made a formal accusation to that effect in front of the Assembly.

The charges leveled against me relate precisely to my function as a member of the Agrarian Commission of the Constituent Assembly. They relate also to my functions as a member of the Human Rights Commission of the Assembly.

For example, when I went to Huancavelica—one of the crimes the police accuse me of—I went there at the invitation of the peasants. They had informed the Human Rights Commission that one peasant, an Indian, had been murdered by the police.

When I went to the Department of Ayacucho, to the district of Cangallo, it was because people there had accused the police of killing two students. And we confirmed that they had indeed been murdered.

When I have gone to Cañete, it has been in response to complaints by peasants. I was sent there by the commission to look into cases of attacks against the peasants of the area.

When I went to Alto Piura, that was also in response to an outcry that arose over the massacre that peasants had suffered at the hands of the police and other government forces.

So these have been my activities as a member of the Human Rights Commission, and of the Agrarian Commission of the Constituent Assembly, which are now being called crimes, committed by me between August of last year and May of this year.

In other words, it is a crime for me to fulfill my duties!

The military junta is waiting for the Constituent Assembly to adjourn on July 15 in order to go after all of us leftist deputies. Various police officials and their subordinates have already said as much on several occasions when leftist members of the Assembly have gone to inquire about the cases of political or trade-union prisoners. It seems the police can hardly restrain themselves.

Since there is no hope that the bourgeois majority of the Constituent Assembly will bring respect for the human rights of the Peruvian people, and since the Assembly

is now about to adjourn and there will be escalating attacks against us and against the rest of the Peruvian people, we are calling on the people of Latin America, the United States, Canada, and Europe—on defenders of human rights throughout the world and on working people everywhere—

to raise your voices in protest against the attacks being committed in Peru. The voices of working people and of defenders of human rights around the world must block the wave of repression that is being prepared by the military dictatorship for after July 15. □

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Thousands Join Upsurge Against Somoza

By Fred Murphy

After nineteen days of a military offensive throughout Nicaragua, the guerrilla forces of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) were continuing to make gains against dictator Anastasio Somoza's National Guard. The FSLN offensive was being joined by thousands of Nicaraguan workers, peasants, and youth. Somoza's brutal airborne rocket and bombing attacks on poor neighborhoods in the major cities were not succeeding in crushing the popular upsurge.

Added to Somoza's difficulties was growing diplomatic isolation in Latin America. On June 17 Ecuador's military rulers broke their ties with the Nicaraguan regime; this followed earlier breaks by the Costa Rican and Mexican governments.

Also on June 17, the five Andean Bloc governments—Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia—declared Nicaragua to be in a "state of belligerency" and recognized the anti-Somoza forces as a legitimate army eligible for "treatment and prerogatives" as a belligerent in international law.

As of June 17, the Sandinista fighters and their supporters controlled wide sections of Managua, the capital; virtually all of León and Matagalpa, the second- and third-largest cities; and a widening strip of territory near the Costa Rican border in the south.

Uprisings in Managua's poor neighborhoods began June 9, and by June 13 thousands of persons were sacking commercial enterprises and distributing food and other goods to those who needed them. "Most of the slums have been organizing for months for what is now happening in Managua," Karen DeYoung reported in the June 12 *Washington Post*, "designating civil defense centers and gathering stores of food and medicine. Many residents are believed to be actively aiding the guerrillas and many slum youths are now on the barricades."

According to *New York Times* correspondent Alan Riding's June 13 report from Managua, "opposition sources say the uprising in the city is still largely in the hands of local youths armed with pistols and rifles, while the better-armed Sandinista forces have not yet reached the capital."

In León, the National Guard garrison fled its besieged barracks June 16, leaving the Sandinistas and the population in full control of the city and its suburbs. The Guard troops reportedly scattered and were being hunted down by the armed

rebels. The FSLN has organized a food distribution system—complete with rationing cards—in León.

In the south, the Sandinistas had made advances after an initial invasion on May 29, but were driven back by a Guard counteroffensive on June 9. A fresh FSLN offensive beginning June 15 brought victories in the border towns of Peñas Blancas and Sapoa. The column of 700 Sandinista fighters bore heavy weapons and was headed by a convoy of ten or more armored vehicles.

According to Sandinista military commander Edén Pastora, the objective of the southern drive was the provincial capital of Rivas, some twenty-five miles inside the border. Upon taking Rivas, the Sandinistas were planning to proclaim a provisional government and seek diplomatic recognition from foreign governments, particularly from those that had already broken with Somoza.

According to a June 17 FSLN communiqué, the "Government of National Reconstruction" would include Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega Saavedra; Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the opposition newspaper editor gunned down in Managua in January 1978; industrialist Alfonso Robelo Callejas, leader of the bourgeois Nicaraguan Democratic Movement; Prof. Sergio Ramírez Mercado, a member of the "Group of Twelve"; and Moisés Hassan Morales, a leader of the National Patriotic Front and the United People's Movement.

Opposition sources cited by Riding in the June 18 *New York Times* said that this provisional junta would quickly gain recognition from the Mexican, Panamanian, and Costa Rican regimes: "... once they had recognized the provisional government, these countries might seek intervention by the Organization of American States [OAS] to negotiate a cease-fire and peaceful transfer of power. This would avoid the destruction of the National Guard and President Somoza's Liberal Party in exchange for the departure of the dictator."

Such a scenario reflects the growing fear of the anti-Somoza Nicaraguan capitalists—and of Washington and its neocolonial Latin American allies—that the dictatorship might be toppled by the popular uprising. All these forces are maneuvering to try to halt the mass upsurge, prevent its spread to the rest of Central America, and—if necessary—remove Somoza while keeping his repressive forces

intact.

U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance called for OAS "mediation" on June 13. "We have told President Somoza we believe that a political solution is necessary to resolve the problem," Vance said. Otherwise, he added, "polarization will continue and the chances of a radical solution to the problem are great."

An earlier report to Vance by State Department Latin American expert William Bowdler warned: "In the absence of a negotiated solution, there is a danger that escalating violence in Nicaragua may transcend the limits of an internal conflict and affect the peace and tranquility of the whole of Central America." (Quoted in the *Latin American Daily Post*, June 7.)

U.S. Senator Edward Zorinsky called June 12 for Washington to use its influence "diplomatically if possible, militarily if necessary . . . to get rid of Somoza." Meanwhile, diehard Somoza backers in the U.S. Congress took out a full-page advertisement in the June 18 *New York Times* to demand that Carter take action "to thwart encroachment by Soviet surrogates in Central America" and prevent "another Cuba" in Nicaragua.

Imperialist intervention in Nicaragua's civil war has been under way from the outset—both through covert military aid to Somoza and through behind-the-scenes efforts to ease the dictator out and preserve "Somozaism without Somoza."

On June 9, 500 persons picketed the Nicaraguan consulate in New York to demand "U.S. hands off Nicaragua." Such international solidarity efforts should be stepped up; they can help the Nicaraguan workers and peasants to victory in their forty-year struggle against the Somoza dynasty and the oppression and exploitation it has enforced. □

General Strike on Dominica

A general strike on the Caribbean island of Dominica went into its tenth day on June 8. Strikers are demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Patrick John's government.

The work stoppage was called on May 30 by the country's five major trade unions to protest the police killings of three persons during an assault on a demonstration in Roseau, the capital, the previous day.

The May 29 demonstration—which drew 15,000 persons out of a total population of 80,000—was protesting government bills that would restrict trade-union rights, ban strikes in "vital services," and curtail freedom of the press.

John withdrew the bills and ousted two cabinet ministers, but these concessions failed to halt the general strike. The movement has brought about a bread shortage in Roseau, but according to a report in the June 9-10 *Latin American Daily Post*, "strikers and their families are being supplied with foodstuffs by the Dominica Farmers Union, which backs the strike."

Oil Workers in Ahwaz Strike to Demand Release of Prisoners

As 200 oil workers began a strike and sit-in demanding the release of their leaders in jail in Ahwaz, pressure intensified on the Khomeini-Bazargan government to free the hundreds of worker militants imprisoned in Khuzestan Province since late May.

The mass arrests occurred during the wave of protests by Arabs for national and cultural rights in the province. Among those jailed were three members of the oil workers council, some twenty steelworkers, and nine members of the Socialist Workers Party (HKS), the Iranian section of the Fourth International.

Two of the HKS members, Omid Mirbaha and Mohammed Poorkahvaz, are being held in Karoun Prison along with the three oil worker leaders—Javad Khatemi, Naser Hayati, and Shobeyr Moiyoo—and others. The oil workers and HKS members are on a hunger strike to protest the arrests.

In the second week of June, 200 oil workers struck and began a sit-in at the oil company offices in Ahwaz to demand the release of Khatemi, Hayati, and Moiyoo. More workers pledged to join the sit-in if the three were not released by June 16.

Meanwhile, growing protests across Iran and internationally forced authorities in Ahwaz to allow the HKS to visit two of the seven other Trotskyists being held. Since June 1, no one had been permitted to see seven of the nine imprisoned HKS members. The Imam's Committee in Ahwaz which arrested them had refused to disclose their whereabouts.

But the committee finally backed down and brought HKS representatives to see the two women members of the party who have been under arrest, Fatima Fallahi and Mahsa Hashemi. Both prisoners appeared to be in good condition.

The government still refuses to give any reason for the arrest of the Trotskyists or the other worker militants. Nor has it allowed lawyers or anyone else to visit the five other HKS members arrested—Hamid Shahrabi, Mustafa Seifabadi, Mustafa Gorgzadeh, Morteza Gorgzadeh, and Hormoz Fallahi.

Prominent writers and intellectuals, with long records as antishah fighters, have joined the campaign to free the HKS members and the oil worker leaders. Among those who have protested to the Khomeini-Bazargan government are Ali-Asghar Hadj Sayyed-Javadi, Ahmad Shamlou, Reza Baraheni, and Gholam Hossein Saedi. □

Where to Send Protests

Protests demanding the release of the oil workers leaders, steelworkers, and nine members of the Socialist Workers Party (HKS) arrested in Iran are needed from supporters of the Iranian revolution around the world.

Telegrams and phone calls demand-

ing the government free these prisoners should be sent to Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, Office of the Prime Minister, Tehran, Iran; and to the Islamic Revolutionary Council, Tehran, Iran.

Send copies of all messages to *Kargar*, Post Office Box 41/3586, Tehran.

International Outcry Against Arrest of Trotskyists

An international outcry from labor organizations and other supporters of democratic rights is being mounted against the arrest of nine Trotskyists in Iran. The nine—members of the Hezb-e Kargarane Socialist (HKS—Socialist Workers Party)—were arrested in Khuzestan Province along with three members of the oil workers council, some twenty steelworkers, and hundreds of Arab protesters.

In Sweden, the National Seamen's Union and the Harbor Workers union have sent protests to the Iranian government.

The Harbor Workers said in their telegram: "Our organization had great expectations in your regime in the beginning when you drove out the shah and freed yourself from U.S. domination. But during the recent period our hopes and expectations have been shaken due to the information we have received."

The telegram went on to condemn the Iranian government's attacks on "progressive political parties and trade-union and worker fighters who are struggling for a socialist Iran."

The Harbor Workers concluded: "We demand now that you release the nine members of the HKS that have been arrested and cease your harassment and repression of these progressive parts of the workers movement."

Through a defense campaign initiated by supporters of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist organization, protests have poured in from many countries.

In France, 1,000 persons demonstrated at the Iranian embassy in Paris June 15. The protest was called by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the French section of the Fourth International. A delegation including representatives from the LCR, Internationalist Communist Organization (OCI), League for Human Rights, and trade unionists entered the

embassy to meet with Iranian officials.

Many prominent figures in France have sent telegrams of protest to the Iranian government, including writer Daniel Guérin; Simone de Beauvoir; Lionel Jospin, national secretary of the Socialist Party; Claude Bourget of the United Socialist Party (PSU); Henri Weber, Daniel Bensaid, and Alain Krivine of the LCR; Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrière; Gilles Martinet, SP member of the European Parliament; and writer Roger Garaudy. The Administrative Committee of the National Education Federation (FEN), the largest teachers union, has also sent a telegram.

Jim Anderson, president of the New Zealand Labor Party, is one of the fifty figures in that country who have spoken out against the arrest of the Iranian Trotskyists. Others include Noa Nawalowo, chairperson of the Pacific Island Advisory Council; Pat Kelly, president of the Wellington Trades Council; Russell Johnson, national secretary of the Socialist Action League; and Sonja Davies, a member of the National Executive of the New Zealand Federation of Labor.

In Spain the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party sent telegrams to the Iranian embassy in Madrid.

In Denmark, more than forty prominent figures in the labor and left movement sent a letter of protest to the Bazargan government. Signers included the chairmen of the Federation of Transport and General Workers, Danish Metalworkers Federation, and Federation of Office Workers; eleven members of parliament; and four members of the City Council in Aarhus.

Six Labor Party members of the Australian Senate lodged protests, as did the regional state conference in Perth of Australian Young Labor, the Labor Party's youth group. Chris Hobson, president of

the Australian Student Union, also sent a telegram.

The national congress of the Union of Printing Workers in Switzerland sent a message to Prime Minister Bazargan demanding release of the HKS members.

In Québec, the Arab Students Federation of Montréal and Québec Palestine registered protests, as did Michel Chartrand, adviser to the Confederation of National Trade Unions, Montréal Council.

Four New Democratic Party legislators in Vancouver, Canada, have sent messages.

In the United States, a protest statement

is being circulated. It was initiated by well-known supporters of the Iranian revolution who have actively opposed U.S. aid to the shah. These include Philip Berrigan; Indiana University Professor Rajai-e Bussailah, a prominent Palestinian human-rights activist; Jerry Gordon; Cindy Jaquith, associate editor of the *Militant* who covered the February insurrection in Iran; George Novack, Socialist Workers Party leader and former member of the Executive Board of the Committee for Artistic and Intellectual Freedom in Iran; and Ali Shokri, an Iranian airman who defected from the shah's air force and organized

protests in the United States against the repression of the Pahlavi regime.

The case of the nine Trotskyists has also been raised by West German legislator Klaus Thuesing, an SP member of the Federal Parliament. Thuesing was recently in Tehran, where he sought out lawyers to learn the facts on the arrest of the HKS members. Since his return, he has sent a telegram to Bazargan expressing concern for the imprisoned revolutionaries.

Picket lines have been held at Iranian embassies and consulates in Sweden, Australia, and Switzerland. The Danish and Dutch media have covered the arrests.

'Crowd Lined Up to Buy Our Newspaper'

Warm Welcome for 'Kargar' Sales Team in Ahwaz Region

By Gerry Foley

In the two months before the arrest of nine Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS) members in Ahwaz on May 30 and June 1, the Trotskyists had been winning support rapidly in the southern oil centers. This is undoubtedly one reason that prompted the procapitalist government and Imam's Committee authorities to try to crack down on the organization.

One thing that made the HKS especially popular was its defense of the democratic rights of the masses.

When I talked to a group of Ahwaz HKS members in early April, one of them, Ali, described the visit of a Trotskyist trail-blazing team to the town of Masjed Soleyman, about sixty miles northeast of Ahwaz.

"Our comrades had gone there to sell our newspaper. This is a relatively small place, with only one mosque. Most of those known as leftists are Maoists, and they are really sectarian. They concentrate on fighting religion.

"For example, the Maoists beat up a mullah and tried to stop people from going into the mosque to pray. Almost everyone in Masjed Soleyman really hates them.

"When our comrades went there, the Maoists gathered around them, saying that they were CIA agents, and so on. A crowd formed.

"So, our comrades said, 'If you want to hear a discussion of Trotskyism and Stalinism, you should come to our meeting tonight at seven.' The Maoists told the people, 'If you go there, we will kill you.'

"Well, a big crowd came anyway, and the Maoists didn't show up. Some of our comrades spoke and there was a very good discussion. The people were very interested and open to what we had to say."

Fatima Fallahi, a woman HKS member

who is among those arrested, talked about what it had meant for a former Maoist to join the HKS. He was an activist in the factory where he worked.

"Before we won him over, he used to begin by asking workers whether they were Muslims or not, and if they were, he just wrote them off. So, he found that he couldn't talk at all to most of the workers.

"After he joined us, he learned that you can talk to most workers if you begin by discussing their problems instead of attacking their religion. He says that his life is a lot easier in the plant now, and that he is making a lot more progress."

Ali described another incident that happened during the HKS team's visit to Masjed Soleyman:

"There was a demonstration of workers who had just been fired. About 500 of them were Iranians, and 500 were Afghans. At first they demonstrated together, but then the Imam's Committee separated them.

"Our comrades tried to talk to the Afghans, but the Imam's Committee guards stopped them and took them off to the committee headquarters. When they got there, they heard all the guards being ordered to go to set up barricades, because the leaders were afraid some of the Afghans might try to come into the town.

"Our comrades started raising questions. They said, 'Who is giving you this order? Do you have an executive committee? You have to know who is giving the orders and why you should shoot if you get that kind of order.'"

The Trotskyists explained to the committee activists why they should elect their leadership and elect their officers and maintain control over them. They explained why democracy was important in the committees and how they could func-

tion democratically.

On the streets of Masjed Soleyman, the Trotskyist paper *Kargar* was enthusiastically received.

"As our comrades sold the paper in the street," Ali said, "a crowd formed around them. We had to ask them to get in line, and they did and bought the paper one by one."

Another HKS member said: "In Abadan, we sold about 140 issues of *Kargar* at one plant gate in half an hour. We heard the guards discussing it. Some said we had the right to sell our paper, others said that it couldn't be permitted. In the factory itself there was a fight between the workers who thought we had the right to sell and others who said that we did not.

"We heard one worker saying, 'They should be able to sell their paper. We fought for freedom and a lot of people died for it.'"

Because the HKS presented a clear socialist alternative and fought for it openly the party became a magnet for radicalizing forces.

"In Masjed Soleyman," Ali said, "we ran into people from many districts and towns. They came to us and asked for bundles of the paper to sell in their own areas. People came up and said that they agreed with us and wanted to work with us.

"We kept running into people who said that they represented groups of independent socialists that had just formed. One group was said to include a couple of hundred people. They were interested in joining us.

"I think that we can form new branches right away in a number of cities. We believe that within a few months we can build an organization that is much larger than our present size." □

Iranian Stalinists Incensed Over Trotskyist TV Debate

By Hormoz Rahimian

[Babak Zahraie, a leader of the Iranian Trotskyist organization HKS, debated Abu al-Hassan Bani Sadr, Khomeini's main ideologist, over the national TV network April 10.

[Bani Sadr had challenged all the groups claiming to be Marxist to publicly debate him. The Trotskyists were the only one to take him up. The debate, which Zahraie used to present a socialist program for solving the crisis in Iran, was viewed by an estimated 22 million persons, virtually the entire adult population of Iran. It provoked a groundswell of interest in socialism among the masses of Iranian workers and toilers. As a result the HKS came overnight to the center of political discussion in Iran.

[After the debate, many members of the Tudeh Party (the Iranian Communist Party) called Zahraie to congratulate him for presenting the socialist alternative as it had never been presented before in the country. The Tudeh leadership did not share this enthusiasm. In the May 18 issue of *Kargar*, the weekly newspaper of the Iranian Trotskyists, the HKS published a response to the CP's attack, which we print below. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

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Issue No. 6 of the Tudeh Party's national organ, *Mardom*, has an article entitled "Trotskyism, Handmaiden of Imperialism." It levels heavy fire against the HKS and the national radio-TV network for setting up the debate between Abu al-Hassan Bani Sadr, spokesman for the Islamic Republic, and Babak Zahraie, defender of revolutionary socialism.

The Tudeh Party contends that by broadcasting this debate, the radio-TV network is responsible for "helping to mislead the people," "besmirching socialism," "dimming the luster and weakening the attractive power of scientific socialism," and promoting "division, confusion, and deviation among the revolutionary forces."

The original sin of the HKS, according to the Tudeh Party, is that it is a "grouplet" that was "recently organized in the United States by a handful of people, and lacks the slightest roots among the Iranian people." Slander and abuse are heaped on the HKS from all sides.

"The Trotskyists . . . are interested only in revising and falsifying, adulterating scientific socialism, and perpetrating intrigues and splits in the world workers and Communist movement and the national

liberation movements." Furthermore, "they do nothing except assist in the imperialists' war against Communism and revolution." The article continues in this vein.

The radio-TV network could make amends, the Tudeh Party suggested, by "exposing the real nature of the organization Mr. Babak Zahraie represents" and by "giving an opportunity to the Tudeh Party, which is the true and legitimate proponent of scientific socialism in Iran, to explain its policies to the people of Iran."

Obviously, this is a very important question; that's for sure. When the Tudeh Party, the defender of the Islamic Republic, attacks the voice of this government, it is certain that a very important question is involved. So, let's look at what this debate showed, and why the Tudeh Party was so upset by it.

The debate aroused an unprecedented response from millions of viewers. Despite the fact that it was held a month ago, it is still a frequent topic of conversation. This debate was important in a number of ways.

First of all, it was an experience of freedom. And it was high time for that. The TV and radio were the voice of the revolution that triumphed over one of the most savagely despotic and oppressive regimes that ever existed. The most basic demand was for an end to censorship and for freedom of expression and thought. But under the direction of Mr. Ghotbzadeh, the radio and TV were turned into a miserable organ of the most outrageous propagandists, the most infantile censors, and the most shamelessly demagogic falsifiers.

Since the first day after the insurrection, this free debate was the first breath of democracy that has been let into this dungeon of censorship. For the first time, millions of people in Iran saw how the TV could be made into an instrument of the revolution.

This debate showed that if socialists had the same possibilities as the ruling class to disseminate and propagate their views, how quickly the socialists' program for solving the present crisis could attract the masses and offer the focus they need to organize themselves. It showed that the arguments of the Council of Ministers and the supporters of the Islamic Republic cannot stand up in debate and they only seem to be accepted because the government monopolizes the means of communication.

The fundamental importance of the debate was that it was an experiment in

democracy and in the presentation of socialism. This debate was not a personal victory for Babak Zahraie, or even for our party. Basically, this victory opened up the road for all those forces that support democracy and socialism, and this is well illustrated in the vast response it got.

So, why does the Tudeh Party, which considers itself one of the "democratic forces" and "the true and legitimate proponent of scientific socialism" feel indignation rather than satisfaction over this debate? Is this simply the result of sectarian shortsightedness?

There is a sectarian shortsightedness in this reaction by the Tudeh Party. But it has deeper political roots. Despite all the claims this party makes about being a defender of democracy and socialism, in reality it is totally antagonistic to democracy for the broad masses and does not have the slightest interest in advancing the socialist revolution. It is an unconditional defender of the Kremlin bureaucracy. It unconditionally defends this government's policy of repression. And it supports the suppression of all those who have opposed this policy.

The Tudeh Party defends a bureaucratic stratum that maintains itself in power by such means as censorship, the suppression of ideas, and monopolizing all the means for communication and for educating the masses. So, it is obvious why this first experiment in democracy would terrify the Tudeh Party.

Moreover, any prolonged and real democracy for the masses will lead to an extension of the revolution in Iran and a continuation of the mass movement toward socialist revolution. This is another reason for the Tudeh Party's fear of this experiment in democracy and presentation of socialism, and for their furious reaction to the TV debate.

The Soviet bureaucracy, and the Tudeh Party, which is the mouthpiece for its policies in Iran, fear an advance of the revolution in Iran and seek to defend the present government and the status quo. They both defend the Islamic Republic—the government of the capitalists and the rich—which is trying to ride out the revolutionary upsurge and block any further advance of the revolution.

The Tudeh Party's anger was also a response to its seeing the voice of the forces that want to advance the revolution reach the ears of millions of toilers in Iran. The Tudeh Party was so furious that while it finds it impossible to answer the "accusations of others," it devoted a fourth of a

page to an attack on the HKS. In the same issue of *Mardom*, Kianuri, the first secretary of the Stalinist party, tells his comrades: "If we answered all the accusations flung at us, we wouldn't have the time to use these few pages that we are bleeding ourselves white to pay for to disseminate our party's program."

But the impression made by an experience of democracy and an explanation of socialism by the spokesman of a little "grouplet" that "lacks the slightest roots among the people of Iran" was such that special attention had to be paid to it.

There is another reason for the Tudeh Party's raging against "little grouplets." The HKS represents a worldwide revolutionary Marxist current that has fought against Stalinism for decades in defense of the achievements of genuine Bolshevism. By offering a program for political revolution, it has pointed out the revolutionary road for fighting Stalinism in the Soviet Union and other such bureaucratically ruled workers states.

The Soviet bureaucracy's alarm at the appearance and consolidation of this international Marxist current in Iran is well founded. The Iranian revolution will give a boost to the struggle against the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. The resurgence of the Bolshevik tradition in our country will smooth the way for this same development in the Soviet Union as well. So, a small "grouplet" can now be a thorn in the side of Brezhnev, who formerly got along so well with the Pahlavis.

In conclusion, we should ask "Comrade" Kianuri what he wants to do with the TV time he is demanding. The policy of the Tudeh Party is to defend and justify the policies of the present government. In his interview in the current issue of *Mardom*, Kianuri is asked the question: "Are you convinced that this government can meet the demands of the workers and toilers?" He answers: "We don't want to get involved here in a discussion of ideology and class. In the present stage we will seek to guide the government and to defend it."

But the government has its own advocates and supporters and they are constantly on TV defending the regime. Does the Tudeh Party want to use the TV to present a better program for defending the government? That is their right, and we demand that the Tudeh Party and all other organizations be granted the right to present their views and programs on TV. Then it will be shown who is "the true and legitimate proponent of scientific socialism."

The readers of the current issue of *Mardom* will not find the slightest hint about socialism. In fact, with the exception of the article that attacks us, they will not even find the word "socialism" mentioned—much less any defense of it. □

Statement of HKS

For Full Freedom of Press in Iran!

[On June 4, the draft of a government bill on press censorship was published in the main Tehran dailies. It stipulates that anyone found guilty of publishing "comments that are insulting to the principles of Islam or detrimental to the Islamic revolution of Iran" will be liable to receive a sentence of from one to three years in prison.

[The draft also provides a prison term of between six months and two years for anyone who has "knowingly encouraged . . . disobedience within the army," as well as anyone who makes "insulting comments against government officials, members of parliament, or judges."

[The following has been excerpted from a statement against earlier attacks on freedom of the press, issued by the Executive Committee of the Hezb-e Kargarane Socialist (Socialist Workers Party), Iranian section of the Fourth International, which appeared in the May 18 issue of the HKS weekly *Kargar*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

* * *

Freedom of the press or arbitrary government censorship—this is a major question for any revolution. The declarations of Imam Khomeini and the attacks on freedom of the press launched by the Bazaragan government appointed by him pose the question of life or death for freedom.

The revolution has brought freedom and made it possible to expand it, but the bourgeois government is trying to consolidate capitalist order through a policy of censorship, threats, and repression. This is at the root of the attacks against press freedom.

Since the February insurrection, we have seen censorship of radio and television. All militant workers have been subjected in their factories to attacks and threats against their rights. The government's secret decrees undermine democratic rights and hinder discussions and meetings in the high schools, universities, and other places.

The revolution has highlighted one thing: the popular masses need democratic rights in order to win their demands, but the capitalist government is preparing brutal assaults aimed at suppressing those rights.

By attacking press freedom, the government is preventing the masses from obtaining information, from being able to exchange political views. It is blocking the sovereignty of the masses. It is trying to do

away with the people's freedom.

By attacking the press, the government is seeking to bury the struggle against imperialism.

The government aims to reduce the mass media to simple organs of the state, so as to be able to suppress the mass struggles. The ruling class knows that following the farce of the referendum for an Islamic republic, it needs to step up repression and limit democratic rights.

The authorities say that the Islamic Constitution—that new name for capitalist rule—will soon be published. Every step toward the consolidation of the capitalist government requires more repression.

The capitalist government has begun by attacking the bourgeois press, but its real target is the workers movement and the toiling masses.

The ruling class is asking itself: How can we consolidate the new capitalist government after the referendum? How can we publish the constitution and at the same time stifle all discussion of it? How can we protect the interests of the capitalists and the big landlords? The representatives of this class have asked the American imperialists for advice.

All the internal discussions among the rulers, all the differences within that class, all the disputes among various ruling-class figures point to the necessity, from their point of view, of solidifying the capitalist regime. The ruling class is preparing the ground for a confrontation with the masses.

The capitalists know that they must eliminate the gains of the revolution one by one. First by duping the masses, then by threats, and finally by outright repression. The road of the capitalists always points in the same direction: blood, the blood of the toiling masses. The attacks against freedom of the press already create the stench of repression.

The outcome of this attack depends on the struggles of the masses. In order to throw back this attack, the struggle must be organized everywhere—in the factories, in the universities, in the high schools.

To make defense of freedom and democracy possible, the sovereignty of the propertied classes must give way to the sovereignty of the people. Only free elections and the immediate convocation of a constituent assembly will permit that.

Only the independent action of the working class and the oppressed masses can safeguard democratic freedoms from the clutches of the capitalists. □

Petr Uhl and Nine Others Arrested

Free the Imprisoned Charter 77 Activists!

By Will Reissner

In dawn raids on May 29, Czechoslovak political police arrested ten leading activists of Charter 77, the country's most prominent civil-rights organization. Among those arrested were Petr Uhl and two of the three public spokespersons of the group. Other arrests were reported to have taken place on May 31.

Uhl faces the most serious charge, "subversion" of a dangerous character, under Article 98, subsection 2 of the criminal code. The charge carries a minimum sentence of three years in jail and a maximum of ten. Others face charges of "subversion" (subsection 1 of the same article) carrying a penalty of one to five years imprisonment.

At the time of his arrest Uhl was editor of the Charter 77 information bulletin and was also an active member of the Committee in Defense of Unjustly Persecuted Persons (VONS), an important defense committee for victims of political persecution in Czechoslovakia. (For more on this committee and other current developments in Czechoslovakia, see the interview with two exiled activists, p. 626.)

Uhl has openly expressed his political sympathy with the Fourth International and has made many contributions to the political and tactical discussions that have taken place within Charter 77. He recently contributed to a book on the East European civil-rights movement, which is to be published by the Polish opposition group Social Self-Defense Committee-KOR.

Among the others arrested are Charter 77 spokesperson Jiri Dienstbier, a leading Communist journalist for Radio Prague in 1968, and subsequently its correspondent in Washington before he was expelled from the CP and fired; Vaclav Benda, secretary of VONS and a spokesperson for Charter 77; Dana Nemcova, a leading figure in the cultural underground; Vaclav Havel, an internationally known playwright, who is active in VONS and the Charter group; Jarmila Belikova, also active in both groups; Jiri Nemecek; and Otta Bednarova.

Charter 77 was formed around a petition that was presented to Czechoslovak authorities in the first week of 1977, calling on them to uphold the basic civil rights that are embodied in Czech law but denied in practice. The charter noted that many fundamental rights exist "only on paper." It went on to list violations of rights that had taken place. (The text of Charter 77 was published in *Intercontinental Press*, February 14, 1977.)

Since its appearance Charter 77 has

been signed by more than a thousand people in the country, and has received widespread endorsement from workers and left organizations in Western Europe and other areas.

In the past, Czechoslovak authorities had repeatedly stated that they would not take repressive measures against the Charter signers. Rather, they said, they would



PETR UHL

combat the Charter and its supporters through "purely political" means. These assurances were repeated last April when Communist Party chief Gustav Husak met with the president of Austria in Prague.

The current arrests, however, indicate an attempt by the Husak regime to crush Charter 77 by administrative and penal methods.

Charter 77 has, in fact, been under increasing pressure since late 1978. The Husak government's first move, in October, was to arrest Jaroslav Sabata, one of the most active of the Charter spokespersons. Sabata had been instrumental in expanding the Charter's influence and effectiveness.

Sabata's arrest was the result of meetings he had had with Polish dissidents. In January he received a nine-month jail sentence for obstructing the police, to which a further eighteen months was then added in May.

Sabata had been active in the "Prague Spring" of 1968 when, under mass pressure, there was a loosening of the controls

on the population by the Dubcek regime. He was an opponent of the Soviet invasion that overthrew Dubcek and installed the present Husak government. Sabata was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party at its clandestine Fourteenth Congress, convened the day after the Soviet invasion.

He continues to hold the view that the Czechoslovak CP can be "reformed" although he himself has been expelled from the party.

In 1971 Sabata was arrested for oppositional activities and was sentenced to six and one-half years in prison, of which he served five years. His release in 1976 was "conditional" for three years, meaning that he would have to serve the remaining time on his sentence if he was arrested again.

According to his family, Sabata's health is very poor, and he has suffered two heart attacks. They fear that he will not survive if he has to serve his full sentence.

The Charter 77 movement was dealt another blow recently when Josef Danisz, a young lawyer who had defended the Charter signers in the past and who served as Sabata's defense attorney in his recent trial, was himself arrested. Danisz was sentenced to three months in prison, expelled from the official lawyers' association, and barred from practicing law after June 30, 1979.

And now the regime has moved against Uhl, Dienstbier, Benda, Havel, and the others. Article 98 of the criminal code, under which they are being held, defines subversion as "an activity designed to undermine citizens' confidence in the organs of state authority."

This charge is so vague that it could be used at any time against anyone who criticizes the regime. The fact that it is being used now shows that the Czechoslovak government is putting the rest of the Charter 77 signers on notice that they too could wind up in jail if they continue to protest violations of human rights.

The seriousness of the situation is evidenced by the fact that in the past the Czech political police have seldom arrested and charged opponents of the regime without then carrying through with a prison sentence. In rare instances in the past in which dissidents were arrested but then released, this was the result of vigorous international campaigns that took place.

A similar campaign—spearheaded by the labor and socialist movements around the world—is an urgent necessity today to win the immediate release of the courageous human-rights fighters imprisoned in Czechoslovakia.

Telegrams and statements of protest should be sent to President Gustav Husak, Prague, Czechoslovakia, or to Czechoslovak embassies abroad.

Copies of such messages should be sent to Anna Sabatova, Anglicka 8, Prague 2, Czechoslovakia. □

Charter 77 and the Situation in Czechoslovakia Today

[The following interview was conducted by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* correspondent George Saunders with Czech dissidents Karel and Olga, who were about twenty at the time of the Soviet invasion in 1968. They are now active in exile helping to publish the revolutionary-socialist Czech-language magazine *Informacni Materialy*.]

* * *

Question. Could you give us some idea of how you personally developed into active oppositionists in the period preceding and during the "Prague Spring?"

Karel. If you ask me for my political activities before the so-called Prague Spring—well, I'm sorry to tell you that I did not take any part in them. There were some small, active groups of students, but most people—and that includes students like me—were concerned with their own private lives. The first time I tried to do something was in the spring of 1968 when my friends and I started activities at the university to establish a new student organization.

We were very enthusiastic at the beginning, but everything was new for us. The motivation was more or less emotional, spontaneous; only a small part of the students were politically motivated.

I remember the discussions at the first congress of the new student organization in Olomouc in the spring of 1968. A small group of radical delegates tried to put clear political goals into the program of the organization, but the congress did not accept them.

Later on, especially after August 21 [the date of the Soviet invasion], things changed radically. Surely you have heard about the simultaneous activities of groups of workers, students, and others—declarations, strikes, and so forth. It simply took time to overcome one's own egoistic group interests.

Q. What was the impact of the Soviet invasion on your development?

Olga. A very great one, I think. The reason why I didn't go back to Czechoslovakia and stayed on in Western Europe was that I didn't want to live in an occupied country. That was all. But after a year or so, after I had seen what happened here, I started to read Marxist literature and also started to be active. In fact, the impact of the Soviet invasion on me—and on my comrades and friends on the *Informacni Materialy*—was that I developed into a socialist. We thank the Soviet Union for that.

Q. What is the present situation in Czechoslovakia, especially the prospects for the movement around Charter 77?

Karel. It is not easy to describe present-day Czechoslovakia, and I'm afraid I will have to generalize a bit. On the one hand Czechoslovakia is a country with one of the harshest regimes in Eastern Europe today, even if the people can buy more than they could ten years ago.

I would say that the "comrades" who are running the party—and that means the state, the society as a whole—are in many cases not "neo-Stalinists" but genuine "old Stalinists." We can see something similar in Romania and Bulgaria.

On the other hand, we can follow the different activities of the Charter 77 movement. I would not like to exaggerate the real impact of Charter 77 at the present time, because it is still a limited body. But under the existing conditions in Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 reached more people than I for one envisaged at the beginning of the movement. Let me state four points that characterize the activities of Charter 77.

First, it is a very great surprise to see so many workers among the signers—this at a time of continuing disillusionment.

Second, there is a very wide circulation of *samizdat* publications, although it is true that in Poland there are more.

Third, I would like to point out the exemplary work of the Committee in Defense of Unjustly Persecuted Persons. As of March 1979 it had distributed some eighty newsletters on persecution, oppression, and trials in Czechoslovakia.

And last but not least, remember the contacts between the Czechoslovak and Polish opposition movements. This is a new and very important development in Eastern Europe, one never seen before. If they succeed in keeping up these contacts over a period of time, we may see a new quality in the opposition movements in Eastern Europe.

Olga. Perhaps I should point out some of the differences between Charter 77 and the Polish Social Self-Defense Committee-KOR. While the Polish committee arose from the strike movement and therefore can act more or less politically, Charter 77 is a very heterogeneous movement. Its political goal today is not to act according to a political program, but first to try to prepare social conditions in which a political program can be heard.

Q. Can you describe the different tendencies in and around Charter 77?

Olga. Before describing these tendencies I have to stress this: if we speak about groups or tendencies in today's Czechoslovakia—and in Eastern Europe as a whole—we must keep in mind the quite special situation in these countries. At the same time, we must not forget that these are not organized groupings, and that there are no fixed demarcations between them. Furthermore, there are quite different trends of historical development in the workers movement in Eastern Europe.

In this sense, we can distinguish the following wings or tendencies in Charter 77. First, there is a still quite large group that could be called "reform communists." (They usually call themselves "ex-communists.") Further, there are comrades who tend slightly to the Second International—but more or less in the sense of the original goals of that organization, not in that of the present political line of the Western European Social Democrats. And then there is also a small radical grouping tending partly to the Fourth International.

The other political components of the movement are socialists who cannot be narrowly defined. And of course, finally, there are the bulk of the people who don't yet have a particular political line. These include Christians, many young people from the cultural underground, particularly the rock music underground, and others.

Karel. In another sense we could perhaps distinguish two main tendencies. The first still believe in the possibility of democratizing and liberalizing the Communist Party itself, although its hope for the party is getting smaller and smaller. On the other hand, there are people who are trying to develop a situation in Czechoslovakia in which a political opposition movement could offer a real alternative. They do not believe that a change in the society can be brought about through the existing Communist Party.

Q. In particular, what is the role of the "reform communists"?

Karel. What has been the role of the "reform communists" up to now? The same—to replace reality with illusory hopes for a gradual, step-by-step policy, in the belief that only the "reform communists" can carry out change. This confusion is probably not as great in Czechoslovakia as in the Western countries, but nevertheless that is the role of the "reform communists."

Q. What position does Informacni Materialy take among these tendencies?

Karel. "Among" would be wrong, because we are not among them; we do not work in Czechoslovakia. Any social, political, or economic change can be brought about only by people living in the country itself, not from outside. But naturally we have our opinions, which are quite similar to those of the radical left in Czechoslovakia.

So our function is not only to supply our friends and comrades with information, but also to promote discussion by supplying the comrades with theoretical views from other countries—both Western and Eastern. And of course we take part in many solidarity actions to defend democratic rights and political prisoners in the countries of Eastern Europe.

Q. What forms of international support and solidarity would be the most effective in advancing the movement in Czechoslovakia?

Olga. Apart from financial support to the families of the prisoners or to the jobless oppositionists, it is necessary to publicize the actions of the movement, to get out information about those who are persecuted.

One of the characteristic features of the activists in Charter 77 is that they do not use clandestine methods. Everything they do is in this sense legal. They are not anonymous. They sign all documents with their own names and full addresses.

This sort of legality, they say, is the best way to defend themselves. And it will be more effective if they are also known abroad. We do know that past solidarity campaigns helped many people in Eastern Europe.

Q. What international links are there, if any, among the opposition movements in different countries of Eastern Europe?

Karel. I have already mentioned the Czechoslovak-Polish cooperation. Both movements have established working groups to develop and coordinate the cooperation. The delegates of both movements met three times at the border. At the third meeting the representative of Charter 77, Jaroslav Sabata, was jailed and sentenced to nine months in jail.

In their joint communiqué the two movements called on all the opposition movements in Eastern Europe to participate in the common struggle. This is a very great and very important step forward, but also the only one. Under the extreme conditions of political oppression, other links do not exist. That task remains to be done. □



Palach Press

Charter 77 and KOR members in meeting at border in September 1978. From left, Jan Litynski, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik.

Joint Statement of Charter 77 and KOR

[We have taken the text of the following statement from the November-December 1978 issue of the British publication *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*.]

* * *

A second meeting between our representatives took place on the Czechoslovak-Polish border in September 1978. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussions concerning the cooperation between the Social Self-Defence Committee "KOR" and Charter 77, and to define more clearly the agreement reached at the first meeting.

It was decided to establish permanent working groups which will supervise the swift exchange of information in order to enable us to cooperate effectively. The prospects of preparing common documents and of organising a political science seminar on the subject of independent civic initiatives in East European countries were discussed. We would wish to invite friends from other countries to participate in such a seminar.

An agreement concerning further cooperation, primarily in the field of culture and the arts, has been reached. The following letter was despatched from the meeting to the defenders of human and civil rights in Armenia, Bulgaria, East Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Rumania and the Ukraine:

Dear Friends!

We send you our warmest greetings from the second working meeting of the representatives of the Social Self-Defence Committee "KOR" and Charter 77, taking place on the Czechoslovak-Polish border. This is why we wish to tell you how much we value your civic stand and your willingness to fight for the right of people in our countries to live in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity.

From our own experience we know the difficulties connected with this struggle. We are convinced that we are all fighting for the same ideals. We often think about all those who suffer in prison for their convictions. We think of J. Orlov, A. Shcharansky, A. Ginzburg, W. Piatkus, A. Podrabinek, Bakhra, Rudenko, Tikhy, Shukhevych, Moroz, Chornovil, Gamsakhurdia and many others.

Thank you for your support of our cause. We also wish to assure you of our solidarity with you. The common fate of our nations bind us together today more strongly than ever before. It is therefore important that those who attempt to improve our common destiny should join forces.

20 September 1978

Charter 77

The Social Self-Defence Committee "KOR"

The Pope's Visit to Poland

[The following appeared as an editorial in the June 22 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

* * *

Heads of state must have been green with envy over Pope John Paul's nine-day visit to his native Poland.

Large numbers turned out for the touring pontiff. In his base city of Cracow, a reported million people thronged to a papal mass.

Partisans of the church rejoiced. See, they argued, that's how necessary to humanity religion is. More than thirty years after the revolution in Poland, the masses pour out for a pope. Christianity has a stronger appeal to working people than Marxism.

But what happened in Poland was no test of Christianity versus Marxism. It was a massive expression of revulsion by the Polish people against a police regime that oppresses them in every sphere of life.

The revolution that ended capitalism in Poland, while it created the potential for great economic and social advances for the masses, came into the world cruelly deformed. Privilege-hungry bureaucrats, backed by Stalin's troops, blocked the workers from exercising political power. Determined to prevent the working class from running the economy democratically, these bureaucrats have mismanaged and distorted the planned economy. They hold back wages and let prices skyrocket. They suppress democratic rights. And when the workers resist they unleash club-swinging, trigger-happy cops.

That's why the Poles are so deeply alienated, so hungry for any broader social vision, that they will turn out for a pope.

But the Catholic church is no progressive alternative to the Stalinist bureaucrats.

At the pope's mass, directly in front of the altar, there flew a red flag with a white eagle and crown—the flag of the Polish monarchy.

For generations on end, the Polish workers and peasants suffered under kings and dictators. Catholicism was the state religion and the church played a key role in the subjugation of the people.

That was and is its world role. The church has been the traditional ally of the most reactionary forces, including those represented by Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco.

In Latin America it is the same. The Catholic priests fled Cuba when the socialist revolution came, but they had been



Ivan/Militant
POPE: Large turnout during nine-day visit expressed massive hatred for police regime that oppresses Poles in every sphere of life.

right at home with the Batista dictatorship.

The church doesn't fight the death penalty. But it's a bastion of the "right to life" anti-abortion forces.

But, some say, the church changes with the times. Look at the worker-priests, the socially involved nuns.

Pope John Paul took a look at them when he visited Mexico last January. And his message to them was—knock it off. Just look at the contrast. In capitalist Mexico, John Paul advised the masses to appreciate "the simple joys of the poor." He warned the clergy to stop interfering in "temporal questions."

But in Poland, the pope pressed for a greater role for the hierarchy in political life. The church there is demanding access to state-operated radio and television.

Why, then, did the Polish government permit the pope to conduct his obviously political religious tour?

Because they *need* the Polish Catholic church.

For what?

For what the Catholic hierarchy has always been so good at—instilling acceptance of oppression and tyranny.

That's not simply our view. The June 10 *New York Times* flatly stated that the ruling Polish Communist Party "needs the support of the church for some of the disagreeable remedies it will have to apply soon to realign the economy—keeping

down wages, raising food prices. . . ."

Despite John Paul's demagoguery, history confirms that at critical moments the church has moved to stem popular rebellions and prop up the Stalinist rulers. In 1970, for example, massive strikes erupted as Polish shipyard and factory workers demanded wage hikes, price rollbacks, and union rights. The Catholic church helped herd them back to work.

Another upsurge broke out in 1976, again sparked by price increases. The Polish bishops told the masses to exercise restraint, "to preserve public order." They counseled that "solid work is a moral obligation, and ability to make sacrifices—a Christian virtue."

So what explains the apparent tension between the church and government? As the *New York Times* explained June 9, the Polish church "recognizes that its standing with the bulk of its adherents, particularly the younger generation, rests partly on its posture of conflict with the state."

So both the Stalinists and the church benefit from the shadow boxing. But the biggest beneficiary is world capitalism—particularly its dominant and leading component, U.S. capitalism. The capitalists, as we've seen, reap enormous propaganda gains from being able to portray the church—that bastion of reaction and repression—as a defender of popular freedom against what they falsely portray as socialism. At the same time, they appreciate the church's services in helping to stabilize the Stalinist regime against the workers.

Because, like the church that serves it so well, capitalism prefers the Stalinist bureaucrats to the workers.

Washington's ultimate aim is to restore capitalism in all the states that have abolished it. But today the world workers movement is too big an obstacle to that. So the U.S. rulers feel compelled to rely on deals with the bureaucrats.

It's similar to how the bosses can't stand the unions. But as long as they can't get rid of them, they prefer to keep the union bureaucrats in power and rely on their help to police the workers and moderate their demands.

The future of the "peaceful coexistence" between the church and the Stalinist bureaucrats in Poland, however, is not as rosy as it may seem.

The Polish workers have a heroic record of resistance to the bureaucrats. In 1956, 1970, and 1976 this resistance flared into strikes and open rebellions. As the bureaucrats try to resolve their own economic difficulties on the backs of the workers, new and sharper struggles are sure to arise.

The Polish masses will increasingly demand *working-class solutions* to their economic and social problems.

There's not a chance they will settle for wafers, holy water, and hypocritical papal rhetoric. □

Behind Washington's Propaganda Campaign on 'Boat People'

By Fred Feldman

The U.S. government and the imperialist press around the world are whipping up a reactionary campaign against the Vietnamese revolution, pouring out stories be-moaning the plight of the "boat people" leaving Vietnam.

At the same time, the U.S.-dominated regimes in Southeast Asia are carrying out real crimes against refugees and emigrants. The Thai government has returned tens of thousands of Kampuchians to mountainous areas in northwest Kampuchea thought to be controlled by U.S.-backed rightist forces supporting former dictator Pol Pot.

And on June 15 the government of Malaysia announced plans to forcibly expel some 70,000 immigrants from Vietnam. The Malaysian regime is threatening to "shoot on sight" any further "boat people" who seek a haven in Malaysia. The Indonesian government has also said it would bar further immigration from Vietnam.

Unlike the government of Vietnam, the Malaysian and Indonesian regimes have proven records of discriminating and even encouraging pogroms against minorities of Chinese origin. Most of the emigrants from Vietnam are Vietnamese of Chinese descent.

But the same imperialist governments that are daily denouncing Vietnam for its emigration policy are taking a highly sympathetic view of the brutal actions of the Thai, Malaysian, and Indonesian regimes.

This cynical propaganda against the Vietnamese revolution is reminiscent of the lies and distortions used to justify counterrevolutionary moves against the Russian revolution after the workers took power. A similar campaign was waged against the Cuban revolution when the workers and peasants of that country seized imperialist properties.

As was the case in Russia and Cuba, the people leaving Vietnam today are primarily those who benefited from the old regime and have lost privileges due to the socialist revolution. The bulk of southern Vietnam's powerful merchant class was made up of Vietnamese of Chinese origin. When they were expropriated in March and April 1978, completing the overturn of capitalism in the South, the exodus began.

Others—particularly from the upper middle classes—are leaving because Vietnam is a nation under siege by U.S. imperialism. At the same time that the Vietnamese workers and peasants are seeking with

little outside help to repair the damage done by decades of imperialist bombing and occupation, they confront U.S.-instigated wars and threats of war on three fronts.

When the U.S. imperialists were driven out of Vietnam in April 1975, they immediately imposed a tight economic and diplomatic boycott on the new regime. They refused all requests for aid to help in the massive job of reconstruction.

And when the Vietnamese workers and peasants in the South completed the overturn of capitalism in March and April 1978, the imperialists' attacks stepped up. The Beijing Stalinists, seeking to prove their usefulness to Washington, cut off aid to Vietnam and moved massive numbers of troops to the border. The rightist Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea escalated its brutal attacks on vital agricultural regions along Vietnam's borders. And CIA-organized rightist armies in Laos stepped up their activity.

Vietnam has fought back with some success. Its troops helped Kampuchean rebels topple Pol Pot, and it beat back a U.S.-inspired military thrust by Beijing. But the imperialist pressure is not lessening.

The impressive thing under these circumstances is not that a few hundred thousand Vietnamese in a population of 50 million have left or want to leave, but that the Vietnamese government is *permitting them to emigrate*. This is in refreshing contrast to the Soviet rulers' practice of seeking to restrict emigration.

The U.S. imperialists are demanding

that the Vietnamese regime crack down on this emigration and force these people to stay against their will. That's because the U.S. and the other racist imperialist powers don't want too many Asian immigrants.

The main purpose of the propaganda campaign is to discredit and isolate a deepgoing socialist revolution. The imperialists also hope to use the cover of this fake human-rights issue to justify further military moves they may organize to contain the Vietnamese revolution.

Washington's propaganda campaign portrays the U.S. imperialists as the appointed saviors, rescuing Southeast Asia from the Vietnamese peril.

Columnist Anthony Lewis gave voice to this theme when he wrote in the June 14 *New York Times*, "The time has come for the opinion of mankind to focus on the principal source of the misery: the Government of Vietnam."

Lewis's call to arms should be viewed as a signal to do just the opposite. We should redouble our demands on U.S. imperialism to end its war drive against the peoples of Indochina.

Those who are sincere in wanting to help the "boat people"—and much more importantly, the working people of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea—will demand that the U.S. stop all aid to Pol Pot, the Laotian rightists, and the Thai military dictatorship; grant diplomatic recognition to the governments of Vietnam and Kampuchea; and provide massive aid to reconstruct the countries of Indochina. □

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New International Recession on the Horizon

By Winfried Wolf

At the time of the publication of the first French edition of Volume 1 of *Capital* in 1872, Karl Marx added a passage that is very interesting in regard to what we are going to deal with in this article, a passage not found in the German edition.

"But it is only in the epoch where mechanized industry, having taken root fairly deeply, exercises a preponderant influence over the entire national production; where, because of it, foreign trade begins to take precedence over domestic commerce; where the world market successively incorporates vast lands of the New World (America), Asia, and Australia; where finally the industrial nations entering the fray have become fairly numerous—it is from that period alone that we can date the recurring cycles, whose successive phases encompass years and which always culminate in a generalized crisis, the end of one cycle and the starting-point of another. Up to now the duration of these cycles has been ten or eleven years, but there is no reason to think that this figure is fixed. To the contrary, we can infer from the laws of capitalist production, as we have developed them above, that it is variable and that the period of the cycles will gradually shorten." (*Le Capital*; Ed. Sociales, vol. 1, page 456, 1976. Not in English editions.)

This passage on international economic cycles, written more than one hundred years ago at the beginning of the industrial revolution, once again testifies to the acuteness of Marx's analysis. There is not one word that does not apply to reality, particularly to the reality that concerns us today—the late era of capitalism, in the seventh decade of the twentieth century.

The world market is becoming increasingly important to the development of each national cycle. After the end of the long economic boom that followed World War II, we are now witnessing a *synchronization* of the business cycles and, simultaneously, a deepening of the economic crisis, just like at the time of the economic boom of the first industrial revolution a century ago. The only change is that the cycles are of shorter duration—from five to six years now.

Rate of Exportation: Dependence on the World Market

The existence of a capitalist world market is a reflection of the spread of the division of labor to a world scale: an increasingly large share of national production is no longer traded on the domestic market, but on the world market (for commodities or—but this is only an

intermediary—for currency, meaning debit accounts for the importing country and credit accounts for the exporter in equivalent currency).

The phrase by Marx stating that "foreign trade begins to take precedence over domestic commerce" is of course true only for a limited number of small imperialist countries, if we consider strictly the percentages of exports; however, the rate (percentage) of exports—meaning the share of the Gross National Product represented by exports—is very important for the big imperialist powers.

The chart below shows the share of exports in the Gross National Products of the most important imperialist countries:

United States	8.3%
Japan	13.8%
France	20.3%
W. Germany	26.0%
Italy	26.8%
Britain	28.8%
Belgium	47.5%
Netherlands	54.3%

The United States' relatively low rate of exports is explained by the extraordinary size of the U.S. domestic market and by the fact that the U.S. is a major economic power. Despite a low rate of exports, it is in fact, and by far, number one on the world market.

The export rate of the big countries of the European Economic Community, which on the whole is more than twice Japan's rate, is primarily the result of the existence of the Common Market. For instance, 45% of West Germany's exports go to the countries of the EEC. The very high export rates of the Benelux countries is explained by the small size of these imperialist countries (and thus the relative constriction of their domestic market). Out of every two florins or francs these countries "earn," one comes from foreign trade.

Since the end of World War II, major changes have taken place in the imperialist powers' share of the world market. (See table.)

The following are the consequences of the transformations wrought by the last thirty years on the world market. The biggest loser has been Britain, ancestral home of imperialism, whose share in the world market has been reduced by more than half.

The United States, which emerged from World War II as the victor and as the new major imperialist power, has been steadily losing ground, especially to West Germany and Japan—the countries that were militarily defeated in 1945. These countries have now become direct competitors of U.S. imperialism.

West Germany experienced decisive growth in its export rate in the 1950s and 1960s, while the Japanese export boom continues to this day.

Since World War II there has been *no* lasting uniform economic cycle on an international scale. This is explained in part by the blows that the war and immediate postwar period dealt to the development of the world market, the effects of which lasted until the beginning of the 1950s.

But the main reason is the *long economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s*. It was, in fact, the major factor in why there were no real *long-lasting crises* marked by real drops in production. Instead there were periods of slower growth (for example 1957-58).

Under these conditions, a crisis in one country did not threaten to draw other countries into a dangerous spiral; the lack of synchronization in the unfolding of the cycles was not interrupted by the impact of recessions.

In the second place, this long boom allowed different countries to benefit from the fact that the cycles were not synchronized. For example, if signs of an economic crisis developed in the domestic market of one country, but the boom was continuing internationally, that country could make

Share of World Trade (percentage)					
Year	W. Ger.	Britain	France	U.S.	Japan
1937	9*	14	5	12	5
1950	4	12	5	17	1.5
1959	9	10	5	16	3
1978	11.9	6	6.6	12.1	8.1

*1937: Third Reich
Sources: Mandel/Wolf, *Ende der Krise*, p. 149; and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 31.

special efforts to increase its exports to take up the slack.

In this way the non-synchronized character of the economic cycles on an international level was further reinforced, and in particular, the tendencies toward crisis in the domestic market were overcome.

The 1966-67 West German recession is undoubtedly the best example of what we have just said. The West German recession took place at a time when other countries such as Japan, France, Britain, and Italy were experiencing major growth. This meant their domestic markets could be targets for an export drive, in this case carried out by Germany.

West Germany was able to overcome its recession through exporting, and 1968 and 1969 saw the beginning of the new German boom.

Since the end of the 1960s, however, the tendency has been for the cycles of recession to become more uniform as a result of growing tendencies toward crisis in all the countries. A first international recession took place in 1971—West Germany was not yet hit. Then in 1974 the cycle of economic crisis spread to such a large extent, with all the imperialist countries experiencing the crisis at the same time, in a synchronized manner, that all avenues of escape were blocked.

And today we are witnessing the unfolding of the most serious crisis the capitalist world has experienced since 1929. Seventeen million persons are officially listed as unemployed in the U.S., Japan, Australia, and Western Europe alone. Since 1974, it appears that no country has been able to really pull out of the vicious circle imperialism is suffering from. A first year of boom in 1976 was followed nearly everywhere by a slight slowdown in growth in 1977 (in general the boom was slowed by the lack of strong consumer demand).

In 1978 there was a recovery in comparison with the previous two years.

1979 seems to be the year of a turning point. Some countries are already beginning a downturn. Others, like Japan and, in part, West Germany, are experiencing their last year of recovery. Let us, therefore, take a specific look at the various countries and their situation in 1979.

The boom in the American economy is undoubtedly already over. As a result of profits (so far still real) and the permanent inflation that continues to rise at an annual rate of 10%, there is a growing tendency for the unions and the working class to stand up to Carter's wage policy. While unemployment has fallen, it is holding steady at 5.8%. Predictions regarding the date of the next crisis differ only as to whether it will begin in 1979 or 1980. According to Citibank, the most probable date is late 1979.

In France, for now, there is no chance of a more extensive recovery, despite the victory of the bourgeois parties in the March 1978 elections. France is also seeing



"The good news, I'm in the vanguard of the fight against inflation—the bad news is, I'm fired"

a rise in profits, but the French capitalists are not inclined to invest. Meanwhile, the rate of inflation has again reached double digits (more than 10%), and we can soon expect to see political and economic remedies applied to the situation.

The official number of unemployed in France is 1.4 million (the real figure is closer to 1.8 million). Despite the recovery, this is a historic record for unemployment! New threats of massive layoffs are looming; moreover a large number of factories are occupied by the workers. Under these conditions one can easily understand why the bosses in France do not foresee anything good happening and are already more or less awaiting the next crisis.

The Italian economic situation presents the same overall picture. Until the end of 1978 the recovery was quite restrained. Nevertheless, a slight improvement is expected in 1979. But inflation has already reached a rate of 13% (the highest in the EEC), and runs a strong risk of going from a trot to a gallop. The opposition of the trade unions and especially the working class to the austerity policy and growing unemployment (1.6 million people), as well as the political instability stemming from the elections, all point to the recovery coming to an end in 1979 in this country as well.

The British economy experienced a small measure of growth in 1978, the first it has seen since the crisis began. This growth is primarily the result of a significant reduction in real wages. The number of unemployed (1.4 million) is, as elsewhere, very high for a period of economic recovery. The inflation rate is climbing, having just reached 10%. The offensive of the British working class earlier this year showed that whether there is a Labour or Conservative government, it is not possible, in the short run, for capitalism to impose the "radical cure" it needs.

All that British capitalism can do is sit

back and wait for the arrival of the crisis stemming from the state of the world market, which will undoubtedly hit the British Isles.

Japan is about the only country that does not completely fall into the same framework. In the past three years it has seen appreciable growth rates. In 1979 it is continuing to experience real growth of the same magnitude. Even the inflation rate remains low (around 4%).

In terms of unemployment, however, Japan falls into what is now the normal pattern. There are 1.3 million people officially on the unemployed rolls, and up to now there has not been a real decline in unemployment. On the contrary, there has been a large increase in the number of overtime hours, which in fact serves to replace the groups of "special" (temporary) workers.

To summarize and conclude, we can say the following: there are very strong reasons to believe that a new international recession is on the horizon. It may emerge toward the end of 1979 in some countries and in 1980 in others. In the meantime the policies of the various imperialist countries, especially the United States, could be decisive at a time when they again find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they try to stop inflation (by raising interest rates and cutting public expenditures) they will plunge headlong into recession. If they allow the economy to roll along or even pick up steam (through new programs for recovery, or belated programs, as in West Germany) inflation will get stronger and attempts to apply the brakes will become even more risky.

Whichever scenario is chosen, the international cycle of economic crisis is moving very rapidly toward the next big crisis, with the workers movement inheriting nothing from the boom except record levels of unemployment left over from the previous crisis. □

4. The Continuing Struggle for Freedom

By Ernest Harsch

[Last of a series]

It is just after dawn on December 16, 1978. The countryside around Blood River, in Natal, echoes with gunfire as infantrymen of the South African Defence Force reenact a battle that took place there exactly 140 years earlier.

In that battle, along the banks of what was then called the Ncome River, a group of white colonialists under Andries Pretorius massacred 3,000 Zulu warriors who were defending their land. The Ncome was renamed Blood River by the victors. And every year since, Afrikaners have celebrated the day as a triumph for "white, Christian civilization."

On this anniversary, Andries Treurnicht, the deputy minister of plural relations and the leader of the National Party in the Transvaal, affirms before a crowd of 1,000 whites at Blood River that the system imposed by the white victors—apartheid—is "just." Less than 100 miles away, at Colenso, Minister of Plural Relations and Development Piet Koornhof reminds his listeners that the Battle of Blood River was a victory over "barbarism" and "cannibalism."

The inhabitants of Soweto commemorate the day differently. They identify with the traditions of resistance that the Zulu martyrs at Blood River symbolized.

While the white celebrations are going on elsewhere, the St. Francis of Assisi Church in Rockville, Soweto, is packed with 1,000 Blacks. Speaker after speaker condemns the government's apartheid policies, police harassment, detention without trial, bannings, and Bantu Education.

Chants of "amandla ngawethu" (power is ours) fill the air. Hundreds of clenched fists shoot up . . .

When the white supremacists cracked down in October 1977, they had few illusions that the repression would be entirely effective in stifling political opposition. James T. Kruger, the minister of justice, police, and prisons, said that when he banned the Black Consciousness groups, "I knew these organizations would not fade away. They are always there, busy reorganizing and moving forward."

And reorganize they did.

Within weeks of the bannings, the Soweto Action Committee (SAC) was established, under the chairmanship of Ishmael Mkhabela. It presented itself as an umbrella Black political organization.

Shortly after its formation, a leader of

the SAC said in an interview with an Amsterdam weekly, "A dangerous vacuum arose in the organization of the struggle, especially among Blacks, after the regime's actions of October 19, 1977. We had to reorganize. A number of people had to flee, others were imprisoned. The SAC is now the mouthpiece of the Black people, especially of the million and a half people of Soweto" (*Vrij Nederland*, April 1, 1978).

The SAC as a body did not appear to have established for itself the same degree of political authority in Soweto that groups like the Black People's Convention or the Black Parents Association had before they were outlawed. But the SAC maintained a visible presence, holding occasional rallies or commemorative gatherings that drew thousands of participants.

And although the leaders of the SAC displayed an understandable caution in their public pronouncements, the organization went on record favoring a complete international economic, political, and cultural boycott of South Africa, the advocacy of which is a crime under the provisions of the Terrorism Act.

Another group formed shortly after the crackdown was the Soweto Students League (SSL), chaired by Colin Kotu. To an extent, it has attempted to fill the vacuum created by the banning of the Soweto Students Representative Council, organizing continued resistance against the racist system of Bantu Education and sponsoring commemorative actions. Most of its executive officers, including Kotu, were detained in January and February 1979, but the group soon began to reorganize itself.

In late April 1978, another new group, the Azania People's Organisation (Azapo), was formed after sixty Black delegates from around the country held a conference in Roodepoort, near Johannesburg.

Azapo openly declared its adherence to the ideas of the Black Consciousness movement, adopting the slogan "one people, one Azania." It called for the establishment of one parliament for everyone, within a unitary state. It demanded a common educational system to replace the present segregated one.

Reflecting to an extent the current within the Black Consciousness movement that is looking more closely toward mobilization of the working class, Azapo announced that it would direct its efforts toward Black workers.

The formation of a new, openly proclaimed Black Consciousness group so

soon after the bannings was an especially defiant act and took the authorities completely by surprise. The government moved quickly, however, and within a month had detained seven of Azapo's top leaders.

A couple of activists from the outlawed BPC whom I spoke to said that they too had not expected a group like Azapo to be formed so quickly. They saw its emergence as confirmation of the continued mood of militant resistance in the Black townships.

The Committee of Ten was one of the few influential organizations to escape the bannings of October 1977, although the bulk of its members had been taken into detention. As a result, it ceased to function for a period.

Nevertheless, the Committee of Ten continued to wield considerable authority in Soweto and played an important role in encouraging resistance to the imposition of the regime's community council. After most of its members had been freed in late 1978, the committee resumed functioning.

On April 1, 1979, it held its first public meeting in many months, drawing a crowd of 2,000 supporters in Soweto. They enthusiastically greeted the committee's revival, urged it to represent their interests, and voted that the committee should not engage in discussions with the government "until community councils and the . . . pass laws have been totally done away with."

One banned leader of the BPC had earlier told me that there was some discussion about the possibility of drawing the SAC, the Committee of Ten, Azapo, and other groups closer together, either through greater coordination of their efforts or through the formation of a common organization or front. Shortly before the Committee of Ten's public rally, the SAC announced that it would dissolve itself as a separate organization in order to give its full support to the Committee of Ten.

Besides these open organizations, there are others that are functioning clandestinely.

The Soweto Students Representative Council, which was among the groups outlawed in October 1977, still has some adherents in the township. Tsietsi Mashinini, the first president of the SSRC who is now living in exile, told me in Lusaka, Zambia, that the SSRCers within South Africa managed to publish at least three issues of an underground journal during 1978.

The African National Congress (ANC)

and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), both of which were banned in 1960, also have underground cells within South Africa, although their main bases are outside the territory. Their orientation is toward preparing for guerrilla warfare and toward carrying out occasional sabotage actions, of which there have been an increasing number since mid-1977.

According to everyone I spoke to who was involved in the massive upsurge of 1976, neither the ANC nor PAC had played any appreciable role in them. Since the rebellions, however, both groups have been recruiting young Blacks from among the many hundreds who were forced into exile by the massive repression. Often, these youths have been given a few months of rudimentary military instruction and sent back into South Africa. Isolated to a large extent from the ongoing mass struggles in the townships, many have been killed or captured by the regime.

Among the supporters of the Black Consciousness movement whom I met in South Africa, there was a widespread feeling that the current campaigns of the ANC and PAC were extremely ineffective and, moreover, that they wasted the lives of many dedicated young militants. They were likewise critical of the ANC's factional attitude toward the Black Consciousness movement and its claims that it was the only "true" liberation movement.

Nevertheless, most activists felt that there was a strong need for unity among all currents fighting the regime, and that the ANC and PAC could play a useful role by assisting the struggles of the Black masses themselves.

Simmering Caldrons

... Five Black officials of the West Rand Administration Board raid the home of a woman in Alexandra, east of Johannesburg, to confiscate some illegal homemade liquor. As they take the woman to their car for arrest, they are quickly surrounded by more than 100 Blacks. The woman is rescued by the crowds, amid chants of "Kill the dogs!"

The officials open fire, killing one person and wounding two others . . .

The smoldering anger and constant frustration of township life periodically bursts out into the open. Sometimes a relatively small incident can quickly escalate into a spontaneous assault against symbols of white authority or against collaborators with the regime.

Unrest in the Black townships of New Brighton, Kwazekhele, Zwide, and Uitenhage, all near Port Elizabeth, flared sporadically during 1978, often involving actions by high-school students and other township youths. Scores were arrested, and some were shot.

At the President Steyn Mine in Welkom, 150 miles south of Johannesburg, Black mine workers rebelled for seven hours on



Scene from Soweto uprising in June 1976. Although regime moved a year later to ban nearly all Black Consciousness organizations, new and reorganized groups sprang up immediately.

May 22, 1978, burning down several administration buildings. The Anglo American Corporation, which owns the mine, called in police to quell the protest, resulting in more than a dozen injuries and sixteen arrests.

The low wages and poor working conditions of Black workers have led to continuing strike action.

In February 1978, some 1,000 Black workers in Isithebe, an industrial area within KwaZulu, walked off their jobs to demand higher pay (wages were as low as R6.50 a week). On the second day of the strike, the workers were joined in the streets by several thousand supporters. The strike lasted a week, and ended only in the face of employer intransigence and police attacks.

During 1978, there were also strikes by 800 coal miners in Entumeni, bus drivers in Alberton and Johannesburg, municipal workers in Clermont and Amanzimtoti (both near Durban), 850 women canning workers in East London, and 200 women workers at the Eveready battery plant in Port Elizabeth.

Black strikes are still continuing. So far this year, there have been strikes by male

and female textile employees in Umtata, the capital of the Transkei; by African trawler fishermen in Durban; by several hundred bus drivers in Pietermaritzburg and in the Ciskei and BophuthaTswana reserves; by 1,000 workers in the Hammarsdale processing plant of the Rainbow Chicken Company; and by 4,400 Black gold miners at Anglo American's new Elandsrand mine near Carletonville.

As it has since 1976, student unrest has also continued to surface in the Bantustans. In April and May 1978, students boycotted classes and "rioted" in at least four schools in KwaZulu, leading to several deaths and scores of arrests. In early October, some 300 women students at Colana High School in the Lady Frere district of the Transkei were reported to have gone on a "rampage." In most of these cases, the Bantustan authorities blamed the ferment on "outside agitators."

The frequent funerals for Black activists who die in police detention have become another avenue for political expression. In Soweto, New Brighton, and other townships, thousands have recently turned out for such funerals, the memorials being marked by clenched fists, shouts of

"amandla," and freedom songs. Often the police attack.

An angry crowd of thousands of mourners turned out in Mamelodi April 6 for Solomon Mahlangu, who had been hung for his antiapartheid activities. Three days later, thousands more marched through Atteridgeville to protest the execution.

Noncollaboration on the Rise

Opposition to the imposition of the community councils and the Bantustan system is widespread.

In the elections to the Soweto Community Council in February and April 1978, about 94 percent of the eligible voters stayed away from the polls, either out of a lack of interest in the council or outright rejection of the entire project. While the turnout was higher in some of the 130 other townships where the councils have been set up, hundreds of thousands of Blacks stayed away from the polls in those elections as well.

The Transkei Department of Interior revealed November 15, 1978, that out of the estimated 1.25 million Africans outside of the Transkei who are considered Transkei "citizens" by Pretoria, only *fifty-seven* had actually applied for Transkeian "citizenship." And most of them were businessmen or professionals with property in the Transkei.

The South African Indian Council, the government-imposed body of Indian collaborators, suffered a serious blow in December 1978. The Islamic Council of South Africa, which claims to represent 400,000 Muslims, called on all its adherents to cease participating in the SAIC or any other "apartheid institution."

The high degree of political consciousness in townships like Soweto has also allowed many Blacks to quickly see through the government's most recent maneuvers. This was indicated by the reactions to the November 15 appointment of the "liberal" Piet Koornhof as the new minister of plural relations and development.

The Black collaborators hailed the appointment. David Thebehali, the chairman of the Soweto Community Council, called Koornhof the Black population's "new leader." Chief Gatsha Buthelezi declared that Koornhof "gives me hope."

However, a random survey conducted by reporters of the Black-staffed Johannesburg *Post* found that a majority of the Blacks it asked saw no difference between Koornhof and other government ministers.

Jerry Mokirisi, of Soweto, dismissed Koornhof as "a participant in the making of the laws that oppress black people." Selina Rathaba responded, "I am not interested in who takes over [the cabinet post] because I benefit nothing."

Ishmael Kabe, a clerk, stated, "We know his appointment is for a simple purpose: to

cool down the raging tempers of the black population.

"We equally know that the Government is merely applying delaying tactics.

"Thebehali and his stooges are just excited over nothing. We are not surprised at their behaviour because they are part and parcel of the present regime."

Despite the constant risk of police reprisal, some of the opposition to the regime has been expressed through organized and open political activities.

On June 16 and 17, 1978, for instance, 6,000 Blacks rallied in Soweto to mark the second anniversary of the 1976 rebellions. The commemorations were called by the SAC, SSL, the Black Priests Solidarity Group, and other organizations. In addition, about 40 percent of Soweto's Black workers stayed away from their jobs to mark the occasion, and similar memorials were held in Cape Town and other cities.

Some 4,000 "squatters" and their supporters rallied July 31 in the Crossroads shantytown near Cape Town to express their opposition to government plans to demolish the camp.

Isolated incidents of student unrest erupted September 12-13 in Kingwilliamstown and Ginsburg during the first anniversary of the murder of Steve Biko, one of the key founders of the Black Consciousness movement.

A little more than a month later, on the first anniversary of the October 1977 crackdown, thousands of persons attended protest rallies in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town, East London, Port Elizabeth, and Witbank.

The Soweto action, which was called by the SAC, featured speakers from the Soweto Teachers Action Committee (STAC), the Writers Association of South Africa, and the South African Black Social Workers Association. Fanyana Mazibuko of the STAC declared that teachers should continue their boycott of Bantu Education until the whole educational structure had been changed.

Defying Pretoria

Hlaku Kenneth Rachidi, the last president of the BPC, defiantly declared in an interview shortly after his release from prison (and before he was banned): "Mr Jimmy Kruger, the Minister of Justice, now speaks of there being security and peace because of the clampdown. There will never be peace and security in the true sense while the aspirations of the majority of the people are stifled" (Johannesburg *Post*, October 30, 1978).

The December 16 rally in Soweto, called to counter the white celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, was sponsored by the SAC, STAC, SSL, Committee of Ten, and other organizations. Similar actions were held in Tembisa and elsewhere.

In January 1979, students at Kimberley's ten Coloured primary schools and

three senior secondary schools staged mass boycotts of classes to protest against the overcrowded conditions in the classrooms. Meanwhile, in Soweto, about 1,000 Blacks attended a rally at the Regina Mundi Catholic Church to discuss ways to continue the struggle against Bantu Education. One youth was shot to death by police at KwaMakhuta High School near Durban March 6, during protests by 300 African students.

Looking Forward

Less visible than the open expressions of opposition are the discussions, debates, and organizing activities going on below the surface, developments that could shape the future direction of the freedom struggle.

... As he enters, he quickly scans the room, registering his surroundings in just a few seconds. His face breaks out into a huge grin as he spots another former political prisoner, an old friend he had not seen since they were both detained many months ago. They hug and pat each other on the back.

I ask the new arrival what it felt like to be detained for so long. He shrugs and smiles. It was just a common occupational hazard, he says. Not really worth talking about. But it did give him a lot of time to think.

He pauses, then asks, Would I mind if he discussed the course of the liberation struggle instead ...

Among the militants of the Black Consciousness movement whom I had discussions with in South Africa, there was no sense of resignation or feeling that the repression made it impossible to continue organizing. Certain calculated risks had to be taken, they felt, but the security police were not omnipotent, and there were a number of things that could be done quietly.

The radicalization that has blossomed in the Black townships since just before the Soweto rebellions has sunk especially vibrant roots among many of the younger leaders of the BPC, SASO, SASM, SSRC, and other banned organizations. Although I was able to get only a few firsthand glimpses of this process, there appear to be many rich political discussions under way, in which virtually every major political question is being raised.

Activists are trying to evaluate the lessons of the Soweto uprisings. Why were the rebellions unsuccessful in bringing down the regime? Could more have been done to draw workers into the struggle? Should there have been greater organization and political direction to the upsurge?

Everyone was avidly following developments beyond South Africa's borders, and trying to analyze South Africa's place in the African revolution in general. "The liberation of Zimbabwe and Namibia will

be a severe blow to this racist regime," one former BPC leader told me. "It will isolate it even more. And we will have more allies."

Not one Black I talked to in South Africa was less than enthusiastic about the Cuban aid to the African liberation struggle. They especially applauded the Cuban role in Angola in turning back the South African invasion of 1975-76.

A former student leader, who was just in the middle of reading some speeches by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, said he thought the Cubans were "true proletarian internationalists. They practice what they preach."

Among some within the Black Consciousness movement, there is also a realization that there are serious social disparities in the Black-ruled states to the north, that liberation from direct colonial rule does not necessarily mean an end to mass poverty or freedom from foreign economic domination.

This has led to some serious consideration of the kind of society they want to build in South Africa itself.

Some of the founders of the Black Consciousness movement had favored postponing such discussions indefinitely or outlining their ultimate goals in only the vaguest of terms. But many of those I spoke with clearly disagreed with such an approach. They thought it was imperative to begin to define their objectives more concretely, in part to have a clearer conception of how best to orient toward the ongoing struggles.

A few had already come to the conclusion that it was necessary to overthrow capitalism along with white supremacy in order to attain liberation from all forms of oppression and exploitation. "Scientific socialism" was the term a couple used to describe their aims. They were quick to add that they did not mean "the so-called African socialism" of capitalist countries like Tanzania and Guinea. Several had read works by Marx and Lenin, despite the difficulties of obtaining Marxist literature in South Africa.

I asked those who considered themselves socialists how many others thought like they did. One, who said he was in close contact with the "scholars"—the high-school student activists in Soweto—maintained that many of the younger leaders considered themselves "communists." Another, who was quite knowledgeable about recent political trends within the Black Consciousness milieu, said that if the BPC or SASO were today able to hold open conferences, their resolutions would be "definitely more to the left."

The popularity of socialist ideas is also growing among the Black population as a whole. An editorial in the May 4, 1979, *Johannesburg Star* raised an alarm about the "steady drift towards communism/marxism/socialism on the part of South Africa's urban blacks. . . . This trend has

been confirmed by three major surveys which show that the majority of urban blacks prefer to call themselves communists, marxists or socialists rather than capitalists."

However, although I only met a few of them, there are also a number of key leaders of the Black Consciousness movement who are less open to socialist ideas, at least at this point, and some who flatly reject the concept of class struggle, claiming that it does not reflect the interests of the Black population.

Others saw no contradiction whatever between the national liberation movement and the struggle of the working classes—the vast bulk of the Black population—against the white bourgeoisie.

A leading militant of the BPC stressed in his discussions with me that the Black

working class would in the future have to provide more of the actual leadership of the freedom struggle. He said that "petty-bourgeois Blacks" could of course participate, but that they could not be relied on to provide the kind of audacious and clear-sighted direction that was necessary to win.

"Black workers," he concluded, "have to have their own political leadership."

"What kind of leadership?" I asked.

"A revolutionary party. We must have one. Or . . . it will be like Soweto again, just hitting out blindly, not hitting the enemy where it really hurts. Soweto was good, it taught us many things, but it could have been better, more powerful. We were not very experienced then. Now, we see we must organize ourselves into a strong force, a more disciplined force.

"Next time, we must be better prepared."

Trotskyists Sentenced to Prison in Hong Kong

By S.S. Wu

HONG KONG—Three members and a sympathizer of the Revolutionary Marxist League, a Trotskyist group supporting the Fourth International, were sentenced to jail June 5 for "unlawful assembly." Another three members received suspended sentence.

The four who were imprisoned are: Leung Kwok-hung, a twenty-two-year-old garment worker, who was sentenced to two months in prison; Chan Chung-wah, a twenty-three-year-old student, three months; Wong Chung-ching, a twenty-one-year-old shopkeeper, three months; and Hou Man-wan, a thirty-year-old delivery worker, two months.

They were accused of having taken part in an illegal demonstration on April 5 in front of the Hong Kong offices of Beijing's Xinhua news agency. The RML had called a rally on that date to commemorate the third anniversary of the Tien An Men demonstration in Beijing and similar demonstrations in other major Chinese cities, and to protest recent repression against the movement for democratic rights in China. Official approval for the rally was not received until the day before it was scheduled to be held.

At the end of the rally it was decided that representatives of the RML be sent to the Xinhua offices to hand in a letter of protest to the Beijing government. It is this action that was deemed illegal by the colonial government of Hong Kong.

Although it is not uncommon for the colonial government to use the reactionary "unlawful assembly" laws to attack the development of mass movements in Hong Kong, this is the first time since 1967 that protesters have been jailed under this legislation.

The sentences thus represent a step-up of colonial repression. It is not surprising

that the RML has been selected as the first group to be victimized in this way. Since its foundation in 1973, the RML has been the most active and outspoken opponent of the British government here and the first organization to rally support for democratic rights in China.

The imprisonment of the four activists must also be seen in a broader context.

On the one hand, in the past couple of years protests against the housing shortage and lack of adequate educational facilities have been on the rise. Although many of these movements, thanks to their reformist leadership, have been kept from developing into generalized social confrontations, the ruling class is frightened by their scope and intensity.

On the other hand, the ruling class is concerned about the impact of the coming economic recession. For in the past few months spontaneous actions by workers to defend their living standards have erupted sporadically, some involving up to 1,000 workers.

It is precisely this objective trend that compels the government to begin to drop its democratic façade and resort to outright repression. In fact, prior to the sentencing of the RML militants, repression had already been unleashed against other social movements.

In these circumstances it is very important for the mass movement in Hong Kong and the workers movement abroad to speak out against these moves by the colonial government. Any possible form of support from abroad—whether from trade unions, human rights groups, or individuals—is badly needed. Protests should be sent to British embassies around the world, with copies to the RML, 9 Bailey Street, 7/F, Hungnam, Kowloon, Hong Kong. □

Italy—Resistance Mounts to CP's Policy of Class Collaboration

[The following background articles on the situation in the workers movement in Italy were prepared as part of the discussion material for a conference of European Trotskyist trade unionists, held in Antwerp June 2-3.]

* * *

After nearly three years, "national unity" in Italy has been plunged into crisis. The recent congress of the Italian Communist Party confirmed that the party would withdraw from the parliamentary majority.

Yet no critical assessment has been made by the CP leadership. On the contrary, the same policy of extensive collaboration among all the parties in the so-called "constitutional spectrum" is being proposed once again, as if the last three years had not happened.

The policy of "historic compromise," adopted by the CP beginning in 1973, became crystallized in mid-1976 after the elections. The specific form it took was that of "national unity"—an extremely broad parliamentary majority resulting from an alliance between the two reformist workers parties, and all the bourgeois parties except for the fascists of the MSI (Italian Social Movement).

The need to establish this sort of national unity policy flowed from the explosiveness of the situation in Italy. After years of struggle, the mass movement was pressing the demand for an overall political solution. The economic crisis had reduced the bourgeoisie's economic margin and undermined its ability to grant partial concessions. The working class realized that it would be hard to solve even its most immediate problems without an overall solution, a governmental solution.

Broad sectors of the population, students, the unemployed, youth, women, and even substantial layers of the petty bourgeoisie were turning to the workers movement and the trade unions to win satisfaction of their demands. The 1975 and 1976 elections reflected this deepgoing shift to the left. At that time the leaderships of the trade unions and reformist parties succeeded in limiting the power of contract struggles by holding out the prospect of elections, just as they claimed that elections would settle the question of the government.

Although the elections did not give the left an absolute majority, they confirmed the inability of the bourgeois parties to rule alone. An extreme sharpening of the social crisis and mounting class confrontations were on the agenda.

It was in this context of an extremely

unstable capitalist system and working-class challenges to it that the reformists, headed by the CP, then at the peak of their strength, proved to be the decisive element enabling the system to survive. The CP in effect agreed to take the tack of abstaining in parliament in order to keep in power the Christian Democratic government of Andreotti—a bourgeois government that made no bones about the fact that its central goal was the normalization and recovery of capitalist accumulation at the expense of the workers.

The CP went on a huge propaganda campaign, explaining that a working-class solution to the crisis was impossible, and that what was needed to overcome the awesome economic problems was a policy of national unity, of collaboration with the bosses.

Up until then the CP's propaganda had emphasized reforms and partial improvements within the perspective of a "new development model." But while continuing to hold out these objectives, the CP now explained that they could be attained only through a rigorous austerity policy of cutting back consumption in favor of investments.

At the same time, the trade-union leaderships also launched a barrage of propaganda for a rigorous austerity policy and sacrifices.

The policy of national unity has gone through three different phases. The first dated from the period immediately after the June 1976 elections to the middle of 1977. A second phase extended from July 1977 to the beginning of 1978. This was followed by a third phase, lasting up to the crisis of the Andreotti government in early 1979, when the CP returned to the opposition and forced the calling of early elections.

In the first phase, the CP abstained in parliament on the question of the government and on government-proposed measures (although in fact it voted for several of them). The explanation given to the CP's restless ranks was that the party had to closely monitor the actions of the Christian Democracy to see whether it really could set in motion a plan for governmental reform and economic development.

The second phase opened when, after three months of discussion, the six parties (CP, SP, Christian Democracy, Republican Party, Democratic Socialist Party, and Liberal Party) signed a programmatic agreement and adopted it as a parliamentary measure.

This highly abstract governmental program conformed faithfully to the instructions of the International Monetary Fund.

The workers parties agreed to the principles of reducing labor costs, labor "mobility" and layoffs, and a resurgence of profits. The government remained Christian Democratic and in Andreotti's hands.

Finally, after another long crisis at the beginning of 1978, the CP finally succeeded in becoming an integral part of the parliamentary majority supporting the new Andreotti government. It did not, however, manage to get any cabinet ministries, something it had demanded.

The new government received a vote of confidence in parliament just after the Aldo Moro kidnapping. It assembled an extremely broad range of forces, from the CP to the neo-fascists of the National Democracy.

It should be explained here that the CP was able to pull off this sort of national unity policy without major problems because of two special factors.

The first of these was the political and organizational crisis of the far left, which was totally disoriented by the unfolding of events and incapable of offering a political line and program—not to mention concrete tactics—vis-à-vis the CP.

Second was the development of terrorism and of adventurist actions conducted on various occasions by groups belonging to Workers' Autonomy. The CP used the pretext of these actions to convince its activists that national unity was needed to save democracy. It supported the repressive measures taken at that time by the bourgeoisie, including reinforcement of the police.

It was precisely in the area of law and order—in strengthening the state's repressive apparatus—that the Andreotti government obtained the most important results. And it was precisely in regard to the nature of the bourgeois state that the CP, aided by the terrorists, has managed to sow the greatest confusion among the masses in the last few years.

The Pace of Implementation of Austerity

But while the policy of national unity has been put into effect, what has been the pace of implementation of the austerity policy itself?

It is first of all necessary to consider three general political points.

The bourgeoisie's success in the social and economic spheres has remained limited. The austerity policy hit the most oppressed social sectors harder than it did the organized working class. The policy of the reformists alienated the student movement from the working class.

The Andreotti government carried out an ongoing political campaign about the



Nogues/Syigma

Enrico Berlinguer addressing mass rally in Turin. CP general secretary is finding it harder and harder to

impose bosses' program of "workforce mobility" (layoffs) on union rank and file.

scope of the sacrifices to be made. But when it came to taking concrete measures, the government used a delaying tactic in order to gradually weaken a movement it considered too powerful to attack head-on.

It was able to obtain some results this way, but in the final analysis these proved wholly inadequate in relation to the economic needs of big business. The shutdown of entire factories is a goal that the bosses are still a long way from attaining. Many times there has been talk of an all-out attack on cost-of-living wage increases, but each time the idea has been rejected. Cost-of-living adjustments remain a thorn in the bosses' side.

There has always been a striking difference between statements by reformist and trade-union leaders or official union positions in favor of accepting austerity and capitalist restructuring, and the concrete application of such measures on the plant and local level in face of pressure from the union rank and file. One perennial complaint of the capitalists is that things the trade unions put on paper do not get implemented, that trade-union leaders say one thing in Rome but do something else under pressure from their membership in Milan or Turin.

The first major attack came in the autumn of 1976. The government raised prices of gasoline, medicines, and a series of other necessities. It also stopped cost-of-living increases for workers with incomes greater than 8 million lira [U.S. \$9,200] a year, and reduced those of workers with annual incomes above 6 million lira [U.S. \$7,000].

The reformists and trade-union leaders issued various protests, but these were totally symbolic. In many factories

spontaneous strikes broke out, and road-blocks were organized by the workers. However, this was a flash in the pan; the strikes did not spread. The CP and trade-union leaderships intervened first in an effort to weaken the mobilization, then to curtail it. In a situation where reformist policies had sown confusion among vanguard layers of workers, this effort succeeded, albeit with some difficulty. Trade-union leaders promised a general strike, which was never organized.

The dispersed yet powerful response by the workers made the bourgeoisie realize that it had to act with prudence—above all, that it had to involve the bureaucracies more directly in support of antilabor measures in the plants.

Thus in early 1977 a new series of measures were imposed through an agreement among the trade unions, the government, and the Confindustria [the employers' organization]. This involved more price and rate hikes, abolition of cost-of-living increases for severance pay, taxation of fringe benefits, abolition of seven holidays during 1977, and unfavorable changes in the "market basket" of commodities used to calculate the cost-of-living index. (Newspapers and public transportation, whose costs were soon to rise drastically, were taken out.)

The fact that trade-union leaderships directly supported these measures prevented a fightback from developing in the plants. Still, an intense debate occurred within plant committees and among the workers, and some rank-and-file sectors of the CP came out with critical positions. Rank-and-file trade-union cadres began to draw conclusions about a variety of refor-

mist politics they had not been exposed to before.

At around the same time, a decree-law was passed that reduced state subsidies to municipalities (the Stamatati decree). This was followed by staff cutbacks—especially female employees—and a deterioration of social services. The Christian Democracy also sought to use this to put the blame on Socialist and Communist municipal administrations—which for their part had done nothing to fight the decree.

The famous programmatic accord among the six parties, signed in mid-1977, proved difficult to implement in practice. Discontent was building up within the working class. Rationalization schemes were delayed and frequently blocked by the workers' resistance. Pressure from the workers forced certain industrial unions to take initiatives in fighting for jobs, although they did so on the basis of vague demands.

This is what led up to the big metalworkers strike of December 2, 1977, when 200,000 workers converged on Rome, drawing in substantial numbers of workers from other industries, as well as youth and students. The demonstration had a clearly antigovernment character. On that occasion the FLM (Metalworkers Federation) became a social and political rallying point for broad layers of workers and youth, presenting itself objectively as an opponent of the government of national unity.

The link between the policies of national unity and austerity, and the need for the state and the bourgeois government to subordinate the unions to their own interests, were seen more clearly in this situa-

tion. The CP and the bourgeoisie took a joint initiative toward the unions, although it was dictated by different considerations in each case.

Following the big demonstration the CP provoked a governmental crisis, demanding to be included in the government without further ado as a basic guarantee that social change would be carried out. But for this maneuver to have any credibility in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the CP also had to give assurances of its ability to tightly control the unions and drag them back into the framework of the austerity policy. Procapitalist forces within the unions, for their part, worked to see that the economic imperatives of the bourgeoisie were respected. While discussions about the government were going on—the CP succeeded only in winning formal inclusion within the parliamentary majority—an operation seeking to “normalize” the unions was in the works. This was the so-called Assembly of the EUR.*

Through a totally bureaucratic vote and a national assembly of handpicked cadres, the trade-union leaderships came up with a programmatic document which, behind its declarations about giving priority to the South and to jobs, failed to conceal its total subordination to the laws of the capitalist market.

Trade-union leaders launched a massive ideological campaign about the inevitability of capitalism in the current period. CP trade-union leader Luciano Lama explained that layoffs were necessary, and that he looked forward to a new period of economic development like that of the 1950s.

In Italy, the 1950s were synonymous with repression of the workers movement and inhuman exploitation.

In this situation the trade-union left demonstrated its full strategic weakness. Incapable of presenting an overall alternative program, it used the old tactic of trying to pressure the trade-union leaderships—with negligible results. However, the bureaucracy's maneuvers provoked a deep malaise in the union ranks, though to a somewhat lesser extent among the masses of workers disoriented by the new policy.

In the provincial assemblies, substantial minorities spoke out in opposition despite all the leaderships' maneuvers. (A case in point was in Milan, where one-third of the delegates voted for an alternative motion.)

Although the “Platform of the EUR” was presented as a platform of struggle to

respond to “rising discontent and rebelliousness in the *mezzogiorno* (the south of Italy) and among the youth,” it is actually a social pact. It restates the objective laid out previously in the agreement of the six parties, and thus accommodates to what is economically compatible for the bourgeoisie, both national and international.

The platform's declared objective is to hold down labor costs and raise productivity. It thus accepts price hikes and cutbacks in public spending. The unions decide “on their own” to curtail labor costs by restraining their demands. The national trade-union federations, while formally granting full discretion in these matters to their industrial federations, intervened more and more heavy-handedly to hold back the most advanced sectors.

In the final analysis, the platform accepts “mobility” of the labor force within a plant and from one plant to another, which is nothing other than a euphemism for layoffs. It proposes to restructure wages in a way that would result in a reduction of overall pay increases, the loss of certain automatic raises, and an end to the practice of across-the-board pay raises for all.

The trade-union left won only one small victory, on the question of employment agencies—offices where laid-off workers would be stuck for a time waiting for either a new job or definitive termination.

The final draft of the platform maintains this demand, although it is expressed in such general terms as to make it scarcely workable.

Paradoxically, it was precisely after the “Assembly of the EUR” that the austerity policy ran into the greatest difficulties. The reason is simple. The EUR erected a barrier against a major revival of the workers' mobilization. But the EUR alone could not break the workers' strength.

Many of the formulations used in the pact remained quite general. Consequently, when it came to concretely implementing it in the plants—for example, to enforce “mobility,” difficulties ensued. Even CP militants—despite their active support for the ideology of austerity—opposed the bosses' initiatives.

It was one thing to put this platform up for a vote in a meeting of trade-union leaders and functionaries. It was quite another to get it concretely implemented by a union whose militants have for years carried out struggles under a very different line, or by a working class that was not willing to give up its gains.

The overall result was once again to intensify the process of discussion and debate in the unions.

In subsequent months the bourgeoisie failed to achieve more than a single objective, and a contradictory one at that: the law on “*equo canone*” (fair rents). This law satisfied no one, and led to a semiparalysis of the housing market.

The government did impose some new,

limited increases in the cost of public services. But on the whole, cost-of-living and other pay increases ensured that the purchasing power of employed workers diminished only very slightly. On the other hand, for those who work at “unofficial” jobs, the situation became difficult.

The big plans for restructuring the chemical industry, which called for closing of entire factories in Sardinia and in the South, failed to materialize. The workers' resistance in these areas was very strong, and the trade-union leaderships were compelled to initiate some struggles. This has been further stepped up in recent months, with the opening of contract negotiations for the industry.

The debate that occurred last year over contract demands resulted in the introduction—although in partial form—of a call for a shortened workweek without a cut in wages, a demand that had been explicitly rejected in the “Platform of the EUR” and which the CP had opposed by all possible means.

In the latter part of 1978, some nervous sectors of the bourgeoisie tried to force the pace of events, and to put the reformists on the spot. But the reformists themselves were feeling the pressure of discontent from the ranks and were having greater difficulties in bringing the union under control. Certain bourgeois sectors questioned the policy of national union, which had not had the desired effect of wearing down the working class. The CP in turn was forced to raise its voice and provoke the governmental crisis that led to the early elections on June 3. In fact the CP's action in the unions wound up bringing the spreading debate into its own ranks.

The events of these past three years thus reveal a situation in which the working class has kept its organized strength and gains intact. The fact that the bourgeoisie has been on the offensive has not led to a reversal in the relationship of forces. Not only have we not seen the consolidation of a stable pact between the Christian Democracy and the CP—that ironclad social bloc that the main centrist groups viewed as inevitable—but on the contrary, in the recent period there has been an acceleration of the process of politicization within the workers movement, along with a debate that poses the question of what overall strategy the unions should adopt in the present period. It is thus a very favorable situation for revolutionary activity and party building.

The Axes of Struggle Against National Unity

Taking all these factors into account, Italian revolutionary Marxists have carried out work along the following lines:

1. During the first phase, the struggle against austerity focused on defense of cost-of-living increases. This enabled us to take advantage of formal statements by union leaders to explain on a mass level the key role that this instrument plays in

*The “Assembly of the EUR” (named after the EUR Palace in Rome where it was held) marked the trade-union leaderships' turn toward acceptance of austerity. The assembly adopted the “Platform of the EUR” in January 1978. The main points involve: “limitation” of wage increases, rejection of a shorter workweek, and most importantly acceptance of layoffs, rechristened “workforce mobility.”

defense of the purchasing power of the workers. Second, we agitated for centralization of the dispersed struggles against the 1976 decree.

2. The struggle against collaboration by the workers parties with bourgeois forces is posed differently according to the situation. At first we placed particular emphasis on the power of the working-class movement, on the opportunity that the workers parties had to form their own government.

We referred in a general sense to the postwar experience to show how the bosses used the reformists before to rebuild their own regime, only to discard them afterwards. We pointed out that the present policies of the CP simply follow the same old course that already led to defeat.

During the second phase, this seemingly more propagandistic explanation could be filled out with the masses' concrete experience of the austerity policy and the reformists' responsibility for it.

3. Within the unions we have seen an intensification of the debate. This has allowed us to intervene actively, and to lead some partial struggles (such as in defense of the cost-of-living clause) while linking them to an overall strategic orientation. The debate over the EUR enabled us to intervene with an explanation of the basic mechanisms of the capitalist system, while at the same time putting forward an uncompromising line of working-class and trade-union unity and independence.

Our intervention has been most fruitful during the debate in recent months over the platform of contract demands and the struggle to win them. We have centered our fire on the question of shortening the workweek in a way that would guarantee greater unity of the workers and cement an effective break with the line of the EUR. In this way we have been able to lead an embryonic tendency struggle in the factory assemblies, in plant committees, and also in provincial and national assemblies such as that of the FLM, where we have several shop stewards.

4. In face of the government's projected three-year plan incorporating the bourgeoisie's objectives, at which the reformist and trade-union leaderships have had to express bewilderment, our propaganda campaign for the development of a working-class plan to deal with the crisis has had a certain impact.

5. Finally, on the basis of the powerful pressure that exists on a mass level for the CP to enter the government, we have waged an ongoing struggle for a CP-SP government based on the trade unions and the mobilization of the workers. This slogan has been a constant element of our activity throughout these three years, as we have sought to point the way toward class independence and a workers government, in opposition to the class-collaborationist policies of the traditional leaderships. □



Unemployed youth in Rome demonstrate for jobs in early 1977.

As Economy Slumps

Crisis of Trade-Union Left in Italy

Among the most important elements of political and trade-union life in Italy over the course of the past ten years has been the existence of what is commonly called the trade-union left. To understand its role and influence, one must look back over the long period of struggles that opened up in 1968, its characteristics, and its impact on the life of the unions.

Although this period of struggles beginning in 1968 has been fundamental for the development of the trade-union left, certain components of this milieu are of earlier origin. Among these are:

1. Certain sectors linked to the PSUIP.¹ This party, along with the CP, acquired significant representation in both the leadership and the apparatus of the CGIL² and major unions. Part of these sectors entered the CP in 1972 (when the PSUIP dis-

1. Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, born out of a split in the SP in the early 1960s, after the latter entered a center-left government with the Christian Democracy.

2. Italian General Confederation of Labor, the main trade-union federation. Led by Luciano Lama, it is dominated by the CP, and also contains Social Democratic and centrist currents.

solved³).

2. Sectors of the CISL⁴ which have broken from the federation's traditional subordination to the Christian Democracy and sought to link up with the CGIL. These sectors are stronger in the industrial unions.

Throughout the whole period of struggles since 1968, the weight of these components has increased and a trade-union left has arisen that is considerably larger and more complex, including sectors linked to the CP as well.

The struggles of this period were marked by a sharp break with previous traditions of the unions, whether over the content of demands, over forms of struggle, or on the organizational level.

This period of struggle has been quite prolonged, widespread, and deepgoing; it has left an important mark on the trade-union organizations. Italian unions expe-

3. The PSUIP ceased to exist after 1972. Some of its members joined with the Il Manifesto group to form the Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP), while the rest went into the CP.

4. Italian Confederation of Workers Unions, originated as a Christian labor organization.

rienced impetuous, rapid, consistent growth as a result of the decision made by their leaderships not to oppose the wave of struggles but rather to adapt to them so as to control and turn them in a direction corresponding to the interests of the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, to accomplish this they have had to respond—even if only by means of maneuvers—to certain aspirations of the rank and file.

The unions have gone through a tremendous organizational renewal with the beginning of a process of trade-union unification, and especially with the consolidation of factory councils as their basic structural unit.

Meanwhile, the union apparatuses themselves have undergone considerable development and renewal. Many young, militant cadres—the real vanguard of struggles—have begun playing roles in the union leadership at an intermediate level. This is particularly evident in the industrial unions. These cadres form the basis of the new trade-union left, which has grown to such a point that at times it encompasses whole sections—such as the metalworkers—in which this process of renewal has been more pronounced, drawing in even those sectors of the bureaucracy traditionally linked to the big workers parties (e.g., Bruno Trentin and Giorgio Benvenuto).

The political cement binding this trade-union left together consists of a tougher attitude in the fight against layoffs and against governments based on the Christian Democracy, support for more intransigent and militant forms of struggle, and the impulse it has given to workplace struggles over the conditions, pace, classification, and organization of work.

But the very proliferation of such struggles, and the fact that since the economic crisis of 1974-75 they have taken on a more clearly political character, has given rise to a crisis of the trade-union left.

Since 1975 we have seen a more open counteroffensive by the bourgeoisie, taking advantage of the “responsible” positions adopted by the CP and SP in relation to the national economy. In this situation, there has been a marked decline in workplace struggles, since companies have more and more lost their margin for reforms, and hence the reformists have been unable to take a firmer and tougher stand.

Thus we have witnessed a gradual decline in the importance and the role played by the trade-union left, part of which is tending to retreat into the union ranks while the rest is showing itself incapable of offering an alternative to the proposals put forward by leading sectors of the union bureaucracy linked to the big workers parties.

This process has accelerated since the June 20, 1976, elections and the implementation of the policy of national unity.⁵

5. See the preceding article.

The sectors of the bureaucracy linked to the CP and SP are intent on subordinating the unions to the schemes of the government. They seek to draw up a virtual social pact at the expense of the workers.

The platform of the EUR is the most concerted step in this direction so far.

In face of these processes, the trade-union left appears totally disarmed, incapable of offering a strategic alternative of its own. But that is precisely what it must be able to do in order to appear credible to the working class today.

The trade-union left nevertheless continues to survive, occupying a certain place, playing a certain independent and often significant role. This was clear, for example, at the time of the December 6, 1977, strike and the Rome demonstration that brought on the first crisis of the Andreotti government,⁶ and also more recently around the debate over the metalworkers' contract demands.⁷

Several factors account for this:

1. The persistence of powerful combativity in the working class, which is still strong and maintains its previous conquests practically intact.

2. The process of politicization that the class is going through. It is a contradictory and nonlinear process, but a deep one that has had certain repercussions even among the ranks of the CP.

3. The maintenance of the unique features of Italian trade unions (factory councils, unity at the level of the ranks, etc.), and equally important, the maintenance of thousands of militant cadres assembled in the union apparatuses.

4. The absence of a credible alternative pole of attraction to the CP and the reformists. This causes the workers to tend to express their opposition to the reformists' policies mainly on the trade-union level.

For all these reasons, the trade-union left will continue to be an important component of the trade unions for a long time. It will influence the evolution of the political situation, and it is certainly something that revolutionary Marxists must pay attention to in their struggle to build a

6. On December 2, 1977, a general strike of metalworkers took place. Two hundred thousand metalworkers joined in a demonstration in Rome against the austerity policy of the government the CP was supporting. Throughout the month of November the CP and trade-union leaderships had opposed the strike, which was organized in spite of them entirely by sectors of the trade-union left. The magnitude of the discontent expressed in those actions forced the CP to take a “tougher” stance toward the Andreotti government.

7. The elaboration of a platform of demands for the upcoming renewal of contracts in the steel industry was the scene of an important fight over the reduction of working hours. The trade-union leaderships—which at first firmly rejected the demand for a shorter workweek—were forced to include in the platform the call for a thirty-eight-hour week.

revolutionary party. All recent political events have shown this.

In recent years, parts of the trade-union left have had deep ties to the main centrist groups, seeking to make them their political voice. The crisis of the principal centrist groups, the disappearance of Lotta Continua, and the marked loss of influence by Democrazia Proletaria and the PDVD signaled the failure of that effort, and led to a certain isolation of these groups from the trade-union left.

Nevertheless one cannot absolutely exclude the possibility that the trade-union left might once again take an initiative along these lines in the near future, attempting to regroup a more credible and consistent centrist political formation. Indeed there are even now many signs that point in that direction.⁸ Nor can one overlook the fact that many rank-and-file trade-union activists—and often the most militant ones—look to the trade-union left as their point of reference. These are the cadres who could potentially form the base of a class-struggle tendency in the unions.

The question of relations with the trade-union left is thus an important one in the process of building a revolutionary party, and more generally in the development of the revolutionary process in Italy.

This is particularly true for the GCR,⁹ an organization that is still small, but whose greatest implantation is in the factories, especially the big steel plants.

The relationship that revolutionary Marxists should maintain with the trade-union left can only be a dialectical one of unity and struggle, in view of the contradictory role played by the trade-union left.

Unity through the whole series of battles that the trade-union left is constrained to fight, year in and year out, against the dominant sectors of the trade-union leadership, both under pressure from the working class and out of the need to safeguard its own position.

Struggle insofar as the trade-union left is incapable of offering a strategic alternative to the reformists, to whom they remain subordinated in the final analysis, and thus winds up blocking the process of developing consciousness in the working class.

For revolutionary Marxists to carry out such an orientation presupposes that they can implant themselves in the working class and link up with its struggles and development. It also presupposes the capacity to offer a real programmatic alternative to the reformists, a program that expresses the demands of the working class and points the way politically out of the crisis of the capitalist system. □

8. In recent weeks, for example, sectors of the trade-union left have been behind the fight for united action by all forces and currents to the left of the CP.

9. Revolutionary Communist Groups, the Italian section of the Fourth International.