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A TURNING POINT FOR SOLIDARNOSC REPORT FROM THE UNDERGROUND

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Solidarnosc after the failure of the 10 November general strike

Jacqueline ALLIO

As far as the economic situation goes, the figures speak for themselves. Month after month production has continued to decline. The report released by the Central Statistical Bureau for 1982 shows that by comparison with 1981, which can hardly be called a "good year"! — the decline in production varied between 7% and 14% for the first six months of 1982. And it is known that it fell still further after that.

Even in the coal industry, where the government strove to achieve an increase in production, the results were far from brilliant. To be sure, in May 1982, the official press could proclaim that production had risen by 23.3% with respect to May 1981. But a comparison with May 1980, before the explosion of the August strikes, shows a decline of 27.7%.

A Solidarnosc economist pointed out: "Despite the enormous material, moral and political costs it occasioned, the declaration of the state of war did not aid in any way in solving the problems of the Polish economy, that is, in relieving the pressure of the foreign debt, the starving of the economy by lack of raw materials, inflation, the agricultural crisis . . ." (1)

The "operational programs" that were drawn up to assure that certain limited priorities in production would be met have now become a whole system of management in themselves. Most directors of big enterprises were able by the usual methods — bribes and interbureaucratic factional battles — to get themselves put on the priority lists.

AN EVEN MORE DISTORTED ECONOMY

As for the special contracts made with the Kremlin in a series of industries such as textiles, the implications they will have cannot be foreseen. In order to make up for the lack of raw materials, it was decided that certain enterprises that were in danger of having to shut down would henceforth work directly for the Soviet market. They were to ship 85% to 90% of their production to the USSR after using raw materials received from the USSR.

Since only a tenth of the production in such industries reaches the Polish market, when the workers get the same wage as other Polish workers, even if this is low, such an arrangement is obviously going to be a factor creating inflation.

The system of privileges accorded to the army and the police forces, moreover, has a not inconsiderable disruptive effect on the domestic market. A worker at the Polar factory in Wroclaw revealed that in September alone, 1,153 washing machines and 589 refrigerators — extremely scarce items on the Polish market — were delivered to the military distribution network.

Such an economic orientation obviously has to be carried out at the expense of the poorest sections of the working people, as is confirmed both by the fragmentary information given by the official press and the analyses that have appeared in the underground bulletins:

"In such a severe crisis — with a 40% drop in the standard of living and pauperization of broad layers of the society — the promises of 'productivity bonuses' without a general increase in wages means in fact that the poor will get still poorer and the rich still richer." (2)

How could an economic reform get anywhere in such conditions?

It is because they have doubts about this — and not because they have any concern whatever about the Polish workers — that the capitalists are reluctant to grant new credits to Poland. If the Western banks finally agreed to make new loans to the Polish junta, on condition that the repressive measures are rescinded . . . by August 1983, this is more because of the threat a Polish default would represent for the international financial world than out of any hope that the Polish bureaucracy can restore a minimum of "order" in the economy.

NO END IN SIGHT TO THE "DISORDER"

The problem of the bureaucrat-generals is how to overcome what they call disorder. What they mean by this is the continued unrest reflected in constantly occurring strikes, even though these have often been isolated and subjected to severe repression; innumerable street demonstrations, both violent clashes involving relatively small groups and impressive mobilizations of several thousand persons; and various sorts of demonstrations of massive opposition to the military junta.

How can the junta boast that it has re-established order when hundreds of clandestine periodicals continue to appear, testifying to the breadth of the resistance movement? How can it claim

that it has silenced the enemy when clandestine radio broadcasts are continuing and growing more numerous, despite the seizures of radio transmitters that have been announced with a great furor on TV? (3)

How can the junta hope that it has gotten the support of the privileged layers when the actors and the stage managers are continuing the systematic boycott of the TV that they started in the wake of the December 13 crackdown? This sort of protest, which few people expected to last more than a few weeks, should be pointed out. Not only does it involve very serious material loss for those conducting it but it shows that the junta has not succeeded in breaking the alliance between the workers and the intellectuals that was one of the bulwarks of the Polish revolution following the August 1980 strikes.

MASSIVE BOYCOTT OF THE BUREAUCRACY'S "UNIONS"

How, moreover, can the military claim to dominate the situation when the new unions that they set up to replace Solidarnosc are being massively boycotted by the working class? Not even bribery has been successful. For example, the Polish railroads offered a wage increase and a six week vacation in a socialist country of your choice to anyone who would agree to join the organizing committees for the new unions. They got hardly any takers. So far only 3% of the 40,000 enterprises in the country have been able to get together the 15 candidates required to set up an organizing committee.

In this context, one can understand the cynical tone openly adopted by the minister of social affairs in an interview about the impact of the trade-union law on public opinion. "It produced a post-operative shock that has still not worn off. People are bitter, full of resentment, distrustful, cautious, and fearful of being ostracized by others. . . Building the new unions will take at least two to three years." (4)

The restoration of order on the trade union front is not going any better than it is in the economy.

(1). KOS, No. 17, in *Bulletin d'Information de Solidarnosc*, Paris, November 1982.

(2). *Nas Czas*, No. 3, October 4, 1982.

(3). A study that is far from being exhaustive indicates such broadcasts took place regularly from April to October in at least six cities.

(4). S. Ciosek's interview in *Polityka* (cited in *Le Monde* of January 7, 1982.)

TOWARD A NATIONAL UNDERSTANDING?

What progress has been made, then, toward achieving a "national understanding"? According to the underground press more than 5,000 political prisoners have been sentenced to long terms, from three to ten years. Another 5,000 are awaiting trial. That is quite a lot of victims for a government that boasts of being the champion of national harmony.

Since the regime has no carrots to offer, it is using the stick. This is the meaning of the moves that are being made on the eve of the lifting of the state of siege to grant the government special powers enabling it to proclaim a state of emergency if necessary. This is also the meaning of the fact that the "operational

meet very often . . . We don't care what your views are, the only thing that matters is your presence."(5)

As a Gdansk worker said, "the situation is difficult, we lack perspectives. But these gents who rule us have even less."

A STAB IN THE BACK BY THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY

In this situation, the workers clearly perceived the Catholic hierarchy's appeal to them on the eve of the planned action not to go on strike on November 10, as the result of a deal by the church with the regime at the expense of the resistance movement. "He dropped us," many underground Solidarnosc workers leaders said about Monsignor Glemp, the primate of Poland.



Defiant show of support for Solidarnosc. (DR).

groups" that were set up last year in preparation for the declaration of martial law are being stationed in the Polish countryside.

By this means, the junta hopes to subdue the most refractory spirits. Whether it will be able to do that is another matter. One of the lessons of the past year is that the workers are not letting themselves be intimidated easily. Despite the repression and the thousands of firings, it cannot be said that the rebellious mood of the Polish workers has receded notably.

The fact that the regime is deeply divided over what attitude to take to Solidarnosc makes the perspective of a "national accord" still more remote. It would be possible to think that this might be no more than the usual sort of factional wrangle in the Polish CP, if the party itself were not in a totally dilapidated state.

"You have a choice between being fired, going to jail, or joining the Party," workers caught drunk or stealing have been told at the public transport depot in Poznan. "If you are in debt, join the Young Socialists and we will wipe it out," the chairman of the CP youth organization promised in Bialystock. "We don't

The question is rather whether Monsignor Glemp ever supported them in their determination to stand firm in defense of the workers' interests.

Some of the activists, the more clear-eyed ones, moreover did not expect anything more from the primate: "Maybe his excellency thinks that if he is humble the regime will be generous towards the church. But that is a naive approach."(6)

Another Solidarnosc activist recalled the way in which in the wake of December 13 the church agreed to give up the right to have sermons given at mass every Sunday broadcast over the mass media, "thereby making the job of the Polish authorities easier." He also noted the compromise made on the Pope's visit. He went on to accuse the church outright of having "collaborated with the propaganda of People's Poland" and "showing a haste worthy of frightened and naive loyalists." This attitude, he said, suggested "a continuation of a certain tradition of the Polish church that has not always been inspiring."(7)

It is obvious that the Catholic hierarchy is watching out for its own interests and embraces the mass movement only to the extent that it fears losing credibility if it does not. A movement as powerful

as Solidarnosc was before Jaruzelski's crackdown represented more of a threat than an ally for the church. But the church had no alternative but to support its demands.

The difficulties the resistance movement is experiencing now have made it possible for the church to reassume its own independent role and to try to operate as an arbiter in the struggle between the workers and the bureaucracy, seeking a compromise with the bureaucrats.

The hierarchy's desire to escape the direct pressure of the masses — and the criticisms that are being expressed for the first time in such a forthright way — was expressed for example in the proposal that Monsignor Glemp made recently in a sermon. He said that "there should be Catholics in the municipal councils, in the provincial councils, in the ministries, and in parliament." Catholics in these bodies would serve as a buffer, leaving more freedom for maneuver to the princes of the church.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that all the priests embrace the views of their superiors. There are many stories of arrests and roughing up of priests who support the actions of the underground union. And it has become impossible to keep track of the number removed from their churches by the Catholic hierarchy itself because they showed too much sympathy for the views of the resistance movement.

The fact remains that in renewing its appeals for social peace as a quid pro quo for the release of Lech Walesa and permission for the Pope to visit Poland, the hierarchy showed clearly which camp it was choosing. It is clear that both the church and the bureaucracy are counting on Lech Walesa to undermine the underground opposition. "Lech Walesa's decision to enter into dialogue with the regime over the problems of achieving a national understanding . . . represents a disavowal of this opposition and its policy of confrontation," the French CP paper *l'Humanite* wrote, for example, on November 13.

What role Walesa will actually play in the period opening up remains to be seen. But whatever attitude he adopts, it would be a fundamental error to think that the position of a single person — even if he is a charismatic leader — can determine the whole future of a movement.

THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT AT A CROSSROADS

The November 10, 1982, strike highlighted the problems that the union is experiencing, problems that were pointed out in a previous issue of *International Viewpoint*.(8)

(5). The Bialystock Information Bulletin, No. 30.

(6). KOS, No. 16, in *Bulletin d'Information de Solidarnosc*, No. 40, Paris, October 27.

(7). *Kierunki*, No. 21, in *Bulletin d'Information de Solidarnosc*, No. 41, Paris, November 4, 1982.

(8). *International Viewpoint*, November 15, 1982.

The following documents show that these problems are not easy ones and that it will take some time to solve them. An activist writing in a clandestine publication wrote, for example, about August 31, 1982, "In dozens of cities . . . there were hardly any organizers. It was not just that they were not visible, they simply were not there."(9)

Without making such harsh judgments, many workers expressed their concern about the lightminded way, as they saw it, that the Provisional Coordinating Committee of Solidarnosc (the TKK, the underground leadership) called a general strike that they did not feel they could carry out.

"Many people think that the time was badly chosen and that in the present circumstances it is too difficult to carry out an eight hour strike in a militarised enterprise. We are not criticizing the national leadership, but there is a lack of coordination." This is what a worker at the Gdansk shipyards said on the eve of the November 10 strike. But he also pointed out: "No, the workers are not afraid. They are just more distrustful and cautious."(10)

In fact, the strike call was not followed by and large. How could it have been

Gdansk Strike Committee awaits government delegation (DR).



otherwise when for a week every worker at a key point in production had a military man on his back? But those who are so anxious to see the end of the resistance movement should not count their chickens before they are hatched. Tens of thousands of people came into the streets in the wake of the November 10 setback itself. And just before Lech Walesa was released the Gdansk shipyard workers had started preparations to go on strike at the end of November "to make up for the November 10 failure."

No, the outlawing of Solidarnosc does not mean that it is dead. The workers no longer believe in any possibility of a national accord, and they expressed this in forceful terms after the delegalization of the union. They are not going to change their minds overnight because Lech Walesa was released.

Even if Walesa's release does arouse a lot of hopes and not inconsiderable illusions, the junta's inability to make any significant changes in the economic situation, along with the growing repression, cannot help but convince many activists that Wladyslaw Frasnyniuk was right when he said just before he was arrested: "There is no way that self-managed unions can exist in a society that is not self-managed." Since then, the former

chairman of Solidarnosc for the Wroclaw region and a member of the TKK has been sentenced to six years in prison.

THE TERMS OF THE CONFRONTATION REMAIN CLEAR

The problem is then not so much whether the resistance movement has reached a crossroads and entered into a period of ebb. The most important question is how it is going to prepare itself for a confrontation that is inevitable, even if it is deferred. "It is an illusion to think that we can entice this regime by offering concessions without conditions. In this game, we are the fish and not the fishermen. It is the WRON that holds the line. As long as this does not change, no representative of Solidarnosc can sign an agreement or even a capitulation. The only thing that Solidarnosc representatives could sign would be a WRON list. The road to the negotiating table leads through a test of strength."(11)

It is necessary then, to prepare for this test of strength. The only weapon the workers have for such a confrontation is — and that will remain true — the general strike. But in order to carry out one successfully, the movement first has to be capable of taking on a series of tasks. "Organization and still more organization is necessary," in order to fill the void left by inadequate or nonexistent coordinating structures. Another fundamental task facing the movement is organizing self-defence of the enterprises and work directed at the army and the police. There has been a lot of discussion about this in the underground press, but not much actual work has yet been done.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

However, the fundamental problem, one that is particularly evident since the failure of November 10, is the problem of leadership. What is needed is a collective leadership able to keep closely in touch with the reality of the underground movement and to offer programmatic perspectives and tactical methods that show the workers the road to follow.

In the coming period, the Interregional Commission to Defend Solidarnosc, which includes workers representatives from 16 regions and is working out an action program, may be able to contribute to the formation of such a leadership.

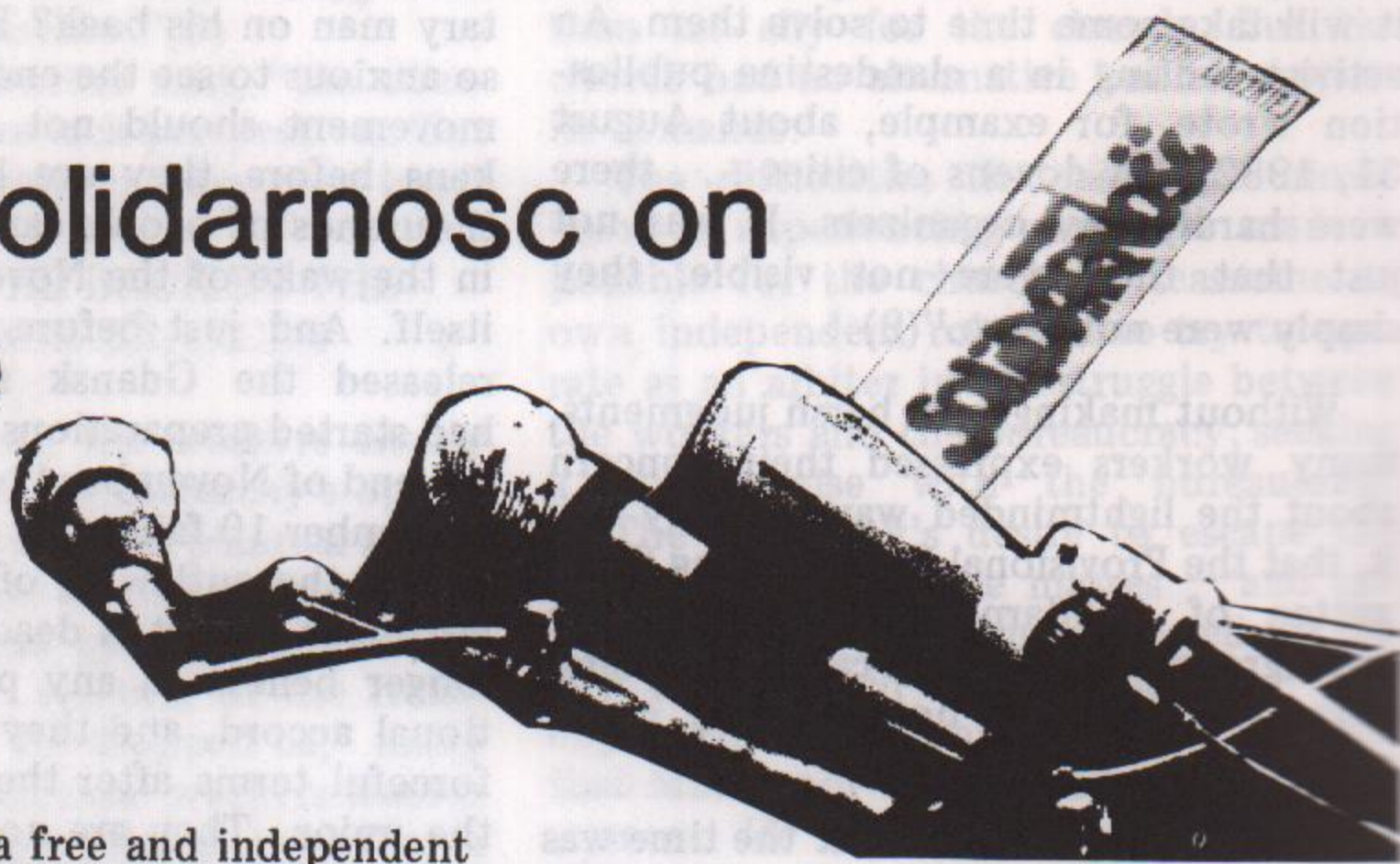
What is certain is that the underground movement more than ever needs international support. It needs this to avoid being isolated. It needs material aid. It needs support for its fight to win the release of all political prisoners, and for winning the restoration of democratic and trade union rights. It needs support to keep Solidarnosc alive. ■

(9). *Bulletin d'Information de Solidarnosc*, No. 42, Paris.

(10). *Le Matin de Paris*, November 11, 1982.

(11). *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, cited in *Bulletin d'Information de Solidarnosc*, No. 28, Paris.

Wroclaw Radio Solidarnosc on the general strike



The following is the transcript of a broadcast on November 16 by the clandestine radio station of the Lower Silesian region of Solidarnosc.

(Fragments of an interview with Piotr Bednarz for the clandestine journal of the Polar plant).

Question: What message would you like to give to the Polar workers?

Bednarz: I would like to pay tribute to the Polar workers and greet them at a time that is so difficult for all of us. But if we are not prepared to change our own situation, no one will do it for us."

Speaker: Today, Piotr is in prison waiting trial. Our task is to continue to carry out the program outlined by Wladek (Frasyniuk) and Piotr, so that they and others like them can come back to us.

(Station identification of Radio Solidarnosc.)

Speaker: The following statement has been issued by the Lower Silesian Regional Solidarnosc on the November 10 actions:

"In the days preceding the second anniversary of the registration of our union, the military junta intensified its repressive operations. There were massive arrests and internments of workers. Persons known for their independent views were called up in large numbers by the army and the police reserves. Several factories were de facto militarized. For example, an inspection committee of forty air-force officers was sent into the Pafawag plant.

A campaign of psychological terror was set in motion in the workplaces and the mass media. In these conditions, since the factory committees could not risk acting openly, the strike proved to be an ineffective method in most workplaces.

For these very reasons, all the more honor is due to the workers in those enterprises where, under these conditions, the strike was successfully carried out. Such enterprises include the transport combine, the building materials complex, and the Wroclaw Polytechnic School.

After the end of the first shift, peaceful demonstrations took place throughout the region. In particular, workers and youth came out. In Wroclaw, the demonstration drew more than 15,000 persons. These demonstrations were proof of the spirit of resistance and the determination to struggle for a republic based on self-

management, for a free and independent society. The November 10 protest action was a general rehearsal for the clandestine factory committees and for the liaison groups. It was an important experience in the search for new forms of resistance.

"On the basis of this protest, the Solidarnosc Regional Committee will develop the union's tactics for our region, new areas of discussion in the factories, forms of action that correspond better to the war conditions imposed on us by the regime.

Signed for the Regional Committee:
Jozef Pinior

Wroclaw, November 12, 1982."

Speaker: The strikes called for November 10 developed in a different way than those called before. What was different mainly was the tactics of the regime, its attitude toward the workers. Previously, the regime carried out repression only after the launching of a strike. This time, the repression and arrests came well before the day set for the strike, and they effectively limited the extent of the action. Here are some of the preventative repressive actions the regime carried out:

In Pafawag, before November 10 they arrested and interned the most active workers. Many were sent off to the army or the police reserves. On November 5, forty air-force officers came in and searched everywhere, in the smallest corners. On November 5 also, there was a meeting of 200 Party members, half of them retirees. It voted an anti-strike motion, which called for firing all the workers en masse and rehiring selectively. Pickets of Party members went on guard twenty-four hours a day, reinforced by the plant security services cell.

In Polar, on November 5, 96 persons were taken away, and other arrests took place on the night of November 9-10. The foremen and brigade chiefs were warned that they would be fired if there was a strike in their units.

At Fadroma, more than fifty persons were interned.

At the university and the agricultural academy, many people were arrested and interned. The authorities threatened to dissolve the mathematics, physics, and chemistry departments.

These are the sort of steps the regime took. Further ones were taken on the day of the strike itself.

At Pafawag, close surveillance was mounted inside the plant by the management, the military commissars, the security services, and the Party activists. Every worker was made to feel personally threatened. The forty air-force officers constantly patrolled the plant. But they were not the most enthusiastic.

In private conversations, some of the officers complained about being used as boogymen against the workers. Some even said: "We have as much to say about this as the voters do about who is elected to the parliament." They had reason to complain, all right, because they were given a ridiculous role. But there are orders that honest people should refuse to carry out.

At Polar, the workers came in in organized groups. At the gate, these groups were dispersed and the workers were sent to their jobs. The management patrolled the factory, accompanied by military commissars, checking every workplace.

At Fadroma, on November 10, a section of the personnel were sent to work at the plant educational center. In the production shops, only about 30% of the workers remained. Despite the forms of intimidation that were brought to bear, no real work went on at Fadroma. The production that day amounted to zero.

At the Polytechnic, the flag of Solidarnosc went up in the morning. A second Solidarnosc flag was hung between the two buildings. The students met in the morning and decided not to go to class. The doors of some auditoria were blocked and could not be opened. At 10:00 a.m., even the students who were still in the classrooms joined their comrades and the school employees in the corridors.

The boycott of classes lasted until 2:00 p.m., when the majority of the students went to the monument commemorating the professors murdered in Lwow. They sang the national anthem. After that, everyone dispersed in a dignified and peaceful manner.

The character of the regime's activity in the plants was that it was directed against individuals. The regime has stopped trying to take on whole groups at

once. It is now attacking individuals separately in order to break up our unity. It is trying to create the impression that each one of us is being personally watched and followed. This method will probably be extended to all areas of society. It has been tried and tested already in the USSR for years, where everyone is taught from an early age to be afraid of everyone else.

We must not lose our heads! There are 35 million of us; there are only a few hundred thousand, at most, of them. They will never have enough informers to put one of them on every one of us, if we act with unity, courage, and intelligence.

(A song.)

Speaker: The new chairman of the Regional Committee of Solidarnosc for Lower Silesia is Jozef Pinior. We are now turning the microphone over to him.

Pinior: My friends, I am speaking to you at a time when we are all shocked by the arrest of Piotr Bednarz and when we are still shaken by that of Wladyslaw Frasyuniuk. I have worked together with them since December 13. We were particularly close following the December strikes in Wroclaw, since we worked together in the clandestine structures of the union. A true friendship also developed among us. So, the arrest of my two closest friends is a severe personal trial.

I am, however, conscious of the responsibility that falls on me to carry on the coordinating work of the Regional Committee. I promise that I will never give up fighting for the ideals of Solidarnosc. I promise that I will never give up fighting for the release of all those who have been sentenced and interned, for the release of the chairman of the Regional

Committee, W. Frasyuniuk, and his replacement, Piotr Bednarz.

I know how difficult a struggle we have to wage, how easy it is to let yourself become discouraged. I am well aware of the fact that we are facing a powerful enemy, that every day we run the risk of being imprisoned, of being separated from those who are close to us. But I am strong in the conviction that we will not yield to oppression. The essence of the totalitarian system is the attempt to paralyze our will to act; it is based on degradation. Everything that gives life beauty and value is abused — work, creativity, the relationship between human beings. That is what General Jaruzelski's Pax Sovietica amounts to. And it is up to us alone whether we will accept or reject such "normalization."

Solidarnosc was born in the factories; they are the source of its power and its vitality. For eleven months, we have been building clandestine trade-union structures, we have been creating an independent society. Forms of mutual aid of the society are developing. Liaison groups to build links among the various sections of society are forming. The preparations for a general strike are going on. Continuing our struggle is a moral duty to the workers who have given their lives for the ideals of Solidarnosc, to our imprisoned comrades.

The state of war has ruled out any possibility for reform. The most important thing for the development of our society — our economic life — has been paralyzed. What belongs to us, our national inheritance, the work of several generations, is falling into ruin month after month. In such a situation, time is not on our side.

A real economic reform is not possible without a republic based on self-management. The struggle for an open society, for democratization, liberalization is also a struggle for improving our material conditions of existence, for decent housing, for hospital rooms, for food, for medicine.

I am speaking to you now, my friends, at a time that is particularly hard for our region. I appeal to you to defend our union, to continue the struggle for a self-managed republic, for freedom and social justice.

I am convinced that we will not yield to discouragement and indifference. We have to go on building an underground society. I appeal to everyone to build forms of social mutual aid in order to perfect the clandestine organization of our union and of the various areas of society. It is the future of our country that is at stake. Our struggle is the only possible response to the state of war, to violence, and to poverty.

Speaker: Jozef Pinior's statement confirms that our objectives have not changed, that our struggle must continue. The situation has changed. But despite the delegalizing of our union and the repression, we cannot give up, because that would mean accepting the role of slaves. Today, as in the period when the union could operate openly, Walesa's words remain valid, the words of Walesa as he was before he was imprisoned as we hope he will remain always.

(Selections from a speech by Walesa on the need to struggle, to unite, the impossibility of retreat — "Nothing can break us, we must remain united." A song. A poem.)

PUWP leader: Strikes, the church, lifting the 'state of war'.

We publish here extracts from a speech by Tadeusz Porebski, former rector of the Polytechnic school in Wroclaw, member of the Political Bureau of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), and first secretary of the party for the region of Wroclaw (Lower Silesia).

This report, given to local leaders of the PUWP in the Wroclaw region, clandestinely recorded in mid-October, sheds light on the intentions of the bureaucracy and shows the sort of language they use among themselves.

Tadeusz POREBSKI

First of all, a few words on the political situation. If we count today, Friday, October 15, we have seen three days of attempts to spread disorder in three enterprises in Wroclaw. These are Delta-Hydral — or, if you prefer the old name, WSK — the repair works for the railway

ZNTK, and the washing-machine and refrigerator makers, Polar.

'THE TROUBLES'

The agitation began on Wednesday 13 at Delta-Hydral, quite early, by a work stoppage in one of the production departments. This stoppage was followed by one on the assembly lines — that is, in a word, by the workers of this factory. Then a demonstration made its way through the enterprise, at different times gathering 200 to 1,000 people, or even more.

At Delta-Hydral, the pretext for the trouble was a report allegedly given on the TV news the day before that during a party meeting a resolution was voted saying that the workers at Delta-Hydral supported the new trade-union law adopted by the Diet (parliament). Personally, I did not see this programme, but I was present

at one of these meetings. It is obvious that the workers were mistaken. The party organisations voted on these resolutions in their own name. This was in conformity with directives from the Party, calling for such demonstrations of support for this law.

In the factory incidents, different slogans were shouted, such as 'Free the internees', 'Down with the Party' — the slogans that we have usually heard during these troubles.

I would like to mention that the three enterprises in question are militarised, and they are all three in the same neighbourhood. This is not by chance. I think that this was a consciously organised test of strength.

The same day, at the same time, there was a meeting at ZNTK, which lasted three hours. The pretext was the same — the false information about Delta-Hydral on television.

The following day, Thursday, October 14, after the troubles had ended in the two previous factories, a similar assembly, organised in the same way, took place at Polar. This time the pretext was 'solidarity with Hydral'. At the high point, 2,000 people took part in this meeting.

WHAT DID WE DO?

What did we do in reaction? At Delta-Hydral the technical managers department has been closed down. It seems, from reading the leaflets which have been coming out of the factory in the last few weeks, that this was the motor force of the troubles and behind the production of the leaflets. What's more, as the workers there wear recognisable overalls, we could see they were at the origin of the demonstrations in the factory. The production department, where it all started, has also been closed down. We are in the process of checking all the workers, after which some of them — those who have been and still are the most active — will not be taken on again. The same measure will be taken in the two other enterprises.

THE DEMONSTRATIONS AND THEIR COMPOSITION

Other troubles which we have to mention here — and you will know already from the brief reports in the press — have been a new attempt to demonstrate in front of the plaque commemorating the foundation of Solidarnosc in Wroclaw. Some 500 people took part, over two or three hours (coming and going). This was, then, a less important event than before. But we should note one dangerous fact: this time, contrary to Tuesday, August 31, when the enterprises were quiet, our adversaries succeeded in spreading disorder within the enterprises.

Also there were more serious troubles as the Cathedral mass ended at 6.30 p.m. After those whom we can consider as the genuine faithful went away, 1,500 people began to walk through the town. It was then necessary to liquidate this demonstration, and this time, it must be said, in a more expeditious way.

Let us note that the Cathedral mass was fired into action by a sermon, although before the vote on the trade-union law there had been discussions with every priest and cleric, to put them on their guard and explain things to them. On the other hand, most of the priests demonstrated their neutrality on this occasion, following our advice.

If we can assume that the arrests give a more or less correct picture of the composition of the demonstrations then, of about 220 people arrested — some of whom were questioned and sent to tribunals, or released if there was no proof of their guilt — more than 150 were under 25. Some 160 were young workers. These proportions are reflected in the previous troubles. Finally, among those arrested, there were also a few university and secondary school students, the latter counting some 40-odd, less than 20 per



Water cannon and teargas used against demonstrators (DR).

cent. University students were even fewer. It's characteristic that in these demonstrations one can hardly find anybody who has finished higher education.

THE TRADE-UNION LAW

Let's come to a second point; the union questions. Here, I would like to emphasise — though what is taking place is unfortunately not a demonstration of this thesis — that we would like these initial groups to be composed of real activists from the movement, with authority. That is, in a word, we do not want to build party unions. Moreover, part of the rank-and-file organisations of the PUWP have refused to pass resolutions of support to the new union law. This is a small fringe, but it exists.

As for the initial groups, they should be formed beginning this month (October) but, as I have said, we have asked everyone not to force them, and particularly not to create these groups with only, or nearly only, party members. The party members, if we want them, are already in our ranks.

The problem is attracting the non-party workers, the youth. This is the meaning of our directives. Therefore, if you have these meetings, I would like you to explain this question, because some people could think that we are losing time, and do some stupid things during the formation of these initial union groups.

As for the International Labour Organisation (ILO), I should emphasise that our government has received recommendations from ILO experts, but not from the ILO as such. There are two points which do not accord with what is accepted by the ILO. All the unions being dissolved by the Diet and not by the tribunal, is one; the usual practice is different; and the fact that we have set up just one union, although the law does envisage the possibility of several, but this provision is suspended for three years. As for the second point, we are fully aware that this is a violation of the principles accepted by the ILO.

I would just like to mention here, perhaps one day it will be useful to you, that we made a mistake — we know for what reasons — in saying that we had to contend with a negative attitude from the capitalist countries in general towards the changes in our country, towards the union question. We should rather have said that this attitude was taken by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries. The specialists say that in some of them there is more talk than concrete actions, but in two, indeed three, countries there is a good deal of determination on this point — in the USA, Western Germany, and France. But again according to the opinion of the specialists, France is enthusiastically preparing for the Mitterrand-Brezhnev meeting. Therefore we can also consider their expressions as just talk without any effect on policy towards the Eastern countries.

But we should not lose ourselves in conjecture. In practice Poland has not been attacked by the other countries, including capitalist ones, at the United Nations. In fact we have understanding, not to say sympathy, from the countries of Central America, and South America, there have been no attacks from this quarter. Nor was there hostility from the African countries, nor other countries except Australia and New Zealand. The loss of the 'most favoured nation' trading status with the USA means a loss for us on the order of 40 to 60 million dollars, of the 200 million dollars that exports to this country bring us.

OUR RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH

Finally, our relations with the Church. There have been meetings, on which you have read brief reports, between representatives of the State authorities and those of the ecclesiastical authorities. Recently these have been about the visit of Pope John Paul II. The Church — according to the information I have — wanted it spectacular, and above all very long. On our side, we put the condition that we wanted it made clear what would be the char-

acter of this visit and what the Pope should raise. We demanded that the church clarify its attitude before the Pope's visit. We want to know what political baggage the Pope will bring along. The present discussions are about that. The Polish primate, Monsignor Glem, has sent a letter on this subject to comrade Jaruzelski, and, in response, conditions have been made precise. Although Glem had been very insistent that he wanted to meet comrade Jaruzelski during the last few weeks, he held back when he saw that the trade union law was going to be voted on by the Diet. On our side we warned the Church that in the case of repeated actions and the use of masses against the state we would:

1) Conduct public polemics, we would lift the embargo on news concerning the practice of the Church. We have already had an example in yesterday's newspaper, where it clearly stated that a certain priest was the organiser of such events.

2) Begin a Public Prosecutor's investigation against those priests who get involved in clear anti-state activity in their sermons.

That would not be a simple thing. The affair is complicated and also has, let us say, negative aspects, but the state must do something so that we do not think the Church can do what it likes. The government does not want to enter into a struggle with the Church, we do not need any new fronts of struggle. Then, if one day we want, let us say, to limit the room for the Church, that could only take place when the times have changed. I say this because often during party meetings there have been shouts of the type, 'Let us have it out once and for all with this Church!' It is easy to shout such slogans but the reality is that the Church is there, and we must come to agreement with it.

FORMALLY THE STATE OF WAR WILL BE LIFTED

To finish, let me take up the question of the state of war. As far as lifting the state of war is concerned, our decisions have not changed. Today the leadership of the party and the state wishes to proceed to lifting the state of war towards the end of the year. Despite these last two events, those of Tuesday, August 31, and the most recent (October 10), we have not changed our decision. There are at least two anniversary dates ahead of us — Wednesday, November 10, and Monday, December 13. We will see. The idea is that in raising or suspending the state of war we will give special powers to the government. I'm thinking for example of the militarisation of the enterprises as a way of strengthening the discipline of the workers, proclaiming a 'state of emergency' in certain regions, and perhaps throughout the country, that is powers that will allow us to act rapidly to calm the situation. But — formally — the state of war will be lifted. I emphasise once more that, for the moment, our intentions remain unchanged from those that comrade Jaruzelski reported to the Diet.

Solidarnosc activists speak...

We publish here two lengthy extracts from interviews with underground leaders of Solidarnosc, made in Poland by Claude Sevrac. The Solidarnosc leaders come from two very different regions of the country: Swidnik and Silesia, in the south-east.

These interviews, made in mid-October, help us to understand the reality of workers' resistance in Poland today. Thus, they also shed light on the situation that exists now, after the failure of the general strike called by the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarnosc for November 10, and the release of Lech Walesa.

IN SWIDNIK: THE SITUATION AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF SOLIDARNOSC

The situation today is even more explosive than after Sunday December 13, in my opinion. First of all because the fear, which was a mass phenomenon during the first months of the state of war, has, if not disappeared, at least decreased. The people are used to it, they have seen internees come back, they have seen sacked workers — at any rate when they are skilled workers — get work again. Here, in Swidnik, there were more than 3,000 workers sacked in all in the aircraft works. But most of them have found work again because there can be no production without them. It's common to see the military commissar sack workers one day, and the factory manager take them on again the next.

Another aspect is the crazy character of the repression. Taking a leaflet in the street means risking seven years in prison, the risk for leading an underground organisation is the same, there's no gradation. So, the people have ended up getting used to repression, and, as solidarity between the victims of repression is strong, and they know they can count on the support of the trade union, the people continue to take risks.

The outlawing of all the trade unions on Friday October 8 united the people. Even those from the sectoral or autonomous unions(1) reacted violently — those few who were not careerists. One worker even said to me, 'I wouldn't be surprised if they celebrated a Mass at the Central Committee tomorrow. They don't have any principles.' No leadership team has been hated as much as Jaruzelski's. This is the basis of the present combativity — this hate, and deep conviction that it cannot be endured.

Another element in the situation is the demoralisation of the repressive forces. We know that the army is considered unreliable. If Solidarnosc did serious work within it, that could bring results, quickly. But what is new is the demoralisation of ZOMO. They have been kept away from home too long. We have learnt that there are often rows among them, and that they fire over each other sometimes

when they are drunk. They are corrupt, and get into lots of black market dealing, in fuel in particular. This is important because it means the ZOMO is no longer an obedient machine. It could well be that one day the confusion in its ranks will manifest itself in the street.

The boycott of the new unions is massive. Even though the regime's project is to make them above all a social aid agency, able to distribute a little pile of privileges to entice people, this project is utopian. Given the economic situation there are no carrots to distribute.

THE SITUATION OF SOLIDARNOSC

What is working well in our region, and beyond that in the whole Lublin region, is aid to the victims of repression and trade union education programs. The second aspect is important. It gives the university youth in particular something to do, and thus keeps a gap from developing between these youth and the rest of the union, as has happened in certain other regions. But that is not to say that everything is going better. There are huge difficulties of communication between the enterprises. People distrust each other. If they don't know each other they avoid making contact, for fear of being picked out. What's more, sometimes the political police (SB) themselves try to organise the co-ordination, and that can only strengthen people's distrust afterwards.

But the principal problem is the political disorientation of the majority of the leaderships. The illusion of Jacek Kuron, that we can reach a historic compromise with the bureaucracy, is still present among many of the trade union activists. This has led to many actions that are more directed at showing the regime that we exist than shifting the relationship of forces in our favour. What the workers want is actions that bring results, even limited ones. Fewer and fewer people, particularly among the most politicised, are ready to take risks for what seems a

(1). These are the sectoral unions that continued in existence after the official confederation was dissolved. Although they declared themselves self-managed they continued with the same membership and leadership.

symbolic struggle. And for how long can one put forward the same demands without concrete perspectives for achieving them?

Without this the union leaderships are going to seem more and more cut off from their base, isolated. Particularly if tactical errors are made because of this lack of strategy. For example, the slogan of a boycott of the official press was launched right in the middle of the football World Cup, in July 1982. This is an attitude of intellectuals, of experts. The worker will hesitate, pace up and down in front of the kiosk, and end up buying the newspaper which, for once, contains something interesting. And the leadership which took such a decision discredits itself and discredits the union.

THE OUTLOOK

I am very sceptical about the idea of a general strike, as it has been put forward today. The workers say it clearly: a general strike which consists of shutting oneself up in the factory and occupying them will change nothing. Because in that situation it will be the police who determine the duration of the strike. The strike will stop when the factory is taken by assault. The effects of the previous strikes — and in the spring there were strike calls practically every week — also weigh on the consciousness of the workers. These strikes achieved nothing. In return thousands of workers were sacked and hundreds imprisoned. Therefore I am worried that the people will not follow the order to strike on Wednesday November 10. Not because they are unprepared to fight or because they are depoliticised but, on the contrary, because they think in a political way, and they see that this strike is not part of an overall perspective, that once again it is a symbolic action.

The people are ready to take on a hard struggle, on condition that the Solidarnosc leadership has an overall strategy for the workers. They are even ready for a general strike, in as much as this strike leads on to the question of power. Without that they think it is a game, and the workers are not pawns.

If there was an overall programme, which clearly posed the question of power, then the people would be prepared to make big sacrifices. They would even be ready — as has begun to happen in this region — to go into the army to do work there. But nobody will make sacrifices without perspectives. This is therefore the main weakness of Solidarnosc today. The lack of strategy, and a leadership which knows where it wants to go, and goes there without hesitating at every moment.

IN SILESIA: ON DEMONSTRATIONS

I am opposed to street demonstrations. For one thing, because the terrain is the most favorable to the regime, which can use them for propaganda purposes, provoking disturbances, then using them to discredit our movement. And, for

another thing, because the price we pay for these demonstrations is too high, out of all proportion to the results that we can expect. Even if the authorities 'tolerate' such assemblies, as they did on Friday September 3, at Jastrzebie, where police didn't attack the assembled workers, everyone was filmed, and then summoned three days later and given heavy fines, 18-20,000 zlotys (more than double the official average wage). The amount to pay in these fines took a good deal of the union's finances which, you can be sure, made our work a lot more difficult.

That said, the demonstrations last August 31 were only partially negative,



Release of Polish internees (DR).

the fact that they showed tens of thousands of people ready for anything was completely positive.

REPRESSION

Everyone knows about the massive arrests, the internments, the trials . . . I would like to draw attention to another, less known, aspect of the repression. First of all the fact that the foremen have all the rights in the enterprises. From this point of view the situation is worst in the mines in Silesia. The foremen there earn 50-60,000 zlotys per month, (official average salary 8-9,000 zlotys) and are ready to do anything to keep this privileged position. And the miners' wages depend on them. A miner earns from 6,000-30,000 zlotys, depending on the post allocated. And, with 6,000 zlotys, you can't feed a family in Silesia, where the prices are higher than in other regions. The second aspect is the sackings. In July for example, six miners were sacked from one of the mines for trifling reasons. Some workers asked the military commissar for permission to collect money for their comrades then unemployed. The commissar gave permission, and three days later sacked them in turn.

We have to say clearly; the working class today is divided. On the one hand, because the regime does everything pos-

sible to divide them — following the old adage 'Divide and rule'. For example, it is obvious that decree 199 — against which Solidarnosc fought before December 13, which fixed much higher wages for miners, introduced an objective division — the other workers considered the miners as privileged, as people who were not quite reliable.

On the other hand, there's a division from the point of view of perspectives. One could say that there are three currents. The first, a radical one, is in favour of street demonstrations, of taking power straight away. But this is unrealistic, and this type of adventurism is dangerous. The second current thinks that it is neces-

sary to prepare for a general strike. But that first requires the unity of all the workers, and the strengthening of organisation and co-ordination. Such a strike, with self-defence of the enterprises, which could become an active strike if we were able to do so, would put the regime in a cleft stick — either to give up or to accept a compromise. And this compromise would favour the workers to the extent that they were strong and well organised. It's our strength which would determine the nature of the compromise. The third current is those who have lost every hope and are apathetic. The first two are very definitely in the resistance, the third obviously less so.

Finally we should note a few negative points within the resistance. First of all, the different groups have a tendency to withdraw into themselves for fear of police infiltration, which makes co-ordination difficult, and is a handicap in circulating the underground press. The atmosphere of fear also means that while lots of people are ready to take part in initiatives one by one, those who are active day to day in the underground structures are a lot fewer. And, finally, we should recognise that the initiatives called by the underground leadership do not always correspond to what the workers are ready to do. For example, the 15 minute strike in May was a failure. In

Silesia there were not many who were prepared to take a big risk for a symbolic gesture.

So, we have to say clearly that our orientation has to be for a lengthy struggle because, to organise a general strike, we have to overcome the present divisions, and also have a clear and concrete programme, which we don't have today.

THE DIFFICULTIES IN CENTRALISING THE TRADE UNION

The co-ordination of trade-union activities is essential. But we have to say that today we are only just starting. The conditions of clandestinity are an obvious and objective barrier, but I think that with time we will get to a situation where, one way or another, each action will be collectively decided.

Without throwing stones at the Temporary Co-ordinating Commission (TKK) of Solidarnosc, because these comrades

are working in very difficult conditions, we have to point out that some of their decisions indicate how isolated they are, their lack of direct contact with the enterprises. For example, their calls for demonstrations at a time when society as a whole did not want street demonstrations. Or the calls for strikes which were not always followed, which undermine the credibility of the union as a whole.

It was to overcome this that the Inter-regional Committee for the Defence of Solidarnosc (MKO) was formed of workers from the big enterprises. This is not a parallel structure. On the contrary the workers want to help the TKK, by providing a relay into the factories. At present the MKO covers 13 regions, most of its members are workers, and they all had, at different levels, responsibilities in the movement before the crackdown.

There is, lastly, another national structure, that was formed on the Baltic coast, the Second National Commission, (II KK).

It involves about fifty enterprises.

PERSPECTIVES

I have said, we must prepare a general strike. But we have to point out at once that this is not an immediate perspective. Today, a general strike is unrealistic. First, we have to create a strong national structure, strengthen links between the many underground groups in the enterprises, so that information and discussions can circulate more widely.

Next, we have to overcome the present divisions — presenting a programme and precise aims which can mobilise all the workers, whatever their religious beliefs or the ideologies they have adopted. Nothing can be done unless the workers constitute an organised mass movement.

On the level of aims, we have to show the link between the present struggle for often limited objectives, and our general aim — workers power. ■

Latest Iranian offensive

The third major Iranian offensive aimed at Iraqi territory ended in mid-November, with an Iraqi counterattack. It was the last offensive the Iranians were able to launch before the onset of the winter, which in the area of the fighting means severe weather in the mountains and, in the lowlands, rains that turn this desert region into a sea of mud.

From now until the spring at least, any fighting on the front will take on a different character. In recent months, the Iraqis have had total control of the air, as well as a superiority in tanks and artillery. These advantages are reduced by bad weather conditions.

That sort of bloody advance through the mud and cold, however, could only be launched if the Iranian homefront is prepared to accept the same sort of casualties in the new offensive phase of the war. The winter will be the test of that. But indications are that the Iranian people are not prepared for that kind of war, even if some sections of youth still have the old enthusiasm.

Since the failure of the first Iranian offensive against Iraqi territory in the summer, the nature of the Iranian operations changed fundamentally. The first offensive was a drive to win a decisive victory. It involved committing large numbers of troops and volunteers to a frontal assault. The subsequent offensives have been on a tactical scale involving limited regular-army forces. The reason for this is obvious.

In the first offensive, the Iranian forces suffered very heavy casualties, which apparently now represented too high a political cost for the regime.

It seems symptomatic that throughout the two-year campaign of large-scale warfare on Iranian territory, the Khomeini government did not resort to general conscription, since it got large numbers of volunteers.

However, in the early phase of the November offensive, a decree was issued

calling for conscription of all youth between 18 and 23. It is probably significant also that this decree was issued at the same time as the first victories won by the Iranian army since last summer.

The reports in the international press, and suggestions in the Iranian press as well, indicate that the Iranian forces did not consolidate any gains inside Iraq. But they did penetrate a few miles across the border, unlike the previous offensive in October that was stopped cold at the frontier. This incursion threatened to cut off Iraqi troops still stationed across the Iranian border, forcing their evacuation.

Thus, the Iran government could claim both a successful invasion of Iraq and the liberation of Iranian territory. Since the summer, every time Iranian troops cross the Iraqi border, the government-controlled press starts counting the miles still to go to Bagdad. Actually, the Iranian gains this time were pretty thin gruel to feed a propaganda campaign.

Since the Iraqi government has offered to withdraw its troops behind the old frontiers if the Iranian force stop their attempt to mount an invasion of Iraq, the continuation of the fighting can hardly be justified by the taking of the few areas inside Iran still in Iraqi hands. The only justification of the war that will stick with the Iranian people now is if it deals major blows to the Saddam regime and appears likely to bring it down.

The Khomeini regime's total control of the press and mass media and its control of a number of transmission-belt mass organizations made it possible for it to make a lot of noise about the gains in the first part of the offensive. But this becomes quickly counter-productive if the claims are not confirmed, at least in part, by the experience of the masses.

Corrupt and worldly journalists do not win wars, nor do mindless cheerleaders. Moreover, Saddam has the same sort of cheerleading setup, if its links with a mass

revolutionary process are much weaker and more remote. At the end of the present offensive, the Baghdad regime made corresponding hoopla about "annihilating" another Iranian assault, as they have done before with considerable justification in fact. On the other hand, it is harder to arouse enthusiasm about defensive victories, especially when the Iranian offensives keep coming.

The situation could change if the Khomeini regime is able to mount a mass attack during the winter, or if it can resume its tactical offensives in the spring and begin to wear down and break up the Iraqi defense and thereby demoralize the Iraqi homefront.

But for the moment, the political results of the war since the Iranian forces reached the Iraqi frontier remain clear. The population of Iraq has lined up behind the regime. The Iranian forces have shifted to a style of warfare that indicates they are not looking forward to any mass uprising against Saddam. Signs continue to appear that the Khomeini regime is running out of steam politically. For example, the Kurdish resistance leaders say that the offensive the government launched against the Kurds after its victory in Khorramshahr has lost its push.

In these conditions, the political evolution in Iran in the next months will likely prove decisive for the outcome of the war, as well as for the more fundamental questions of the fate of the Iranian revolutionary process and the stability of the capitalist system in the region. Therefore, it is particularly important now to look at the way the Khomeini leadership gained and maintained its control. This issue of IV has an analysis of what happened to the working-class movement in Iran before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war. In a coming issue, we will have articles that will go in detail into what has happened to the workers movement during the war itself. ■

War danger mounts in Central America

Jean-Pierre BEAUVAIS

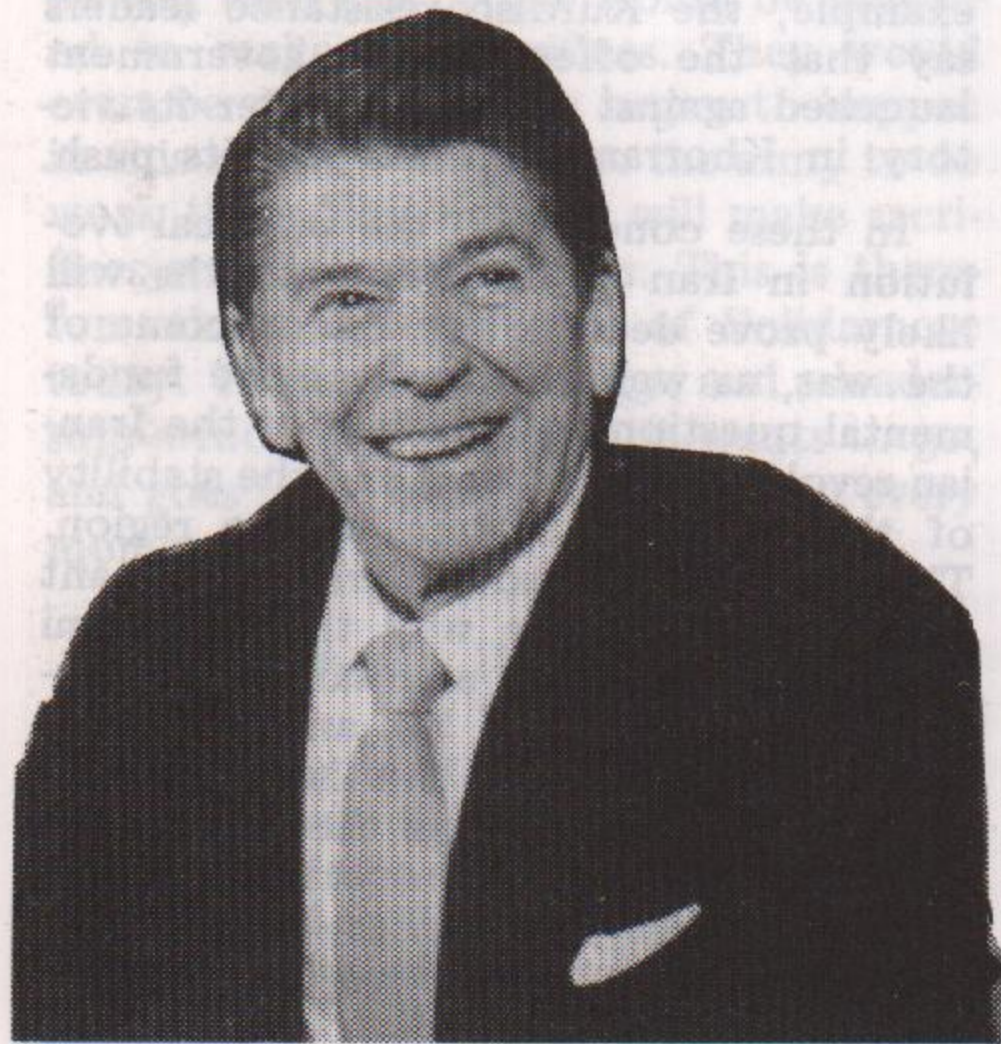
In his November 29-December 4 tour of Latin America, Ronald Reagan has two stops in Central America. One, in Costa Rica, was planned long ago. The other, in Honduras, was added to his itinerary at the last moment.

In Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, the American president has several meetings scheduled. One, to be sure, is with the constitutional president, Suazo Cordova. But Reagan is also meeting Suazo Cordova's military chief of staff, General Alvarez, an avowed supporter of "military action" against neighboring Nicaragua.

Reagan will also meet the Guatemalan dictator, Rios Montt, who bears direct responsibility for the massacre of thousands of Indian peasants, although this has not kept him from being classified as a "defender of human rights" by the White House bigwigs.

According to the official announcement, at the top of the agenda will be the bilateral relations between the U.S. and each of its two allies. What this involves is a new step-up in aid programs to the Guatemalan military, which is engaged in "counterinsurgency" operations of a growing scope, and an accelerated militarization of Honduras, so as to prepare it as soon as possible to assume fully its role of the bastion of counter-revolution and American military base in the region.

The importance of Reagan's visit to Tegucigalpa, however, goes far beyond this. Both in the case of Nicaragua and El Salvador, the American administration is facing some crucial choices. And Reagan's discussions in Honduras may have a decisive effect on them.



For three years now, Washington has been waging an "undercover war" against Nicaragua, as the U.S. magazine *Newsweek* recently put it. The U.S. did not hesitate to back ambushes, sabotage, or the massacre of isolated communities in order to create a climate of insecurity in Nicaragua and force the Sandinista government to devote a growing part of its human and material resources to defense.

Washington sought to get Nicaragua bogged down in a military confrontation at the same time as it took measures designed to strangle the country economically.

A lot of people in Washington and in the Central American capitals are convinced that it is time to move into a new stage of this "destabilization plan." They think that the time has come to make full use of the "three to five thousand" counterrevolutionaries "massed at a dozen bases along the Honduran frontier." (See the December 8 issue.) In other words, it is necessary to "create the conditions" for an invasion of Nicaragua.

This gives the full import to Colonel Buchanan's testimony: "The information I got in Central America is that a war between Honduras and Nicaragua is going to begin in December." That is what he told the U.S. legislators who questioned him.

Is Reagan going to follow the logic of his Central American policy to the end? Will he give the greenlight for a massive invasion of Nicaragua? That is unquestionably the most important subject for discussion in his stop in Honduras.

Obviously, many political factors, both domestic and international, will affect his final choice. Some of these factors weigh on the side of postponing such a decision, such as the change of regime in the Kremlin. But in Tegucigalpa there will be strong pressures for unleashing the military machine that has been built up steadily since the victory of the Sandinista revolutionaries.

Another no less crucial choice that the American imperialists will have to make concerns El Salvador. Here the decision will be linked to the one concerning Nicaragua, from which it is in many respects inseparable.

In El Salvador, the revolutionists of the FMLN launched a series of large-scale actions over October, the most extensive for at least a year. By occupying important towns in the provinces of Chalatenango and Morazan, blocking the main



thoroughfares, cutting off the capital several times, and successfully resisting a number of military counteroffensives, the guerrillas demonstrated that they had neither been "isolated" nor "decimated," as the government's spokesmen had claimed. At the same time, they showed that the government is by no means on the way to "controlling virtually all of the country," as Washington has been suggesting for some time.

Of course, the revolutionists are not yet in a position to win a decisive victory over the junta's forces. They are the first to recognize this. But the junta has shown itself still incapable of dealing any decisive blows to the FMLN fighters.

The political advantages the junta counted on getting out of the March 28 "elections," have proved finally to be very limited. Even the financial and technical aid of the imperialists, their massive arms shipments, and their intensive training of new "elite units" for counterinsurgency warfare have not enabled the junta to turn the relationship of forces on the ground in its favor.

It was in this context that the leaders of the FMLN-FDR dramatically renewed their offer of negotiations.

On October 26 in Mexico City, Guillermo Ungo for the Executive Committee of the FDR, and Ana Guadalupe Martinez for the FMLN, proposed a "rapid opening of direct dialogue without any preconditions." Such discussions would involve "neither humiliation nor surrender by either of the two parties." They would "put the unity of the Salvadoran family above any special individual or group interests."

The very terms of this proposal have aroused debate among the Salvadoran revolutionists. But they were finally endorsed by all the sectors that make up the FMLN-FDR. What is more, while continuing to give total support to the fighters of the martyred Salvadoran people, the Cuban leaders are favorable to a search

for a negotiated settlement. Several of their more recent statements clearly go in this direction.

Formally, the FMLN-FDR initiative was rejected by the spokespersons of the regime. But, over and above this, it aroused numerous and divergent reactions in the military and political circles that support the regime.

Major d'Aubuisson, head of the Republican Nationalist Alliance, the main far-right group, and chairman of the so-called Constituent Assembly that was elected on March 28, categorically rejected negotiations in principle. As he saw it, "even thinking about negotiations is treason."

But the Constituent Assembly disassociated itself from the extremism of its chairman, rejecting the motion that he presented, which excluded "any attempt at dialogue or discussion with the terrorist minorities."

The so-called president, Alvaro Magana — in fact the puppet of the sections of the general staff grouped around General Garcia, the minister of defense — has publicly envisaged the naming of a "peace commission."

This commission could propose the entry of representatives of the Salvadoran left into the city councils, which will be up for reelection in early 1984, on condition that it first lay down its arms. The Catholic hierarchy and particularly Monsignor Rivera y Damas, the influential archbishop of San Salvador, are pushing for such a settlement.

Facing a military impasse and growing dissention among its allies, which have been thrown on the defensive politically, the U.S. imperialists are going to have to try to make a decisive move soon to avert a rapid deterioration in the position of those trying to defend their fundamental interests in El Salvador.

What will the U.S. do? Beef up its military aid again? Swell the already large number of "military advisers"? Take a more direct part in the fighting? All these options mean increasing the U.S.'s stake on the more and more dubious prospect of crushing the insurgent forces.

Or will the U.S. imperialists go for opening up negotiations, and risking clashes among their allies. This is obviously a difficult choice. And a desire to assess the implications more thoroughly was undoubtedly a factor in the decision to include Honduras in the presidential junket.

At no time since the overthrow of Somoza in July 1979 has the Nicaraguan revolution been as directly threatened as it is today. Never has its fate been so closely tied up with that of the Salvadoran fighters.

Everything possible must be done to assure that the repeated cries of alarm raised by the Sandinista leaders do not go unheeded. This is necessary to avoid the worst — an invasion of Nicaragua and the isolation of the Salvadoran fighters, which in the long term would prove fatal. The decisive moments seem to be approaching.

Broadening movement of solidarity with Central America

A MEYLAN

The following is a somewhat shortened version of an article from the latest issue of "La Breche," the fortnightly paper for French-speaking Switzerland of the Swiss Fourth Internationalist organization, the Socialist Workers Party.

Since the victory of the Sandinista Front in Nicaragua in 1979, a movement in solidarity with Central America has been developing in Switzerland. But for more than a year now, it has been evident that this movement has been taking on a new dimension.

The Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala committees continue to play an indispensable role in maintaining ongoing solidarity work, building united-front mobilizations around specific objectives, and in getting information. But the movement has begun to go beyond the committees.

In the trade union field, Swiss Workers Aid launched a rather successful appeal for "One hour's wages for El Salvador." In those circles devoted to aiding the so-called third world, there have been some concrete actions around Central America, such as the sale of Nicaraguan coffee by the Magasins du Monde. Religious organizations such as Pax Christi International have stepped up their denunciations of the massacres in El Salvador and Guatemala. And finally in all the peace demonstrations that have been held since December 1981, there has been strong condemnation of U.S. intervention.

In these circumstances, the idea arose of trying to bring together all these forces in a common activity, in order to reinforce the united-front mobilizations against U.S. intervention. For this reason the National Coordinating Committee of the Committees for Solidarity with Nicaragua and El Salvador decided in June to set up a United Forum for Solidarity with Central America. The first results of this project have justified all the hopes.

Many organizations and personalities support the forum. The Swiss National Union Confederation (USS) decided in August to back it. The Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the POCH, and the Labor Party (PST), and the Italian Communist Party are represented on the sponsoring committee. This body also includes representatives of organizations devoted to aiding the third world, such as the Berne Declaration, Workers Aid (Oeuvre d'etre-aide ouvriere), Terre des Homme, Freres sans frontieres, Magasins du Monde, and Unite. A number of immigration workers organizations have also joined in, such as the Christian Worker Youth of the Spanish State and ATEES.

Among the personalities that represent other forces than those previously cited, we could mention B. Bianchi, from the International Association Against Tor-

ture; I. Bosch, from Swissaid; B. Gurner, from the Third World Information Group; M. Mugglin from SKAAL; M. Oltramere, from the Swiss Health Workers Union; R. Renfer, chairman of the Third World Commission of the Protestant Church; L. Vogel, from the Anti-Apartheid Movement; A. Zoeller, from Pax Christi; J.B. Waeber from the Association of Progressive Jurists; U. Diethelm, from the Mole Youth Organization; A. C. Memetrey, from the Manifeste Democratique Vaudois; A. Murmann, CRT Public Workers Union in Geneva; G. Chicherio, general secretary of the Swiss Human Rights League.

The call issued by the forum states: "We can no longer be silent about those responsible for the massacres in Guatemala and El Salvador. A minority of rich landowners are fighting, with the aid of military dictatorships to hold onto their privileges at any cost . . . The Reagan government is not pulling back from threatening a generalized war in this region."

The call says that U.S. intervention has already begun and appeals to all participants in the forum to "form a broad movement in Switzerland . . . to defend the right of self-determination of the Central American peoples against the interference of the U.S. government" and to fight for recognition of the FDR/FMLN by the Swiss government and to force an inquiry into Swiss material being used against the Central American peoples.

The forum will be held on January 14, 1983.



What happens to those caught in the Israeli mass roundups

The following is an interview with a member of the Lebanese section of the Fourth International made in Beirut in late November.

Question. Can you tell us how you were arrested and what were the accusations against you?

Answer. I am from a village of a few thousand in Southern Lebanon. It does not border Israel and the Palestinian fighters have no bases there. So, there were no mass roundups in my village, as was the case in the Palestinian camps or in the southern cities such as Sidon, Tyre, etc.

In early July, about one month after the occupation began, the Israeli soldiers came to my house and took me for questioning. First I was interrogated in the village, then I was transferred to the Safa concentration camp (Safa was previously a factory situated at the south of Sidon and near al-Ghazieh). During the interrogation, I was accused of being affiliated to Fatah. The accusation was false, and the Israeli soldiers did not present any proof. Nevertheless they stuck to the accusation, and I was arrested. I was arrested because I had been fingered by a person in prison who cooperated with the occupation authorities out of fear.

Q. What were the conditions in Safa concentration camp like?

A. Safa was a transit camp. The prisoners were sent there before being transferred to other camps in Israel or elsewhere. The day I arrived, there were about 1,000 prisoners there.

When I reached Safa camp, there was neither food nor water. When food was demanded, if you got any, it was one piece of very rotten bread that you would never eat at home and only one tomato. This was the only meal of the day. It was not regular; we might get it in the morning or at night. We were also given water to drink only once per day. The prisoners were left all day under the sun without any shelter, and at night they had to sleep on the ground without blankets. During sleeping hours they were not allowed to move, and the Israeli soldiers are free to walk on the prisoners' bodies and heads. Once because I tried to move from one side to the other to be more relaxed while sleeping, I received a hard beating and many kicks from the soldier nearby. Besides that, we had to wait about four or five hours to urinate.

Humiliation and beatings were random and depended on the mood of the Israeli

soldiers. An Israeli soldier might pick any prisoner and tell him to kneel and start beating him; or in front of all the other prisoners force him to repeat loudly phrases such as: "I am an idiot," or to curse Abu Ammar or George Habash or curse himself or his friends. Even talking between prisoners was very difficult. An Israeli soldier could pick any two prisoners talking to each other and start beating them. Anyway, this did not happen to me because during the first days of detention I was not in the mood to talk to anyone. Prisoners who were weak and used to shout "I am innocent," were subjected to very severe beatings. One of these prisoners had his legs broken quite badly on the orders of the Israeli official at Safa with the Arab name of "Abu Nimer." Another prisoner had his nose broken.

Then there were the interrogations. Some prisoners were not interrogated and were shipped off to Israel. Those who did not confess during interrogation were severely beaten, some were critically injured. One of the prisoners from Sa'eqa fainted during interrogation, the interrogation did not stop, they brought him around and continued beating him. They threatened to bring his wife and rape her in front of him. After interrogation, some prisoners would return to the camp in very bad shape. The one who had his leg broken was left in the camp with only a small band on his leg. The Israeli doctor said that the wounded and sick would be treated when they reached Israel (because all the prisoners go to Israel). But this was a lie. Nothing changed in Israel. Those who needed treatment were given tranquilizers.

I was not interrogated in Safa. I stayed there only for three days before I was transferred to Israel. Other prisoners stayed for 10 or 15 days.

Q. Was the Safa concentration camp the only one in Southern Lebanon?

A. I'm sure it was not. I think that where there were mass detentions there were local concentration camps. I met a prisoner in Safa who told me that before coming to Safa he was detained in a school in Sidon. There were about 130 prisoners and they stayed there ten days without food and were beaten continuously. Twelve prisoners died as a result.

Q. Were Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners treated differently?

A. Certainly, and this is still the case. Every Palestinian is a "Mukhareb" (saboteur) according to the Israelis. They took all the men from the Palestinian

camp of Ain el-Helweh, arresting even boys above the age of ten.

There was no different treatment between groups of prisoners, we were all put together. But they made distinctions on an individual basis. For instance, I saw a prisoner ask for food. The guard asked him if he was Palestinian or Lebanese. When he said that he was a Palestinian, the answer was: "a Palestinian and you want to eat!"

Q. Were visits permitted?

A. Not during the entire three months I was in prison. You cannot even send any message to your parents, nor receive any. For the first two months my parents didn't even know what prison I was in. But thousands of women and children used to crowd around the concentration camp in South Lebanon.

Q. What happened to you after Safa?

A. I stayed a few days in Safa and I was then transferred to Israel. The journey to Israel was very tough. It was a four hour journey — four hours of continuous beatings and humiliation. This was in July.

We did not have any food during the day, and had only taken the famous meal of one piece of rotten bread and a tomato the day before, in the morning. We were transferred in buses, seated with our hands chained and a band fastened around our eyes, and our heads turned down. After any slight movement of the head we would receive a blow. During the journey the prisoners would be forced to repeat things like: "long live . . ." (the name of the Israeli soldiers on the bus), "long live Begin," and curses against Abu Ammar. I was able to see because the band around my eyes was not very tight.

On the way we arrived at an Israeli settlement (I don't know the name). I saw a crowd of settlers — women, men and children — armed with sticks, knives and chains approaching our bus shouting. But the bus closed its doors and started moving. Later the bus stopped in a station where there were crowds of Israeli soldiers. The doors were opened and the Israeli soldiers got in carrying sticks in their hands, and started beating the prisoners. No one was safe from their blows. When they finished, the bus continued on its trip.

We reached the prisoners camp in Israel. I knew then from an old Palestinian prisoner that we were in an area near Jaffa. It was an agricultural area covered with lemon and orange trees.

They then took the bands off our eyes, but our hands were still fastened. There was a row of about 20 soldiers carrying iron bars waiting for us in front of the camp door, and each prisoner had to pass by every soldier and was hit many times.

The Israeli camp was like the one in Safa. The same treatment and the same suffering. 600 prisoners arrived the day I did. We stayed together for about two days before being transferred to other places in the camp. There were masked men there. Five prisoners at a time are introduced to them. If a masked man points at a prisoner, the prisoner must confess something, otherwise he may suffer more torture. The interrogation took place in a hole surrounded by reinforced sand.

Other interrogations, (less serious) took place in the open air. This is what happened to me. All the prisoners were lying down on the ground. An Israeli officer moving around, picks a prisoner, interrogates him, and then goes to another one. On our clothes was written something in Hebrew. I don't know what was written, but I suppose it was something related to the charge. The officer asked me if I was in Fatah, and I said no. He then accused me of being a liar and the beating started. I was left bleeding on the ground. He then moved to another prisoner.

The Israelis also used tricky methods. An officer might come and speak calmly. He would say: "We know that there are innocent people among you and we will try our best to send them home in a day or two. We urge you to cooperate with us. Those who are affiliated to some organizations have to confess, and we promise not to hurt them. And those who know something about a prisoner must tell us and we promise to release them . . . etc."

Other lesser incidents occurred. Many prisoners were robbed (rings, watches, money) in Safa camp, on the journey to Israel or in the Israeli camp. One of the prisoners was courageous enough to say so, and he was beaten very severely as a consequence. Later they came and said that those who had been robbed should put down on paper the time and place of the incident. Many prisoners wrote things down, but nothing happened.

After about two days we were given military clothes and blankets and some kitchen utensils, and were then divided between several parts of the camp.

Each part consisted of twenty tents with a tent for every sixty prisoners. There were 1,200 prisoners in the camp. The tent was open on four sides, and not fit for sixty prisoners, so many used to sleep outside around it.

For the first time the prisoners had a meal. There was a kitchen in which twenty prisoners worked, and we had three meals per day. The food was very little and very bad: an egg for two when there were eggs, and a loaf of bread (half a kilo) for six. The prisoners were not satisfied but at least they had proper meals.



Lebanese prisoners taken by Israeli soldiers (DR).

The beatings did not stop. Each morning the Israeli soldiers came for inspection. They used to stand us in rows with our hands on our heads. Any slight movement would be followed by a beating.

I stayed there eight days. They named 300 prisoners and I was among them. Our eyes were covered by a band and we were tied up with chains and taken in buses to Ansar concentration camp in South Lebanon. The return journey was not as tough as the previous one, but the beatings were inevitable after any unwanted movement from the prisoners.

Q. Were the prisoners' conditions better in Ansar?

Awaiting us in Ansar concentration camp was a row of soldiers carrying sticks and iron bars, and each one of us had to pass by them to receive his punishment. We were placed in tents smaller than those in Israel but less crowded because there were only 25 prisoners in a tent. Each part of Ansar's camp consisted of twenty tents, and therefore contained 500 prisoners. There were twenty parts, so the total number of prisoners was 10,000. Each three parts were separated by a road and between each part there were coiled iron fences two and a half meters high. Water came by wagons and was distributed two hours per day, a can of twenty liters per tent. This means that each prisoner had less than a liter for all uses, which was not enough.

The prisoners were forced to stay seated in the tents 24 hours per day. They were not permitted to move around or stand up or even talk. One could move only when his turn came to go and urinate. The Israelis chose a chief among the prisoners to be a relay between them and

the soldiers. The chief had to be put to a test: he was asked to beat his fellow prisoners and if he did not he would be replaced. To be beaten by a chief was more painful, for psychological reasons.

The situation remained this way for one month. Later with the increased intervention of the Red Cross, things became better.

Q. How did the Red Cross help?

A. On the day of my arrival the Red Cross was getting out about 100 prisoners who were less than 15 years old.

On July 21, a member of the Red Cross visited our camp, and said that everyone was permitted to write two letters. But the Israeli forces stopped the distribution of the letters, or at least made sure they were not sent on time. The letter I wrote on July 21 reached my parents a month after I was released; that is, in November.

A week later the Red Cross made another visit. This time they said no letters could be sent, but we could write down on cards our names and addresses. The card reached my parents on time.

After that the Red Cross started to help us in other ways. For instance we could tell them about the torture the prisoners were subjected to during interrogation. The interrogation took a week and more. The prisoner would be taken outside the camp during the whole period. His hands and legs would be fastened with chains, his eyes closed with a band, and he would be placed in a small hut made of tin, difficult to stand up in. The hut is in the sun all day so it becomes very hot and painful. Soldiers would knock with iron bars on the tin all day making very harmful sounds. The prison-

er remains in this situation for two days before the interrogation starts. During the whole period of interrogation no food is offered except a carrot or a piece of bread with a tomato per day. Besides this there is the beating during the interrogation.

A medical unit from the Red Cross came later to check for those with chronic diseases and give them medicine. We also had a chance to show them how bad the food was.

With the increased intervention of the Red Cross, the beatings were stopped. That is, there were no arbitrary beatings inside the camps, but only when there was a "reason" for it and of course during interrogation. Now we were inside the prison camp and the Israelis were outside. Their supervision was not as tough as before. We used to see them once per day, every morning. We could move more freely now, talk and discuss and sometimes sing.

Q. What else can you tell us about the interrogation?

A. I have told you about the kind of torture that took place. But that happened to those who later (after a week or more) would come back and tell us. We do not know about those who went and did not come back. When I was in Israel, twenty-five prisoners from my camp were taken and we have not yet heard anything about them. It was the same with those pointed at by the masked men or those who were known to have responsible positions in Palestinian organisations. For instance when I was in Safa camp I saw the Deputy Commander of the Joint

Forces in South Lebanon.(1) Later an Israeli car came and took him from Safa and I do not know what happened to him later.

Q. Did the prisoners rebel against the prison conditions?

A. There were three main incidents. The first was an attempt in a nearby camp to escape. The prisoners tried to dig an underground trench in the hole in which they used to urinate, using their kitchen utensils. They were almost finished when the trench collapsed under the wheels of an Israeli car, and their attempt was discovered. The whole camp (500 prisoners) was subjected to very brutal beatings as a result, and those accused were interrogated and tortured.

The second incident occurred in our camp. This was on September 23. Before that day we were preparing for a rebellion; the most active were communists. We told the Red Cross that we were going to burn the camp if the prison conditions were not made better or if they did not release us. We started working very seriously on that, writing letters and throwing them to other camps, so that the rebellion would include all Ansar. The Israelis knew about our plans. On September 23 they came and took the 500 prisoners out of the camp and picked up twenty-five for interrogation. One of those taken was a friend of mine, a doctor. This man was a doctor in Tyre and was not engaged in military activities. He is still in prison.

The third incident was very spontaneous, without any previous preparation. It was a feast day for the Muslims. Thou-

sands of women and children crowded around Ansar camp asking for their relatives. Then suddenly the women started pushing towards the gates. The Israeli soldiers started shooting in the air. The prisoners then began their own rebellion. They began shouting, "God is Great (Allah Akbar)," "Palestine, Palestine is Arab," "Revolution, Revolution till victory," "Communism, Communism," and started to throw stones at the Israeli soldiers. The Israeli soldiers quit shooting in the air and started shooting at the prisoners. More than twenty prisoners were wounded. Half an hour passed before everything calmed down.

Q. How did the prisoners benefit from the relative freedom of movement permitted after the increased intervention of the Red Cross?

A. We stayed about a month in Ansar under very effective control of the Israeli soldiers. After that the control was lifted a little bit. We were inside the camp and the Israelis outside it. Many restrictions remained but we could ignore them. For instance, I would pass my time in another tent with some friends and go back to my tent before the time for inspection. This freedom of movement helped me to build many friendships and to pass my time in political discussions. We were also able to sing together and lift our morale and that of others.

We had some paper and pens, very few indeed, but I was able to write something about my experience in prison and to write a poem about Palestine.

(1). Palestinian-Lebanese left.

The Iranian workers movement and Khomeinism: From the insurrection to the war with Iraq

An article in a coming issue will deal with what happened to the Iranian workers movement from the outbreak of the war with Iraq to the conclusion in recent weeks of the latest phase of the conflict.

Saber NIKBEEN

The periods of growth of the workers movement in Iran have been closely linked to general revolutionary upsurges, in which political questions have been decisive, and the future of the workers movement depended on the resolution of the question of power.

In all the previous upsurges, the leadership of the workers movement failed to offer a political line that would make it possible for the movement to grow and to advance. Instead of orienting the movement toward achieving social and political independence, these leaderships subordinated it to bourgeois politicians, thereby

undermining it and preparing the way for its liquidation. As a result, the Iranian workers movement lacks both organizational continuity and a political tradition.

Thus, before the start of the revolutionary process that led to the overthrow of the shah in 1979, there was no independent mass workers movement in Iran. When the new movement arose, it faced the same basic political problems as the previous ones.

What we have seen since the rise of the present workers movement is a characteristic pattern of empirical advances, sometimes very rapid ones, which have been continually undermined by the lack of a leadership that could offer a perspective and an effective strategy for building a movement independent of the control of bourgeois forces.

This is a result both of the failures and betrayals of past leaderships of the work-

ing-class movement and of those forces which in the present period have had the strength to give impetus and form to an independent workers movement.

It is particularly important to clarify the lessons of these setbacks now, since the revolutionary crisis in Iran is not over and there is still time to achieve a historic breakthrough in building a mass workers movement. In fact, if that is not done the Iranian masses face the danger of a very grave defeat.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST

In the revolutionary upsurge that followed the second world war, a wave of strikes led to the formation of the first real trade-union confederation, which united over 250,000 workers and artisans.

However, the leadership of this movement was in the hands of the Tudeh

Party, at the time a Stalinist-led nationalist party (it later became just the Iranian CP by another name). Since the Kremlin wanted to maintain its alliance with "democratic" imperialism, the Tudeh party line was that the essential struggle in Iran was between the camp of dictatorship and the camp of democracy. It joined the bourgeois government of Ghavam, an agent of British imperialism, and led the workers movement into the bourgeois democratic camp. It dissolved the class struggle in Iran into a general movement of opposition to dictatorship.

Another result of this was that the Tudeh Party allowed the group of bourgeois politicians around Mossadegh to take the leadership of the mass movement that was developing against imperialist control of the country.

The Stalinists drew the conclusion that their error was not backing Mossadegh, that is, not dissolving the class struggle into the "anti-imperialist camp" instead of the "antidictatorial camp." They are trying to make up for that now but the result is the same, subordination to a bourgeois political leadership.

The bourgeois nationalist leadership diverted the workers and the poor masses away from building their own organizations and putting forward their own demands. In this way, it sapped the vitality of the mass movement and prepared the way for the shah's coup in August 1953, which was both dictatorial and pro-imperialist.

On the basis of the demoralization of the masses, repression, heavy involvement of U.S. imperialism, and the huge inflow of oil money, the shah created a massive state machine that totally crushed the working class movement.

In the following 15 years, however, Iranian capitalism grew enormously, resulting in a huge increase in the numerical and economic strength of the working class. By the mid-1970s, the working class had grown to almost three times what it was at the end of the 1940s. It numbered over 3 million. Of this, nearly a third was concentrated in the largest plants, of which about half were in the capital city.

On the other hand, the largest category of workers, both in Tehran and elsewhere were building workers, who did not have stable employment. They were an explosive layer but one with little economic power, industrial discipline, or cohesion. They blended in with the urban poor. Both their strength and weakness strongly marked the coming revolutionary process. They could be fierce fighters but also relatively easily dispersed and demoralized in the context of an economic crisis and in the absence of a united mass workers movement.

The combination of rapid economic growth and a strong repressive regime blocked the revival of independent workers organizations. The so-called unions that existed were corporative structures totally controlled by the Minister of Labor.

The life of the workers in the factories was closely monitored by the so-called

Workers Protection Committees (which were run by SAVAK, the secret police). Workers mobilizations, therefore, were few and far between.

In this period, what militant left forces there were directed their energies toward guerrilla warfare actions outside the working class.

THE RISE OF THE NEW WORKERS MOVEMENT

Then, the situation started to change fundamentally in 1975-76, when the shah's system of economic development based on heavy state involvement and massive oil income ground to a halt because of its inherent contradictions.

The even greater inflow of money because of the higher oil prices only increased the problems. Enormous bottlenecks developed because of the lack of the social infrastructure for development. The destruction of the traditional rural economy led to the concentration of huge masses of unemployed and semi-employed in the urban areas.

The impact of economic stagnation and breakdown was compounded by the

involved in a national political struggle and beginning to throw the repressive forces off balance.

By late 1978, what might be called a creeping political general strike began to emerge. It involved over 1.5 million industrial, agricultural, and white-collar workers (bank and government employees). This phenomenon continued to widen with ups and downs but in a more or less continuous way, up to the February 1979 insurrection. It was what really broke the back of the shah's regime.

The impact of the strikes grew, in particular, after the mass street demonstrations reached an impasse in the wake of the September 1978 massacres, since they could not actually overthrow the shah. It was the militancy of the workers that revived the mass movement and gave it new strength and effectiveness.

Thus, after being absent from the political scene for almost three decades and despite its lack of class struggle tradition and organization, the Iranian working class demonstrated that it is the leading revolutionary force in the country.



austerity measures taken in 1977-78, including the imposition of price controls on small merchants.

With the perspective for continued economic growth dimming, class conflicts sharpened again.

Moreover, the shah's dictatorship was no longer able to contain the discontent created among the better-off layers by a distorted economic growth in which the top state bureaucracy and a small clique of capitalists closely associated with the state got the lion's share of the wealth. The traditional merchants and the small capitalists were marginalized without either being replaced or given alternatives.

The massive Shiite clergy, traditionally an instrument of the state, was in effect replaced by the state bureaucracy. But it retained its roots among the people and the marginalized merchant and small capitalist layers.

In early 1977, sporadic economic strikes began breaking out, and by early 1978, there were signs that the strikes were spreading and tending to become political. The working class was becoming

This fact alone, regardless of later setbacks, has had, and will continue to have a decisive importance for the building of a revolutionary party in Iran.

THE PROCESS OF WORKING-CLASS SELF-ORGANIZATION BEGINS

Unlike the mass demonstrations, which depended on a centralized organization that at the time could be provided only by the mullahs, the strikes favored self-organization of the workers.

The workers began to form strike committees (bypassing the corporative union structures), and found that extending and maintaining the strikes required forming coordinating bodies. Thus several coordinating committees developed. The strongest was in Khuzistan, the oil producing region. It was a joint coordinating committee of the oil and steel industries.

These coordinating committees represented a new force in the mass movement, but they did not try to assume the leadership.

The oil-workers strike committee did, however, refuse to accept the proposal

by Bazargan, at the time the "Imam's representative," that they end their strike. The workers insisted that they would not end their action before the shah was overthrown.

Thus, the Khomeini leadership, which was still trying to make a political deal with the shah's government, was already colliding with the rising workers movement.

Despite all the threats made against them, the oil workers kept reducing production until they cut it off altogether. Moreover, they began to throw out what they called reactionary managers.

THE POWER AND THE WEAKNESS OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

The demands raised most broadly by the strike committees were for rehiring of the workers fired for their participation in the struggle against the shah, for the payment of their unpaid wages, and for ousting of the pro-Shah and Savaki elements from the plants. The struggle created a dynamic of workers control.

The railroad workers strike committee blacked all transport of military forces and material. It paralyzed the state, while assuring the transport, despite government sabotage, of the foodstuffs and fuel needed by the people.

The bank workers exposed the financial dealings of the capitalists and provided up-to-date figures on the flight of capital from the country. In addition, with the help of government employees (in the Ministry of Finance, for example), they paralyzed the state's financial operations.

The working class thus began opening the books and exercising workers control over production. But this was still confined to the level of the individual workplace. The workers assumed the power to stop production when necessary and to regulate it, but they did not move on toward an alternative way of orienting and organizing production as a whole. They were leading the fight against the shah, but they were not putting forward a political alternative of their own. On the political level, they were only putting their power behind the maneuvers of the bourgeois-merchant-mullah coalition in the leadership of the mass movement.

Thus, a peculiar situation arose. The mosques and the bazaar merchants were partially financing some of the major strike committees (including even in the oil industry). The bourgeois opposition to the shah found the general strike to be a powerful lever for forcing the transfer of power to the mullah-merchant and liberal bourgeois factions of the ruling class.

The result of this situation was that even the most advanced layers within the working class were very much under the political influence of the bourgeois-mullah-merchant leadership of the mass movement.

The vanguard layers of the workers movement did not, therefore, rally



Rigged elections strengthen mullahs' hand. (DR)

around the left but remained under the political leadership of the mullahs and the broad coalition of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces in opposition to the shah. This had a profound effect on the subsequent course of the Iranian revolution.

The general strike could only give rise to a new power if it went beyond the limits of the individual workplaces and threw up Soviet-type structures. The February 1979 insurrection, which took place despite the efforts of the Khomeini-Bazargan leadership to prevent it, could have opened up the way for such a development. It did not, however, create a situation of dual power.

A POLITICAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION

To the contrary, immediately following the insurrection, the revolutionary elements accepted the demands of the bourgeois-mullah leadership to disarm and to disband the strike committee.

A bourgeois government was established over the heads of the masses, and was able to present itself as the culmination of the mass upsurge: "The revolution has been victorious, what we have to do now is rebuild the economy," the bourgeois leadership said.

Khomeini himself called on the workers to end their strikes and increase production. Those who refused to do this, he threatened, would be considered "counter-revolutionary saboteurs" and would be dealt with as such.

For a brief period the employed workers, mainly building workers, struggled against the new regime. But since these struggles were not effectively linked to the building of a mass workers movement, they were isolated and led nowhere.

To replace the strike committees, the mullah-bourgeois leadership offered "Islamic Shoras" which were supposed to be the means for assuring the "participation of the mostazafeen (the humble) in building a new Islamic society."

The political counter-revolution began. At the beginning, in fact, little actual force was needed. The bourgeois regime

was able to take advantage of the political illusions of the vanguard to push them into capitulating. The strikes were ended, and the strike committees almost totally liquidated.

There were some exceptions, such as the committee in the oil industry, which renamed itself a coordinating committee. But even it was housebroken. The attacks of the mullah-bourgeois leadership did not destroy it outright. But since its leaders had no political understanding of what was happening and why and had no political alternative, they became intimidated and demoralized.

The large centrist and Maoist organizations that dominated the Iranian left at the time barely noticed this turn in the situation.

The centrist and Maoist organizations were unable to see the way that the question of which class was to rule was being posed on the level of the mass movement and the entire society. For them, the leading role of the proletariat meant simply the leadership of their particular group. They were only interested in increasing the numbers of their own organizations.

The only voice of opposition raised by any major force in the movement was that of the leaders of the oil industry's strike committee. They demanded that the workers organizations be "represented" on the Islamic Revolutionary Council (IRC) set up by Khomeini as the governing body. They did not demand elections for a constituent assembly.

The political role of the working class was pushed back below what it had been before the insurrection, and the class struggle became even more confined within the limits of the individual plant or concern. Furthermore, the working class, or at least its vanguard, was now split between an Islamic wing and a class-struggle wing.

RESURGENCE OF WORKERS' SELF-ORGANIZATION

Nonetheless, the insurrection had opened up the road for class struggle and political and social advancement for the

workers. Because of the enormous weakening of the capitalist class (many of whose members fled the country) and the old instruments of repression, in nearly every factory a favorable relationship of forces existed for the workers on the ground. This was true despite their political illusions in the mullah-bourgeois leadership.

In a context of deep world economic crisis and growing revolutionary struggles in Iran, it was necessary to permit a certain amount of workers control to revive production.

New workers committees, including many of the workers who had been active in the strike committees, were formed with the help of the Imam's Committees, the groups that were set up in the neighborhoods under the control of the mosques. They were called Islamic Shoras and given a certain role in managing industry.

Alongside the Islamic workers organizations, a center for independent and left worker activists was set up shortly after the insurrection in the Workers House, a government building taken over by militant workers. In the first months, this center could compete with the Islamic organizations. But because it lacked a coherent strategy for building the workers movement, over time the backing of the state and the Khomeini leadership for the Islamic groups put it at an increasing disadvantage.

In many factories, the shoras elected the managers themselves. They began to intervene directly to find sources of raw materials, spare parts, credits, and so forth. And they were obliged to play a role in the distribution of products. They also decided on hiring and firing. The dynamic of this situation was leading the workers to fight for the abolition of business secrets.

THE REGIME ATTACKS THE SHORAS

Nonetheless, this type of workers control had inherent limitations. To lead to actual control of production, workers control would have to go beyond the confines of the individual factory. The abolition of business secrets could be achieved only on a national scale. But the political illusions of the vanguard blocked them from taking up the fight for this.

A lot of activists in the shoras placed their confidence in bourgeois ministers who had "the blessing of the Imam himself." This political factor obstructed and slowed down the process of unification of the shoras, as well as the development of coordination.

In any case, the role the shoras were playing led increasingly to confrontations between the individual shoras and the bourgeois ministers of the Provisional Revolutionary Islamic Government. And these clashes impelled a deepening of the radicalization of the working class.

There was a constant tendency for the Islamic shoras to break away from the control of the Khomeini forces and become independent. This reoccurred after

such campaigns by the regime to regain control. The process of becoming independent normally went hand in hand with becoming more democratic and representative.

At the same time as the shoras were formed, activists most directly linked to the mosques set up Islamic Societies (Anjomanha-ye-Eslami). But at the start the latter could not dominate the factories. The regime itself was divided about how much, if any role, these groups should play as a means of organizing and controlling the workers. In some places the Anjomans were in fact dominated by the shoras.

As early as March 1979, the prime minister began attacking the shoras, saying: "They want to own the factories; they want to be the boss. They want to decide on the management. So, what is the role of the government?" His labor minister, Foroohar, was saying: "I do not believe in shoras. At most, we can accept trade unions." In the large industrial plants, the government began in early April to impose managers it appointed on the shoras, especially in the state-owned industries, such as the oil refineries and petrochemicals. And it did this with the backing and the blessing of Khomeini.

In May, new law "for special force in regulating labour and social affairs" was passed by the IRC, empowering the Minister of Justice to "prevent the interference of unauthorized individuals or institutions in workplaces."

The government also used various methods for bringing pressure to bear on the independent shoras. These included stopping the payment of wages, cutting the flow of raw materials, and preventing the independent distribution of products.

Mullahs were sent to the major factories to preach on the virtues of "constructiveness" and "respect for law and order." They called on the workers to subordinate themselves to "the government elected by the Imam." They played on the religious feelings of the workers to whip up anti-Communism, purge the shoras of militant workers, and to keep them from functioning in a democratic way.

At the same time, the state repressive forces remained in total disarray. And the attacks on the shoras were producing further radicalization. Many of the shoras started denouncing "the new capitalist ministers."

THE REGIME'S STRATEGY TO STOP THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

The ruling bourgeois-mullah coalition adopted two basic strategies for dealing with this radicalization. The first was a major program of nationalizations to make it easier for the state to intervene in those plants whose owners had fled and where production was almost totally controlled by the shoras. The government had already achieved a certain success in the state-owned industries.

So, with much fanfare and display of public rejoicing, the government announced in the summer of 1979 that it was nationalizing all the plants belonging to fifty top capitalists (with more than generous compensation for the foreign capitalists and the so-called "other share holders"). Almost without exception, these concerns had debts to the state's Industrial Credit Bank that amounted to many times their declared capital.

After these so-called nationalizations (that is, the writing-off of the capitalists' debts) the government greatly tightened its control of capital investment, wage levels, production levels, and the sale of products. The workers were now called upon to exert themselves to help rebuild Iranian industry "which henceforward belongs to the Islamic flock." Managers began to be imposed wholesale, with the backing of the preachers and the pasdars.

The second strategy the government adopted was to coopt the shoras more directly into the state apparatus. In April 1979, a united center of Islamic shoras was set up. In this, the Islamic Societies at the major universities, especially the one at the Tehran Polytechnic (from which the Students Who Follow the Imam's Line later emerged) played an important role.

THE MULLAHS ATTACK THE SHORA MOVEMENT FROM WITHIN

This center then drew up and adopted a constitution for the shoras. It set up an armed unit of Pasdars on the basis of the "Special Force" law. And then, with the backing and direct involvement of the office of Revolutionary Islamic Public Prosecutor, it began to "reorganize" and "unite" the Islamic shoras, starting in the newly nationalized industries. In June it started publishing a journal called *Shora*.

This operation was closely observed and backed by the newly formed Islamic Republican Party. The concomitant of this was that it was viewed with a certain disapproval by the Bazargan faction, since by this time a factional struggle had developed within the bourgeois-mullah coalition.

Representatives from the Polytechnic Center would go to the factories (with a group of Pasdars), show their papers from the Public Prosecutor's office, interview the Islamic Society and certain members of the shora. Then they would draw up a new list for the leadership, force new elections, and set up "new shoras" which would then affiliate to the center. If they met with any resistance, they would call the nearest Imam's Committee to arrest the troublemakers.

In this way, in many industries, the Polytechnic Center organized a purge of the left. It was initiated in July and August 1979, and became particularly extensive in September 1979. This was the same period in which the regime launched its first full-scale offensive against the Kurds, and the Polytechnic Center helped

to recruit workers to go to fight against the Kurdish people.

FACTIONAL SPLIT IN THE REGIME

The fact that this center was critical of the Bazargan government led many workers to think that it was anticapitalist. But the faction fight in the mullah-merchant-bourgeois coalition was really over other questions.

Bazargan represented the old Iranian national bourgeoisie based on small industry, which was largely bypassed by, and excluded from the enormous possibilities for capital accumulation provided by the state after the start of the White Revolution. It wanted a "liberalization" of the state and a "fairer" distribution of state credits and money making opportunities among all the capitalists.

It is true that this section of the regime wanted to reorganize the capitalist state as soon as possible and with the least possible upset. But that did not mean that the wing that opposed it did not also seek to rebuild capitalism and the capitalist state, or that it was any less dangerous an enemy for the workers movement.

The IRP was formed right after the revolution by the mullahs around Khomeini to ensure the political domination of the Shiite hierarchy.

Gradually the traditional mercantile sectors of Iranian capital, closer to the masses but also more parasitic, obscurantist, and despotic — both in their mentality and ideology and in the social relations bound up with their economic activity — gathered around the IRP. This backward merchant class was also closely linked to the mosques. They saw the IRP as the plank for getting to the state trough and sinking their snouts in it.

The IRP could appeal to the urban and rural poor because the sector of capital it represented was marginal to the modern economy and had nothing to lose by indulging in demagogic "Islamic" rhetoric about "these capitalists and landlords who fear not the Lord and want everything for themselves." That is, they had nothing to lose so long as the workers could be kept from organizing independently and raising their own concrete demands. And to assure this they were certainly no less inclined to use strongarm methods than the Bazargan government.

Of course, the bazaar merchants could get away with this only because of the weakness of the class-struggle and political tradition in Iran.

In their struggle against the mullahs and the bazaar merchants, the Bazargan forces relied on demagoguery about "democracy" and "modernism." They argued that the mullahs did not have the technical skills needed to run society.

In response the IRP argued that the Bazargan forces were weak, lacked revolutionary will, and were corrupted by Western values. It preached the dictatorship of Khomeini, who "loves the humble."



Ayatollah Khomeini gives press conference (DR).

In the early stages, the IRP could not take over the state because of its weakness within the state bureaucracy. It achieved control of the state by a gradual process, including several stages. The most important was that initiated by the takeover of the U.S. embassy. This was followed by a gradual purge of the state apparatus.

The final stage was the so-called Administrative Revolution initiated by Khomeini in June 1980, to purge the old "idolatrous" elements. The way for this was opened by the assurance of an IRP majority in parliament through rigged elections. The new parliament began sitting in June 1980.

For the sake of its own operation, as well as that of the IRP, the Polytechnic Center had to make a certain demagogic pretence of defending the workers interests. But this was only the bait on the hook.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE POLYTECHNIC CENTER

By early autumn, 1979, the Polytechnic Center had managed to "unite" some 120 shoras in Tehran, 40 in Ghazvin, and a few in Shiraz, and Isphahan. By comparison with the number of shoras that existed at the time, this was rather insignificant.

The Polytechnic Center had absolutely no success in the large industrial plants, where it was not so easy to set up a new shora from the top. This operation totally failed in Ahwaz, Tabriz, and Rasht, where there was a stronger working-class tradition and militancy.

In those industries where for objective reasons the tendencies toward united shora activity had developed early, the Polytechnic operation did not make any inroads. This applies to the plants grouped under the Organization for the Development and Modernization of Iranian Industry and in transport.

In other cases where shoras had already developed links with other shoras

through their own independent efforts, the Polytechnic operation also did not get very far. This applies to the shoras, mostly in Tehran, which were organized on a geographical basis — in the east, west, and south of Tehran.

At the height of its power, the Polytechnic Center claimed to represent 900 factories throughout Iran. That did not mean that 900 shoras were affiliated to it, however, but that in 900 factories it had at least individual members of the shoras working with it.

Moreover, even in those shoras that the Polytechnic Center managed to gain control of, radicalization continued under the pressure of the class struggle, even though in a distorted form. The Polytechnic Center was obliged to organize meetings of representatives of various factories and to discuss many real problems.

Despite the bureaucratic control over these meetings by the Polytechnic Center, they began to become a problem for the regime. For example, at the monthly and later weekly meetings at the Leyland's car factory, at which forty factories were represented, the participants drew up a plan for workers cooperatives that would sell factory products directly to consumers. They proposed this as a method of fighting hoarders and speculators.

The regime had a lot of trouble keeping the workers from putting this plan into operation. The IRC itself had to intervene in the matter. The pages of *Shora* began reflecting the workers dissatisfaction with the regime's support for the bazaar merchants.

The process of political differentiation within the working class, however, was limited and did not develop fast enough or on a wide enough scale to match the reconstruction of the instruments of state repression. The mullah's base within the mass movement was mobilized to stop the advance of the revolution. This base was narrowing, and this was happening most rapidly in the working class. But, nonetheless, it meant the creation of a split within the revolutionary masses.

And this, coupled with the continuing illusions of a section of the vanguard in the "progressive clergy," hampered the spread and unification of the workers shora movement.

THE ROLE OF THE LARGE LEFT GROUPS

The so-called left, the big centrist and reformist organizations, made the situation worse. The Tudeh Party counterposed its line of building traditional trade unions to the actual revolutionary movement of the shoras. This meant in practice concentrating on organizing the workers in the old industries and small workshops, in general the most backward layers.

The Fedayeen called for "Red Unions," and set up a number of sectarian organizing committees in conjunction with various Maoist groups. None of these got anywhere, and were subsequently bypassed by the shora movement. The Fedayeen then went into the shora movement, but together with a number of small ultraleft groups, they formed and pushed their own "real" shoras, which were even less democratic than the Islamic shoras. On the other hand, the most right-wing opportunists simply sang the praises of the existing Islamic shoras, and in particular, the state-backed Polytechnic Center, which was the largest of these bodies.

Only a small fraction of the left worked, in fact, for extending and unifying the shoras that actually existed, for democratizing them, and developing them into organs of workers control over the national economy.

The fight for a united shora movement could not bypass the Islamic shoras, even those most directly linked to the state. But neither could it ignore the real obstacles that the state had placed in the way of working-class unity.

The weakness of the bourgeois state meant that there were possibilities for working through the Islamic shoras. But the illusions that existed among the workers in the national leadership meant that unless a consistent struggle was waged against the political counter-revolution there was the danger that the concept of shoras could be transformed into its opposite — into a cover for forming instruments of bourgeois repression against the working class.

Nonetheless, the movement remained on the rise for a whole period. On May Day 1979, nearly 300,000 people came out in Tehran for an independent workers demonstration called by the Workers House.

THE REGIME'S FIRST MAJOR REPRESSIVE OFFENSIVE

The regime realized that the illusions of the masses in Khomeini were not sufficient, without the backing of much more material force, to hold back the advance of the revolution. In the context of the mass radicalization, there was no way

that a bourgeois controlled constituent assembly could be elected. So, the government set in motion a massive wave of repression, which was now systematic and concerted between the government and the hezbollahi gangs. It began by banning what it called "the Zionist press" (that is, the liberal and democratic press that defended democratic rights and was open to a certain extent to the views of the left, papers such as *Ayandegan*).

Despite the advances of the workers in action, the political weakness of the left and the workers vanguard disarmed the workers movement in the face of this offensive. There was no strong force in the movement putting forward the line of fighting for political independence from the regime and for consistent defense of the workers interests. There was no strong force putting forward a realistic political perspective for the workers movement as an alternative to the regime. To a considerable extent, moreover, this was the result of the confusion caused by the adoption of dogmatic schemas from Stalinism by the large left currents, which included many thousands of activists and leaders who were subjectively revolutionary.

Ayandegan was first banned in May, for example. But at that time the regime was forced to retreat by mass demonstrations. Then it was banned again at the end of July, in the context of the beginning of the first Kurdish war. The Democratic National Front organized a demonstration to protest. The major left groups, the Mujahedeen and the Fedayeen, refused to participate on the grounds that the NDF was a bourgeois group.

The demonstration came under heavy attack from the hezbollahis. The following day, Khomeini called for outlawing the NDF and insisted that *Ayandegan* must be destroyed. It never reopened.

On that same day about 40 left and revolutionary papers were banned. The political headquarters of the major left groups, such as the Mujahedeen and the Fedayeen, were occupied. Then Khomeini declared a "Holy War" against the Kurdish people, and this offensive proceeded under the cover of almost total press censorship.

Then the regime announced that instead of organizing elections for a Constituent Assembly it would prepare the way for an "Assembly of Experts" (experts in Islamic law). This assembly drew up a new Islamic constitution that gave the supreme authority to Khomeini as the chief expert on Islamic law (Velayet-e-Faghih).

FIRST REPRESSIVE ASSAULT FAILS

The regime's attacks on democratic rights had a profound effect on the mass consciousness. Opposition to the mullahs grew rapidly in this period. So, the repression was gradually running out of steam. Moreover, the government suffered a major military and political defeat in Kurdistan.

The debates at the Assembly of Experts (shown on TV) had helped to ex-

pose the mullahs and their bourgeois friends. Moreover, the start of the new academic year in September 1979 brought with it a new wave of political activity independent of the regime on the campuses.

All this had its effects on the workers movement too. Not only had the bourgeois government failed to destroy the shora movement, but in fact a new upsurge was developing that was raising clearer political and economic demands.

The Polytechnic shora had failed to gain effective control of the shora movement and housebreak it. By the end of the summer of 1979, it controlled a very small fraction of the shoras (no more than 200).

In the oil industry, a united shora had developed representing the refineries, the white-collar workers in the offices, and the drilling operators and pumping stations. The United Shoras of the West of Tehran (which was dominated by the left and the Mujahedeen) included nearly thirty shoras. The Center of Shoras of the East of Tehran could speak in the name of about twenty factories. The Center of the Islamic Shoras of Rey (south Tehran) brought together the shoras at over sixty small and medium construction-materials factories. The big steel plants had organized the Central Shora of the National Industrial Group of Iranian Steel.

All the shoras belonging to the factories under the Organization for the Development and Modernization of Iranian Industries had united in the National Union of Revolutionary Islamic Shoras.

In Tabriz, the workers in the machine-tool plants had organized a powerful shora that was playing a major political role in the city and drawing representatives of the small factories and workshops toward it.

In Arak and Ghazvin, regional centers of the shoras had developed that were constantly organizing meetings and sending delegations to Tehran to present the workers grievances to the government.

In Gilan, over forty shoras (mainly dominated by the left) had united to form the Union of Workers Shoras in Gilan. This confederation was developing independent networks of workers cooperatives in the rural areas to sell factory products and to buy raw materials and foodstuffs.

At the same time, there was a growth of trade-unionism in the more traditional and small industries, such as textiles and printing.

In one form or another, all these organizations (including the Polytechnic Center) were involved in struggles in opposition to the capitalist policies of the government. Demands were being raised for the abolition of the old labor laws and for the workers shoras to draw up a new one, for further nationalization, for the removal of ministers, for the access of the shoras to the TV and radio. The revolution was on the rise.

The crisis at the top was also intensifying. The bourgeois liberal politicians were gradually losing their hold on power.

They were now openly expressing worry about the new constitution that would put power in the hands of the religious hierarchy. They were also pressuring the mullahs to take a more active role in heading off the mass movement. The mullahs on the other hand were more and more openly showing their intention to take control of the financial and political instruments of the state.

Moreover, in order to try to stem their loss of credibility among larger and larger sections of the masses, the mullahs were putting all the blame for the crisis on the bourgeois liberal politicians.

It was in this context that the occupation of the U.S. Embassy took place. It was designed by the IRP to divert the mass movement.

In the first place, empty anti-imperialist demagogy was a good course to take to divert the real anti-capitalist dynamic that was developing. The workers and peasants who in their daily struggles were striking at the real bases of imperialism were now called on to come to the front of the U.S. Embassy to hail "the Imam's Anti-Imperialist Line." A few weeks later the Imam himself called on the masses to stop all strikes and sit-ins "while the second and greater revolution is going on against the Great Satan."

Secondly, this situation provided the best cover for dumping the by now unpopular Bazargan government. Thus the Khomeini leadership could recoup the political defeat of its first attempt to rebuild the bourgeois state by winning new popular support for an "anti-imperialist" bourgeois regime.

Any politician who stood in the way of the IRP was promptly exposed by the Students Following the Imam's Line, who would publish the documents of their "collaboration" with the U.S. embassy. Information on contacts between IRP figures and the U.S. embassy was covered up, as was exposed later by a group that split from the occupiers.

The IRP used the embassy hoopla as a cover for pushing through its unpopular Islamic Constitution.

Thirdly, under the cover of mobilizing "the army of 20 millions" to fight the Great Satan, the armed instruments of the new regime (the pasdaran and the Imam's Committees) were enormously strengthened.

Ironically, this slogan was dropped after the Iraqi invasion when it threatened to take on real meaning.

The regime's reinforced armed units were used efficiently to crush the Turkomanis (December-January) and the Azerbaijanis in Tabriz (November). The operation in Tabriz prepared the way for the breaking of the militant organizations in Tabriz, where in March 1980 strikes broke out in three factories demanding the expulsion of the hezbollahis from the workplace.

Of course, the mobilizations around the embassy had initially a contradictory effect, encouraging large sections of the population to demonstrate their hatred of imperialism and their aspirations for a

different Iran. But in the absence of forces strong enough, united enough, and politically clear enough to present these masses with concrete alternatives, the demonstrations soon became purely the demagogic show that they were designed to be, burning themselves out harmlessly.

The working class was the section of the population least fooled by this demagogy. The first official demonstration in support of the Students Who Follow Imam's Line called by the Center of Islamic Shoras in December drew less than 50,000 persons. The second one was only slightly larger. By May 1980, the support had declined drastically. The official May Day demonstration in front of the U.S. Embassy gathered less than 20,000 workers.

In fact, the working class tried to take advantage of the sharpening of anti-imperialist feeling among the masses to push its own social and economic demands. The workers shoras everywhere were calling for a purge of all the capitalist and pro-imperialist managers and owners in industry. That is, they were trying to fight a real struggle against imperialism.

The weight of the regime-controlled mass movement fighting the Great Satan, however, had its effect on the working class. The anti-imperialist demagogy of the Khomeini leadership also offered an excellent cover for the class collaboration of the Tudeh Party and reinforced the arguments of the rightward-moving group in the Fedayeen leadership.

The Fedayeen, who were the largest organization on the left at the time, split into a pro-regime "majority" and a left-centrist minority. This had a profound effect on the shoras movement. A large section of the workers vanguard was drawn into direct collaboration with the Islamic regime. And within the factories, the Islamic Societies directly controlled by the IRP were gaining a new credibility with the help of the large left groups.

A NEW, LARGER OFFENSIVE BY THE REGIME

In February 1980, the regime launched a new operation designed to curb and destroy the shoras movement. After Friday prayers, a group of hezbollahi thugs, members of the Islamic Societies, supported by the Tudeh Party, attacked the Workers House, drove out all the workers that were there, and on the spot set up a new Center for the Coordination of the Islamic Societies and Workers Shoras. This was a regime-controlled umbrella organization for coordinating the pro-Khomeini elements within the Islamic Societies and shoras.

This new center also split the old Polytechnic Center. It began immediately to organize conferences of Islamic shoras in various cities (Tehran, Isfahan, Meshed, etc) to organize the pro-regime forces in Iranian industry and to block any further development of the independent shoras.

The proceedings of these conferences were all well publicized in the censored

mass media. All the resolutions they passed had at least ten clauses about the revolutionary anti-imperialist principles of the regime and one or two demagogic calls based on some popular but apolitical and harmless "workers demands" such as *participation* of the workers shoras in drawing up a new labor law.

Although it gave lip service to the concept of shoras, the new center was in fact working toward replacing the shoras with more easily controllable Islamic societies (Anjomans). In factories, where the independent shoras would not accede to the demands of the Islamic societies, the repressive forces were used to break them up.

It was in this atmosphere that the Khomeini regime began a new wave of repression. Having successfully gotten through the rigged elections for the Islamic Consultative Parliament, it launched a new general offensive against the Kurds in March, a much more ruthless and large-scale one than the offensive of the preceding summer.

In April, the Student Islamic Societies and hezbollahi thugs took over the universities, physically ejected the left groups, and shut the campuses down. They remain closed to this day.

In June and July, open moves to shut down shoras and arrest their leaders began. The leaders of the oil industries shora were arrested, their bulletin was banned, and the shora itself was liquidated. The Union of Revolutionary Islamic Shoras was declared illegal. The railway workers shora was closed down. The Center of the Shoras of East Tehran was occupied by a pro-Khomeini gang and its leaders arrested.

These repressive attacks on the workers movement were reinforced by a major offensive against the workers standard of living, and were in fact a concomitant of it. The right of workers to a share in the profits was abolished. Wage increases were declared illegal, and any management that disobeyed this decree was threatened with imprisonment. A new code of conduct for the shoras was passed by the IRC, which basically put an end to any independent election of the shoras and excluded them from any involvement in management.

The repression was so severe and the attacks on the working class so open that even the state controlled shora centers were forced to come out in opposition to the new laws.

In early September, both the Polytechnic Center (which had now lost a lot of its base and represented less than 60 shoras) and the Coordinating Center for the Islamic Societies and Workers Shoras — Workers House condemned the new codes and called for a "greater share of the working class in the running of Iranian industries." The polarization was sharpening.

This was the context in which the Iraqi invasion intervened in late September and posed a new decisive test for the workers movement and the left. ■

The smoldering miniwar in Somalia

The miniwar that began on Somali territory four months ago continues to smolder. In its November 13 issue, the British "Economist" carried a report from a correspondent saying:

"The Ethiopians remain about 20 miles inside Somali territory, on two fronts around a couple of border villages. They make almost daily air reconnaissance flights, but there appears to be a stalemate in the fighting. The Somalis, who say they have had 500 men killed and 1,200 wounded, claim that Ethiopian reinforcements have arrived and that a further onslaught is imminent."

The Somali government has used the threat of an Ethiopian invasion to pressure its Western allies to cough up more aid. The "Economist" noted that the Western diplomats were skeptical about the Siad Barre regime's new cries of alarm.

On the other hand, the November issue of "Afrique-Defense," a magazine published in Paris for businessmen interested in investing in Africa, reports that the two main Somali opposition

groups, the Democratic Front for Somali Salvation, and the Somali National Movement have recently formed a common front "with the aim of accelerating the armed struggle and hastening the fall of President Barre."

This accord was announced by Radio Kulmis, a Somali opposition station located in the suburbs of the Ethiopian capital. This radio station has reportedly changed its name to Radio Halgan (Struggle), the United Voice of the Somali Opposition Forces."

The two opposition groups have claimed, according to "Afrique-Defense," that they have occupied large parts of Somali territory and are now engaged in a "struggle to the death" with the government forces.

The following article, written in late September, shortly after the scope of the confrontation became clear, analyzes the background and terms of the armed conflict underway in Somalia.

Claude GABRIEL

The development of an armed conflict involving Ethiopia on the territory of the Somali state might seem surprising, since it represents a reversal of the terms of the 1977 conflict, when the fighting developed on Ethiopian territory.

In 1977, on July 23, the Somali army took the initiative, using as a cover the West Somali Liberation Front, an organization that claimed to be fighting for the right of self-determination of the Somalis living in the Ethiopian Ogaden.

After the defeat of the Somalis, the region has again been thrown into turmoil, in the name of a totally different cause. Now the people of this region are supposed to be in opposition to the Somali regime and to support a liberation struggle against the military dictatorship of President Siad Barre.

A few years ago, the Somali regime claimed that the fight was over liberating the Somali people of the Ogaden. Today, a section of the Somali opposition claims that it is basing itself on the same people to overthrow Siad Barre, with the aid of their Ethiopian friends.

In fact, there are two distinct aspects in these repeated clashes between Ethiopia and Somalia, and neither one should be forgotten.

First there is the background to these conflicts, the Somali national and ethnic question. Because the Somali nationality is extremely clearly defined, the problem of the border between Somalia and Ethiopia cutting off a part of the Somalis is a permanent source of instability.

The idea of reuniting "Greater Somalia" has always been part of the propaganda of the Somali governments. After being dealt a defeat in 1978 at the hands of the Ethiopian, Cuban, and Soviet forces, Siad Barre publicly renounced this "ideal" on March 9, 1978, announcing

the unilateral withdrawal of Somali troops.

THE OGADEN QUESTION

The Ogaden has always been a bone of contention between the two countries. The area was ceded to Ethiopia by the British after the second world war, in a period in which the policy of the imperialists was to reinforce the empire of the negus, Haile Selasse. This gift had an effect similar to the Western powers winking at the annexation of Eritrea in 1952 by the regime in Addis Abeba. This sort of conflict, therefore is directly linked to the legacy of colonialism and to imperialist policy in the region.

The Ogaden question led to an initial conflict in 1968, a second in 1966, and a third in 1977-78. Each time, the Somali state was able to base itself on a strong national feeling among the Somali communities, all of which have a common language, the same religion, and the same sort of social organization, regardless of what side of the border they live on.

However, the Somali national question does not always produce the same politically clear and unanimous response in all the Somali communities, which exist not only in Ethiopia but also in Djibouti and in northern Kenya.

CLANS AND POLITICS

The objective reason for this complexity has to be with the Somali social formation itself. Some 60% of the population is considered totally nomad and part of the remaining 40% are only semi-settled.

Among the effects of this situation is that the social, economic, and political life of the country is chronically dominated by clans. It is still being debated whether there is even a stable full-fledged

ruling class in Somalia. In the past, this situation has led to a generalized fragmentation of political life, with a myriad of groups mainly representing different clan interests. Thus, in the March 1969 elections, there were 88 parties running candidates.

So, in this context, it becomes clear how important the military coup staged by Siad Barre in 1969 was. It was aimed at achieving the coercive power to build a centralized state and ruling class through installing a nationalist military junta. After 13 years, the military regime has only partially achieved its objectives, and the power of the clans remains unbroken.

This fragmentation of the Somali people into clans greatly complicates the Somali national question in the frontier and disputed areas. The ups and downs of Somali irredentism in Ethiopia, as well as in Djibouti or Kenya, are often conditioned by the relations between the local clan notables and the groups in power in the Somali capital of Mogadiscio. Thus, the Somali state's conflicts with Ethiopia are usually accompanied by maneuvers, purges, and splits. This was also the case with the fronts operating in the Ogaden.

These problems are further complicated by the way in which the various governments in the region use and manipulate the national question — Ethiopia and Somalia in the first instance, to say nothing of the imperialists. Real self-determination of the communities involved is the last concern of all these governments. This goes for the Somali nomads, as well as for the peoples of Eritrea and Tigre in the northern part of Ethiopia.

In the name of defending the frontiers left by colonialism, wars have persisted in this part of Africa for thirty years. Indeed they may have been primarily means of settling the internal political crises of the existing regimes.

The successive renewals of the Ethiopian offensive against the Eritreans or the wars between Somalia and Ethiopia have come at good times for defusing serious internal crises facing the regimes concerned.

At times, it has been the vicissitudes in the relations between these regimes and the imperialists that have directly encouraged them to undertake such military adventures. The 1977 Ogaden war was so motivated. Mogadiscio hoped to get massive aid, including economic aid, from the imperialists at a time when the Ethiopian revolution still had a strong element of mass self-organization, both in the capital and in the countryside.

DERG TRIES TO HOLD ON TO THE EMPIRE

The Derg (the Amharic word means "the Council of Equals") was determined to keep the empire of the negus intact. But this state was being torn by great convulsions. Centrifugal forces were at work not only in Eritrea but also in Tigre and in the Ogaden.

In the Ogaden, the central government in Addis Abeba had always represented oppression and poverty. After the fall of Emperor Haile Selasse on September 12, 1974, the people gradually discovered that the "revolutionary" military officers intended to maintain a centralized repressive rule over the restive regions.

At the same time, a crisis broke out between Somalia and the Soviets, leading Moscow to break with Mogadiscio. This opened up the way for a rapprochement between Somalia and the imperialist powers. In fact, the imperialists had probably been maneuvering for a very long time to reduce the Soviet foothold in the country and to find ways to rebuild their network of positions in the Horn of Africa, after the breakup caused by the fall of Haile Selasse.

One of the consequences of these new relations between Somalia and the U.S. was granting of the Berbera military base near Djibouti to the American navy.(1)

THE REASONS FOR THE 1977 WAR

But the Ogaden war between the Somali and Ethiopian regimes was not caused by the national demands of the Somali communities in Ethiopia or the American maneuvers against the Ethiopian revolution. In the case of both regimes, the war was intended to solve certain internal political problems.

On the Somali side, the war was used to restore order in the satellite fronts that the regime maintained on Ethiopian territory, to get a firmer hand on leaderships that had shown a tendency to presume to speak in their own name.(2)

On the Ethiopian side, the war offered an opportunity for an intense campaign to integrate the still uncontrolled peasant militias into the state forces. Far from being a simple and necessary measure of bringing these forces into the revolutionary army, this action was a step in rein-

forcing the bourgeois army controlled by the Derg. It preceded the housebreaking of the neighborhood committees in Addis Abeba and the repression against the Meison (the Pan-Ethiopian Socialist Movement).(3)

From the broader standpoint, the war enabled the Derg to make it clear that in the case of the Ogaden, as well as in others, it had no intention of granting any right whatever of self-determination.

Finally, the Ethiopian officers succeeded in getting the Soviets and the Cubans to intervene massively on their side, without their making the least criticism of the Ethiopian government's policy. A common general staff was even set up, including the generals of the three countries.

After the war, the guerrilla movement continued to operate in the Ogaden. Cuban forces remain stationed in the area, about 9,000 troops guarding the border. In 1981, several thousand refugees in Somalia reportedly came from that area of the Ogaden. According to the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees, there are between 500,000 and 900,000 refugees from the Ogaden in Somalia.

CHANGES IN THE WAKE OF THE 1977 WAR

In the present conflict, like that in 1977, it is important to identify all the various elements involved so as not to overemphasize any one of them.

Since 1977, several changes have taken place in both Ethiopia and Somalia. First of all, the Somalis have not gotten the financial and military commitment they expected from the United States.

Washington did not want to alienate the Ethiopian regime definitively, and so it preferred to drag its feet, awaiting likely changes in the relations between the Soviets and the Derg officers. As in many other conflicts in Africa, the U.S. knows how to keep several irons in the fire at once.

THE U.S. INTEREST

The so-called contradictions the bourgeois press points up by comparing quotations from various American officials and politicians often reflect the complexity of American interests, since the general line adopted at a given moment by the White House can be deflected by the industrial and financial lobbies.

Ethiopia ranks nineteenth in Africa as a trading partner for the U.S., selling 89.5

million dollars worth of goods to the U.S. and buying 62.2 million worth in 1981. Somalia comes far behind.

This is why, despite the American promises, Siad Barre has made no bones about his criticisms of the West:

"The West's indifference is more surprising than it is disappointing. How can the Westerners keep letting the Soviets pull the wool over their eyes? The Soviets make promises they have no intention of keeping, and here, as in Iran or Afghanistan, they are getting ready to confront the West with accomplished facts."(4)

In fact, after making a belated deal with the Somalis for using the Berbera naval base, the Americans have not yet taken the decision to make it into an important part of their military network in the region. A considerable part of the old Soviet installations are awaiting the overhaul needed to make them usable by the American forces. After its military defeat in the Ogaden, this cautious attitude on the part of the Americans was a second heavy blow for Siad Barre inside his government.

THE SOMALI OPPOSITION

There have been other internal political developments in Somalia since 1977. A group of officers, some of whom are known to have continued to harbor pro-Soviet attitudes, tried to overthrow Siad Barre. The attempt failed and two of the plotters were shot.

This episode illustrates, once again, the complexity of the problems. These officers were far from being simply soldiers embittered by a military defeat. They were also involved in an old conflict between their clan, the Mijerteins, and the Darods, to which Siad Barre belongs.

This first test of strength was to give rise to the Somali Salvation Front, which thus is partially an outgrowth of an inter-clan struggle. At the beginning of 1981, this group gained attention by starting up urban terrorism. Its activities led to stronger repression, and they revealed that the group enjoyed a certain complicity in the administration and the army, as well as ties with personalities described at the time as pro-Soviet.(5)

It seems, in fact, that the break with Moscow divided the leading group. The Ogaden war made it possible to maintain a facade of unity by appeals to the old nationalist ideals of "Greater Somalia."

The war against the hereditary enemy, Ethiopia, may well have obliged officers

(1). Before Ethiopia, Somalia was characterized by Moscow as an "anti-imperialist socialist and revolutionary state." At that time, the Siad Barre regime got large amounts of military aid and was considered the backbone of the Soviet military establishment in the region.

After the fall of Haile Selasse in Ethiopia, everything was suddenly thrown into the melting pot. The Soviets probably tried to foster a rapprochement between the two countries. But at the very least they did not want to let the Ethiopian situation evolve without their taking a hand in it. Several small crises had already taken place between the Somalis and the Soviets over economic questions. Suddenly, after their withdrawal from Somalia, the Soviets started to consider the Siad Barre regime a reactionary regime. Clearly, this

government never ceased to be a repressive military regime. For his part, Fidel Castro had visited Mogadiscio during an African tour. At the time, he endorsed the characterization of the regime as "socialist and revolutionary." After 1976, he also denounced the regime as pro-imperialist.

(2). *Le Monde*, September 5, 1982.

(3). The Meison was a populist group of Maoist origin, which, unlike the Revolutionary People's Party of Ethiopia, supported the Derg for a whole period. The Meison supported the physical liquidation of the Revolutionary People's Party, which had been isolated by its totally irresponsible ultraleftist actions. In turn, the Meison had to break with the military and its leadership became the target of repression.

(4). *Le Monde*, August 5, 1980.

(5). *Le Monde*, November 25, 26, 1981.

marked by ten years of "scientific socialism" and suddenly left political orphans to restrain their feelings. It is not excluded either that Moscow was able to keep certain military circles under its influence, waiting for a more propitious moment to touch off a political crisis in Mogadiscio.

In any case, the defeat in the Ogaden precipitated things. It exposed the Siad Barre group to blows from the most varied collection of opponents — clans, friends of the Soviet Union, disappointed military officers, and so forth. At no time, however, was there any indication of mass support for this opposition.

A PRO-IMPERIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO SIAD BARRE

In 1981, twelve ministers formed a tendency inside the official party, which is the only one allowed to exist, demanding more democracy, a turn toward more free enterprise in the economy (today it is based mainly on state enterprises) and a genuine peace with Ethiopia. They also called for creating a post of premier in order to reduce what they regarded as a concentration of power in the hands of the president, Siad Barre.

Shortly after this, it was announced in London that a Somali National Movement had been formed, which, in the words of one of its leaders, Hassan Adan Wadadi, a former ambassador, was "neither hostile to the West nor favorable to Moscow."⁽⁶⁾

Finally, in October 1981, three other groups, including the Somali Salvation Front, fused to form the Democratic Front for Somali Salvation, whose ties with the Ethiopians are obvious. It has a radio transmitter in the suburbs of Addis Abeba, Radio Kulmis. And in the present military conflict, the Democratic Front forces apparently have modern arms, even supposing that the troops involved are its forces and not simply Ethiopian units.

In February 1982, mutinies broke out in military bases in the northern part of the country, along with mass demonstrations, which were harshly suppressed. This was the first time since 1977 the regime faced anything more than small opposition groups. But it remains impossible to tell what, if any connection, existed between these demonstrators and the organized opposition.

Finally, in June 1982, the crisis was at its height in the ruling party. Siad Barre was in danger of losing his majority, but he extricated himself by successfully carrying out the arrest of seven top figures.⁽⁷⁾ The first charge lodged against them was complicity with Ethiopia.

DIVISIONS IN THE DERG

The Ethiopians, for their part, had hardly any less problems. First of all there was the chronic and still unresolved question of building a "Marxist-Leninist party." This project divides the Ethiopian ruling strata. The Soviets are supposed to



have brought heavy pressure to bear to assure that such a party is finally formed, since it is unquestionably the only way to create the conditions for stabilizing the ruling layer. The Soviets have intervened in the same way in Angola.

Such official parties, which copy all the mechanisms of Stalinist parties and use Marxist phraseology for the purpose, can in fact play a decisive role in such situations. They can be the means of achieving homogeneity within the petty-bourgeois layers, military or civilian, that make up the apparatus of a fragile and unstable state that remains in the framework of economic dependence on imperialism. Such parties can use repression within the ruling strata themselves to accomplish this objective.⁽⁸⁾

According to *le Monde* of March 16, 1982, this affair strained relations between Addis Abeba and Moscow. The French daily reported that an article in *Pravda* stressed the slowness of changes in Ethiopia, noting, for example, that the revolution had been made "without an organized political vanguard." The Soviet

CP organ said that it was necessary to make up for lost time.

It was in this climate that the military junta decided to launch a new offensive against the Eritrean fronts. It committed considerable forces to this operation, and for the first time since 1978, carried it out without massive support from the Soviets. The offensive failed to achieve its principal objective, to take the city of Nafka from the People's Liberation Front of Eritrea. This setback was compounded by a worsening of the military situation in Tigre, where another liberation front is fighting the central government.⁽⁹⁾

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN ETHIOPIA

Finally, Ethiopia is experiencing a grave economic crisis. The Ethiopian revolution has released social forces long suppressed by the monarchy. Today, despite the state enterprises, despite the committees and the cooperatives, social differentiation is developing in the countryside. In the cities, corruption and the

(6). *Le Matin*, July 15, 1982.

(7). Namely, the vice president, Ali Abukar; former minister of defense Omar Haji Mohamed; former minister of information Mohamed Aden Sheih; and former minister of foreign affairs Omar Arten Galib.

(8). See *Quatrieme Internationale*, No. 5, July 1981, Claude Gabriel, "Y a-t-il des partis marxistes-leninistes en Afrique?"

(9). *Le Monde*, February 25, 1982; June 1, 1982; and November 14, 1981. In 1978, the offensive against the Eritreans was supported by the Soviet navy and air force. An Ethiopian landing on the coast was carried out from Soviet ships. In this period, the Cubans were present in Eritrea, but it is impossible to tell what their role was. Afterward, they made the decision to limit themselves to giving logistic aid to the Ethiopian army, to training soldiers, etc. From Eritrean sources, it seems that they are still stationed in Asmara, the capital of

Eritrea, but are still not involved in the military actions. It should be noted that the 1978 Ethiopian offensive against the Eritreans was launched just after the victory in the Ogaden. It seems that the integration of the peasant militias into the army that was carried out at that time helped the Derg to whip up chauvinist feeling against the Eritreans.

At the same time, the military integration in the Ogaden between the Ethiopians, the Soviets, and the Cubans probably extended to some extent to the Eritrean front, with the Cubans being brought under the combined pressure of the other forces. So, it was after some time that the Cubans decided not to support the Ethiopian army on the ground in operations in Eritrea. It was at this time that Fidel Castro talked about the need for a "political settlement" to the war. Nonetheless, overall, he continued to support the Derg.

state bureaucracy are promoting the rise of a privileged layer. The shortage of necessities such as wheat, cooking oil, sugar, textiles, shoes, and soap is hitting the urban population hard. The head of state, Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam recently launched an attack on "backward farmers," who are selling their produce at prohibitive prices.(10)

But the basic problem lies elsewhere. The Ethiopian economy depends basically on financial aid from the European Economic Community (see *Marches tropicaux et Méditerranéens* of January 22, 1982). Between 1976 and 1978, the government made the maximum exertion to break the self-organization of the masses. The state apparatus remains in the hands of the military officers, the petty bourgeoisie, and a few other profiteers.

The peasant and worker masses have found themselves denied access to the central decision-making power, at the same time as the local power of their village and neighborhood committees has been rolled back. Thus, the laws of capitalism continue to operate in the country. The state apparatus functions along bourgeois-state lines. And the official "Marxist" ideology serves in fact as a veneer for military bonapartism.

THE NEW WAR

So, this was the context in which the news came of the outbreak of the conflict on Somali territory between Siad Barre's army and opposition forces. No one can seriously believe the version offered by the Ethiopians and their supporters, who claim that this is a very simple question: the Somali masses are unhappy, a democratic and anti-imperialist opposition has developed, and it has gotten some fraternal but modest aid from the Ethiopian regime.(11)

Despite the Ethiopian denials, there is no doubt that the authorities in Addis Abeba have given the green light to the Somali opposition, that they have furnished heavy arms, and that they have at the very least provided logistic support. The present anti-Siad Barre Democratic Front is no more independent of the Ethiopian state than the Western Somali Liberation Front was independent of Mogadiscio.(12)

A PRO-IMPERIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO SIAD BARRE

The Somali government has raised a hue and cry about foreign invasion to try to force Washington to step up its support. But the Americans know how fragile and isolated the Siad Barre regime is. The American policy is torn between the fear of seeing a new pro-Soviet regime established in Somalia and a desire to find an alternative to the group presently in power in Mogadiscio. The Somali National Movement has tried to step into this opening. It has taken a position against

"foreign intervention" in Somalia, thereby offering itself as an alternative for the Westerners.

On July 24, 1982, Washington announced its first shipment of emergency aid to Somalia but made it clear that it consisted of defensive weapons (radar, anti-aircraft batteries, and ammunition). Several newspapers published reports indicating the still modest character of this aid. On August 16, after Siad Barre declared a state of siege, the United States decided to make new shipments.(13) Although it is not possible to determine exactly how extensive this new aid is, there is no doubt that for the moment the White House has decided to line up with Siad Barre.

Probably, the U.S. is carrying out diplomatic maneuvers to defuse the conflict. But the U.S. administration preferred to take a step closer to the Mogadiscio regime, undoubtedly because of the recent military revolt in Kenya. The new political situation prevailing in Kenya suddenly forced the imperialists to make some clearer choices in East Africa. A prolonged destabilization in Kenya would constitute a longer term danger to imperialist interests and investments in the region and to the hope of restabilizing Uganda after Idi Amin.

The Democratic Front's statements calling for a "democratic socialist government" and an end to the military facilities accorded to the U.S. shows clearly the risks that the Americans will run if they persist in the wait-and-see policy they have followed in recent years.

(10). See *Marches tropicaux et méditerranéens*, July 30, 1982.

(11). It is too often forgotten that in the conflict between the Derg and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the imperialists are for the victory of the Ethiopian government because they know that the People's Front is a nationalist movement based on the Eritrean masses and if it won that would constitute a victory of "prolonged people's war." The present ideology of the People's Front is permeated by progressive and radical nationalism.

The People's Front was also able to differentiate its criticisms of the Derg, of the Soviets, and finally of the Cubans, whom it handled quite differently.

Finally, a victory for Eritrea would be a severe blow for imperialist policy in Africa, since the imperialists claim to uphold the principle of maintaining the borders inherited from colonialism, a principle contained in the charter of the Organization of African Unity.

The overthrow of the Derg, if it made possible self-determination of the Eritreans and a victory of the People's Front would be a new source of problems for imperialism. In December 1981, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Claude Cheysson signed a joint communique with Ethiopia reaffirming respect for the established borders of the states in the region. (*Marches tropicaux et méditerranéens*, January 9, 1982.)

(12). It would also be simplistic to reduce the situation in this region to a conflict between Moscow and Washington. Quite the contrary, the clashes going on there may force the Soviets to maneuver to cool things down. Rene Lefort, who was *le Monde's* correspondent in Ethiopia in this period, described an incident at the end of the Ogaden war in this way: "But this Soviet commitment (not to go into Somali territory) provoked the first serious conflict between Addis Abeba and the USSR. The Derg dreamed of nothing but revenging the affront it suffered and of settling the Ogaden question once and for all by giving Somalia a lesson it would not forget. This meant carrying out fourteen years later the plan of Aman Andom, which had been blocked by the negus.

But not only did Moscow rule this out but it also twice opposed a battle plan that would

Nonetheless, for the immediate future, there are no prospects for a change in the situation for the masses of the region. The Democratic Front is a pawn in a conflict that is far from being a simple clash between Moscow and Washington. This region of Africa is one of the poorest in the world. The Ethiopian revolution had excellent possibilities for arousing the enthusiasm of the masses in this part of the continent.

MASS MOVEMENTS DIVERTED

However, the absence of a revolutionary vanguard has enabled the Ethiopian and Somali military to divert the mass liberation movement. The Ethiopians did this through repression, the Somalis by using the national question. If the Ethiopian revolution can regain momentum, it would turn against the policy of the Derg. It would, then, have to put an end to the bloody repression being waged against the Eritrean people. In Eritrea, in Tigre, or in the Ogaden, the revolution would recognize the right of self-determination of the populations.

Such a development would make it possible to pose the question of power in Somalia in a different way than through a classical military conflict between groups of officers with confused programs and with immediate objectives that take very little account of the fate of the populations involved. Indeed the various national questions are an underlying and basic fact of political and social developments in the region. ■

have led to the encirclement of the Somali forces. Reluctantly, the Ethiopian army stopped on the frontier. Only the pilots, the hard-core of the anti-Soviet elements in the armed forces, went beyond their orders and bombed Somali cities, including Hargeisa and Berbera." (Rene Lefort, *Ethiopie, la révolution hérétique*. Maspero, Paris, 1981, p. 357.)

(13). On August 12, 1982, in front of the National Assembly, Siad Barre declared once again that he was ready to enter into peace negotiations with Ethiopia at any time and in any place, to achieve a political settlement. Mogadiscio now says that it no longer claims the Ogaden territory but demands only self-determination for its population.

For their part, the Ethiopians demand recognition of the border and of the principles of the OAU charter, as well as reparations for the 1977-1978 war, as preconditions for any negotiations. Moreover, for the time being, they want to play their cards very close to their chest, presenting the present conflict as a purely Somali affair.

The Cubans, who maintain large military forces in the Ogaden, have no doubt maintained the political position on this question that they held in 1978. In its March 26, 1978, *Granma*, the daily paper of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, said:

"Those who know Africa are aware that in every African country there are tribes that straddle the frontiers with other African countries. Many African states have not yet passed the stage of tribal organization. If a country succeeded in taking by force a territory it demanded, this would constitute a precedent that would lead to a real catastrophe for all of Africa. This is why the African states have said: There cannot, and must not be any redrawing of borders, and the use of force to redraw borders is out of the question." (Retranslated from French).

The Cuban CP journal thus made quite a clear defense of this point in the charter of the OAU. But rather than take up the fundamental problem of the national and ethnic questions and the tragic heritage of colonialism, it takes refuge in a strange view of tribalism as a sort of original sin.

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