

imprecor



international press correspondence

fortnightly, N°66, 27 january 1977

£30, \$75, 30fb

JAPAN
BETWEEN
TWO ERAS



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INPRECOR 76 rue Antoine Dansaert Brussels-1000 Belgium
INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE
Fortnightly information organ of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International
published in English, French, Spanish, and German.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of INPRECOR.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (25 issues) — US\$17; Can\$17; £7
AIR MAIL TO U.S. & Canada: \$24. TO AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND: US\$30.
SPECIAL SIX-ISSUE AIR MAIL INTRODUCTORY SUB: U.S. & Canada \$5.50;
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND US\$6.50.
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JAPAN: BETWEEN

TWO ERAS

interview with a revolutionary

marxist leader

The December 5 elections to the lower house of the Japanese Diet (parliament) resulted in a major setback for the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP). The party's share of the popular vote declined to 42%, down from 47% in the elections of 1972. The LDP won 249 seats in the 511-member Diet, the first time in twenty-one years that the ruling party has fallen short of a majority. (The adherence of 8 conservative independents to the LDP after the election will give the party a bare majority of 257 seats.) In the previous Diet, which had 491 seats, the LDP had held 271. In addition, three LDP cabinet members failed to win re-election, the first time since 1958 that any cabinet member had suffered electoral defeat.

The Communist party also suffered losses, declining from 39 seats to 17 (although the CP's share of the popular vote declined only slightly, from 10.49% to 10.38%), while the Socialist party gained 11 seats and holds 123 in the new Diet. It was mainly the so-called moderate parties that made significant gains in their number of seats. The Democratic Socialist party, a right-wing split from the SP, increased its Diet membership from 19 to 29. The Komeito (Clean Government party, which is Buddhist oriented) went from 30 seats to 55. The third big winner was the New Liberal Club, formed by some young members of the LDP who split from the party last summer. The NLC entered the elections with 5 Diet members and emerged with 17, two of whom received more votes than any of the other 897 Diet candidates.

In the wake of the LDP's electoral setback, Prime Minister Takeo Miki resigned and was replaced by Takeo Fukuda, another leader of the LDP.

Although the LDP remains at the helm, the post-election situation in Japan is much changed, the electoral results being a distorted reflection of a deeper crisis. In the following interview, which was obtained in Tokyo on December 29, 1976, Jiro Kurosawa, a member of the Political Bureau of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International, explains the meaning of the election results and the prospects for the development of the political and economic crisis in Japan.



Q The Liberal Democratic party suffered a setback in the December 5 elections to the lower house of the Diet.

This has been referred to as a catastrophic defeat, even though the number of seats lost was rather small and the LDP still controls the government. How serious was this setback, and how did it come about?

A At the start of the election campaign, LDP leaders said that they would consider it a victory if they could hold on to 271 seats. That was the same number of seats they had held prior to dissolution of the Diet. But considering that the total number of seats in the Diet was increased by about twenty in this election, the LDP was actually forecasting a loss of ten seats or so. But as it turned out, they lost twenty seats more than they had anticipated. The LDP now holds a bare numerical majority in the lower house, but not a large enough majority to control all the Diet committees, as they have in the past.

These results reflect the direct effect of the Lockheed bribery scandal, especially the fact that from about February through April the masses were able to go onto the offensive around the Lockheed case. Since April, though, the masses haven't risen up together against the government, so the effects of the Lockheed scandal have been expressed as an internal crisis within the ruling party, focusing on a strategy dispute over how to deal with the demands of the masses. (See INPRECOR, No. 59, October 7, 1976.) The various factions of the LDP continued to be divided under this pressure, and the party went into the elections suffering a de facto split between the "bourgeois mainstream" factions headed by Takeo Fukuda and the minority grouping led by then Prime Minister Miki. These two groups essentially ran separate election campaigns, and under these conditions the LDP as a whole suffered a big defeat.

Miki hoped to limit the masses' alienation from the LDP by means of policies that in a sense prefigure the line of a possible coalition government in the future. That is, he compromised with the Socialist party and at the same time tried to restrain the bourgeois mainstream. But Miki was unable to win mass support in the context of the Lockheed scandal and the divided LDP campaign.

Miki's policy had been successful during the 1975 Spring Labor Offensive (*shunto*). Up until 1974, the *shunto* had always been marked by numerous strikes over a ten-day period, but in 1975 Miki succeeded in preventing widespread industrial actions. In that sense, Miki's policy succeeded in restraining mass struggles — or at least in restraining political polarization — in 1975. Nevertheless, it turned out that this line of Miki's failed completely when faced with the outbreak of the Lockheed scandal.

Q The Socialist party remains the largest opposition party in the Diet, but its electoral gains were relatively modest. Why was this?

A We saw a stagnation of the vote total for the Socialist party. In terms of Diet seats the SP came out stronger than in the previous lower house elections in 1972, but this reflects the way election districts were redrawn when the twenty new Diet seats were created. One of the deals between the Miki government and the SP was that in return for the SP's cooperation during and after the 1975 *shunto*, Miki made the big compromise of allowing some election districts to be redrawn more favorably for the SP. The SP didn't win many new seats outside of these redrawn districts.

The geographical distribution of the SP's support also shifted significantly. Compared with the previous

election, the strength of the SP declined in urban areas, both in terms of Diet seats and in the percentage of the vote. At the same time there was a slight increase in the SP vote in rural areas. So we can say that what the SP lost in the cities was compensated for in the countryside, and most of the SP's new Diet seats were gifts from Miki. The total percentage of the vote that went to the SP was less this time than four years ago.

This increase in the SP's vote in rural areas reflects something we began to see in the previous election, namely that the votes of people who are becoming alienated from the LDP are tending to go to the SP. In a sense, this is the initial political expression of alienation from the LDP in the countryside. In Tokyo and the other urban centers we've already passed through that phase, and the process of political differentiation is proceeding with the SP picking up votes that went to the Communist party in the previous elections while losing votes to other parties. The net result is that the SP's strength in urban centers has declined significantly since the previous elections.

as the city of Sendai. But that strategy completely collapsed this time, as the most important unions wouldn't lift a finger.

In a sense, this is a result of the defeats of the shunto in 1975 and 1976. It shows very clearly what has been happening to the relationship between the SP and the working class, especially the workers in Sohyo-affiliated unions. (Sohyo, the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, is the largest Japanese trade-union federation — INPRECOR.)

Q Why did the Communist party suffer such a major defeat?

A The percentage of the total vote that went to the Communist party this time was only 0.1% lower than in the previous elections, but in terms of Diet representation the CP suffered a historic setback, losing twenty-two seats. This reflects the geographical shift of the CP's vote, which was more dispersed this time, rather than concentrated in a few urban strongholds.



Communist party candidate
MATSUMOTO

I should mention a couple of other things about the SP's results. One is that nearly all the most prominent SP leaders, except for the party chairman and vice-chairman, were defeated in this election. Among the losers, for example, were the two ranking members of the Party Policy Council and leaders of major intra-party factions, such as Saburo Eda.

The second thing is related to this. These defeated Social Democratic big shots were the ones who traditionally had depended most heavily on the major labor unions to gather votes for them. One of the striking features of the SP's campaign this time was that the unions under Social Democratic leadership didn't budge on behalf of SP candidates. Up to now, the big shots had always figured that they could rely on the stable vote-gathering capabilities of the big unions and just call on them in order to get elected. This is how it had been for a long time in traditional SP strongholds such

We can say that in those strongholds the CP lost from both the right and the left of its traditional base of support.

In the past, the CP's support came largely from city dwellers, especially workers in education and local government employees. The CP attracted these layers, responding to their economic demands and organizing them on the neighborhood level, and on this basis establishing "renovationist" municipal governments in various cities. This has been more or less the structure of the movement on which the CP's growing strength was based.

But in the last couple of years the Stalinists' support among teachers and local government employees has been declining as a result of the party's new theories that "a teacher's profession is a sacred one" and that "local government employees are not workers, but public

servants." These "theoretical" innovations were intended to justify the CP's abandonment of the struggle of these workers for the right to strike. This has resulted in a loss of CP influence — and membership — among these layers of workers, which have been the CP's only major base within the union movement.

In the recent election campaign, the CP of course carried out leafleting and other activities, but it was unable to turn out large numbers of its usual labor union supporters for this sort of activity. The Stalinists were unable to organize such big street demonstrations as in the past. The only layers of the CP's base among whom the party did not lose support seemed to be the elderly. They also lost their ability to mobilize students. Support for the CP within the student movement had been a big factor in previous election campaigns. But this year, for example, the Stalinist youth group organized campus demonstrations around the Lockheed scandal which in some cases involved only a few hundred students — no larger than the ones we organized.

So we can say that the CP ran in this election campaign without the support of the activist layers of trade unionists and students who had been crucially important to its earlier campaigns. Trying to run an election campaign without those activists was like trying to run a car without the engine.

At the same time that it was losing the support of these layers on the "left" of its electoral base, the CP also ran up against the contradictions of the reformist municipal governments in which it participates. There are very many people who have supported CP candidates in local elections not because they are attracted to the Communist party ideologically, but simply because they see the CP as a symbol of "clean politics." Some of these supporters have become alienated from the CP because they now stand politically to the left of it, or at least because the CP is offering no positive alternative to people who are beginning to think seriously about the question of political power. The central theme of the CP's propaganda in this election wound up being opposition to anticommunist attacks, rather than any concrete perspective of governmental power.

We began to see these trends when Minobe, the reformist governor of Tokyo, ran for re-election in 1975. There has been a continuing rightward evolution of the CP's line, which was symbolized in 1976 by the decision to delete the term "proletarian dictatorship" from the party program. But more than just the renunciation of one well-known slogan, it is this whole evolution that has acted to demoralize many party members and alienate CP supporters. To the average activist, the most blatant betrayal is the new "theory" that workers in education and in municipal government services are not really workers and therefore should not have the right to strike.

After splitting from the LDP last summer, the New Liberal Club (NLC) made big gains in the elections. The Democratic Socialist party (DSP) and the Komei party also got much larger votes than in the past. The

bourgeois press has pointed to these victories as evidence that "the people rejected both the right and the left, and instead showed their preference for the moderates, for a middle-of-the-road political line." Is this assessment accurate?

A Komei, the DSP, and the NLC all appealed to the masses — including layers of the working class — on the theme: "we have to get rid of the LDP and restore clean politics." In a way, their election strategies were the ones most closely in tune with the prevailing mood. What characterized the campaigns of these parties was that they completely avoided any propaganda along the lines of what kind of government they wanted to form. Rather than elaborate policies, they merely stressed over and over that "we have to get rid of the LDP." They definitely had this character of "mood campaigns." This was true of all three parties, above all the New Liberal Club.

In a situation in which the SP and CP also refused to speak clearly about their policies, about what kind of government they wanted to form, the masses voted for Komei, the DSP, or the NLC simply as an expression of anti-LDP sentiment. It's true that the SP and CP also got these kinds of votes, but the "floating votes" were really the key to the Komei, DSP, and NLC's success. Support for these parties increased most conspicuously in the major cities.

These gains of Komei, the DSP, and the NLC — particularly in urban areas — reflect not so much support for the political programs of these parties, but rather the combined processes of alienation from the LDP and disillusionment with the Social Democrats and Stalinists. Many people who in the past had voted for the SP or CP turned to these parties for lack of an alternative. For this reason it is incorrect to speak of the election results as "the people's choice of a moderate line." On the contrary, the results were an expression of the disappointment of voters who were not presented with a clear choice of political line and in many cases wound up casting votes for candidates of the "middle of the road" parties, whose lines have yet to be tested in practice.

The NLC in particular was appealing precisely because it was new. But its political character will be put to the test in the very near future, even sooner than the line of the SP and CP.

The success of the Komei party also reflected its organizational growth. It has been expanding its influence among the lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie and unorganized workers and building a neighborhood-level organization linked to the Soka Gakkai Buddhist sect. Many of the people being attracted to the Komei party were CP supporters in the past. During the economic boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the CP drew around it those urban layers who were "left out" of the economic prosperity. The CP promised increased social welfare spending under "renovationist" municipal governments. But with the end of the economic boom and with the cutbacks by local governments, these layers have

become disillusioned with the CP. The somewhat increased social welfare spending by reformist local governments always depended on funds provided by the national government controlled by the LDP. Now the LDP is demanding cuts in such spending, and the CP has refused to lead a mass struggle against the cutbacks. As a result, those unorganized workers and layers of the urban petty bourgeoisie who used to support the CP are now being attracted to the Komei party and its local organizations, which promise better funding for municipal services.

Q So how would you sum up the significance of the election results as a whole?

A This election marked the first time since the early 1950s that the radicalization of the masses has begun to pose the possibility of an alternative to the LDP government. At this point the working masses are not at all clearly conscious of what kind of government they want, but they know they've had enough of the LDP. In that sense, this election marks a turning point in Japanese history.

The LDP lost its numerical majority in the lower house in this election. Only because a few Diet members who were elected as independents have joined the LDP since the elections, the LDP now has a bare majority. The class polarization reflected in the election results is still at an early stage of development and was expressed in a very confused and incomplete way. That is, it has not come to the point of a clear polarization over what kind of government should be formed. Nevertheless, it is an important political trend objectively.

The role of the SP and CP further exacerbated this confusion. They represent the only currents that could have offered a realistic alternative to the LDP, but they refused to do so. Instead, they also tried to water down their programs, formulate their slogans more vaguely, and present themselves as "moderates." This was especially so in the final weeks of the election campaign, as SP Chairman Narita publicly announced that the SP would be willing to join in a coalition government with elements of the LDP, even if it meant dropping the SP's longstanding demand for abrogating the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Chairman Miyamoto of the CP hesitated barely twenty-four hours before announcing that the CP was willing to do the same.

In this context, with all parties but the LDP refusing to speak about what policies they propose to carry out, the process of political differentiation among the masses was suspended at a very early stage. And as a result, the masses' alienation from the LDP was often expressed in votes for "moderate" parties. This was the basic character of the election results.

Another factor was that the struggles of the working class over the past two years have been dispersed under the line of the SP and CP. Not only has the voting strength of the working-class parties declined in urban areas, the shunto has gone down to defeat two years in a row. The working class has been left without any or-

ganized nationwide tendency willing to confront the LDP as an organized movement. This was an election in which the working class was objectively left without any nationwide pole of attraction around which to unite and struggle against the LDP.

Q What are the factors that have brought on this crisis of the LDP's rule in Japan?

A There are basically two main factors that have led to the present crisis of the LDP government. The first of these is the bankruptcy of the economic boom that continued throughout the decade of the 1960s. (See INPRECOR, No. 61/62, November 11, 1976.) This bankruptcy was already apparent, in a way, at the time of the explosive outbreak of the youth radicalization in 1968, for the movement of radical youth was clearly a reaction to the contradictions of rapid economic growth. But the generalized economic recession that began after 1972 transformed this youth radicalization into a generalized radicalization of Japanese society as a whole. Or to put it another way, alienation from Japanese capitalism was transferred from a purely intellectual level to the level of the daily life of the masses, from the disenchantment of youth with capitalist society to a more generalized mass disenchantment increasingly directed against the capitalist LDP government.

Simultaneous with this has come the second factor: the advance of the East Asian sector of the world revolution. But the tremendous impulse from the advance of the Asian revolution, which spurred on mass alienation from the LDP and swung the masses' energy to the left, toward support for the SP and CP, has come to an end in the past two years. This, of course, is due largely to the détente between the United States and China.

This is reflected in one important difference between the 1972 and 1976 general election campaigns: the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty ceased to be a key issue. In all the elections prior to 1976, the Security Treaty emerged as a central issue. Masses of people who were not necessarily opposed to the Security Treaty as such nevertheless supported the SP or the CP as the political currents which would prevent Japan from being drawn into a war. These votes represented not so much a desire to put the SP and CP into power in place of the LDP as the hope that if the anti-Security-Treaty parties were strengthened, Japan would be less likely to go to war. This time, however, the Security Treaty was not a focal point of the election campaign, clearly because of the détente between China and the United States — in other words, because China now accepts the Japan-U.S. military alliance.

Mass opposition to the Security Treaty had been increasing ever since the start of the Vietnamese revolution. But that opposition was defused and the Security Treaty issue was completely pushed into the background, when China gave its approval to the treaty. In this way, the present advance of the Asian revolution has guaranteed the expansion of the influence of the "moderate"

political currents internationally. That is, the political moderates in Japan have become the "pro-China" current. The Komei party, for example, began actively raising the call for peaceful coexistence with China just when the U.S.-Chinese détente was initiated.

Today, the figures in Japanese politics who are most popular with Peking are first of all former Prime Minister Tanaka of the LDP; second, Chairman Takeiri of Komei, and third, Saburo Eda, a leader of the right wing of the SP. These three were the first major Japanese political figures invited to visit China; since then, they have all been depicted in China as very important people. They have acted as advocates of the Chinese position in policy debates in Japan. They obtain mass support in Japan because they have become identified as supporters of China. They benefit from the Japanese masses' traditional sympathy for China, or at least from the masses' fear of a war with China. By virtue of the fact that they are the ones who can act as go-betweens on questions of Sino-Japanese relations, it has been these moderate politicians whose political influence has been bolstered by China, at least since the downfall of Tanaka, when his crooked financial dealings were exposed. In keeping with its hostility toward the Soviet Union, Peking has assumed a hostile attitude toward the CP and the left wing of the SP, which favors joint action with the CP. In this way too, it is the moderates who are bolstered by China's position.

In this political context, the advance of the Asian revolution has had a contradictory effect on Japanese politics. It has strengthened the moderate currents, even though it had spurred on the rise of the New Left during the late 1960s. The relationship of forces between Japanese "moderates" and "radicals" has objectively shifted in favor of the moderates as a result of the détente.

Q Could you explain this point a little more concretely? For example, you have often referred to the LDP governmental crisis as a consequence of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution. Concretely, how did that victory contribute to the governmental crisis in Japan?

A It used to be said that in the elections one-third of the voters opposed the Security Treaty, and two-thirds supported it. But nowadays, as a result of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, one-third support the Security Treaty, one-third don't favor revising the treaty but don't support it either, and one-third oppose it. Consequently, the LDP, whose entire policy is predicated on the alliance with U.S. imperialism, has become unable to win a majority in support of its line. The present sentiment is that Japan should no longer determine its policies fundamentally in relation to Washington, but rather in relation to China. This is a direct effect the Vietnamese revolution has had on the structure of Japanese politics.

Q How is the political situation in Japan likely to develop in the near future? What can we expect from the new cabinet under Prime Minister Fukuda?

A Well, in the area of foreign policy, Fukuda's biggest problem is Korea. In a sense we can say that we are now entering a third period in the relationship between the Asian revolution and the governmental crisis in Japan. The first period was from about 1968 to 1972, when China and Vietnam acted as a single element affecting Japanese imperialism and the Japan-U.S. alliance. It was then that the LDP began to lose many Diet seats, began to collapse.

From 1972 to about 1975, we had a period during which the advance of the governmental crisis was partially blocked. That is, the rise of the moderate currents and the maintenance of the LDP government expressed a widespread attitude not of opposition to the Security Treaty, but of accepting the treaty so long as Peking approves, accepting the alliance with the United States so long as it does not lead to war with China. This period is now coming to an end.

In that sense, the recent election results reflected the mood of this past period. The effect of the new situation which has arisen in Korea this year was hardly reflected

INTERNATIONAL

Theoretical Journal of the International
Marxist Group, British Section of the
Fourth International

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International will henceforth be appearing quarterly under the editorship of Tariq Ali. The next three issues will appear in mid-February, mid-May, and mid-August.

Subscription rates:

Britain: £3 for 4 issues

Overseas: £3/\$6 for 4 issues (surface mail)

£6/\$12 for 4 issues (airmail)

Single copies: 75p/\$1.50 (includes postage)

All correspondence: International, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BT, England

at all in this election. But the situation in Korea is evolving rapidly right now.

You see, the détente between Peking and Washington has had a moderating effect on the situation in Japan. But the effect of the détente in Korea has been felt only for about half a year. The joint North-South Korean Declaration was issued in 1972. That was clearly done in an attempt to establish a system of peaceful co-existence on the Korean peninsula patterned after the U.S.-China and Japan-China détentes. But just at the moment when the Park regime had put forward a Joint Declaration and North Korea had agreed to it, the relationship between Park and the South Korean masses changed abruptly. In other words, the U.S.-China détente played a certain moderating role in Japanese politics, but in Korea the onset of the détente was linked to an upsurge of the masses which immediately exacerbated the crisis of the Park regime.

Consequently, Park was forced to quickly change his line. Even though a détente had been established between the United States and China, it proved impossible to do the same on the Korean peninsula. As a result, the Yushin Constitution, the State of Emergency, and the whole augmented repressive system in South Korea was established within the framework of the détente.

Today, the crisis in Korea once again calls into question the moderating effect of the U.S.-China détente on Japanese politics. That is, the Security Treaty may be acceptable in relation to China, but for the Japanese masses it once again appears as a dangerous factor in view of the crisis in Korea. The Japan-U.S. alliance has now become a system for reacting to events on the Korean peninsula, and the Japan Self-Defense Forces have also become part of this joint U.S.-Japanese-South Korean military system. The fact that U.S. imperialism can no longer act single-handedly in Korea, that any moves in Korea will involve this whole military system, means that the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty will once again become a key issue in Japan.

With South Korea fitting into this sort of structure, we've begun to see a new movement around the problem of Korea. In June 1976, the New Current was formed by the moderates in Japan, mainly leaders of the right wing of the SP. Their aim is to establish a mass movement, further to the right than the SP's old Voice for Peace, whose support has been declining. These elements have begun to take up the problem of Korea actively.

The Korean problem is clearly the Achilles Heel of the moderates' line. If the Park regime continues to exist and events in Korea take a sudden violent turn, the whole moderate line would be wrecked. Therefore, it is urgently necessary for them to integrate Korea into the structure of the détente. We can see this in the attempts to organize a mass movement in Japan — and in America as well — to pressure the Park regime to make the necessary changes to bring Korea into the framework of the détente. This implies, in fact, replacing Park by another regime in South Korea.

In this sense, the struggle here in Japan in solidarity with the Korean people has grown in importance, spreading rapidly beyond the narrow milieu of groups like ours based on the youth radicalization, who have carried out this activity in the past. The formation by the New Current of the Korean Problems Research Council shows that concern over Korea is reaching into the mass trade unions and political parties. The success of the recent campaign by the Korean Youth League in Japan, who gathered more than one million signatures on petitions demanding the release of political prisoners in South Korea, is also evidence of this spreading concern.

In the final analysis, Vietnam had only half the effect on Japan that it might have had, thanks to the Chinese leadership. Vietnam did not strike a direct blow at Japanese politics. The Vietnamese revolution was just beginning to have an effect when China interfered. Hence, the victory of the Indochinese peoples was not able to play an active role in promoting opposition to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Vietnam is also geographically farther from Japan than Korea is. But the present problem of Korea is one which China cannot intervene to solve, and one which is tightly, inseparably linked with the political and economic situation in Japan. In this sense, Korea is the axis of the new situation.

We now see the Japanese government carrying out a very active diplomatic policy in regard to Korea. Prime Minister Fukuda is so far postponing action on other major foreign policy questions such as Sino-Japanese relations, treating Korea as the top priority. We saw that three Japanese who had been held as political prisoners in South Korea were recently freed. That was President Park's gift to Fukuda.

So the Korean question is intimately linked with the whole political situation in Japan. One of the perennial themes of certain LDP politicians has been the "Red Flag over Pusan" theory. Pusan is a South Korean seaport across the straits from Japan. They say that "if the day ever comes when the red flag flies over Pusan, it won't be more than a week or two before Japan will go red, too." We're hearing that more often these days.

Q What about the economic policies of the new cabinet?

A During 1976 the Japanese economy recovered a bit from the 1974-75 recession. But much of that recovery was due to a rapid expansion of export trade, which means it was at the expense of Japan's imperialist competitors. This kind of situation cannot last for long — even now the Fukuda cabinet is working hard to persuade West European governments not to enact retaliatory import restrictions. In the long run, the LDP will be forced to carry out much more severe anti-working-class measures at home, to make Japanese workers pay for the long-term crisis of the capitalist economy. And Fukuda will have a much harder time putting over new attacks on the Japanese workers than he will reaching agreements with his European colleagues.

The bourgeoisie and the LDP tried to enforce a massive program of speed-up and rationalization against public-sector workers in 1973 — that was the *marusei* "productivity program." That attack was defeated by the resistance of the unions. The experience of that successful struggle and the effects of the recession have deepened the radicalization of public-sector workers. Today not only the youngest layers, but even middle-aged workers are more and more coming into motion, in spite of attempts by the leadership of Sohyo to tighten up bureaucratic control.

Fukuda and the government have no choice but to launch a new round of attacks against these workers. The precarious state of the economy leaves the LDP very little room for compromise, or even for postponing the confrontation.

The first main target of the Fukuda regime's economic policies will be the workers of Japan National Railways (JNR). This is partly because the JNR workers have the strongest union organization in the country. The fiscal crisis of the JNR is also a concentrated expression of problems that affect all sectors of the economy. The LDP will try to politically isolate the JNR workers from mass support by linking the workers' demands to the question of raising railway fares.

We saw this happen in 1976. The government demanded a 50% increase in JNR fares as a precondition for paying the 7% wage raise won by JNR workers in the 1976 shunto. The union took a position against any fare increase, and the SP carried out parliamentary maneuvers to stall passage of the legislation to raise fares. The union threatened to go on strike again to get the pay raise, but the SP reversed its position just before the strike deadline and allowed the fares to be raised. But even with that 50% fare increase, the crisis of JNR finances has not been solved, and a major confrontation with the union of JNR workers was only postponed. One of the first acts of the new cabinet was to announce plans to eliminate over 100,000 jobs in a massive rationalization of the freight division of JNR.

So as I said, at this stage the JNR workers are Fukuda's main target. If the government can defeat these workers, it will succeed in forcing the burden of inflation onto the masses through further fare increases, it will be able to break up a powerful workers' organization, and it can resolve the most acute contradictions in the transportation industry. For us too, this struggle is a key test of how well the workers movement can stand up to the attacks that are being prepared.

Q Can you tell us about the intervention of the Japanese Trotskyists during the Lockheed scandal and the elections?

A Okay, but first I should make a point about the difference between the class struggle in Japan and in Western Europe, because it has a lot to do with our tasks. There are important historical reasons why the

radicalization of the Japanese working class, this process of class polarization, is not expressed at this stage in a growth of support for the mass reformist parties.

The distinction between the European and Japanese workers movements results partly from the effects of the defeat of the potentially revolutionary upsurge following the surrender in 1945. The Japanese workers movement had been completely smashed prior to the war. In addition, there was no large-scale resistance movement during the war. The tremendous upsurge of 1945-47, which saw the formation of industrial unions and the explosive growth of the Communist party, was completely smashed. Industrial unions were replaced by company unions and the CP suffered heavy repression by the American occupation forces. This is in contrast to what happened in most of Europe, where real trade unions continued to exist, providing a mass base for the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties.

The Japanese working class had no tradition. And lacking tradition it was unable to build lasting mass organizations during the post-surrender upsurge. The present union movement, in which some of the Sohyo unions come closest to being real trade unions, took shape during the struggles against economic rationalization in the 1950s. As a result of the defeat of workers in private industry during those struggles in the 1950s, even today only the public-sector workers have effective union organizations. This is why working-class militancy has developed for the most part in the public sector and not in the key sectors of heavy industry. In the private sector we have "enterprise unions" which collaborate with management on the shop floor and are politically pro-imperialist.

Since the early 1950s the Communist party has had no organized base whatever in the union movement. Beginning in the 1960s the CP acquired important influence within some Sohyo unions — especially teachers and local government employees — but that's all.

This means that the working class has been unable to confront the capitalists and the government as a class, even on the trade-union level. There has been no experience of any sort of SP-CP united front on that level. Half of the working class is left with nothing but these pro-imperialist company unions. Therefore, when the process of radicalization begins again, there is a lack of class-struggle tradition, and the radicalization is expressed in an extremely dispersed and confused form rather than a rapid polarization reflected in votes for the SP and CP. The recent working-class struggles in Japan are not part of a continuity of accumulated experience. This is a big difference between the West European and Japanese workers movements.

This also means that the Communist parties are different in some important ways. In the late 1960s the Japanese CP began to formulate a line very similar to that of its West European counterparts. But unlike what happened in Europe, this rightward evolution of the CP, culminating in explicit rejection of the dictatorship of the

proletariat, quickly eroded the base of support that the party had begun to build up among certain sectors of the working class. I guess we'd have to say that in France or Italy, when the CPs made their "right turn" they took big sections of the working class with them — all the way to renouncing the proletarian dictatorship. But the Japanese CP found itself without a proletarian base long before it renounced the proletarian dictatorship.

This is a key aspect of the political situation, and the essential nature of our task flows from this. The working class in Western Europe has the experience and the tradition of joint action by the SP and CP at both the trade-union and parliamentary levels — although it has always been class-collaborationist, not a genuine united front. There hasn't been that experience in Japan, not on any level. As a result, when you talk about a workers government, it's more difficult for a Japanese worker to visualize what you mean. Even the term "workers government" doesn't have the same meaning — or the same connotation — that it would to a European worker.

In spite of this problem, we concluded at the time of our eighth national congress in January 1976 that the political situation was entering a period during which the question of a workers government would be posed objectively. This was a theme that ran through all our discussions at the congress. This discussion, however, remained somewhat abstract; we did not see any way to respond in practice to the new situation we saw developing.

Less than two months after the congress, the Lockheed scandal broke and we were suddenly up against a very concrete question. We tried — and we were the only current that did so — to link the scandal to the question of power for the working class, emphasizing the need for a workers government and for workers control of industry. The axis of our propaganda was this: bring down the corrupt LDP government, for the formation of an SP-CP government, for the nationalization under workers control of all the corporations involved in the scandal. Throughout this campaign we stressed the need for a workers united front.

We also took the initiative in trying to organize united actions involving those left groups that were willing to participate. In Sendai and Osaka during the shunto we projected the Lockheed scandal as a key theme for the Sohyo's struggle. Building on that momentum, we initiated a united demonstration in Tokyo on June 20, which drew about 3,000 people.

Our second major arena of activity has been mobilizing the working class to support the Buraku liberation struggle and the struggles in solidarity with the Korean people. (The Buraku, or "outcasts," are an oppressed minority in Japan — INPRECOR.) Objectively these struggles are linked to the interests of the labor movement, but they have always been isolated from the unions. We try to take these questions into the unions,

to link the movements in action. For example, we propose that local unions carry out strikes in solidarity with the Buraku Liberation League. Also, as I mentioned before, the whole problem of Korea is being discussed increasingly by sections of the SP and the Sohyo leadership. We want to pose solidarity with the South Korean people's struggle as a key task of the unions. This is another issue around which we can take new political initiatives within the unions which cut across the existing relationship of forces between ourselves and the reformists. This will be a prime vehicle for bringing together the younger layers of unionists whose activity has generally been suppressed by the bureaucrats since 1974.

To the extent that we can accomplish this second task of drawing radical young unionists back into action around the Buraku or Korean issues, we'll be in a better position to carry out the first task, advancing the process of political differentiation, forming a militant wing of the union movement which will be able to force the SP and CP leaderships into a united front.

The events of the next year or so will provide several tests of our ability to do this. We have to campaign around the issue of the proposed rationalizations of the JNR. This should be the central focus of the 1977 shunto. As I mentioned before, the JNR issue poses some of the central demands of our transitional program as immediate, pressing questions. In particular the demand for nationalization, workers control, our governmental slogan — these are all tied in. Why is nationalization necessary? Why do we need workers control? Unlike the past, when we've explained these things in an abstract way, the 1977 shunto will be a time when we can propagandize and agitate among working people directly around these questions. We'll find out how capable we are of intervening that way.

And following soon after that struggle, there will be elections next summer for the upper house of the Diet. These two events, the shunto and the elections, will clearly measure our ability to bring together a united front of militant activists on these key questions.

CORRECTION

Two errors of fact crept into the article on Mauritius published in the last issue of INPRECOR (No. 65, January 13, 1977). First, the Mauritian Social Democratic party left the governing coalition in December 1973 and not in 1969 as printed (page 27). Second, contrary to what is stated in the first footnote (page 29), it is not the case that the present coalition was made possible only because of the eight "corrective" seats in the Assembly added to reestablish "communal equilibrium." The coalition parties and the MMM each took four of the "corrective" seats, but the coalition parties also won 32 of the 62 elective seats in the Assembly, against 30 for the MMM.

COMMITTEE TO DEFEND THE WORKERS FIGHTS ON IN POLAND

We are publishing below large excerpts from the fourth communiqué issued by the Committee to Defend the Workers, which was released in Warsaw on November 22, 1976. The Committee was formed after the workers mobilizations of June 1976. (See INPRECOR, No. 56, July 22, 1976; No. 60, October 21, 1976; and No. 63, November 25, 1976 for reports on the workers mobilization and the committee's founding statement and subsequent communiqués.)

The text of the fourth communiqué presents some detailed information on the means the Polish bureaucracy is using in its attempts to beat the workers into line. In a statement issued at the beginning of January 1977 the committee emphasizes that "terror and illegality still reign in Radom and threaten to spread throughout the country if all the violations of legality are not punished."

But the bureaucratic repression is also — even especially — aimed at the members of the defense committee, who now represent a not negligible current in Poland. Their audience in the working class is broad. For example, of the 5,000 workers of two factories in Radom and Zielona-Gura, only 160, among them the party leaders and factory managers, signed a petition demanding the "expulsion from Poland" of the members of the defense committee.

Gierek and his police are using various methods to try to take the defense committee apart. For example, the postal administration has been ordered to confiscate the material donations that are sent to committee members, which are instead to be delivered to the state treasury! In this manner the police are attempting to prevent the committee from carrying out its function of materially defending the workers who have suffered repressive measures from the administration and the judicial system.

Two members of the defense committee, the writer Jerzy Andrzejewski and the actress Halina Mikołajska, were brought before a "special tribunal" at the beginning of January to answer charges of having "illegally" collected money." Andrzejewski, the author of *Ashes and Diamonds*, has, like the committee itself, been attacked in the Polish press. The editor in chief of the daily *Zycie Warszawy* wrote in the January 8, 1977, issue of his paper: "It is too bad that Andrzejewski, in the twilight of his life, should associate himself with

a small but noisy group of people . . . who desire through their activity to disturb the moral atmosphere in Poland. These people would like to take Poland backward from the road of national development. In their program we find all sorts of things: the utopia of Trotsky, morsels from Social Democracy, fragments of the New Economic Policy of the Soviets, and the latest anticommunist ammunition, a dash of Zionism and an extract of Christian Democracy — in a word, a frightful chaos and mélange of ideas."

Nevertheless, increasing numbers of "personalities" seem to be attracted to this "frightful chaos," which has taken the form of an effective campaign to defend the workers. The defense committee, which had fifteen members at its formation, now has twenty-three. And at the beginning of January, 172 "personalities" sent a letter "to the representatives of culture in the parliament." In it they demand the creation of a commission of inquiry into the repressive measures taken by the police against the workers who demonstrated in June 1976. This letter asserts: "We think that it is necessary to establish a commission to inquire into the abuses and victimizations of which the entire country is speaking . . . It is the civic and moral duty of every honest man to stigmatize these abominable practices and to combat them with all possible means. As usual, to remain silent would be to give a sign of approval, and in this case that would mean approval of injustice and physical violence."

All Gierek's measures of intimidation have been unable to silence the vast protest movement against the repres-



Militants picket Polish Embassy in London.

sion, and this in turn can only strengthen the workers in their struggle.

The response to the Committee to Defend the Workers has gone beyond the Polish borders. In France a Committee of Solidarity With the Polish Workers was formed in November 1976. It defines its task this way: "The role of the French committee is to support the Polish committee in all its activities and to call upon French public opinion to show its solidarity with the workers movement and democratic opposition in Poland. The most urgent task at present is to collect money to aid the families of those imprisoned and laid off and to assure the defense of all those still awaiting trial." (The address of the French committee is: Cahiers du Cinéma, 9 Passage de la Boule-Blanche, Paris 75012.)

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Communiqué No. 4

All the information furnished below has been checked; it brings up to date the facts reported in communiqués Nos. 1, 2, and 3, respectively dated September 29, October 10, and October 30, 1976.

1. General facts on arrests and imprisonments

According to present estimates, a total of 2,000 people were arrested in Radom and about 500 in Ursus in connection with the events of June 25, 1976. Up to now we have received information concerning 261 people sentenced in Radom and 112 in Ursus. We cannot give the exact number of people still in prison, for in Radom they are now releasing those awaiting their appeal, while at the same time some people already freed have been brought back to prison. We know of three people who are still imprisoned in Ursus. . . .

3. Facts on repression outside Radom and Ursus

We know of cases of repression — mainly layoffs — in the following cities: Nowy Targ, Lodz, Gdansk, Pruszcz Gdanski, Elblag, Plock Szczecin, Starachowice, and Warsaw. For example, between 200 and 400 people were laid off at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, about 300 in the Starachowice truck factory, and 200-250 in the shoe factory in Nowy Targ. In Gdansk we know the names of ninety-two of those laid off in the shipyards, the Zremb and Budimer factories, and the milk-machine factory. As of July 31, sixty-eight appeals had been presented to judicial bodies. Of these, fifty-three were rejected, eleven were settled by compromises, and four people were rehired. As of September 29, twenty people had appealed to the labor tribunals. In reports on the layoffs there are systematic directives from the Department of Employment and from the Department of Social Affairs of the National Council of Gdansk forbidding the rehiring of these workers: ". . . directors are reminded of the necessity for the strict application of the rules in effect concerning the hiring of personnel with particular considerations. . . namely, the non-hiring of persons whose labor contracts have been immediately abrogated."

As in Radom and Ursus, the layoffs were ordered in violation of the right to work, utilizing article 52 of the labor code as an antistrike regulation. The trials of E. Szreder against the Zremb factory and of J. Zapolnik against the shipyards are characteristic of such practices. Szreder was fired because he, "commanding great authority, provoked the work stoppage of others by stopping work himself." Zapolnik was fired in spite of the fact that "he was on sick leave on June 25, 1976, and came to the shipyards only to obtain financial aid for the funeral of his daughter, who had been buried two days earlier." (From the deposition signed by the president of the regional appeal commission for labor affairs in Gdansk.) Henryk Kicja was fired because, as president of the circle of the Socialist Union of Polish Youth, he convoked a meeting to defend J. Trzaska, who had been fired, and tried to gather signatures in support of Trzaska. The latter had been fired after requesting during a consultative meeting that the price increases be discussed by economists!

The strike in Nowy Targ began on June 29, 1976, as a protest against the false information being published in the press. About 250 people were laid off. Since then, around 50 have been taken back.

In Lodz, as in many other cities, many enterprises went on strike on June 25. We do not have a complete list. A strike committee was formed in the Malgorzata Fornalska textile factory. On July 1 no less than 300 people were fired on the basis of article 52 of the labor code. By now nearly all of them have found jobs, after period of unemployment varying from one to four months. In general they have found jobs paying less than those from which they were fired. Only in the Malgorzata Fornalska factory did a significant percentage of those fired utilize the possibility of juridical defense, and many complainants were rehired after the decisions of the labor tribunals. In all the cases we know of, the appeals commissions ruled against the workers. During the second half of July all those fired were brought in by the militia and questioned about their means of subsistence; they were advised to inform the militia if they found jobs.

4. Extent of aid donated to workers of Radom, Ursus, and Lodz

Ursus: The committee has information about 209 people who suffered repression. One hundred seven families enjoy permanent aid. Of the 209 people, 69 have already found jobs. . . .338,170 zlotys were spent, 39,900 for occasional aid, 198,160 for extended aid, and 100,110 for court expenses. The major problem is the payment of court costs which amount to 137,140 zlotys. . . .According to official information transmitted by the leadership of the Voivodie committee of the Polish United Workers party (the Polish CP — INPRECOR), 500 people were fired in the Ursus tractor factory. Only 15 of them have been rehired. . . .

Radom: Here we have reports on 292 cases of repression. Eighty-five families have received financial aid and

thirty-four persons have received judicial aid. There were 261 sentences, of which 54 were more than two years in prison, thirty-seven ranged from three months to two years, and 48 were less than three months. . . . We know of many cases in which workers were ordered — in exchange for maintenance of their seniority — to sign statements waiving payments for the time they spent on forced unemployment, payments which were legally due them in any case. . . . 304,960 zlotys were spent.

Lodz: We have information on thirty-four people and spent about 15,000 zlotys in various forms of aid. . . .

In all, we spent 658,030 zlotys in Radom, Ursus, and Lodz. Two hundred thirty families receive permanent aid, which falls far short of all the families who need help. . . .

9. Aims of the defense committee

We repeat the aims of the committee formulated in our communiqué No. 3:

The committee was formed to provide judicial, medical, and financial aid to the participants in the June protest who were repressed. In a situation in which the trade unions, the agencies of social aid, and the organs for the defense of citizens have not fulfilled their functions, a group of people of good will had to play this role. Whenever these institutions fulfill their obligations and put an end to the persecutions, when there is an amnesty, or when all those repressed are rehabilitated and have found jobs where they enjoy full seniority, when the full extent of the post-June repression is made public, and when those responsible for the abuses, violations of rights, and tortures committed against the workers have been indicted, then the committee will lose its reason for existence. . . .

12. Appeal

We recall once again that wherever there are persons who have suffered repression, it is a social duty to organize to defend them. In every milieu and every factory there should be courageous people to take the initiative in forms of collective defense. We call upon those people repressed to make use of all their rights in defending themselves. The committee is prepared to come to their aid to whatever extent possible.

The Committee to Defend the Workers continues to call for financial, judicial, and medical aid to those repressed. We thus issue an appeal to send exact information, which is indispensable for the work of the committee.

Committee to Defend the Workers: J. Andrzejewski, S. Baranczak, B. Borusewicz, M. Chojecki, L. Cohn, J. Kuron, E. Lipinski, J.J. Lipski, A. Macierewicz, H. Mikolajska, E. Morgiewicz, P. Naimski, A. Pajdak, J. Rybicki, J. Sreniowski, A. Steinsbergowa, A. Szczypiorski, W. Zawadzki, Mgr. J. Zieja, W. Ziembirski.

STRIKE SWE SRI

The biggest transport strike in the history of Sri Lanka took place from the third week in December to January 17, 1977. This outbreak of social struggle came in the wake of drastic increases in the cost of living (the prices of basic foodstuffs were doubled) and university struggles which occurred in November (see INPRECOR, No. 64, December 9, 1976). Thus, the government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike must now deal with a series of mobilizations of national scope, after the explosion from the cabinet of the Lanka Sama Samaja party (Ceylon Equal Society party) in September 1975. The prime minister decided to respond to the demands of the workers by resorting to force, just as she had done earlier in the case of the students.

On December 24 a group of about 150 railway employees in Ratmalana staged a sit-down strike. Their initial demand was that the year-end loan be 500 rupees instead of the 200 rupees proposed by the government. As the struggle continued, new demands were raised, notably relating to wage increases (minimum wage of 250 rupees, automatic increase of 2.50 rupees for each point of increase in the cost of living index, etc.). Initially, the big unions were opposed to the strike. But when the workers massively followed the minority that had taken the initiative, the unions changed their position. The strike of the railway employees was solid. No train could move and in some areas the tracks were even taken up.

The government took a hard line. It rejected any negotiation until the strikers had gone back to work. But shortly after, the workers of the port of Colombo joined the strike, advancing demands identical to those of the railway workers. Some 6,000 of the port's 7,000 workers participated in the strike. The outbreak of the strikes and their subsequent extension were largely spontaneous phenomena. In the port, as later in the postal system, trade-union leaders of the CP who tried to oppose the strike movement were attacked by the workers. In several cases, partial agreements reached between the union leaderships and the government were rejected by the strikers.

WAVE EPS LANKA

Then, belatedly, the LSSP decided to give full support to the strike and to use its influence in the General Clerical Servants Union (GCSU) and the Lanka Dumriya Sevaka Sangamaya (LDSS, the railway workers union) to extend the struggle. A trade-union front was finally formed, which called for a strike for January 6.

Once again, the strike was solid, with about 80% of the workers concerned participating. All the unions except those dominated by the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP, the ruling party), which are led by Alavi Noulana, supported the struggle. The Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) and other unions of the Trade Union Coordinating Committee (TUCC) demanded that the government negotiate and criticized the regime's responsibility for the rise of inflation. In their declaration, these unions explained that the year-end loan was only a temporary solution and that each worker had to be paid a decent wage.

On January 4 the government brandished both a carrot and a stick. On the one hand, it declared that in addition to the 200 rupees promised it could also come up with another 300 rupees from the banks. But at the same time it declared government services as "essential services," which meant that striking workers in this sector would be subject to arrest under the Essential Services Order. The strikers and trade-union militants were thus threatened not only with layoffs but also with prison and confiscation of their property. In addition, many workers were arrested on charges of inciting to strike. Nevertheless, the strike mobilized at least 400,000 workers; transport, communications, and port services were paralyzed. The government responded by sending troops and naval forces to assure distribution of goods and gasoline and to break the strike.

In face of these measures the TUCC met once again, denounced the measures, and called for stepping up action in defense of the strikers. The Ceylon Mercantile Union proposed preparation of a general strike. But this preparation had not been achieved when the railway strike finally ended on January 17, after a government ultimatum. The movement thus ended in failure,

although there was no serious defeat. This failure is explained in good part by the trade-union and political division of the workers movement. And the responsibility of the CP and the LSSP here is great.

The Communist party continues to sit in the government. Caught between its government participation and the danger of losing control of its rank and file in the trade unions, it tried to escape from the dilemma by calling for negotiations. But the government drove the CP to the wall by taking a tough attitude. The CP minister then ceased to attend cabinet sessions, which did not prevent Bandaranaike from asserting that all decisions had been taken unanimously. Consequently, a crisis which may turn out to be significant is developing among the ranks of the CP and the unions it leads.

The expulsion of the LSSP from the government in September 1975 has unblocked the situation in the sectors of government employees this party controls. For the first time in five years, significant struggles for union demands have broken out in this sector. But the LSSP has tried to exploit these social movements in a narrowly partisan way, using them to recompose a political opposition front including the CP, and initiating many contacts even with the United National party (UNP), the conservative bourgeois party. The LSSP thus helped the government to denounce the strike as a maneuver by the opposition, although the demands of the workers were essentially economic. This sectarian attitude of the LSSP also explains the failure of the strike to extend to some sectors, such as the bus drivers, as well as the failure of the call issued by the Ceylon Federation of Labor.

In fact, a bloc was formed among the LSSP, the CP, and the UNP, as well as the trade-unions they control. This common front between reformists and bourgeois elements did everything to exclude the CMU and the unions grouped around the TUCC, which were nonetheless the most active militants in supporting the strikers. This rejection of the indispensable unity of the trade-union movement, which is the work of the LSSP and the CP, considerably limited the possibilities of extending the strike.

Nonetheless, the failure of the strike probably does not herald a massive repression against the workers. The sympathy the population manifested for the government employees in struggle and the imminent elections will probably prevent Bandaranaike from hitting as hard as she would like. But the failure of the strike does mean that a hard blow has been dealt the hegemony of the LSSP over significant sectors of the union movement among government employees. The LSSP will be compelled to give an account of the manner in which it led the struggle, while the loss of its cabinet posts, which had previously provided it with a base for patronage, has already placed a question mark over its position in this sector. The latest strikes, even though defeated, may represent an important moment in the ongoing re-composition of the workers movement and offer new possibilities for the development of a base for the radical left.

BRITAIN

THE TRADE UNIONS

AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

by ALAN JONES

Below is the concluding portion of an analysis of the relationship between the economic crisis and trade-union activity and the class struggle in Britain. The first part was published in the last issue of INPRECOR, No. 65, January 13, 1977.

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The three economic elements we have analyzed — unemployment, incomes policy, and inflation — are, of course, only part of the explanation for the decline in trade-union struggles during the past two years. What is decisive is the combination of the economic cycle and the blocking of political perspectives created by the betrayals of the Labour government. Disillusionment with Labour is spreading rapidly, but this is not reflected primarily in a shift to the left, and this fact, combined with the present unemployment, much higher than ever before during the postwar period, and the present decline in struggle, much sharper than in any other period, makes it dangerous to try to predict the exact development of the trade-union struggle in the coming period. Nevertheless, a number of signs indicate that what has occurred is a temporary setback and defeat for the working class, that no qualitative defeat has taken place which would bring the situation back to its pre-1968 conditions, and that an upturn in struggle, even if a slow one at the outset, should be expected. In particular, we may note four factors.

1. The bourgeoisie's estimate of the relationship of forces

While this is not a decisive index, it is nonetheless significant that despite all the gains of the past year, and despite the serious defeats of the Labour party in by-elections, the bourgeoisie is still not confident that it can defeat any major struggle by a well-organized group of workers. This has been shown time and again. When the seamen threatened to strike during the summer of 1976, no significant section of the rul-

ing class expressed any desire for a serious fight to defeat the seamen, in sharp contrast to the bourgeoisie's reaction to threatened struggles by almost any group of workers during the period before the first miners strike of 1972. Without exception, bourgeois leaders urged reliance on the trade-union bureaucracy and insisted on avoiding provocations. Although the threatened strike was eventually called off, it did gain certain small concessions for the workers involved — gains which represented the first achievements on the wages front in one year and which therefore had a small stimulating effect on other sections of workers.

Even clearer has been the bourgeois response to the action threatened by the miners over the lowering of the retirement age. Although on the surface the issue here did not involve wages, it still represented a much sharper threat to the incomes policy than did the action of the seamen. Not surprisingly, after the experiences of 1972 and 1974, the bourgeoisie is convinced that it cannot defeat a miners struggle, and the degree to which the exchange value of the pound followed the state of the negotiations with the miners was almost laughable: When union president Joe Gormley said that the majority of miners did not want a confrontation with the government, the pound rose; when left-wing leader Hugh Scargill called for a ballot on industrial action, the pound fell; when the Coal Board's latest offer was rejected by the miners union and a ballot was called, the pound immediately fell further. (The Times, November 24, 1976.) This ballot produced a massive vote of 78% to 22% to reject the offer of the Coal Board and in favor of industrial action. There is every likelihood that the miners will extract concessions from the government which will further undermine the incomes policy, something which will in turn affect other groups of workers.

Finally, and most significant politically, the bourgeoisie continues to be uncertain and fearful of the possible effects of the return of a Tory government, which the ruling class could probably secure at any time. The major fear is that such a government would meet a major struggle by the working class that would

render it incapable of governing even more rapidly than was the case with the Heath government. This fear is undoubtedly one of the major factors now keeping Labour in office, which is why the government's action in urging dockers not to strike over the defeat of the Labour-sponsored dock bill was not merely class treachery, but even suicidal from the standpoint of the bureaucracy itself. Despite the gains it has made in the past period, including the lack of any action against the defeat of the dock bill, the ruling class is still not confident it would not face a repeat of the struggles that first defeated and then brought down Heath.

2. Combativity of the masses

Turning from the political judgments of the bourgeoisie to the objective features of the development of the workers movement, we find equally good reason to reject any idea that there has been a qualitative defeat resulting in a complete reversal of the relationship of class forces established since 1968.

The combativity of the masses continues to be shown in the very broad response received by any call from the leadership of the working class. In spite of the downturn in strike struggles, it is clear that demoralization and apathy do not reign, as is demonstrated by the response to any call to action issued by the bureaucrats. In addition to mobilizations on more specifically political issues (the large turnout, some 20,000, at the Labour party demonstration against racism on November 21 is an example), the most important development pointing to the temper of significant layers of the masses was the November 17 demonstration against cuts in public spending. This came on the heels of more limited but nonetheless important actions, notably the 20,000 who marched on the November 30, 1975, demonstration against unemployment and the one-day general strike against cuts in Dundee. The November 17 demonstration surpassed even the most optimistic predictions, mobilizing 60,000 in the largest demonstration of the labor movement since the 1971 action against the Industrial Relations Bill. It is clear that very broad layers of workers in the public sector were drawn into this action, despite regional unevenness. In particular, there was massive participation by women workers, black workers, and a number of sectors (school cafeteria workers, cleaning departments, direct works departments) which had no previous record of struggle.

Given the present situation in the public sector, where the union leaderships not only must deal with pressure from the ranks but also stand to suffer real losses in membership if the cuts go through, the openings created by the small left turn made by the leadership are meeting a real response from militants. In Scotland in particular, two or three strikes or lobbies a week take place over the issue of cuts. The Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), with 220,000 members, has imposed an overtime ban in areas where additional work would disguise the need to fill a staff vacancy,

and is opposing moves to pay unemployment compensation on a fortnightly instead of weekly basis. The executive of the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) is to ask its members for an overtime ban and to refuse to perform duties that would have been carried out by employees who have been laid off. In London about twenty-five schools are refusing to cover for teachers absent for more than three days.

There are, of course, severe limits to this situation. At best, the leaderships of the unions in the public sector are pursuing the classic left bureaucratic tactic of not mobilizing forces in a centralized way, but leaving it to individual militant sectors to fight it out alone. For example, NALGO has left it to the individual branches to ban overtime, the National Union of Public Employees position on the cuts is to fight on a hospital by hospital basis, and the National Union of Teachers has done nothing to implement its formal position against cuts; even the massive turnout on November 17 was secured essentially by vigorous campaigns of rank-and-file militants taking advantage of the leeway given by the bureaucracy. Furthermore, in a number of cases the bureaucracy still resorts to methods of direct repression. NALGO, for example, sent out a "scabs charter" stating that no action could be taken against any member for not participating in the November 17 action, and the NUT has attempted to victimize the teachers involved in the most isolated "no cover" struggle at Little Ilford school in London.

The role of the bureaucracy in these actions highlights the necessity of demands that overcome the fragmentation being imposed on struggles, but the very big response with which even the smallest calls from the leadership are greeted reveals the continuing underlying combativity of the workers and indicates that there has been no qualitative defeat.

3. Local Leaderships created before 1971 remain intact

Given that the furthest the bureaucracy has gone in the current period is to leave the door open to action led by militants on the local level, it is especially important that the local leaderships created in the pre-1974 period remain essentially intact, with certain exceptions, such as the Midlands factories of Chrysler, construction, and, to a certain extent, the docks. Furthermore, in a number of areas, notably the public sector and to a limited extent among women workers in industry, there has been a new development of shop steward and local organization. This has a dual significance. First, as already noted, it means that whenever some room for action is created by the union leadership, a large enough number of militants are organized to take advantage of it. This was shown above all on November 17, but it has also been seen in the 3,000 delegates who attended the National Assembly on Unemployment called by the Communist party and in the forces attracted by the "Right to Work" initiatives of the International Socialists.



Workers at British Chrysler vote to preserve jobs.

Second, it means that wherever there is an upturn in industrial production and thus more favorable objective conditions for struggle, local militants are able to take advantage of the situation to relaunch struggles in defense of their interests. Especially significant here has been the motor industry, one of the strongholds of shop steward organization, which was severely hit by the recession, massive layoffs, and undoubted defeats in some sectors. With the turn in the economic situation of this sector, a new wave of struggles is unfolding. The week ending November 20 alone saw no less than six strike struggles in this industry. Generally, they were relatively small, but they were nonetheless significant — not only in comparison to the apathy that had prevailed for the previous six to nine months, but also in that three of them were waged against official instructions by the union leadership to return to work, a clear instance of shop stewards and local leaderships again taking up the struggle and gaining some new confidence. In addition, these small struggles have recently been joined by more widespread actions with greater potential — most notably the factory occupations at Jaguar Coventry to defeat a threatened lockout and the important struggle at Ford Dagenham, where nightshift workers seized control of the body plant, built barricades, and turned fire hoses on the police. It would be wrong to exaggerate this trend, for these struggles are almost all defensive, but it is a clear turn in the situation compared to that which has prevailed for the past year and after such major defeats as the one suffered at Chrysler. The important thing is that the workers are beginning to fight back against the attacks.

4. Spread of struggle and some victories

Particularly significant in light of the generalized attacks on the working class, and itself a sign of the beginning of more important resistance and struggle, new layers of workers are now moving into action. This is particularly noticeable in the public sector. Groups of workers with no historical record of struggle

have been involved in fights in health, education, and other sectors, as was shown on November 17 when layers such as cleaners and dinner servers mobilized and when women and black workers made up a very large section of the demonstration. The mobilization of women workers has also extended to other sectors. A series of equal pay strikes, culminating in the Trico* struggle, took place throughout the summer as it was increasingly revealed that the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 cannot grant even the limited economic gains that were promised. (Despite government promises and legislation, the equal pay situation has continued to deteriorate. By April 1976 the gap in hourly wage averages between male and female workers stood at 40 pence, compared with 32.2p in October 1972.)

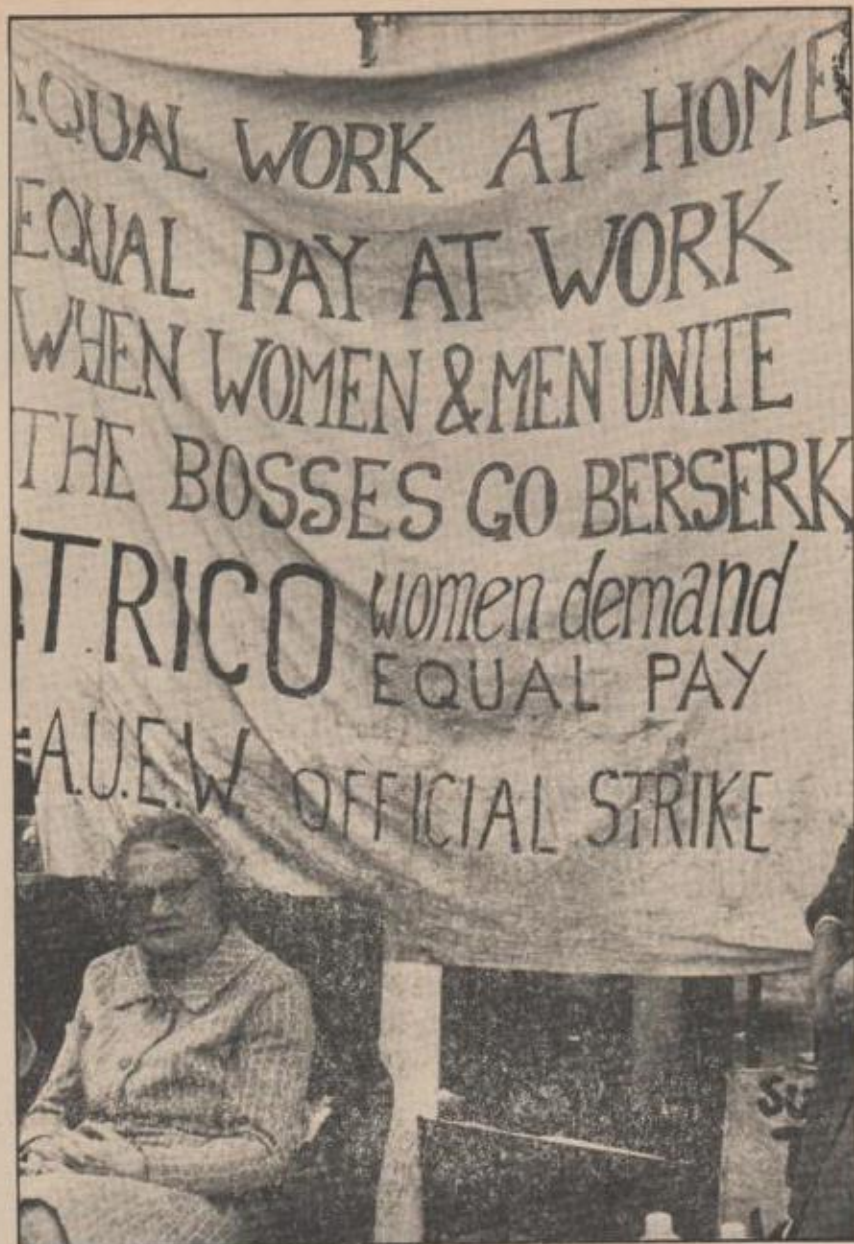
Even more important, some of these struggles are now bringing at least limited partial victories. Most are still defensive, waged on limited fields, such as the blocking of the use of scab labor at Ford Dagenham, the factory occupations that defeated an attempted lockout at Jaguar Coventry (management was forced to pay wages for most of the period of the sit-in), the successful struggle for unionization at Greenings in Warrington. Nevertheless, after a period in which virtually every struggle ended in defeat, the winning of a number of victories, even if small ones, is important in stimulating the combativity of the working class.

It is also clear that a slight turn has occurred in the struggle over wages during the immediate post period. The small gains made by the seamen were the first sign.

The second was the twenty-one-week strike for equal pay at Trico. This victory — won against police harassment, the decision of a state tribunal, and lukewarm support from the official trade unions — was the first major vindication in quite some time of the proposition that struggle can actually bring results. Finally, the fact that the miners are in position to extract at least some concessions going beyond the limits of the incomes policy will represent another stimulus to struggle.

Taking all these indices together — the bourgeoisie's estimate of the relationship of forces, the significant response by the working class to any call for action by the leadership, the continued existence of the local leaderships created prior to 1974, and the extension of struggle into new sectors, combined with the winning of some partial victories — we may confidently reject the view that there has been a qualitative defeat of the working class taking us back to the pre-1968 situation. The continued increase in union membership reflects a still undefeated underlying combativity. Further, the November 17 action, the small gains won by the sea-

*This was a successful strike by 300 women which lasted 21 weeks. It was the largest and longest running equal pay dispute in Britain, and one of the most significant because the women boycotted the state run Tribunals created under the EPA&SDA legislation, which ruled against their claim for equal pay.



men, the rise of struggles in the motor industry, the victory at Trico, and the current moves of the miners constitute the beginning of a slow but definite turn in the situation.

In view of the setbacks of the past year and the many major political obstacles confronting the rise in combativity of the working class, even on the purely trade-union level, it would be lightminded and unrealistic to expect a new upturn in struggle to be rapid. Furthermore, these political elements mean that economic determinants are less crucial than they were previously. Nevertheless, British revolutionaries, while not anticipating spectacular developments at the outset, have a perspective of a new rise of workers struggle. The next steps to be taken if this turn is to be consolidated are to step up the fight against cuts, begin serious struggle against layoffs in Courtaulds and other sectors, and relaunch at least partial struggles against the incomes policy. Many social and political problems remain to be over-

come. The bourgeoisie still holds many cards, from racism to a campaign for a "national coalition government," to increased pressure on the Labour government. But there are no underlying economic reasons to justify the conclusion that the combativity the working class has evidenced during the past eight years has been basically broken. A new upswing in trade-union struggles will in turn help to create improved conditions for revolutionary intervention aimed at resolving the political crisis confronting the working class. An extension of the struggle into heavy industry would mark a qualitative turn here. Today, after a period of undoubted setbacks, British revolutionaries have more reason than for some time to feel guarded confidence in the prospects for the unfolding of the class struggle in Britain. To prepare for a new upturn in trade-union struggles, to extend their demands and methods of organization, and to overcome the political obstacles that will confront them is a crucial part of the activity of revolutionaries today.

West Germany SCHMIDT IN TROUBLE WITH THE UNIONS

by WERNER HÜLSBERG

"We have now realized that the honeymoon with the coalition is over. After the great beginning in 1969, we are now struck by a definite disillusionment." It was with this statement that Heinz Oskar Vetter, president of the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB, West Germany's central trade-union federation), composed of sixteen unions with a total of 7.5 million members and dominated by the Social Democracy, began his interview in the first issue of the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* for 1977. Just a few days after the government inaugural declaration of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, in which he sang the praises of the "social market economy," Vetter noted the following fact: for the third time in a row, there are more than a million unemployed in West Germany. He added: "If the social market economy is unable to reestablish full employment through a collective effort in the short term, then one may wonder whether it represents a valid economic system for the future."

In addition, Vetter attacked the thesis upheld by Schmidt and the bourgeoisie according to which new jobs would be created if profits rise faster than wages. He likewise opposed the proposal of the Schmidt cabinet to grant further tax breaks to the employers. And finally, he attacked the attempts to "reorganize" the pension and health insurance systems as well as the coalition agreements on workers participation. It was a bombshell. For the first time, the government's inaugural declaration was not met by great applause and devotion from the union leadership. In 1969 Brandt had been greeted with euphoria; in 1972 Brandt's cancellation of reforms had been accepted; and in 1974 Schmidt was hailed as a hero. This time, however, the government was met with harsh criticism.

A few days later, the Social Democrat Vetter dealt a new blow to his political friends in the SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands — Social Democratic party of Germany). In an interview with the Springer newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (January 2, 1977), he declared: "We don't like it at all, but this time we're holding the club." In saying this, he gave the clearest possible answer to the question of whether he wanted to fight unemployment by reducing the workweek.

Vetter's "interview war" provoked a torrent of further positions by the major trade-union leaders. They could

not avoid taking positions, for contract negotiations are either under way or about to begin in their own sectors. E. Loderer, head of the metalworkers union, which is now demanding a 10% wage increase, and H. Kluncker of the social service employees union, which in a few weeks will open negotiations on the basis of demands for an 8.5% wage increase and additional vacation payments, seized upon Vetter's rejection of the government program to strike poses on the wage front and take advantage of the light minded manner in which the government has responded to the problem of the unemployment of more than a million workers. Nevertheless, Vetter drew some criticism from his own ranks, no doubt because of his proposal to "link reductions in the workweek to losses of income," in other words, reductions in the workweek without complete wage compensation. It is true that he did not make his attacks on the government with a perspective of class struggle, nor did he cite the struggle for reduction of the workweek as a present task of the trade unions; in fact, he envisioned such a reduction only in the "medium and long term."

Nonetheless, reaction to these attacks from the bourgeois side was prompt and vehement. *Welt am Sonntag* accused Vetter of being an "incessant preacher" for "the march to the trade-union state." The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also sounded the alarm of "the threat of the trade-union state" and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* formulated the concerns of the bourgeoisie in the following exaggerated manner: "Who really governs this country? The government that comes out of democratic elections or the trade unions? Do the trade unions command the state and are we the trade unions? This does not bear much resemblance to a parliamentary democracy. . . . The trade-union federation sees itself as a parallel government or even as standing above the government."

The reaction of the bourgeois parties ran along the same lines. Lampersbach, president of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), saw the "trade-union state looming on the horizon." The CSU (Christian Social Union) saw Vetter's words as confirmation of "the alternative of freedom or socialism," and Hans Dietrich Genscher, vice-chancellor and president of the FDP (Free Democratic party, the SPD's partner in the government coalition), feared that West Germany was on the way to becoming a "banana republic."

It is understandable that these gentlemen are upset. Frictions in the cabinet, which have led to resignations, the "pension fraud," which led to the rise of opposition to Schmidt within the SPD for the first time, and the government declaration, which was disappointing to the Social Democratic voters, have placed the government in a bad light after only a few weeks in office and have touched off a process of strong decomposition that is clear for all to see. Unfortunately for the bourgeoisie, the CDU/CSU, divided among itself and incapable of action, cannot serve as an alternative in the short term. The government, torn by internal differences, trails behind events and flipflops from one direction to another. This is no small thing at a time when the new year is just beginning with all its problems. The passive attitude of the trade-union bureaucracy and "pact of stability and social peace" (in sum, a "model Germany") are the heart and soul of the Schmidt policy, which consists of making the working class bear the burden of the crisis and the dismantling of the social security system. From the standpoint of the employers and their interests, the "privileged relations" of the SPD as the major government party with the trade-union leadership represents Schmidt's essential advantage over Helmut Kohl's CDU.

The "interview war" unmistakably raises the question of whether the years of the rallying of the trade-union bureaucracy behind the policy of the Social Democratic government have now given way to a phase of differentiation and conflict.

The background

Our analysis of the outcome of the legislative elections last October led us to the conclusion that the SPD was



HELMUT SCHMIDT

in trouble: "If it wants to remain in the government it will more than ever have to govern against the working class. This implies the risk of losing support among the workers. With the aid of the trade-union bureaucracy, it will try to continue the orientation that Helmut Schmidt has imposed during the economic crisis. There is no other choice. But sooner or later this orientation will lead to differentiations or even breaks within the unions, in relation to the policy of 'moderation' of demands." (INPRECOR, No. 60. October 21, 1976.)

When Schmidt succeeded Brandt nobody expected a new Social Democratic "reform program," nobody within the SPD and the trade-union bureaucracy and nobody among the Social Democratic supporters. Schmidt simply aroused the hope that he represented the "magician" capable of plugging the leaks, the person who could master the economic crisis in the short term and who, on the basis of a new "upturn," could breathe new life into the reform policy of the Social Democracy. In the meantime, the "miracle" of 1974 has gone up in smoke and the miracle maker is himself in trouble.

The economic crisis was not ephemeral. Contrary to the hopes and optimistic speeches of the SPD, it turned out to be the signal of a general transformation of economic development which further narrowed the possibilities of making concessions to the masses.

Finally, as the prophecies ran up against economic reality, the concept of integrating the working class through the vehicle of the trade-union bureaucracy appeared quite fragile. For the bureaucracy's acceptance of one million unemployed and a lowering of real wages not only came under growing criticism from the rank and file of the trade unions, but also placed the specific interests of the bureaucracy itself in question. Thus, the bureaucracy's policy of "restraint" in wage negotiations and the persistence of unemployment led in the long run to undermining the bureaucracy's positions of power as the monopolistic seller of labor power.

The accumulation of evidence that the government was helpless in dealing with a million unemployed, the announcement of further dismantling of the social security system in the government inaugural declaration, the steps taken to grant the employers new tax breaks, the regime's promise to eliminate the pension deficit, and the change in the expectations of the working class in the current round of contract negotiations all combined to confront the bureaucracy with the laws of the market.

Economic upturn: at the expense of the workers

After two years of crisis and promises of recovery, the upturn has finally arrived. But prospects are more than somber. This situation is unprecedented in the history of West German capitalism. There are still a million unemployed and the rate of inflation, which had declined, turned up again in December. Things were

different after the first West German recession in 1966-67, and so were the expectations of the Social Democrats in the party and the trade unions. In 1966-67 the inflation rate fell to 1.5%; in 1976 it was 4.4%. Unemployment declined from 300,000 in 1968 to 170,000 in 1969, while in 1976 it was one million and, according to the most optimistic estimates, it will be around 900,000 for 1977. Planned investments have not been made, even though the rate of profit has risen strongly (15-20%). The reason is this: present production capacity of capital is utilized at an average rate of less than 90%. The increase in the profits of capital was generated primarily by a 3-4% decline in real wages and by an exceptionally high increase in the productivity of labor.

Thus, according to official trade-union statistics, the wage cost per ton of steel in 1976 declined 20% compared with 1975. The Volkswagen trust even succeeded in eliminating more than 20,000 jobs in 1975 during a crisis that had resulted in a loss of 1,000 million marks. During the years 1968 and 1969, respectively 35% and 50% of employers stated that their central objective was to increase investment. In 1976 this percentage had declined to a bare 18% and it will be even lower in 1977. Thus, it cannot be asserted that the Social Democratic led government has kept its promises.

The number of unemployed again rose to more than one million in December 1976 and a further extension of the length of unemployment is in sight. As of the end of September 160,000 people had been unemployed for more than a year, 30,000 more than at the end of May. In the space of one year 26,000 people entered the category of those who had been unemployed for more than two years. Finally, some 38,000 people are rapidly approaching this category. The income losses of workers on long-term unemployment amount to 45%.

Important differentiations exist among the unemployed between workers and white-collar employees and above all between men and women. The number of white-collar workers unemployed is rising continually. The figure was 361,000 in May 1976 and rose to 383,000 by September 1976. But the unemployment figure for "industrial positions" is also going up.

Thus, the upturn has clearly weakened in various economic sectors. In the machine-building industry the slight growth rate is due above all to exports. The steel industry has been in stagnation since the middle of the year and is being sustained only by demand from the automobile industry, which is now undergoing a flourishing development and is thus shielding the steel industry from collapse. Growth is close to zero in the chemical and electrical industries. And the "official figures" are deceptive. The annual "expert report" delivered by a commission convoked by the government concluded that the real rate of unemployment was about 9%. This was based on the concept of "real potential employment"; it is a figure which includes those who are no longer prepared or feel it discriminatory to go to unemployment offices or welfare; after being unemployed for more than one year, they no longer have the right to unem-

ployment compensation. And this still does not include the immigrant workers who have been expelled from the country.

In spite of this situation, the federal government has openly come out against "measures to reduce the work-week." It is hiding behind an "expert report" on rationalization entitled "Against Rationalization." As for unemployment of women, the only thing being proposed is to create some part-time jobs in social services. And as a consolation for the trade unions, a 1,000 million mark investment program has been planned, the implementation of which is to be accelerated in the wake of strong criticism.

But the most alluring aspects of this investment program have not yet been carried out. In essence, what is planned is:

- *Construction of water purification stations on the Rhine;
- *Elimination of dangerous areas on the highways;
- *Cleaning up the urban centers through construction of parks and anti-noise shelters.

Thus, the most trumpeted projects will create very few new jobs.

In fact, previous experiences with such projects indicate that the cities and municipalities, already in debt and still short of money, will require federal financing to make these investments.

These projects profit mainly the most advanced sectors of the construction industry, sectors whose technical development is most sophisticated and which consequently use little labor and were scarcely affected by the general crisis of this industry. Finally, no important group of unemployed workers (women, white-collar workers, or older workers) will find jobs thanks to these programs.

Schmidt's promise that the "future task of the government is to assure the return to security and full employment" (from the government declaration) has already gone up in smoke.

Message of the government declaration

In the declaration of his second government Schmidt unmistakably emphasized that the policy he had followed during the crisis would be continued during the "upturn." The message of his government declaration was the call upon the working class to reconcile itself to a further decline in social benefits, while new improvements in tax policy were held up for the employers. In his attempts to conceal this fact, the chancellor resorted to hoary Christian charity, along these lines: In the past, the reform policy of the SPD had lifted the workers out of the depths of social darkness; now it is time for the workers to swallow their pride and prepare themselves to sacrifice for others. Exactly who these "others" are has long since been made clear by the subsidies granted the employers through cuts in social spending. True,

the increase of the sales tax (which amounts to a 1.5% inflation rate for wage-earning households) was postponed to January 1, 1978, but the promised improvements for the working class (such as the increase in the child allowances) were linked to this same timetable. But in spite of a continuing upturn, the employers will enjoy further easing of their tax burden, with "certain discounts in the realm of non-profit-related taxes." After the giveaway of the "corporate tax reform" enacted under the previous parliament, property taxes are now to be lowered, and the trade tax will be reduced. That this is an outright gift was recognized even by *Das Handelsblatt*, house organ of big capital: "Hopefully, Schmidt will not expect any increase in investment as a result of this gesture."

Thus, while the Social Democratic voters had expected a change, Schmidt ruled out any change. The tax burden on wage-earners now operates in such a way that of every mark they are paid, less than half will remain after taxes and social security payments.



Attempted pension fraud

The chancellor's crudest error was undoubtedly on the question of pensions. The need to reorganize the situation of pension insurance (West German pride and joy in the social realm) was an open secret even before the October 3 elections. According to the estimates of the Union of Old-Age Pensioners, the 1976 deficit amounted to 7,000 million marks; for 1977 it is expected to rise to 12,000-15,400 million marks. Accumulated reserves are also on the decline: 34,000 million in 1976 and an estimated 17,000-18,000 for 1977. Even on the basis of the most optimistic projections (yearly wage increases of 8%, decline of unemployment to 2.5% by 1990), the deficit will stand at 10,600 million marks by 1980 and will rise to 160,000 million marks by 1990.

A 10% increase in pensions had been planned for mid-1977. During the election campaign, the SPD tried to present this payment as assured and claimed that the general situation of pension funds was not at all perilous. ("There are only a few problems," said Schmidt.) It was proclaimed: "Pensions remain secure, for the SPD represents the social conscience of the nation." And the minister of labor even announced to

elderly voters: "Let's not mince words. Pensions will be raised on July 1, 1977."

Then, two days before the government declaration, the bomb was dropped. Without prior vote by the SPD's Bundestag fraction or the party leadership, without informing the heads of the trade-union bureaucracy, who hours before had been presented with the coalition agreements, the chancellor announced that the pension increase would be postponed for half a year.

But a gross miscalculation had been made. The "rebellion of the pensioners" led to a rebellion against Schmidt within the party itself and within the trade-union bureaucracy as well. Overnight they challenged the big "magician," who himself became confused for the first time and confessed, "This is the worst shock since the 1974 government change." The pension fraud had been too gross for an orderly retreat to be made. The retreat had to be just as cowardly and overhasty as the original decision had been bold and apparently unchallengeable.

Down the drain went Minister of Labor W. Arendt, last remaining top-ranking figure of the "Brandt era," former trade-union chairman and (for the trade-union bureaucracy) guarantor of the privileged relations between the trade unions and the SPD government. Down the drain went any improvement in the Schmidt government's relations with the trade unions. The naming of a new minister of labor without consultation with the trade unions caused Vetter to comment: "From Adenauer(!) to Brandt things were different. During that period all the ministers of labor were designated through a discussion, if not an agreement, with the unions. This was the minister who, because of his extremely close relations with the trade unions, had always come from our own midst. . . . The new minister of labor does not have such credentials. He will thus surely not have an easy time of it."

And the measures for reorganization of the pension system that have now been decided on will open up new financial gaps in the health fund and unemployment compensation fund. Measures which will lead to an increase in health insurance payments (of about 1.3% as of now) and unemployment insurance contributions. Measures whose main burden will be borne by the wage-earners. Measures which have been characterized as "patchwork" by all experts and which will open up the prospect of still other measures of reorganization: reduction in the growth rate of pensions, abolition of contributions of family members, private payments for hospital costs.

Change in working-class consciousness

But the changes in West Germany are not limited to objective developments and the accumulation of blunders by the chancellor. There is ferment in the West German working class, whose passivity during the crisis brought

the government over the hump. The facts clearly confirm that the wage restraint of past years has not at all persisted. The altered relations of the working class to the SPD were already apparent during the election campaign, when there was no mobilization whatever for Schmidt, in contrast to the mobilization that occurred for Brandt in 1969 and 1972. The workers went to the polls not to vote for Schmidt's pro-employer policy, but rather to reject the openly reactionary appeal of the CDU/CSU.

In this situation, the workers are once again turning to strengthening the elementary organizations of struggle, the trade unions. The level of expectations in trade-union policy has risen noticeably since the elections. In contrast to the years of crisis, the trade-union bodies on the factory level are now preparing to raise heightened demands in wage negotiations. Demands which nearly always exceed the official demands in material terms. The trade-union bureaucracy has taken note of this alteration in the attitude of the working class and is now seeking, for obvious reasons of self-interest, to cover up the role they played through their policy in the past. They have ceased to parrot the government's line that there is a connection between low wages and high profits which creates jobs, and they are therefore coming under the pressure of the workers' desire to "make up for losses" on the wage front.

But this is only one side of the coin, for the bureaucracy today is no more prepared for a policy of tough defense of the interests of the union membership than it was in the past. In the metalworkers union (IG Metall), this was shown quite clearly in the unfolding of the wage negotiations in the steel industry during November and December 1976. In spite of the verbal radicalism of the demands, the bureaucrats finally accepted a wage increase that falls within the state guidelines and also gave up on essential "secondary demands" (rises in premiums for shift work and special work) which, because of the economic situation of the employers, had been put aside in agreements concluded during the crisis. This settlement was concluded at a time when mobilization and token strikes had reached a real highpoint, that is, at a time when the union's negotiating position was improving.

And here we come to the deeper reason for the trade-union bureaucracy's refusal to act against the government. The combination of the crisis and the bureaucracy's lining up behind the policy of the Schmidt government has meant long-term disadvantages for the apparatus, but it has resulted in short-term advantages as well. On the basis of the policy of stability and the "freezing" of class contradictions, the trade-union bureaucracy had succeeded in sharpening its control over the rank and file, eliminating the weakness of the apparatus that had become apparent during the initial phase of the new rise of workers struggles in West Germany, and halting the process of construction of a layer of class-struggle vanguard elements within the rank-and-file bodies of the unions.

If the bureaucrats want to stabilize these "successes," they will have to get some help from the government. And here lies the nub of the contradiction. The unemployment and the trenchantly pro-employer policy of the Social Democratic led government are directed not only against the working class, but also, to a certain extent, against the self-interest of the trade-union bureaucracy. The bureaucrats are prepared to continue to maintain peace and quiet (and order) in wage policy, but under the conditions created by government policy they stand before the working class empty-handed. The government's policy does not leave them room to do this. They are thus forced into conflict. In accordance with this calculation, in none of the many interviews with trade-union leaders does one find even the most modest reference to the notion that defense of the interests of the workers against unemployment is a central task of the trade-union organizations today. For this would amount to a class policy that takes no account of the interests of the employers and would trigger a dynamic that would be incompatible with the policy of stabilizing the system. In order to ease the contradiction with the membership, Vetter (and the other trade-union leaders) directed the demand for a fight against unemployment to the government.

The union bureaucracy is primarily concerned with placing a new accent on the relations between the SPD government and the unions. For some time now the SPD government's recipe for success in obtaining the passivity of the bureaucracy has been based on binding this bureaucracy to the government's policy. Not on the basis of coercion, but through appropriate concessions, reforms, small improvements, and promises of reform. That was how the basis was laid for implementation of the policy of passivity. This relationship became a one-sided one under Schmidt, and this was accepted during the crisis. Schmidt's policy was determined not on the basis of "privileged relations" with the union bureaucracy but instead on the basis of mutual agreements with the bourgeois Free Democratic party (FDP). Vetter's attacks on the federal government and the chancellor represent nothing other than an attempt to restore these privileged links with the SPD as the leading government party. This is, moreover, the only possibility open to him as a faithful SPD ranking bureaucrat.

Response of the government and the bureaucracy

Up to now, however, this attempt has been a failure. Only in regard to the above-mentioned "investment program" has a quick arrangement been guaranteed. On the main question, though, they made no progress. In response, Schmidt has not stressed the "traditional" solidarity of the SPD and DGB as he has on other occasions, but instead the ties among "employers, employees and their trade unions, and responsible politicians." The plans for reduction of the workweek would be shelved: "The federal government sees no opportunity for a legal initiative on shortening the workweek. This matter will remain in the hands of the negotiating partners."

The federal government's rejection of the "Vetter plan" was, in part, grist for the mill of the leaders of the individual unions. They could not go before their members during a negotiating period with Vetter's proposal for a reduction of the workweek without wage compensation, for in the best of cases this would amount to a stagnation of real wages. But their refusal to do this is quite different from a positive contribution to maintaining real incomes. The bureaucrats' slogan of "no renunciation of wage compensation" in fact amounts to "renunciation of shortening the workweek." The discussions about this should continue, for the federal government's rejection of the "Vetter plan" and the rising contradictions around this question have now placed this discussion on the agenda in the trade-union bodies. And not in the "medium term," but as a present task of struggle for the unions.

Beginning of process of differentiation

Nevertheless, the conflict between the trade unions and the SPD government, rooted in this contradiction, represents a positive point of departure for class-struggle openings, provided the lines of division can be seized upon and greater political maneuvering room can be won.

This opportunity arises above all in the contract negotiations now going on, in which the official union demands fail to deal with the real questions that are posed (unemployment, decline of real wages, speed-up, cuts in social spending, tax problems). There are possibilities here, if the struggle does not remain simply on the level of the percentage of wage increases. That is, if the questions posed are dealt with and grasped with the aim of rooting in the consciousness of the working class the necessity of an overall program of trade-union struggle for jobs, wages, and decent conditions.

One further consequence of this first rift in the bloc between the union bureaucracy and the SPD already bears watching: differentiations within the bureaucracy. There should be no illusions in this type of differentiation, nor is there any question of "staking" anything on them. But the contradiction between that part of the bureaucracy that wants to stick with Schmidt through thick and thin and that section which, out of motives of "self-preservation," enters into conflict with the government improves the starting position for a class-struggle turn. In the realm of wage policy, it also leads to a breakup of the monolithic bloc the bureaucracy had constituted during the crisis. No longer fully master in its own house, the bureaucracy will have greater difficulty playing its stabilizing role during the contract negotiations. What it all amounts to is that every open contradiction with the government increases the workers' level of expectation in the results of the contract agreements and narrows the bureaucracy's maneuvering room. In the metal industry, for example, in spite of the lack of a course of determined confrontation with the employers' association, the negotiations are extremely dangerous. In fact, the possibility

of a strike is not completely ruled out, even if the bureaucracy drags its feet in giving a green light to the mobilizations that are already being prepared. This creates a dilemma. Such a strike, coupled with the government's inability to negotiate with the unions, would have fundamental repercussions on the political structure of the Federal Republic of Germany. A frightened retreat by the bureaucracy in face of a combative confrontation (which is what acceptance of wage agreements within the official guidelines would amount to) would give a new impetus to the discussion in the unions.

But Vetter's attacks will have effects not only in the unions but also in the SPD. The rallying of the party behind Schmidt during the election confrontation (for example, the capitulation of the Jusos, the Young Socialists, to the Schmidt line) threw the party into a visible internal organizational crisis. A crisis which rendered the party powerless during the election battle. The situation has been described this way by someone who should know: "It was every man for himself, the one taking to the newspapers to separate himself from party opportunism, the other utilizing the possibilities for advancement tailor-made by the party itself." (A. Klönne in Links, No. 84.) The "one" was a reference to the old SPD leftist J. Steffen, who, in a provocative interview at the beginning of December, attacked the leadership of the so-called "Basic Program Commission" of the SPD, which drafted the SPD's long-term program for the workers. In this interview, Steffen (who is still a member of the party leadership) said of Schmidt: He thinks and acts as a pure technocrat and seems not at all to notice that "he simply rubber stamps what has already long since been initiated by industry and interest groups of capital." But this was before the "dismantling" of the social security system. It shows that there is a potential for criticism in and around the SPD. Every instance of resistance to Schmidt thus undermines his position within the SPD, which in turn opens new possibilities for any internal criticism under the cover of trade-union criticism.

The rallying of the Social Democratic party and the trade-union bureaucracy behind Schmidt's conceptions during the crisis created a vacuum on the left, which was constantly fueled by the passive acceptance of the government's policies; at the same time, because of the muting of important social contradictions, there was a "blunted potential." The "rifts" that have now opened up in the pact between the trade-union bureaucracy and the SPD government do not yet mean a general turn, for the connection remains solid. But they have opened the door a crack. This opportunity must be seized upon. Not through abstract denunciation or attempts to turn every rejection of Schmidt's course directly into gains for this or that organization, but through putting forward a program of struggle that responds to the problems posed, a perspective of mobilization of all forces that are beginning to realize the necessity for an alternative.

January 16, 1977

SWITZERLAND

REFEREN- DUM FOR A FORTY HOUR WEEK



by KARL BRUNNER

Last December 5 Swiss citizens voted on a referendum to reduce the legal workweek from forty-five hours in industry and fifty hours in construction and the hotels to forty hours for everybody. In 1973 the POCH, PSA (1), and the Ligue Marxiste Révolutionnaire (LMR — Revolutionary Marxist League, Swiss section of the Fourth International) had submitted a constitutional initiative (2) calling for the legal introduction of the forty-hour week for all categories of workers within one year after a favorable result in a popular referendum.

Crisis and privilege

For many years now the Swiss employers, taking advantage of the "labor peace" policy of the trade-union leaders, have succeeded in reducing the legal workweek only very slightly (and reducing the actual workweek even less, considering the widespread use of overtime) and in strongly increasing the physical productivity of labor. Thus, Swiss capitalism now enjoys the longest legal workweek in Europe — and this at a time when an attack on employment levels is being intensified.

In fact, Swiss capitalism, whose motor force derives from exports (machine tools, electrical equipment, chemicals, watches, etc.), has been hard hit by the generalized recession of capitalism and by the "collapse" of the domestic market due both to the deep structural

crisis of the construction industry and to the "departure" (in reality the expulsion under pressure of unemployment) of 200,000 immigrant workers.

A simple international comparison enables us to gauge the breadth of the capitalist recession in Switzerland. The following figures indicate the rate of decline of industrial production between 1973 and 1975, the reference point being the highest peak industrial production had attained in 1973 or 1974 and the lowest point attained in 1975 (variation in percent).

United States:	10.1
West Germany:	11.3
France:	11.9
Italy:	15.2
Belgium:	15.6
Switzerland:	18.4
Japan:	19.7

(Source: OECD, "Principaux indicateurs économiques.")

The policy of the government and the National Bank, inspired by the strictest monetarist doctrine, accentuated the extent of the recession. The objective was clear: "loosen up the labor market as much as possible" in order to exert serious pressure on wages at a time when job insecurity was stimulating "labor discipline." The result was convincing: The annual rate of inflation in December 1976 was only 1.3%; some 300,000 jobs (out of a total work force of 2,900,000 in 1973) were eliminated, that is, more than 10%; real wages stagnated or even declined in some industries; the productivity of labor grew heavily. Among the 300,000 jobs eliminated we must note the 200,000 immigrant workers "exported" to Italy and Spain. The 100,000 others are essentially married women who were forced to quit their jobs, retirees who had continued to work, etc. In the end, the number of Swiss residents on complete unemployment attained the record figure of 32,000.

Employers and unions

It was in this context that the vote on the forty-hour week took place. There was no doubt that the bourgeoisie was going to launch a catastrophic campaign in the best tradition of the arguments used over the past century to portray "the terrible effects on the national economy" of any reduction in working hours. In the framework of intensified competition on the world market, the Swiss capitalists were not inclined to give the slightest ground. The combination of stagnation of wages, growth of productivity, and long working hours permitted them to lower unit labor costs, while the revaluation of the Swiss franc relative to other currencies was reducing the competitive strength of Swiss exports.

To the amazement of the observers of the big international financial newspapers, the employers and bankers did not stand against the trade unions in this battle. On the contrary, the Union Syndicale Suisse (3) stood in the forefront of opposition to the forty-hour week. But things did not run completely smoothly.

<u>Referendum on:</u>	<u>Initiated by:</u>	<u>No. of "Yes" votes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Voter turnout in %</u>
Old-Age Insurance	Communist party	294,511	15.6	52.9
Factory participation	USS	471,941	32.4	39.4
Forty-hour Week	POCH, PSA, LMR	370,439	22.0	44.7

A total of 370,000 wage-earners, 22% of those voting, cast ballots in favor of the forty-hour week. It must not be forgotten that about one-fourth of the wage-earners working in Switzerland cannot vote: the immigrant workers, not to mention the young workers (among whom the demand for forty hours received a broad response, as was shown in various polls). Considering the strength of the three organizations that launched the initiative, and considering the campaign waged by the bourgeoisie in its press, radio, and television, as well as the position of the USS, the result was not negligible. A simple comparison with the scores obtained by the most recent constitutional initiatives indicates the significant value of the result given the present sociopolitical context in Switzerland. (See above.)

In addition, the 22% must not be viewed in isolation. In fact, we find that the percentage of "yes" votes was considerably higher in the cantons in which a more or less broad unity in action among the parties, organizations, and trade unions of the workers movement was established: 32.6% in the city of Basel; 42.1% in the canton of Geneva; 34.6% in the canton of Tessin; 29.8% in the canton of Neuchâtel. Further, in the most heavily working class neighborhoods of the big cities, the percentage of "yes" votes exceeded 40% and often represented an absolute majority of the wage-earners.

Differentiation in the workers movement

But this is not the most important feature. In taking advantage of the mechanism of semidirect democracy, three "minor" organizations of the workers movement — in unity in action on a platform corresponding to the objective needs of the working class and challenging the policy of "labor peace" — stimulated an important process of differentiation within the traditional organizations themselves. Moreover, in some cases they succeeded in establishing broad unity in action with all the components of the workers movement.

First of all, during the October 1976 congress of the Swiss Socialist party, a government party since the second world war, the opposition, which was in favor of the forty hours, overturned the position of the leadership. In various cantons the sections of the SP therefore participated in the common campaign. The Parti du Travail (Labor party, the Swiss CP), which had attacked the initiative in a sectarian manner, was compelled to change its line.

Second, within the USS various federations on the cantonal or federal level came out in favor of the initiative, against the official position of the USS leadership. This was the case with the typographers union, some sections of the public services union, the assembly

of presidents of sections of the postal workers union, and others. Under this pressure the USS found itself compelled to announce the launching of an initiative for a very gradual introduction of the forty-hour week, the immediate function of which was obviously to weaken the position and audience of the initiative of the POCH-PSA-LMR.

Finally, an important debate unfolded among the ranks of workers, which is not unimportant at a time when many contracts are coming up for renegotiation. In fact, this campaign actualized a demand that will now become part of many trade-union platforms of demands.

Such a campaign, combined with patient work in the trade-unions and the broadest organization of solidarity with the strikes that are now developing very slowly in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (which remain isolated phenomena), represents one of the instruments with which an independent and united mobilization of the working class can be prepared.

This task is now on the agenda, at a time when the bourgeoisie has launched an extensive attack against the gains the working class has made over the past fifteen years, essentially as by-products of the exceptional economic boom, and at a time when the xenophobic movement is preparing a new offensive of its own. (A new xenophobic initiative will soon be presented for a vote.)

FOOTNOTES:

1. The mechanisms of Swiss semidirect democracy allow modifications in the federal constitution to be proposed. Presented in the form of a "constitutional initiative," for which the signatures of 50,000 citizens must be collected, the proposed modification is then submitted to a vote in the form of a referendum.

2. The POCH (Swiss Progressive Organization) was created by some former members of the Communist party in German-speaking Switzerland. This organization partially claims allegiance to the Stalinist Third International. It now places itself within the orbit of the policy of the official CPs. The PSA (Parti Socialiste Autonome — Independent Socialist Party) emerged from a split from the SP in Tessin (Italian-speaking canton) and now maintains special relations with the POCH.

3. The USS is the federated organization that unites the various trade-union federations. It had 470,000 members in 1975. The FTMH (Federation of Metalworkers and Watch-making Workers), which organizes 145,000 workers, has significant weight within it. The USS occupies the forward posts in the policy of "labor peace."

FRANCE

REVOLUTIONARY PLATFORM FOR THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Municipal elections will take place throughout France on March 17. These elections are especially important this year and will serve as a political test of the state of the confrontation between the right and the left parties, the latter grouped behind the Common Program of the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left), the bloc composed of the Socialist party, the Communist party, and Left Radical politicians.

The right has been in a minority since the last cantonal elections, which were held in March 1976. (See INPRECOR, No. 49, April 15, 1976.) The political crisis is intensifying day by day and has now led to a break between the two components of the presidential majority: the Gaullist Jacques Chirac and President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. (See INPRECOR, No. 65, January 13, 1977.)

The only solution the workers parties are offering in face of the government's austerity plan and the growing discontent of the workers is to patiently wait for the results of the municipal elections and then, above all, for the results of the legislative elections in 1978.

To the great mass of workers the Union de la Gauche appears as the only credible alternative. It is in this context that three revolutionary organizations — the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR — Revolutionary Communist League, French section of the Fourth International), Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle), and the Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs (OCT — Communist Workers Organization) — have just signed a "pact of alliance," the text of which we are publishing below. This pact should enable revolutionaries for the first time to present in a united manner an alternative to the policy of the parties that claim allegiance to the Common Program. The accord was concluded on clear bases: First, unequivocal denunciation of the Common Program, a program of class collaboration which places itself within the framework of bourgeois institutions; second, a call for the centralization of struggles against the austerity plan around a platform of unifying demands; third, an initiative of unity toward the CP and SP, which is concretized in a call for a vote for their candidates on the second round of the elections.*

To be sure, many disagreements continue to exist among these three organizations. But the unity that has been achieved will not fail to generate great interest well beyond the periphery of the organizations involved. United meetings will be held throughout France.

*French elections are held in two rounds. If no candidate for a given post wins an absolute majority on the first round, a run-off is held between two candidates in a second round.

The economic crisis which has lasted for two years now, far from moving toward resolution, is instead getting worse. Inflation has scarcely slowed down, despite the Barre plan's claim to have frozen prices for three months. Unemployment is spreading. Thousands of layoffs are still being announced, in the steel industry for example.

The employers are openly and cynically demanding the right to lay off whomever they want. It may be that in coming months the number of unemployed in the country will no longer be one million — a figure that appeared enormous two or three years ago, but has been a reality for a year and a half now — but two million. Through the Barre plan, the present government has thrown its full weight into the balance to make the workers pay for the crisis. It has openly given the employers a green light to lay workers off. It has decreed a wage freeze for the coming year. And, setting an example itself, it has annulled the so-called contracts for progress which had more or less guaranteed that wages in the public and nationalized sectors would follow rising prices, although with much delay.

Nevertheless, the government and the president of the republic himself are facing increasing dissent, and even discredit. This is true even within the ruling majority. The resignation of former Prime Minister Jacques Chirac was a good illustration of this. The various formations of the majority are tossing obstacles in one another's paths, trying to trip one another up. With the creation of the RPR (Rassemblement pour la République — Rally for the Republic, the new Gaullist organization — INPRECOR), a portion of the right is seeking the means through which to evade responsibility for the economic crisis and the policy of the government; it is preparing an alternative.

There is a constant possibility of a political crisis, which could lead at any moment to a government crisis, dissolution of parliament, and the calling of early legislative elections, even if neither Giscard, nor the major right-wing politicians, nor even Chirac wants it. In face of such an anti-working-class offensive, the defense of the most immediate interests of the working class and the popular masses requires a united response of all the workers, who must counterpose their demands to the claims of the austerity plan of the employers and the government. All the organizations and all militants concerned about defense of the interests of the workers should take part in such a response:

*Against the spread of unemployment, we say no to layoffs. We demand jobs for all through a massive reduction in the workweek (to thirty-five hours) and an increase in the number of workers.

*Against factory shutdowns, we demand that not a single worker be laid off, not a single factory closed, maintenance of all jobs. When private employers prove incapable of guaranteeing the jobs of the workers, we demand the nationalization of the enterprise by the state with no compensation and no resale to the capital-

ists, under conditions imposed and controlled by the workers.

*We reject the wage freeze and the cancellation of wage gains:

*maintenance of purchasing power, not on the basis of the index of the government, but on the basis of indices worked out by the workers and the trade-union organizations;

*substantial and across-the-board wage increases (of at least 300 francs a month);

*No wages less than 2,300 francs a month.

*We reject the challenging of the social gains that have been won: for the elimination of personal charges, extension of social security, free health care.

*We refuse to let our struggles be broken and our organizations repressed by the official or parallel police and the judicial system of the regime and the employers: for workers self-defense.

Fearful of being carried into the government on the basis of a workers mobilization for their demands, the Communist and Socialist parties, with the support of the leaderships of the union federations, instead of assembling the workers and their allies in action around such a platform and against the consequences of the crisis and the present government, are trying to limit and control the workers response. They are essentially devoted to preparing for a parliamentary majority in the framework of the electoral calendar defined by Giscard, if possible without any popular mobilization. The leaderships of the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail — General Confederation of Labor) and the CFDT (Con-



fédération Française et Démocratique du Travail — French Democratic Confederation of Labor) are organizing days of action but at the same time are preventing any real coordination or unification of struggles. They back down before any test of strength with the regime.

The CP and the SP are allying themselves with the Left Radicals; they are extending their hand to the left Gaullists.

And above all, they are preparing to govern along with Giscard, with full respect for the constitution of 1958. They commit themselves to administering the profit economy; they are thus prepared, once they enter the government, to impose on the working class and the other toiling layers the austerity policy that the right is having difficulty imposing today.

The workers must make no mistake. The Common Program offers no way out of the crisis, for it does not allow for eliminating the system that causes the crisis. A majority for the Union de la Gauche represents neither workers power nor the "road to socialism."

Stakes of the municipal elections

The coming municipal elections, regardless of attempts to lend them a primarily local significance, appear as a national test and will be considered as such not only by the politicians but also by the workers and popular layers who place their hopes in a change in government.

It is now necessary, without abandoning the field of struggle for the sake of an electoral truce, to defend working-class solutions to the crisis during these elections. We will do this against all the formations of the right, against all those responsible for the anti-worker policy of the present government and its predecessor, but also against the parties of the Union de la Gauche, which reject any policy that would permit the costs of the crisis to be borne by the capitalists and not by the workers and other popular layers.

It is not our intention to prevent the CP and SP from conserving or extending their positions in the municipal governments against the right. We affirm right now that this will determine who we will vote for on the second round of the elections.

The presentation of slates "For socialism, for workers power" will enable all the workers, all popular voters:

*To say that they have had enough of the right and of politicians in the service of the employers and their state;

*To say that they have firmly decided not to bear the costs of the crisis and are prepared to fight for this without waiting until 1978, whatever the results of the elections;

*But also to say that they have no confidence in the compromise policy of the parties of the left, and that if these parties enter the government, they are determined not to allow them to carry out the policy of the right as they have done so often in the past.

Defend the interests of the workers in the municipal elections

We do not pretend that life or society can be changed by a city government. The political rights and material resources of the municipal administrations are narrowly limited by the bourgeois state, in which the municipal administration is a cog surrounded by a genuine strait-jacket. The city governments possess no autonomy to speak of. Even in the administration of municipal affairs, the state apparatus subjects the city governments to a control much more powerful than that of the citizens: manifold financial control over the budget, spending, and possibilities of borrowing; thus, the city budget is made up of the crumbs the state feels like leaving to the cities. The fight for democracy in the cities thus requires a fight against the bourgeois state apparatus and can achieve success only by replacing the bourgeois state with a state of the toilers.

In addition, since Gaullism came to power, the tutelage of the central state over municipal institutions has been strengthened. The budgetary strangling of most cities bears testimony to this. Only the "right thinking" cities receive significant subsidies from the regime. The limited political independence the cities could have commanded thus tends purely and simply to disappear.

Our participation in the municipal elections therefore does not aim at sustaining the illusion that a city can be transformed into an "island of socialism" in a state that remains fundamentally bourgeois.

Even with revolutionaries at their head, city governments in the context of the present society and institutions would have no greater resources with which to profoundly alter the conditions of the workers.

Thus, we refuse to subject ourselves to the logic of simply managing the city institutions, even "democratically," a logic which aims solely at reorganizing municipal institutions as an integral part of an allegedly "democratized" bourgeois state.

That said, in our program we do propose increasing the budgetary resources of the cities in the framework of our general struggle for:

*elimination of the sales tax (VAT);
*a fiscal system essentially directed against the capitalists and those with large incomes.

We will participate in all mobilizations to demand that the state subsidize all the urgent projects which the cities are unable to carry out because of lack of funds.

Likewise, we support extending the competences of the municipal councils, against the tutelage of the prefectures and the central administration, and against the twofold function of the mayor as agent of both the state and the city. The mayor's powers must be reduced to those of a simple executive of the municipal council.

But we know that such changes can be achieved only through an overall struggle by the entire toiling population against the bourgeois state. Moreover, this is true even of the limited demand that the cities be reimbursed for the VAT, the battle cry of the parties of the Union de la Gauche.

Nevertheless, it is in the context of the city that the toiling population finds itself confronted by the thousand and one problems that flow from the capitalist organization of society. It is thus in the context of the city that revolutionaries can demonstrate, deal with, and link together the many aspects of capitalist society's inability to assure a life worthy of men and women for all those who create social wealth.

* * * * *

We propose to wage the municipal election campaign around the following axes:

1 Develop the possibilities of Workers Control

Democracy is a fiction today. A genuine municipal democracy would require that the elected representatives of the workers be under the constant control of those who voted for them. It would require permanent participation by the toiling population in all the affairs and decisions of the cities, which in turn requires that they have the time and information with which to do so.

Elected officials should be recallable at any time.

But this is not the case today; elected local officials are not recallable by the voters. The mayor himself, once designated for his six-year term, can be removed by the minister of the interior but not by the municipal council. And the council itself can be censured by the prefect if he decides that any council decision is "illegal."

The workers will not be able to radically overturn this situation unless there is a central political change. But it would be possible, beginning right now, for a municipal council that really represented the interests of the workers to place the council and all important municipal decisions under the direct control of the workers and toiling layers of the city. To do this, it would aid in the development of organs of struggle and control that include both voters and non-voters, to any and all organizations that represent the toiling population (trade unions, tenants associations, users of public services, etc.).

These organs, which could take various forms (neighborhood or local commissions, struggle committees on particular problems, etc.), provided they were genuinely democratic mass bodies, would have the right to propose and control, would have de facto power over the questions with which they deal. Revolutionaries would commit the municipal council to respect the decisions of these organs and to submit to their control.

2 Support the struggles of the workers and the toiling population.

No municipal government can replace the struggle of the people themselves, but a municipal government that really represents the interests of the toiling population would fully support the struggle of the workers and all the exploited or oppressed layers of the population, in particular women, youth, and immigrants.

This implies moral and material support to all the organizations these workers or layers of the population in struggle create democratically: trade unions, committees, various associations. This implies, in addition to financial support to the full extent possible, placing the offices and material resources of the city government at the disposal of these organizations.

*The municipal government will support striking workers (free services for strikers and their families, canteens, etc.), respecting the decisions made democratically by the workers in struggle.

*The municipal government will grant all aid to women struggling and organizing against their oppression and double exploitation; it will support and strive to satisfy their essential demands:

*possibility of information on sexuality and contraception for women and men in consultation centers as close as possible to work places and housing areas;

*equal rights and employment possibilities, equal job training and wages with men;

*total freedom of abortion through the development of adequate facilities, staffed by competent personnel, in each hospital;

*complete reimbursement by social security, development of child-care centers and nursery schools with mixed and well-trained personnel and with adequate material facilities;

*free availability of meeting places and discussion halls (women's centers).

*The municipal government will extend full aid to unemployed workers so that they may come together and struggle. It will support and strive to satisfy their demands (free transportation, unemployment stipends to all those unemployed); it will facilitate links between employed and unemployed workers in the fight to reduce the workweek and hire unemployed workers.

It will strive to force the offices of the national employment agency to remain open permanently so that the unemployed can organize and meet with the workers and trade unions of the factories in the area.

*The municipal government will strive to foster class solidarity between French and immigrant workers against racism and will ban all racist propaganda in the territory of the city. It will place at the disposal of the immigrant workers material resources enabling them to safeguard their own culture.

*The municipal government will materially and politically support the workers in uniform, backing their demands and their struggle for the right to organize. It will demand the right of a municipal commission to inspect all barracks.

3. Defense and extension of democratic rights

A municipal government, even one headed by revolutionaries, would be unable to prevent money from continuing to confer privileges, even in the realm of the expression of ideas. But by genuinely and completely placing its offices and material resources at the disposal of the population, a municipal government representing the interests of the toiling population would considerably alter the present situation.



All the political and trade-union organizations of the workers and toiling layers, with no exclusion or restriction, will have the possibility of freely using the offices and means of expression commanded by the municipal government. They would thus be guaranteed the right of assembly and expression, in reality and not merely in theory. Open to all the population, the city offices (with the aid of permanent posters, open municipal bulletins, etc.) would become a real permanent living forum in which all people could present their problems and attempt to resolve them.

The municipal government will stand on the side of the workers in struggle in opposing the intervention of the official or parallel police of the employers and the regime. In order to effectively oppose police occupations of factories and homes, evictions and seizures of the

property of tenants and immigrant workers, it will foster the development of workers self-defense.

No confidence will be placed in the police, even the local police, in the maintenance of order. We will base ourselves on the collective organization of the workers. And the municipal government would do everything:

*To alert the population to the police harassment to which youth and immigrants are particularly subject;

*To shed maximum light on the activity of the local repressive organs (police stations, precinct stations, etc.).

4. Change the conditions of the life

The problems that relate to the conditions of life cannot be resolved in the framework of the cities and within the limits of their present material resources. To simultaneously build housing, child-care centers, schools, and hospitals, to be able to staff them with qualified personnel, to establish a comfortable and effective network of mass transportation certainly exceeds the material resources currently at the disposal of municipal governments. Nonetheless, the city budget will be subjected to the control of the entire toiling population; it will be determined in consultation with this population and its organizations.

But regardless of the financial resources that limit its projects, the municipal government will politically and materially support all struggles to improve the living conditions of the population, which are in fact struggles against the state: the fight for free transit, for child-care centers, for adequate public services, against pollution, for health-care centers, for women's centers.

Although it is not possible for the municipal government to construct decent housing for all, it nonetheless can aid in organizing the population around this important problem, among others. In order to put an end to the scandal of vacant housing while there are so many ill-housed people or people living in the streets, the municipal government, aided by neighborhood committees, will make a count of the vacant housing and the needs of the population. It will support all occupations of vacant housing. Likewise, supported by neighborhood committees, all the workers organizations, and tenants associations, it will call upon the entire population to defend workers threatened with eviction or seizure of property and to prevent these incidents, which will rise rapidly given the crisis and unemployment.

Municipal governments in the hands of real representatives of the interests of the workers would be able to aid the struggles of the workers and all the oppressed layers of the population. This would significantly change the conditions under which these struggles unfold.

Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire

Lutte Ouvrière

Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs