

Dictatorships Challenged

Focus on Pakistan and Chile

Growing mass struggle many places in Asia, Africa and Latin America has unmasked the crisis of neocolonialism. This year's power changes in Haiti and the Philippines showed that the people will not tolerate corrupt dictators indefinitely. Now events in Pakistan and Chile are challenging US imperialism's reliance on fascist regimes to insure its interests.

In the seventies, imperialism's crisis became apparent with a chain of victories for national liberation movements, and an economic recession in the capitalist countries. The prevailing structures were proving insufficient to secure imperialism's exploitation of the peoples and resources of the 'third world', and the US resorted to installing dictatorships, relying on the military and the most reactionary strata of the local bourgeoisie. The CIA was active in promoting coups - Chile 1973, Pakistan 1977 and Turkey 1980 are only a few examples. The gendarme regimes unleashed a virtual reign of terror, comparable to Nazi atrocities practiced at the time of World War II. Thousands upon thousands of patriots have been incarcerated, tortured, murdered, or made to simply 'disappear'. Mass impoverishment was the other side of this massive repression, as the juntas

totally subordinated the local economy to the multinationals and finance capital.

Today the cycle is coming full circle with the resurgence of popular struggle against the political, social and economic tyranny of imperialism's surrogate juntas. The 1979 Iranian revolution was the first major jolt to imperialism's reliance on dictatorships. Since then, civilian governments have replaced the juntas in a number of Latin American countries. Faced by objective developments, the US was quicker to anticipate the outcome of the mass uprisings in the Philippines and Haiti. Marcos and Duvalier were escorted to safety, while the Reagan Administration worked to prevent the mass struggle from bringing truly revolutionary forces to power. However, the dilemma for imperialism remains,

as seen in the recent mass protests in Pakistan and Chile, where the respective dictators continue to respond to their crises with the usual state-of-siege methods.

PAKISTAN

In January, General Zia Al Haq made a pretense of 'keeping up with the times' by lifting eight years of martial law, announcing elections for 1990, and installing a civilian cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Junejo of the rightist Muslim League. However, mass pressure for real democracy exposed all this as a fraudulent maneuver.

This spring the return of Benazir Bhutto, daughter of the prime minister who was hanged when Zia took power, served as a rallying point for popular sentiments against the regime. In August, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, which she profiles, declared its intention to initiate a new phase of struggle if elections are not held this year. The Movement planned a rally for Pakistan's independence day on August 14th, to be followed by a campaign for Zia's removal. The dictator tried to keep his face clean by absenting himself from the country, posing as a pilgrim in Mecca. Junejo meanwhile confirmed that his cabinet is only a decoration pasted on the de facto continuation of martial law. Hoping to head off the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, he banned public meetings, ordered the preventive detention of scores of opposition leaders, and sent the army into the streets for the first time this year.

This only served to further enrage the people who went into open rebellion the last half of August, with protests occurring throughout Sind and Punjab provinces, and in Peshawar, capital of the North-West Frontier Province. The people were demanding early elections and the release of the detained. In many instances the masses went beyond the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy's legalistic approach. Slogans were raised demanding an end to Pakistan's collusion with US imperialism's plans. In scores of towns, demonstrators hurled stones and erected barricades against the regime's forces, and engaged them in hand-to-hand combat. Banks and government buildings were burned, and railways disrupted by mass sabotage actions. Zia's soldiers shot to kill, and over 50 people died in the first five days of the uprising, among them a few soldiers and policemen who fell victim to the masses' rage. Arrests were ongoing, with estimates of the number of those detained ranging as high as 10,000.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Besides the masses' right to freedom, vital imperialist interests are at stake in Pakistan. Especially since 1979, when then Secretary of State Brzezinski, after the fall of the Shah, defined the 'arc of

June 1983 demonstration in Santiago

