

CHILE Waiting for the opposition to ripen

Police arrest youth during August '83 Day of National Protest in Santiago.

By Tim Frasca

SANTIAGO, CHILE

CHILE PRESENTLY HAS ALL the ingredients necessary for a full-scale rebellion against 10 years of military dictatorship. But, as one former parliamentarian from the Radical Party put it, "The fruit is not yet ripe." The heady expectations of the protest movement's August and September peaks have given way to a sober examination of exactly how this stubborn and resourceful regime can be dislodged. Chileans have stopped speculating on when and are asking if an overthrow is possible.

The protest scenes witnessed by hundreds of journalists in town for the 10th anniversary of Gen. Augusto Pinochet's September 1973 takeover—the clashes with police, the bonfires and barricades spreading for hundreds of blocks through Santiago's slum neighborhoods—left the impression of a regime tottering on the brink. Civilian politicians began to journey around the country as if running for

the presidency in some soon-to-be announced elections. The example of Argentina, where the military was forced into a tactical retreat after its Falklands disaster, lent an air of inevitability to the majority's desire for change.

But majority will is a far cry from a majority rule. As a retired general told *In These Times*, "We have the military force. The armed forces are 100 percent behind this government." He predicted that Pinochet "will be in power until 1989." (Under the constitution ratified in 1980, Pinochet is to rule until that year, when a tightly-controlled electoral system will replace the present system.)

The realization that pot-banging and street demonstrations alone will not end military rule has sent the opposition forces into a period of examination and planning of a long-term strategy. Various forms of grassroots mobilization are being tested in the political elbow-room created by the months of protests. Party activity is surprisingly open, much of it still technically illegal, and all signs point to an attempted general strike as the next escalation of the confrontation,

sometime in March or April.

But despite the enthusiasm for following Argentina's lead, Chileans grimly realize that Chile is a different case. "Right now we are heading more toward a Cuba or a Nicaragua solution than an Argentina solution," says Government Employees Union President Hernol Flores, a Social Democrat who clearly prefers the latter.

In its war debacle, Argentina's governing military had proved itself incapable of fulfilling either the function of a government or a military. By contrast, while Pinochet is discredited by the economic disaster, Chile's armed forces, built on Prussian-style lines, are still held in some awe by Chileans, who like to remind foreigners that their country "has never lost a war."

In addition, while Peronism absorbs most radical sentiment in Argentina, the Chilean general must consider the continued strength of the Marxist left, especially the powerful Communist Party. A voluntary military exit that would set the stage for another Salvador Allende is hardly plausible. Fear of the left is also

widespread among the centrist critics of the government—a fact Pinochet has used successfully to divide the opposition.

An early skirmish.

If Chile's workers will in fact risk their jobs in a general strike, as labor leaders believe—despite unemployment above 30 percent and widespread hunger—it reflects both the maturity of the opposition and the desperateness of the situation. "We have a responsibility to explain to our people that they can't expect quick and easy gains," says Hernan Camun, head of the unrecognized union of Santiago's 235,000 government workfare employees. "But in general, they know what they're getting into, and they're ready."

Camun's ranks were the first to test the waters of the post-September climate in a massive face-off with their employer—the regime. During November and December thousands of laborers in the government-funded PEM (Minimum Employment) and POJH (Public Works for Heads of Household) projects assembled to demand increases in their sub-survival stipends of \$25 to \$45 a month. They staged marches on Santiago's various municipal headquarters and struck their largely irrelevant make-work projects for a day or two.

The regime responded with its usual iron fist. Santiago's military governor announced that all PEM and some POJH projects would be terminated as "unproductive," throwing more than 60,000 people back to "pure" unemployment. The canceled works corresponded, of course, to the localities that had staged the most militant protests. All of La Granja's projects were eliminated. "Now we have gardens, people eat greens," says Olga, head of a two-year-old soup kitchen in one hard-hit neighborhood. "But in the winter, the hunger will be terrible."

On the surface, it appeared that the government had won the round—it gave no concessions and discouraged further upheavals with its punitive response. But the price was a deepening of the social crisis. "At 4,000 pesos (\$45) a month, we had nothing to lose," said 28-year-old Jimena at the POJH rally in the western district of the capital. "Now we have even less."

Party politics.

In September "dialogue" was the rage. But currently, participants in the aborted series of meetings between approved moderate politicians and Gen. Pinochet's cabinet chief, Sergio Onofre Jarpa, are silent about the subject. Jarpa met three times with leaders of the Democratic Alliance (AD), composed of Radicals, Social Democrats, a Socialist or two, Nationalists and assorted rightists, but dominated by the Christian Democrats (DC). The government strongly insisted that the Communist Party (PC) be excluded and harped on this theme repeatedly, demanding at one point that the Alliance "define itself" vis-a-vis Communist participation in the body and its public acts. Alliance figures dutifully distanced themselves from the PC, thus fueling the government's red-baiting campaign.

With the dialogue, the Pinochet regime managed to get through the difficult August-September period of mass protests and the dozens of state-provoked deaths with a veneer of flexibility. The U.S. State Department issued 14 separate statements applauding the talks. Early reports of what was actually being said in the dialogues were ominously vague. Jarpa promised nothing but more talks, while continuing to utilize the full repressive force of the state as interior minister. After one dinner session at the home of Archbishop Juan Francisco Fresno, Jarpa signed the order relegating 24 people to internal exile under the despised Article 24—one of the topics the dialoguers had pressed him on.

During the dialogue President Pinochet issued statements designed to undercut the whole process. Finally, the Alliance broke off the talks. Christian Democratic Party president Gabriel Valdes accused Pinochet of "unwillingness to arrive at a solution that will lead us to a real democracy without awaiting the present constitution's schedule."

PERSPECTIVES

The opposition in Iran is on the rise and it's optimistic

By Saeed Dorani

ONLY FIVE YEARS AFTER the 1979 revolution in Iran, the Khomeini regime is facing a resistance movement that believes the regime's days are numbered.

This optimism on the part of the opposition is based on the existence of a ruined economy, an unpopular war, fierce competition among ruling factions, murderous suppression of dissidents and the steady growth of opposition. The Iran-Iraq war has already been accompanied by 50 percent unemployment, a 400 percent inflation rate, shortages and rationing of most commodities and three million refugees. Conflicts among leaders of Khomeini's state apparatus are growing. Resignations, purges and public attacks are daily occurrences. On occasion, Khomeini himself has had to step in and dismiss or reshuffle officials in order to get the government to function.

Above all, what appears to be the only viable democratic alternative to the Khomeini regime—the National Council of Resistance—and its principal constituent member—the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran—are organizing the growing Resistance. In a country where 11-year-old children caught with anti-government leaflets are subjected to torture and execution (as reported recently by Amnesty International), the messages and pictures of Massoud Rajavi, chairman of the National Council of Resistance and leader of the People's Mojahedin, continue to be widely distributed and displayed.

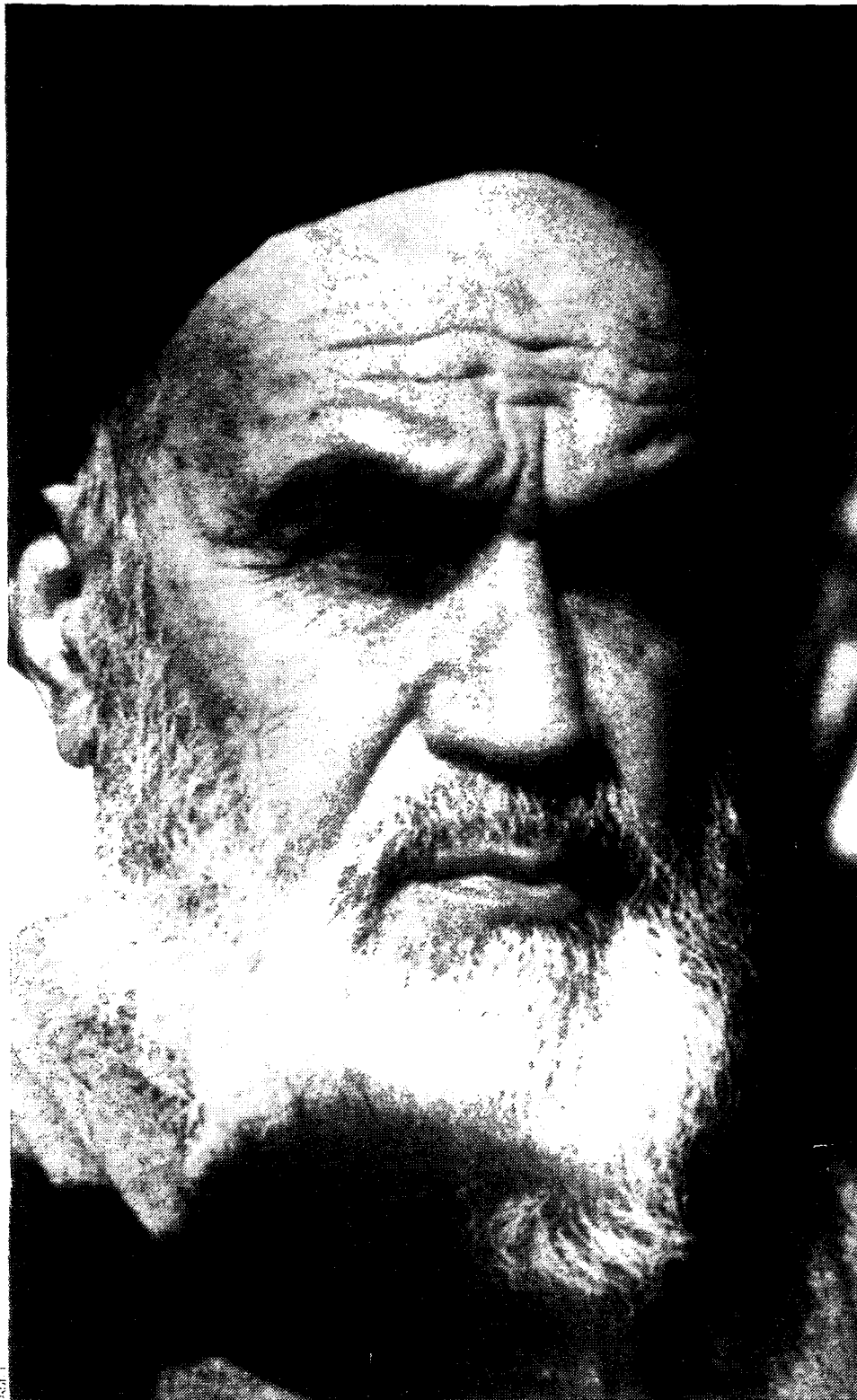
Despite severe repression and the round the clock presence of more than 5,000 bullet-proof patrol cars in the streets of Tehran, news of resistance and the regime's savagery spreads and secret gatherings and ceremonies to honor martyrs of the Resistance are held.

The most important of such occasions was February 8, which marked the second anniversary of the martyrdom of Commander Moussa Khiabani (Rajavi's deputy and the politico-military commander of the Mojahedin inside Iran), Ashraf Rabi'i (Rajavi's wife) and Azar Rezai'i (Moussa Khiabani's wife and the famous Rezai'i family's fifth martyr) as well as 17 other members of the Mojahedin.

They were slain two years ago as they fought the Pasdaran (Khomeini's guards) who had attacked their residence in Tehran.

The same evening, a shocking scene was broadcast on National Iranian Television. Lajevardi, head of Tehran's Evin Prison, held in his arms Mostafa, the in-

A democratic alternative to the Khomeini regime exists in the National Council of Resistance, led by the people's Mojahedin.



Conflicts in Khomeini's Iran are growing as conditions in the country deteriorate.

fant son of Massoud Rajavi as he stood by the bodies of Ashraf Rabi'i (the baby's mother), Moussa Khiabani and other slain Mojahedin.

Throughout Iran people watched outraged at the blood-stained corpses and the one-year-old Mostafa crying in the arms of Khomeini's infamous torturer.

The bodies were also taken to the Evin Prison and displayed before the prisoners to break their morale. But the prisoners defied Lajevardi's order to desecrate the bodies. Instead, they saluted Commander Moussa. One prisoner stepped forward and spat on Lajevardi's face. On Lajevardi's order, 300 imprisoned Mojahedin were executed the same night.

Commander Moussa Khiabani and Mojahed Ashraf Rabi'i had previously been jailed for many years by the Shah and were freed by the people during the 1979 revolution. Their heroic resistance and the events following their martyrdom had a profound impact on the Iranian people. The vivid contrast between Khomeini's rascality and Mojahedin's self-sacrifice greatly increased popular sympathy with the Resistance. It turned February 8 into a national day to remember the more than 30,000 martyrs of the past two and a half years of resistance.

At the time of his martyrdom, "Moussa," 33, was one of the most brilliant figures of the Iranian revolution. His 15

years of struggle in the ranks of the Mojahedin and resistance against torture during seven years of captivity in the Shah's jails, his role in liberating the city of Tabriz during the final days of the Shah and his numerous lectures and speeches, particularly as a parliamentary candidate, had made Moussa Khiabani an unforgettable hero against the dictatorships of both the Shah and Khomeini. Ashraf Rabi'i had spent 10 years of her

life in struggle against the regimes of the Shah and Khomeini, enduring enormous torture in the Shah's jails. After the 1979 uprising, she lectured frequently on the objectives of the revolution. Being the most prominent woman member of the Mojahedin, she was regarded as the symbol of revolutionary Mojahed women.

Last year, people throughout Iran secretly commemorated the first anniversary of February 8th. Ceremonies were also held this year to mark the occasion. Iranians abroad organized various activities to publicize February 8 as a national symbol of the determination of the Resistance to "pay any price for freedom." Demonstrations were held in major Asian, European and American cities (Los Angeles, Montreal and New York) by the Moslem Iranian Students Societies (supporters of the Mojahedin) to promote a distinction between the Khomeini regime and the majority of the Iranian people and introduce the popular Iranian Resistance.

Many personalities and parties around the world have supported the struggle for democracy and social progress in Iran led by the Mojahedin. Among them are the Socialist Party of France, the Socialist Party of Italy, the British Labour Party. In Chicago, Professor Lee Anderson, chair of the Northwestern University Political Science Department, in a January 18 letter to Massoud Rajavi extended "feelings of Solidarity on the second anniversary of February 8, 1982.... That day will be remembered as a historic day in the endeavors of the Iranian people to achieve freedom...."

Khomeini's urgent need to suppress his opponents stems from the strength of the Resistance and the growing peace movement against a background of the deepening economic and social crises. In the face of war as a distraction from internal problems, the opposition publicizes its strategic slogan of "Peace and Freedom." In a communique broadcast repeatedly during the week of January 8-14 on the clandestine "Voice of Mojahed" radio, the Social Section of the People's Mojahedin proclaimed it "a week for peace." Initial reports said that the Resistance units and cells concentrated on leafletting and writing slogans throughout Iran. The campaign was especially successful in Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Rasht, Lahijan, Semnan and Hamedan.

Despite the use of more than 20 security and intelligence organizations, armed patrol cars, street checkpoints and control of arterial routes into and out of cities and several other security plans, Khomeini has failed to deliver a strategic blow to the Mojahedin in the past 20 months. This is why in his recent speech he told his adherents: "We have all entered an arena in which we shall be defeated if we take one stride back." But there is not much room left for "improvements" in the severity of repression and he does not dare release any of the 100,000 political prisoners currently being held.

With continuous intensification of the crisis, all indicators point toward the collapse of the Khomeini regime. ■

Saeed Dorani was a journalist in Iran before coming to the U.S.

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