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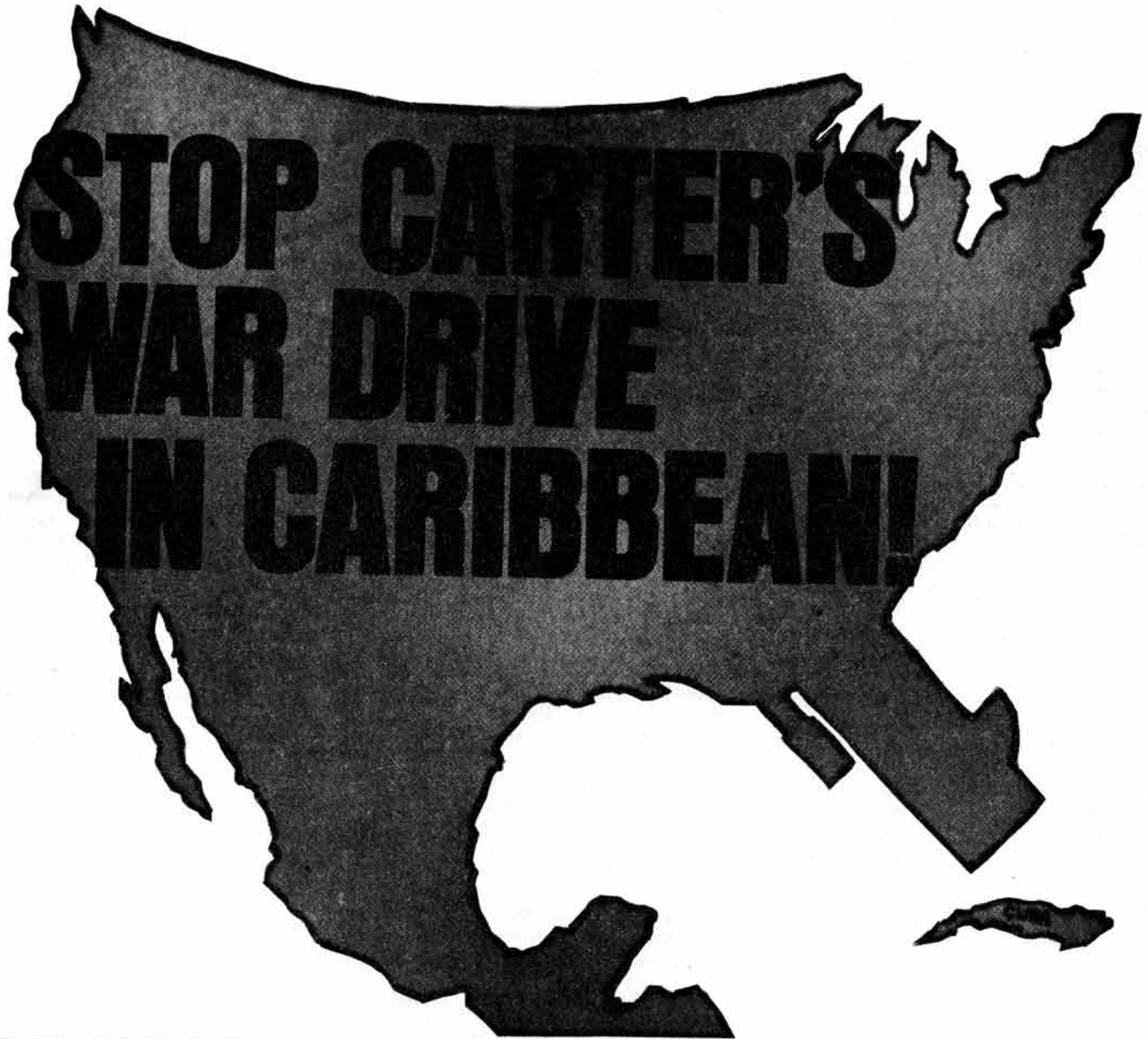
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Charles-André Udry

**NICARAGUA:
A REVOLUTION
ON THE MARCH**

**KAMPUCHEA:
WORLDWIDE AID
NEEDED IN FACE
OF MASS STARVATION**

Stop Threats Against Cuba, Nicaragua!

By Steve Clark and Larry Seigle

"We know that imperialism is interested in seeing our process fail and that it is going to use all the resources at its disposal to achieve that," Nicaraguan Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega told the Conference of Nonaligned Countries in Havana last month.

Ortega's warning was a timely one. On October 1 President Carter announced a sharp escalation of Washington's military threats against Nicaragua, Cuba, and all peoples struggling against imperialist domination throughout Central America and the Caribbean. These moves are an ominous step toward war in that region.

Carter is taking a series of measures to build up Washington's military strength and striking capacity in the Caribbean, and to prepare American working people for the use of U.S. troops.

According to news reports, the Defense Department has announced that the U.S. will stage a landing by a Marine battalion at the U.S. base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, supported by a naval task force that includes assault ships.

The justification for these aggressive moves is the Soviet "combat brigade" in Cuba, around which the Carter Administration has whipped up a propaganda furor since August. Nonetheless, Carter's speech did not provide a shred of evidence to disprove the statement by Cuban President Fidel Castro that the Soviet troops are not a combat brigade, but instead a training unit "that has been in Cuba for seventeen years. It is nothing new."

In fact, Carter's speech confirmed that the issue of Soviet troops has all along been a pretext for U.S. moves toward direct intervention in the region. Carter is using the Soviet "combat brigade" the way Lyndon Johnson used the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964 to pave the way for escalation of the Vietnam War.

Central America & Caribbean

While admitting that the alleged Soviet Brigade "presents no direct threat to us," Carter said, "Nevertheless [it is] a serious matter. It contributes to tension in the Caribbean and Central American region [and has] added to the fears of some countries that they may come under Soviet or Cuban pressure."

As Carter well knows, however, it is above all the Nicaraguan revolution that has "added to the fears" of U.S.-backed dictators. In El Salvador and Guatemala, struggles of workers and peasants have accelerated following the victory over Somoza in Nicaragua. Washington was also

alarmed by the events last March that brought a radical new government to power on the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada.

Cuba is providing desperately needed food, medical supplies, and other aid to Nicaragua and has called on other countries to do the same. It has also spoken out in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles in the Caribbean. The Cubans are especially forceful in demanding independence for Puerto Rico.

And it is not only in the Western Hemisphere that Cuba has defied U.S. imperialism and countered its reactionary moves. Carter complained of "Cuban military activities around the world," pointing out that its "military forces are used to intrude into other countries in Africa and the Middle East."

But what Carter didn't say was that Cuban troops have been sent in response to requests by African and Mideast governments faced with "intrusions" or the threat of "intrusions" by imperialist-backed forces.

Aggressive Moves

In response to the Nicaraguan revolution, the upsurge elsewhere in Central America, and Cuba's growing prestige and influence in anti-imperialist struggles around the world, Washington is systematically preparing the ground for the first direct use of troops since the U.S. defeat in Indochina.

Carter said that Washington would "expand military maneuvers in the region. We will conduct these exercises regularly from now on." News reports only a few hours before Carter spoke announced that sixteen warships, including two nuclear-armed submarines and the aircraft carrier *USS Forrestal*, had arrived in the Caribbean just east of Puerto Rico, allegedly on routine maneuvers.

Carter also announced the establishment of a full-time Caribbean Joint Task Force Headquarters at Key West, Florida. This would, he said, allow the U.S. to "respond rapidly to any attempted military encroachment in the region."

Carter said that governments in the Caribbean and Central America "can be confident that the United States will act in response to a request for assistance to meet any such threat from Soviet or Cuban forces." It was under the cover of such a "request for assistance" to "meet Communist threats" that Washington landed Marines in Santo Domingo to crush a popular rebellion there in 1965—to cite merely one

example among many.

Carter also declared that Washington would increase its surveillance of Cuba. This opens the way for a renewal of spy flights over the island, as well as stepped-up CIA crimes against the Cuban people.

Imperialist Arrogance

These arrogant moves by U.S. imperialism will be greeted with outrage by the oppressed and exploited throughout Latin America and in the Caribbean.

The mood of the masses will make it impossible for many capitalist governments in the region to endorse Carter's moves; some will be pressured to denounce them.

But a *New York Times* dispatch from Buenos Aires three days prior to Carter's speech indicated that Washington is already seeking the active cooperation of three of the bloodiest tyrannies—those in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. According to correspondent Juan de Onis, Washington wants them to agree to participate in a "regional military peacekeeping force" in light of "continuing instability in Central America, where left-wing insurgents are challenging military regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala."

While the U.S. military moves are aimed in particular at Central America and the Caribbean, Carter's speech was part of the U.S. rulers' overall effort to reverse the deep antiwar sentiments and suspicion of U.S. foreign policy among American workers. It must try to do this to free its hands for direct use of American military forces against revolutionary struggles around the world.

Carter announced that he has "directed the Secretary of Defense to further enhance the capacity of our Rapid Development Forces to protect our own interest and to act in response to requests for help from our allies and friends. We must be able to move our ground, sea and air units to distant areas—rapidly and with adequate supplies."

As an example, Carter said, "We have reinforced our naval presence in the Indian Ocean"—vital to U.S. imperialist interests in the Mideast, Iran, and the Horn of Africa.

SALT II

Another key aim of Carter's moves is to warn Moscow that the U.S. will not allow it to provide aid to Nicaragua, and to urge the Kremlin to attempt to rein in Cuba's activities around the world. In contrast to the internationalist policies of the Castro leadership in Cuba, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin seeks to gain trade and diplomatic concessions from imperialism in return for using its power and influence to sabotage revolutionary struggles.

Because of Washington's economic blockade against Cuba and its aggressive military posture toward it, the Cuban

government is heavily dependent on Soviet economic and military assistance. In his address, Carter said that the Soviet Union must take "responsibility . . . for escalating Cuban military actions abroad."

Carter's references to the SALT II pact were aimed both at driving home this point to the Kremlin and cloaking his war moves in pious phrases about world peace. There was more than a little irony, however, in his statement that, "The purpose of the SALT II treaty and the purpose of my actions in dealing with Soviet and Cuban military relationships are exactly the same."

Under this so-called arms limitation pact, Washington is permitted to increase both the quantity and diversity of its nuclear arsenal, including the new MX mobile missile system and other weapons of mass destruction.

Castro Won't Be Intimidated

Castro conducted two important interviews with U.S. reporters in the days just before Carter's speech.

"Carter has not been honest; Carter has not been moral," he told CBS news correspondent Dan Rather September 30. "I challenge Carter to tell the truth."

Castro asked Rather whether he thought Carter would submit to questioning by Cuban reporters, as Castro has done for American reporters.

When asked by Rather to comment on reports of Carter's plans for stepped-up military activities in the Caribbean, Castro replied: "We are not scared by any of that. . . . We have suffered for twenty years."

Two days earlier, Castro had told reporters: "I do not feel obligated whatsoever to give any explanation to the United States concerning our military facilities and measures that we take for our defense."

Instead, said Castro, Carter has the duty to withdraw all U.S. forces from Cuban soil and to dismantle the U.S. base at Guantánamo.

If Carter persists in charges about the alleged Soviet "combat brigade," Castro said, "he will be telling a great lie to American public opinion and to world public opinion."

That is exactly what Carter did.

The labor movement in the United States and around the world has a responsibility to launch a campaign to counter those lies. As shown by the U.S.-provoked Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, Washington will bring the world to the brink of nuclear disaster to defend its interests against the spread of socialist revolution. "Our strategic nuclear forces are powerful enough to destroy any potential adversary many times over," Carter solemnly reminded his audience at the opening of his speech.

Working people around the world must

demand withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from the Caribbean and Central America.

We must demand the immediate return of Guantánamo to the Cuban people.

And we must demand that instead of

subjecting Nicaragua to threats, Washington and other imperialist powers should send massive shipments of food and other desperately needed supplies to the war-ravaged country—with no strings attached. □

In This Issue

Closing News Date: October 2, 1979

KAMPUCHEA	940	Worldwide Aid Now!—By David Frankel
IRAN	941	Four Puerto Rican Nationalists Demand Release of Socialists—by Alexis Irizarry
MIDEAST	942	Blacks Invite Arafat to Speak in U.S.—by David Frankel
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	943	Coup Made in Paris—by Ernest Harsch
NICARAGUA	944	Worldwide Campaign for Aid
	946	A Revolution on the March—by Charles-André Udry
	956	Class Conflict Mounts—by Fred Murphy
	956	Simón Bolívar Brigade Dissolved
	957	Interview with Jaime Wheelock
AFGHANISTAN	960	Behind the Imperialist Lies—by Ernest Harsch
USA	962	1,550 Attend 30th National Convention of SWP—by Will Reissner
	963	Socialists Discuss Trends in Industrial Unions—by Malik Miah
NEWS ANALYSIS	938	Stop U.S. Threats Against Cuba, Nicaragua!—by Steve Clark and Larry Seigle
AROUND THE WORLD	958	Juan Mari Brás Arrested on Way to UN

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Worldwide Aid for Kampuchea Now!

By David Frankel

Since 1969, millions of Kampuchean have died as a result of U.S. aggression and the savage policies of the Pol Pot regime. Now, more than half of the remaining 4 million face starvation.

It is the elementary duty of governments around the world—and especially of the U.S. government, responsible for so much carnage in Indochina—to mount a massive international relief campaign.

Nobody denies that such a campaign is technically feasible. To begin with, the food is available. U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance assured the UN General Assembly September 24 that “the American harvest this year will be of record size.”

Jim Howard of Oxfam, a British relief agency, told reporter John Pilger that “milk alone can put life into thousands of kids in a matter of days. There is no shortage of it—Oxfam is always being offered dried milk from the EEC [European Economic Community] ‘milk mountain.’” (London *Daily Mirror*, September 13.)

Ability to transport the food and desperately needed medical supplies also exists. Experts say an immediate airlift of 600 tons a day is needed. During the October 1973 Mideast war, the U.S. Air Force airlifted 22,600 tons of military supplies from America to Israel—an average of more than 700 tons a day.

Between early 1969 and March 1970, the U.S. Air Force carried out 3,630 B-52 bombing raids over Kampuchea—an average of at least eight a day.

But Washington has not sent a single plane to save the lives of 2.5 million Kampuchean.

The French Air Force—which has delivered troops and military supplies on short notice to countries such as Chad, Zaïre, and now the Central African Republic—should also join the effort.

“These people *can* be saved,” Oxfam’s Howard told Pilger. “Just one tanker with 100,000 tons of rice would feed the entire population for two months.”

Two such tankers would be more than enough to bring all the supplies that the Kampuchean government is asking for.

If the aid gets to Kampuchea, it will be distributed. Edward Snyder, a member of an American Friends Service Committee delegation that went to Kampuchea, told reporters in Bangkok September 21 that there was agreement by relief workers there that the new government of Heng Samrin has been “extremely conscientious” in distributing aid to civilians.

Sister Françoise Vandermeersch, a

French nun who recently returned from Kampuchea, also testified that “the authorities in Phnom Penh have proved their honesty in the distribution of supplies.”

But the imperialist governments, led by Washington, have put a virtual embargo on aid to Kampuchea. At the same time, they have sought to place the blame for the famine on the Kampuchean government and on Vietnam, whose army helped topple the nightmare rule of the Khmer Rouge in January. A September 21 Associated Press dispatch said:

“U.S. State Department officials in Washington say the Vietnamese-backed government has thus far refused to agree on a program of international controls on food distribution. Until such controls are in effect, the United States would not contribute food, the officials said.”

Just what type of international controls they have in mind was explained by “Western diplomats” and “experts” to London *Daily Telegraph* reporter Ian Ward in Hong Kong. “North Vietnamese politics, they say, almost certainly would block the vital distribution effort by foreign aircraft, ships and even troops which would be required to get food and medicines to isolated sectors of the country,” Ward reported in a dispatch carried in the *New York Post* September 25. (Emphasis added.)

Meanwhile, *Washington Post* correspondent Lee Lescaze said in a September 24 dispatch from the United Nations: “Singapore Ambassador Tommy Koh told reporters the ASEAN nations [Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia] will tell the United States this weekend that any international aid must be carefully monitored so that it cannot be diverted for use by the Vietnamese armed forces. He admitted that such monitoring could be extremely difficult to arrange.”

This campaign of callous hypocrisy was spelled out further by *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis September 27. “The U.S. and other governments would provide food and money,” he said. “But political obstacles are preventing action.”

Lewis repeated the standard charge that the Heng Samrin government is blocking relief efforts and added: “The signs are growing that Vietnam is using starvation as a weapon in the effort to consolidate its hold on Cambodia and destroy remnants of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge forces.”

The facts show, however, that it is the imperialists who are using starvation as a weapon. Famine is their ally in trying to accomplish what Washington was unable to do with its B-52s and napalm—stopping

the spread of social revolution in Indochina.

The imperialists’ other ally is the remnants of the Pol Pot regime, which they managed to keep in the United Nations September 21. The possibility that Kampuchean and Vietnamese forces will succeed in mopping up the last of the Khmer Rouge bands has been particularly upsetting to Washington.

U.S. officials complained September 25, according to *New York Times* reporter Bernard Gwertzman, that “the new [Vietnamese] offensive, which could run until March, makes it impossible to arrange a political compromise between the competing Cambodian Governments of Heng Samrin and Mr. Pol Pot, at least until the fighting is over.”

In a thinly veiled threat, they noted that “this in turn makes it more difficult for relief to be sent to Cambodia to ease the wide-scale starvation and malnutrition.”

Anthony Lewis offered a not-so-subtle suggestion of how relief could be linked to increased pressure on Vietnam and Kampuchea for a political settlement. Lewis suggested “an immediate international conference on the human situation in Cambodia.”

“A conference would have to focus at first on the imminent threat of famine,” Lewis explained. “But that problem is so connected with the political struggle over Cambodia that there might be ways to move on to the larger issue.”

While denying aid to the great majority of the Kampuchean people living under the Heng Samrin government, the imperialists have been using the cover of humanitarian aid to channel increased supplies to the Khmer Rouge butchers by way of Thailand. Thai troops have openly aided the Khmer Rouge in the past, and Gwertzman reported that “steps have been taken to expedite the shipment of military aid [to Thailand] from the United States.”

A new Chinese attack on Vietnam is also being hinted at by U.S. officials.

The human cost of Washington’s support to Pol Pot and the continuing attempt to maintain an imperialist foothold in the area was described in harrowing detail by Pilger after his tour of Kampuchea.

Describing the situation today, Pilger says:

In the northern town of Kompong Speu there is a silence where there once were markets and schools and hospitals; 150,000 people were murdered here by the Khmer Rouge, and there is no trace of the main hospital. It was not just destroyed; it was *erased*. . . .

When the Vietnamese army overthrew the Khmer Rouge last January, they built an emergency hospital at Kompong Speu, supplied a doctor and as much medicine as they could spare.

But there are no beds and no blankets and Dettol was constantly splashed on our hands because most of those dying on the stone floor had bubonic plague and anthrax, caught from eating diseased cattle.

Dr. Jean-Yves Follezu, from Paris, said: "Anthrax takes about a month to kill. In that time penicillin can cure it completely. For four months the International Red Cross knew what was happening in Cambodia, and what was needed, and did nothing.

On the day I arrived in Cambodia a man from UNICEF, the United Nations Childrens Fund, was leaving. UNICEF have sent one relief plane to Cambodia.

Those relief agencies, such as Oxfam, that have seriously sought to aid the Kampuchean people have had no difficulties in carrying out their work. Oxfam's Howard told *New York Times* correspondent R.W. Apple September 17 that he had been given "100 percent cooperation."

Far from trying to hide what they were doing, government officials allowed Howard to visit every place he asked to see, with the exception of Kampong Som, where a Soviet ship was then unloading.

Unfortunately, the imperialist governments are doing their best to obstruct any aid to Kampuchea.

"Their response has been a studied indifference that itself complements the crime of genocide committed here," Pilger points out. "Mrs. Thatcher's Government and the EEC have gone as far as cutting off food aid to Vietnam, the only country attempting to hold back the famine in Cambodia with supplies of food and drugs that it badly needs to combat its own critical shortages."

The record gives the lie to the imperialist claims that Vietnam would appropriate food sent to aid starving Kampuchean. Nayan Chanda reports in the August 31 issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*:

"In Mekong delta provinces like Cuu Long, Ben Tre and others, each Vietnamese family is being asked to contribute 3 kg of rice for the sister province in Kampuchea."

According to Chanda, "Vietnam so far 20,000 tons of rice, 9,000 tons of fuel oil and 5,000 tons of consumer goods such as condensed milk, cloth and household utensils."

That is 44,000 tons more aid than the French, British, West German, and U.S. governments combined have supplied.

Even the editors of the *New York Post*, a major capitalist daily, complained September 26 that "Secretary of State Vance, in his address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, called for 'an international program of humanitarian relief' and yet insisted that the aid be 'adequately monitored.'"

"There is no time for such pedantic niceties to insure that Western aid is known by the starving Cambodian children to be, in fact, Western aid."

The *Post* editorial demanded that aid for Kampuchea be provided immediately and unconditionally. That is exactly what is needed. The world labor movement should take the lead in fighting for such international aid to prevent a further tragedy in Indochina. □

Four Puerto Rican Nationalists Demand:

'Stop Execution of Iranian Socialists!'

By Alexis Irizarry

LARES, Puerto Rico—The four Puerto Rican Nationalists just released from U.S. jails have added their support to the call for the immediate release of the fourteen imprisoned members of the Socialist Workers Party (HKS) of Iran.

They were among the 616 persons who signed a petition for the HKS during the proindependence rally held here September 23. The rally, attended by 30,000, was held in commemoration of *El Grito de Lares*, the 1868 uprising against Spanish colonial rule.

Other well-known supporters of Puerto Rico's fight for freedom who signed the petition include Juan Mari Brás, general secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and Juan Antonio Corretjer, poet and independence activist.

Luis Lausell, president of the Electrical and Water Workers Union (UTIER), one of the largest trade unions in Puerto Rico, also signed the petition, as did hundreds of members of trade unions, professional organizations, and other proindependence groups.

At the Lares rally, members of the Committee to Defend the HKS Fourteen, along with the Puerto Rican Trotskyists of the International Workers League (LIT), set up a huge sign that read: "Save the Lives of the Socialist Workers in Iran," and displayed large photographs of the imprisoned Iranian socialists. They also distributed leaflets explaining the injustice these *compañeros* have been subjected to.

Of the fourteen HKS prisoners, twelve have been sentenced to be executed, solely for having defended the democratic rights

that the Iranian people won following the downfall of the shah. The other two HKS prisoners—both women—were sentenced to life imprisonment on the same charges.

Once the defense committee's leaflets began circulating at the rally, a crowd quickly gathered around the petition table seeking more information about the case. As people learned the facts they stepped forward to sign the petition.

One reason many Puerto Ricans identify with the Iranian *compañeros* is that the HKS members have consistently defended the rights of Iran's Arab and Kurdish oppressed nationalities, who like the people of Puerto Rico have fought for years against colonial and national oppression.

The four Nationalists, Lolita Lebrón, Oscar Collazo, Irving Flores, and Rafael Cancel Miranda, had themselves spent more than a quarter of a century in Yankee prisons for having launched armed actions against the United States government in the 1950s, in an attempt to focus international attention on the colonial oppression of their homeland.

The day after the Lares rally a telegram was sent to Ayatollah Khomeini and to the Tehran daily *Baamdad*. It read in part: "We celebrated the overthrow of the shah. But now the Iranian people are facing a new wave of repression. . . . We demand the immediate and unconditional release of the 14 HKS members and all revolutionary fighters."

For the organizers of the defense campaign here, perhaps the most inspiring thing is the enthusiasm and solidarity with which Puerto Ricans have declared, "We're doing our part!" □



Alexis Irizarry/IP-1

Supporters of independence for Puerto Rico line up at September 23 rally of 30,000 to sign petitions demanding release of fourteen Iranian socialists.

Black Leaders Invite Arafat to Speak in U.S.

By David Frankel

Cheering Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank hoisted Black civil-rights leader Jesse Jackson onto their shoulders September 26, chanting "Jackson, Arafat," "Victory, victory, PLO," and "Palestine is Arab."

A similar scene was repeated in Lebanon September 29, at a Palestinian refugee camp outside the city of Tyre.

In the town of Damour, Lebanon, an old man, asked if he knew who Jackson was, replied, "He is our friend, he is our friend." A Palestinian teacher added, "We hope there will be many like him in America who will understand our cause."

Meanwhile, top policymakers in both Israel and the United States watched with dismay as Black leaders continued to express their identification with the Palestinian people and their struggle for self-determination.

At the Kalandia refugee camp on the West Bank, Jackson denounced Washington's miserly \$50-million-a-year contribution to aid 1.8 million Palestinian refugees driven from their homes by the Zionist state, contrasting it to the billions given to support the Israeli military and economy.

"We are suggesting by our budgetary allocation that one human being is worth much more than another human being," Jackson declared.

He went on to say: "I grew up in this kind of situation, I understand this camp. I identify heavily with this camp. When I smell the stench and look at the open sewers, this is nothing new for me. This is a reminder. And when I look at all of these children, and to them the top grade in school is nine years . . . no official library . . . the double shifts, I identify with this strongly. This is suppression."

Jackson's Mideast trip follows one by a ten-member delegation led by Southern Christian Leadership Conference President Joseph Lowery and Washington, D.C., congressional delegate Walter Fauntroy.

In a breakthrough for the Palestinian liberation struggle, the SCLC leaders invited PLO head Yassir Arafat to come to the United States and speak to the first of ten community educational forums on the Mideast that they are planning.

After his return from the Mideast, Lowery denounced the Israeli use of U.S. weapons in Lebanon in heated terms. He told the National Association of Black Journalists September 23 that "we discovered much to our outrage that American weapons had been used on non-military

targets."

As a result of the bombing, Lowery said, "the Palestinians are suffering in an indescribable way.

" . . . the savage and destructive bombing has turned villages into refugee camps and the continued bombing, refugee camps into ghost towns."

The SCLC asked both the PLO and the Israeli government for a "three-month moratorium on violence." A similar plea for an end to violence was conveyed by Jackson. The racist attitude of the Israeli government was shown by its refusal—unlike the PLO—to even meet with the Black leaders to discuss their proposals.

The Black leaders were clearly taken aback by the extent of the destruction caused by Israeli attacks in Lebanon. "America is dangerously close to backing into another Vietnam war," Jackson said as he viewed the rubble.

Both Lowery and Jackson spoke at a meeting of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign in Washington, D.C., September 22. Jackson explained his view that "the inherent right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a just existence is as inalienable as all the rights we cherish in the American Declaration of Independence."

He added that peace in the Middle East has to be based on "justice for those who have been dispossessed and denied their sovereign rights."

As for the PLO, Jackson pointed out: "The PLO was once disregarded. But things have changed. Now 115 nations of the world recognize the PLO. Fifty-one nations recognize Israel. One hundred nonaligned nations castigated America and Israel and Egypt in Cuba a few days ago. The PLO is no longer behind the curtain. . . . Now the PLO is center stage."

Their support to the rights of the Palestinian people has resulted in these Black leaders being subjected to a flood of racist abuse. In one typical statement, Phyllis Frank, president of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, termed Lowery's invitation to Arafat "an outrageous affront to human decency."

She added: "We wonder if SCLC is not simply allowing itself to be used by Arafat."

Rabbi Marvin Bash, another Jewish leader, said that "the current involvement of some black leaders in the complex issues of the Middle Eastern affairs is uncalled for. . . .

"Foreign policy is best handled by those who are experts in the matter."

Responding to such racist attacks, Lowery told the Palestine Human Rights Campaign meeting: "I know they say we're being used. But they've always said that. When we fought segregation in Alabama and Mississippi, then we were being used by the communists. Then later when we marched at Selma, we were being used by the Jews. Now we're being used by the PLO.

"Well, I reject that racist arrogance. I deny the allegation and I defy the allegator. It's an insidious insinuation that Black folks can't think for themselves."

Jackson took up the charges that supporters of Palestinian rights are anti-Semitic. He insisted that taking "this position . . . is not to be anti-anybody. I am concerned about our Palestinian brothers and sisters. I am concerned about our Jewish brothers and sisters. We know of their agonies and fears. We know of Hitler."

But Jackson stressed that Blacks have a direct interest in taking a position on the Mideast conflict, which has "the potential for dragging a big part of the world into a war of massive destruction.

"If there's a hot war in the Middle East," Jackson explained, Blacks "will die first. If there's a cold war, we will starve first."

For the first time, a public debate inside the United States is beginning to take place on the real issues in the Middle East. The initial form this discussion has taken has been a debate between Black leaders and Jewish leaders, who are the most fervent supporters of Israel. But the fundamental interests of both the American ruling class and the American working class are involved.

American imperialism has no alternative but to rely on the Israeli state as a counterrevolutionary bastion in the Middle East. Support to Israel is not a tactical question for the U.S. ruling class. Nor is its opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state of any kind.

At the same time, the American working class as a whole is drawing its own conclusions about the Middle East. As Black columnist Carl T. Rowan noted September 8, "if a confrontation is coming, it will be not just between Jews and Blacks, but far larger numbers of Americans who believe that Israel is pressing her luck and possibly making support of the Jewish state costlier than many millions of Americans will be willing to pay." □

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Central Africa Coup: Made in Paris

By Ernest Harsch

During the evening of September 20, French military transport planes, carrying hundreds of French troops, began arriving at the airport near Bangui, the capital of what was then called the Central African Empire.

Out of one of the French planes stepped David Dacko, a personal adviser and cousin of Emperor Bokassa and a former president of the country.

With French troops already taking up strategic positions around the city, Dacko announced at five minutes before midnight that Bokassa (who was abroad at the time) was deposed. Dacko declared that the country would once again be called the Central African Republic and that he himself was now president.

Following a prearranged script, Dacko then called on "our constant friend, France," for military aid. And the French government, under the pretense of responding to an appeal by a "sovereign" head of state, announced the next morning that it would send troops (which were, of course, already there).

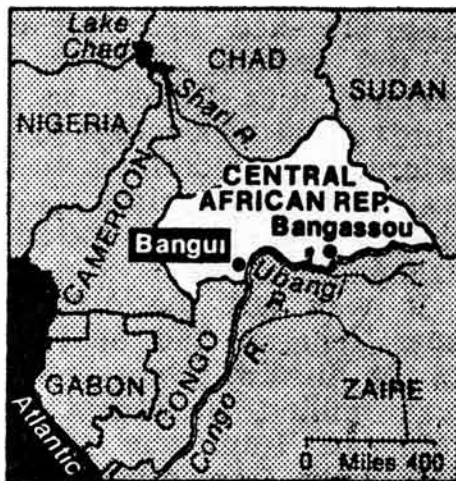
Two days after his arrival, Dacko admitted to reporters that he had spent the previous two months outside the country preparing the coup with the help of Paris and "friendly African governments."

This blatant French military intervention makes a mockery of African sovereignty. It is a blow against all those in Africa struggling to free their continent of imperialist domination.

The dispatch of around 1,000 French troops to Bangui was not aimed at Bokassa—a bloody capitalist dictator the French government itself had propped up for many years—but at the peoples of the Central African Republic. At a time when the urban masses were already mobilizing against the monarchy, the regime of French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing felt it necessary to step in directly to protect French political and economic interests there (including the exploitation of the large uranium deposits).

This aggression is part of a broader French imperialist offensive in Africa, which in recent years has included bombing raids against the Western Saharan freedom fighters, direct military intervention in Chad, and—in direct collusion with Washington—the sending of troops in 1977 and 1978 to put down rebellions in Zaïre's Shaba Province.

The Bangui operation won praise from some of the most reactionary forces. An American State Department spokesman responded, "Vive la France!" And an edi-



torial in the September 25 *Wall Street Journal* lamented that the political climate in the United States was not conducive to similar American intervention, no matter what "the size of U.S. interests" involved.

In Bangui itself, Bokassa's downfall was initially greeted with street celebrations, which French troops quickly sought to bring under control. But the joy subsided when the character of the new French-installed regime became clear.

Virtually all of Bokassa's imperial cabinet has been retained by Dacko, including those most identified with the repression. A few days after taking power, Dacko announced that he would seek closer diplomatic and trade ties with South Africa; he later backed off somewhat, claiming it was "all a great joke."

On September 23, only three days after the coup; the first antigovernment demonstration occurred. Hundreds of students and teachers rallied outside the presidential palace to protest the composition of the regime.

One of the most important groups formed in opposition to Bokassa, the Front Patriotique Oubanguien (FPO—Oubangui Patriotic Front),* issued a statement in Paris the day before condemning the Dacko regime and demanding the withdrawal of French troops.

The FPO called the French intervention a "veritable act of colonial reconquest" and appealed to the peoples of the Central African Republic to "refuse to collaborate in any way with the antipeople and anti-democratic puppet regime imposed from abroad."

*Oubangui is an African name for the country, which before independence was called Oubangui Chari.

The French Communist Party has also demanded that French troops get out. At a September 23 news conference, CP General Secretary Georges Marchais said that Paris should "stop its interventions in Africa."

The Giscard government has sought to divert criticism of its role by stressing the repressive nature of Bokassa's regime. But this "concern" over human rights violations under Bokassa is a complete fraud.

The French rulers supported Bokassa with hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, ever since he came to power in 1966. They even funded his lavish coronation in December 1977, when he proclaimed himself "emperor." Paris was totally silent about Bokassa's repression—until it concluded that he had outlived his usefulness.

In January, serious opposition to Bokassa began to emerge. Students demonstrated and were soon joined by residents from Bangui's poor neighborhoods. Coming just days after the shah had fled Iran, the protesters took up the chant: "After the shah, the dog of Berengo!" (Bokassa's imperial residence was in Berengo).

Police attacked the demonstration, provoking a popular rebellion that shook the city for several days. By the time it was put down, up to 400 persons had been killed or wounded.

In the weeks that followed, there were frequent clashes between students and police. Rallies in Bangui called for Bokassa's ouster and the restoration of the republic. Workers went out on strike. Several underground groups were formed.

Police arrested many activists. In April, scores of students were reported to have been killed in prison, some by Bokassa himself.

The French government initially backed Bokassa's denials, referring to the killings as "pseudo-events." But a commission of African jurists substantiated the charges in August, further isolating Bokassa and making him a political liability to his French capitalist backers.

Around the same time, Paris learned that some of the opposition groups were planning campaigns to oust Bokassa. To forestall an insurrection or a coup by less reliable forces, the French government acted first.

Amid signs of opposition to the new regime, Dacko made it clear that he will rely on the French troops to stay in power. He declared September 24 that they would stay in the country "10 years if necessary."

A few days after his statement, even more French troops arrived. □

WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR AID TO NICARAGUA



In a statement issued August 15, the Fourth International urged "the mass parties and organizations of the workers movement to build the broadest possible international movement—united and nonexclusionary—in support of the struggle of the Nicaraguan people and the fighters of the FSLN, whose courage has become a most precious heritage of the world proletariat."

The revolutionary government in Nicaragua has appealed in particular for emergency aid to help the country overcome the ravages of war and reconstruct its economy. With this issue, we are initiating a special department that will report on developments and activities in the international campaign of solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution.

Canadian Trade Unions Take Action

[The following article by Phil Courneyeur appeared in the September 10 issue of the Canadian Trotskyist newspaper *Socialist Voice*.]

* * *

The labor movement in Canada has taken the lead in organizing emergency relief aid for Nicaragua. Led by the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC), union locals and labor councils across the country are collecting money and supplies.

On August 19 four plane loads of food, clothing, and medical supplies were sent by the labor congress to its Nicaraguan counterpart. The shipment included 50 tons of milk, anti-biotics, and tons of clothing. A complete immunization program to cover one million people was also sent.

By mid-August the CLC Nicaragua Relief Fund had raised more than \$250,000. The biggest boost came from the 180,000-member Public Service Alliance of Canada. At its recent triennial convention PSAC voted to give one dollar per member to the fund.

In Ottawa local unions collected clothing and other supplies, operating out of city fire halls with official permission.

In Toronto the Metro Labor Council hopes to raise close to \$200,000, one dollar per member of each affiliate. The council has set up a collection depot at the Steelworkers headquarters (32 Cecil Street) where unions and other organizations can take food, clothing, and medical supplies for shipment to Nicaragua.

In Québec, the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) has participated in solidarity actions with Nicaragua. In July, just before the fall of Somoza, the union federation joined in a demonstration of a thousand people. And at the June convention of the CSN in Québec City, delegates heard greetings from a representative of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). He received a standing

ovation.

In Winnipeg, Somoza's defeat was celebrated at a meeting whose keynote speaker was Nels Thibeault, representing the Manitoba Federation of Labor and the NDP [New Democratic Party].

In Vancouver, the NDP is participating in a medical aid committee for Nicaragua.

The CLC solidarity campaign got under way following an international labor fact-finding mission to Nicaragua after dictator Somoza's downfall.

Speaking to the Toronto labor council August 16, John Simonds, a member of the mission, said that most of Nicaragua's industry had been destroyed, along with almost all hospital and medical facilities.

Simonds, an aide to CLC President Dennis McDermott, explained that the CLC campaign will unfold in two stages. First, emergency relief aid to help avert the danger of hunger and disease. Second, a more long term campaign to help Nicaragua rebuild its war ravaged economy.

The CLC campaign is still only at its opening stages. Most union locals across the country have yet to be brought into the campaign.

Speaking to a large Nicaragua solidarity rally in Toronto August 21, Metro Labor Council President Sam Fox appealed to union members present to raise the CLC campaign in their union locals and workplaces. The rally, organized by the Chilean Socialist Party and the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) units in Toronto, drew a crowd of over 800 people. Among the speakers were Melina Mercouri, the well-known actress and PASOK member of the Greek parliament, and Pastor Valle-Garay, representative in Toronto of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. Toronto Mayor John Sewell sent a telegram of greetings.

Bob Rae, New Democratic MP for Toronto Broadview, spoke on behalf of the NDP federal parliamentary caucus, pledging its support in the campaign to get the

Canadian government to send massive aid to Nicaragua.

The rally raised more than \$3,000 for Nicaraguan relief.

Similar rallies are being held across Canada. A meeting in Saskatoon September 4, sponsored by the Saskatoon Nicaragua Support Committee, was endorsed by a wide range of organizations, including the city's labor council, feminist groups, and the Revolutionary Workers League.

In Toronto representatives of two dozen organizations met on July 20 to form Canadian Action for Nicaragua (CAN). CAN is acting as a coordinating center for various activities and will work in close liaison with various relief campaigns such as the CLC campaign and Oxfam.

CAN will carry a political campaign to press the Canadian government to send aid to Nicaragua and it will organize solidarity and educational activities to get out the truth about events in the Nicaraguan revolution. All funds raised by CAN will go to the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

The CAN is supported by a wide range of organizations including the Ontario NDP, Oxfam Ontario, the Law Union of Ontario, the Nicaraguan Human Rights Committee, PASOK in Toronto, the Revolutionary Workers League, and many other groups.

The CLC solidarity campaign and the formation of committees like Canadian Aid for Nicaragua in Toronto testify to the widespread sympathy for the Nicaraguan struggle within Canada.

The basis exists not only to send much greater amounts of emergency aid but to build a political campaign to pressure the Canadian government itself to send massive aid to Nicaragua. □

CPs Back Nicaragua

Radio Havana reported September 26 that the French Communist Party has demanded that the government of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing send emergency aid to Nicaragua.

It was also reported that the Mexican, Guatemalan, Panamanian, Costa Rican, Honduran, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran Communist parties, meeting in Mexico City, passed a resolution declaring their full support for the Nicaraguan revolution and the FSLN.

'Grant Loans and Aid Without Conditions!'

[*Combate*, a newspaper published by Spanish-speaking supporters of the Fourth International in Sweden, published a call by its editorial staff for international solidarity with Nicaragua in its special July-August-September issue. The following are excerpts.]

* * *

To all working class and revolutionary organizations and militants.

Comrades:

The Nicaraguan revolution has triumphed. However, the battle has not ended. The counterrevolution is making preparations abroad to try to drown the struggle of the Nicaraguan workers in blood. In face of this, the revolutionary people of Nicaragua advance each day in their military, organizational, and political preparation to confront any aggression.

The workers and revolutionary movement of the world cannot remain passive in this situation. It must help, it must speak up in this fight and not wait for the aggression to materialize. On the contrary,

it is necessary to act immediately in order to tie the hands of the assassins.

This means it is necessary to build a great world movement to aid and protect the Nicaraguan revolution. It is necessary to spread the truth about Nicaragua and its struggle, and it is necessary to stamp into the consciousness of the workers of the world that it is their duty to cooperate in supporting the Nicaraguan revolution.

Today Nicaragua is a country plundered by Somoza and Somozaism, a ruined country with an enormous foreign debt, with its industry destroyed by bombing, without schools or hospitals, and without the means to meet the elementary necessities of the population. A million Nicaraguans need food that is brought in from abroad each day; 300 tons of food are needed daily in order to avert hunger and disease resulting from the war that got rid of the genocidal dictatorship. Nicaragua needs immediate international aid: food, medicine, clothes, loans, and support of every kind—doctors, teachers, technicians, etc.

Many governments and international

institutions have offered help, but a month and a half after the victory, they have not delivered on their promises and commitments.

Blackmail is flowering. Hunger is being used as a means of pressure. The aim is to use food, clothes, and medicine as a weapon to rein in the sovereign will of the Nicaraguan people. The revolutionary process will not be halted by this, and the revolutionary leaders have declared that they will not accept blackmail, pressure, or negotiations over their sovereignty.

But various imperialist governments are trying to blackmail through hunger and want to continue drowning the Nicaraguan workers in suffering and calamities. They must be stopped. And that can only be done by the workers movement and the movement of solidarity in each country. We must demand aid from our respective governments, and force them to grant loans and assistance without conditions.

It is necessary to mobilize to demand the sending of immediate and unconditional aid. □

Medical Supplies 'Could Be Put Into a Large Closet'

[The following is excerpted from a letter by Peter Hinde, a priest who has been in Nicaragua since June. Hinde's letter describing some of the problems faced by the Nicaraguan people was printed in the September 10 issue of the newsletter of the U.S.-based National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People.]

* * *

Industry and commerce in Estelí carry on at 25% of normal, or less. A survey by agencies of the Catholic Church estimates a need of \$1.25 million for Estelí alone to sustain the populace through November, and to help them get emergency planting started and shelter over their heads.

Extensive parts of Managua are in the same condition, which delays the help that the capital can give to its battered departments like Estelí. If the rate of foreign food assistance isn't quickly brought up to the 400 tons per day necessary to sustain this populace of Nicaragua, the malnutrition and undernourishment are going to deepen.

The problems of organization are complicated by the lack of telephone service to Managua and the shortage of transport. Supplies arrive that are not needed, like bandage and gauze, while medicines for cough, gastro-intestinal problems, diarrhea, and nerves are long since exhausted. No surgery can be performed in the provisional hospitals nor even injections given in quantity because there is no way of sterilizing.

The Red Cross has trouble with vehicles

for lack of parts and maintenance. They have to use ambulances for transport of medicines, food, and personnel when they are sorely needed for carrying the sick to distant hospitals. I have seen people carry their sick for 20-30 miles in a hammock slung off a pole.

Red Cross supplies in Estelí could be put in a large closet, and in Managua the supply is notable only in those things that are not being used. The stuff that is needed in Estelí is not coming into Managua. In Somotillo, Estelí, and Managua there is terrible frustration at having to search through big plastic bags of sample medicines dumped out of doctors' offices overseas.

The impressive figures on quantities of food and medicine look quite different from this, the needy, end. The 20,000 ton capacity "US Fred Lykes" is announced to arrive in Corinto with medicine and food, and it unloads 1,827 tons. The planes arriving daily one week hardly arrive at all the next. A phone call from Managua to Washington, D.C., brings assurance that our appeal for five ambulances for this northern zone and also for autoclaves, as well as particular medicines, can be gotten through informing the Disaster Relief Section of the US Embassy. But they have spent all their funds, they say, \$7 million, of which \$3 million was for transport. □

Swiss Trotskyists Urge Immediate Aid

Featured on both the front and back pages of the Swiss Trotskyist fortnightly *La Brèche* September 15 is an appeal for immediate and massive aid to the Nicaraguan revolution.

"The battle for material aid," the Revolutionary Marxist League states, "is a political battle, a part of the international anti-imperialist struggle. What is needed is the following:

"Immediate aid . . . to relieve as rapidly as possible the children, women, peasants, and workers of Nicaragua of the burden of poverty and hunger.

"Unconditional aid, sent directly to the

Sandinista National Liberation Front, or to any organization it designates, to prevent the imperialists from using selection of the destination to control the distribution of aid and by renewing its blackmail, influencing the political situation in Nicaragua. . . .

"Massive aid, including money, medicine, food, and spare parts.

"Success in this campaign, which must get under way without delay, will deal a blow to imperialism and help the working and peasant masses of Nicaragua to freely decide the future of their revolution."

Nicaragua After the Overthrow of Somoza

By Charles-André Udry

On July 17, 1979 Anastasio Somoza Debayle fled to the United States, the imperialist power that installed his father, Anastasio Somoza García, as head of the National Guard in 1933 and assured his ascension to the presidency in 1936.

At daybreak on July 19, hundreds of National Guardsmen, the mainstay of the Somoza regime, shed their weapons and uniforms and left them lying in the streets of Managua. More than 5,000 members of this routed army fled, many with their arms and belongings, into Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in search of refuge.

A massive popular insurrection in the main urban centers combined with a major military offensive by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) have overthrown the dictatorship and destroyed the institutions of the Somoza regime.

In the month and a half since the insurrection, the masses have gained instruments of struggle and power—the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS). They have formed a popular militia that fights along with, and under the direction of, the FSLN. These have been the most decisive elements in the evolution of the situation since the victory over the Somoza tyranny.

* * *

The extent and determination of the mass participation in the insurrection—especially that of the youth—and the masses' high level of self-organization have upset the plans for an "orderly transition" cooked up by sectors of the bourgeois opposition in Nicaragua, various Latin American ruling classes, and American imperialism. The latter has suffered a resounding defeat in Nicaragua, especially in light of the fact that, since the Cuban revolution, Washington had closely incorporated Nicaragua and other Central American regimes into its political and military strategy for counterrevolution.

The schemas of a "democratic stage" put forward by the various tendencies within the FSLN were also scuttled by the collapse of the basic institutions of the Somoza regime under the impact of the military victory and the insurrectionary mass movement. The dynamic of the permanent revolution is now unfolding.

1978: The Turning Point

Nineteen seventy-eight was a pivotal year in the crisis of Somozaism.

On January 10, Pedro Joaquín Cha-

morro was murdered by Somoza's henchmen. He had been editor of the major daily newspaper of the bourgeois opposition, *La Prensa*, and founder of the Democratic Union for Liberation (UDEL). Chamorro's killing eliminated the only leader of the bourgeois opposition with enough prestige and authority to offer a viable bourgeois alternative to Somoza and to win over a significant section of the mass movement. Since 1974, when the UDEL was formed, Chamorro had been put forward as the opposition candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for 1981. He received the support of the European Social Democracy. He established ties with some sectors of the American bourgeoisie. And the Stalinist Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) worked with the UDEL.

The year 1978 was marked by a rise in the mass movement. After the employers' strike of January 1978 in protest over Chamorro's murder, the struggles against the dictatorship multiplied. They included a national student strike; massive mobilizations and the first insurrections in León, Diriamba, Chinandega, Managua, and Masaya in February; a national day of protest against repression; a hunger strike by political prisoners; occupations of land by the peasants; mass demonstrations in July to welcome back a wing of the bourgeois opposition, the "Group of Twelve"; a strike by workers in the national district; mobilizations and protests against tax hikes; a strike by hospital workers; and a general strike called on August 25 by the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) and the United People's Movement (MPU).

On the occasion of the general strike, the MPU, under the influence of the FSLN, declared, "It is important that the working class participate in a decisive way in this great day, which will allow it to unify and strengthen its forces to the maximum in order to deepen the crisis of the Somoza regime and lead to its overthrow by the people's forces."¹

At the same time, the military actions of the various FSLN tendencies increased, in particular under the influence of the Tercerista current. They grew from well-planned attacks against military installations to huge operations in the urban centers. On August 22, 1978, the Terceris-

tas occupied the National Palace and demanded freedom for the FSLN political prisoners, including Tomás Borge.

Following this show of force, the three tendencies within the FSLN on September 9 organized military offensives in the cities of Estelí, León, Managua, Rivas, Masaya, and Chinandega. They were combined with popular uprisings.

During these three months, the bourgeois opposition desperately tried to achieve unity among its own forces to put forward an alternative to the regime that could preserve some of the key institutions—including an important part of the National Guard—and win approval from American imperialism.

The Broad Opposition Front was formed in July 1978, with the participation of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN) led by Alfonso Robelo Callejas, who is connected to one of the three big banks, BANIC, and American business circles; the UDEL; the "Group of Twelve"; as well as various bourgeois parties, such as the Conservatives and Christian Socialists. Both factions of the PSN also joined the FAO. During this period, the "Group of Twelve" established ties with the Sandinista tendencies.

The aims of the FAO emerged with dazzling clarity following the momentary success of the National Guard's military counteroffensive in September 1978. A committee was established by the United States, in which Guatemala and the Dominican Republic held subordinate places, to set up negotiations between Somoza and the FAO. The main participants estimated that the blows against the mass movement in September had created a situation favorable to change, within a context of general continuity. The FAO bent toward a series of conditions demanded by Somoza.

The resistance of the masses, which again began to surface in December, as well as concessions of the FAO, led to a break in relations between the FAO and the Sandinistas. There was a reshuffling of positions, as well as moves toward unification of the Sandinista tendencies. In February 1979 a new front was established, the National Patriotic Front (FPN), made up of the FSLN and some sectors of the bourgeois opposition.

The Worsening of the Economic Crisis

All of this unfolded against the background of a sharp economic crisis.

1. *Nicaragua—Análisis Interpretativa Provisional* [Nicaragua—Provisional Interpretive Analysis], September 24, 1978, Universidad Centroamericana, p. 10.

Since 1975, productive investment had stagnated. In 1978 it fell. The country's gross national product (GNP) shrank by 7% that year. The flight of capital abroad accelerated, accompanied by speculation and a drop in bank deposits and investment. The Central Bank estimated that \$220 million in capital left the country in 1978. The foreign debt climbed rapidly.

Since the 1972 earthquake, reconstruction was based largely on a policy of state investments, financed primarily by loans from private imperialist banks and international financial institutions, owing to the growing deficit. These credits were naturally channeled by Somoza and his clique into their own businesses. Military expenditures increasingly worsened the balance of payments deficit (Israel, Argentina, and the United States were the main sources of arms). Inflation reached a crisis rate.

All these tendencies sharpened in 1979: investment in industry fell close to zero; it declined heavily in agriculture; the GNP diminished by about 25% during the first half of 1979 (according to the Latin American Economic Commission of the United Nations [CEPAL]); the flight of capital was estimated at \$315 million; inflation reached 20% in April and May, according to official figures, following a 43% devaluation of the cordoba in April.

For the toiling masses, this economic crisis meant a very sharp attack on their living standards, which had already suffered terribly as a result of the 1972 earthquake and its aftermath.

In the urban areas, real average wages did not fluctuate much between 1961 and 1970. But from 1970 to 1975 they fell by 14%. Since then, this tendency has increased, with an even greater decline in 1977, 1978, and 1979.²

During the relatively favorable period of the economic plan at the beginning of the 1970s, unemployment, according to official figures, oscillated around 12% in the urban areas and 22% in rural regions. These figures did not take into account underemployment (disguised unemployment). For instance, those who worked two months out of the year on the cotton or coffee harvests were counted as employed.

At the end of 1978 and during the first half of 1979, unemployment shot up as a result of the fall in investments, the sharp contraction of trade within the Central American Common Market, the shrinking of the domestic market, the fluctuations in the price of agricultural products on the world market in 1977-78, and the disruption of the agricultural cycle in Nicaragua in 1978-79.

In addition, the length of the working week increased, to between fifty and sixty hours.

This brutal attack against the living

2. Pedro Belli, Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas, March 1978.

standards of the masses in 1977, 1978, and the beginning of 1979 came on top of their already miserable conditions, which are reflected in the following figures:³

Forty-three percent of the population was illiterate in 1970. Only 364,000 inhabitants, out of a total population of 2,325,000, had running water in 1977. During the same year, for every 10,000 persons there were only an average of 22 hospital beds, 2.9 clinics, 6.4 doctors and nurses, and 0.8 dentists (such averages give no indication of the sharp inequalities in health care between town and country and between different social classes).

The infant mortality rate, life expectancy level, and extent of infectious and contagious diseases place Nicaragua at the bottom of the scale of the countries of Central America.⁴ Imperialism and dictatorship have shown here how they "normally" function.

All these factors help explain the mobilization of the masses, particularly in the cities, in the struggle against Somoza.

The Social Forces of the Revolution

Like many underdeveloped capitalist countries, Nicaragua experienced a high rate of urbanization over the past decade. This urbanization resulted both from a relative industrialization (and its by-products in the service sector) and changes introduced in the countryside by the development of agribusiness.

The total population of Nicaragua rose from 1,836,000 in 1970 to 2,409,000 in 1978. The urban population increased from 838,000 to 1,265,000 in the same period, while the rural population rose from 998,000 to 1,145,000. The economically active population rose from 545,000 to 740,000.⁵

The urban proletariat has thus been strengthened in recent years, although it still remains modest. Statistics indicate that there are 60,000 industrial workers, strictly speaking. The relative industrialization has not been able to absorb the bulk of those who have been displaced toward the cities. The urban centers thus include a large plebian layer, which has participated massively in the struggle. The youth are in the front ranks. Nearly 60% of the population is under twenty years of age.

Nevertheless, the urban proletariat played an important role in the overthrow of the dictatorship. In 1973-74, it was construction workers who were at the head of a strike movement and who launched a struggle against Somoza.

The actions of the working class led to political differentiations inside the FSLN

3. CEPAL, on the basis of facts from the Central Bank of Nicaragua and UNESCO.

4. *Las condiciones de salud de las Americas, 1971-1973* [Health Conditions in the Americas, 1971-73], Organización Panamericana de la Salud.

5. CEPAL, August 1979.

in 1975-76. The "Marxist-Leninist proletarian tendency" began to do trade-union work and reevaluated the role of the urban working class in the development of the revolution.

The participation of the workers in the insurrection, their involvement in the CDS, and the very big movement toward unionization within the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) indicates that they will play a role in the future of the revolution.

In the rural areas, an agricultural proletariat was formed among the workers on the coffee, sugar, and cotton plantations. A large part of this proletariat is migrant, involving some 300,000 persons. They work several weeks or months a year, according to the rhythms of the agricultural cycle.

For example, in 1973, out of a total of 228,000 workers in cotton, only 26,000 were employed permanently by the big landowners. Temporary work, for a maximum of four months a year, remained the lot of the other 202,000.

The agricultural proletariat comprises the bulk of the proletariat, and within it the cotton workers occupy the decisive position.

The miserable conditions of this section of the working class have in recent years prompted land occupations and unionization of sugar workers. Movements have been launched for higher wages (the wages of a migrant worker during the cotton harvest range between 6 and 15 cordobas [US\$0.60 to \$1.50]) a day and against the high prices of goods sold to agricultural workers in the stores run by the big landowners, who in that way recover part of the workers' wages.⁶

Nevertheless, the traditions of union organization and mobilization of agricultural workers, among whom the youth and women hold an important place, is limited. This sector of the Nicaraguan proletariat is a decisive social force for pushing forward a radical agrarian reform and in the building of a social bloc that can deepen the process of permanent revolution.

They live for the most part in the regions along the Pacific Ocean, where the main export crops are centered and where land ownership is highly concentrated.

Finally, there is the pauperized and proletarianized peasantry. They are forced to sell their labor power, after harvesting crops on their own plots of land. They are another active force in the revolution.

These peasants suffer under the weight of debts, usury, speculation that affects the prices of manufactured goods that they must buy, and fraudulent practices when they sell part of their harvests (when they have enough to sell). The women fre-

6. *Nicaragua—La crisis del sistema capitalista* [Nicaragua—The Crisis of the Capitalist System], December 1978, Universidad Centroamericana.

quently have to work as domestic servants in order to earn a skimpy supplementary income.

These proletarianized peasants have often given their support, in the north and along the Atlantic coast, to the guerrilla fighters of the FSLN. For that reason, they were the targets of brutal repression by the dictatorship.

These peasants have had a tradition of land occupations as long as they have been the victims of oppression. In 1977, a section of the poor peasantry began to organize themselves within the Agricultural Workers Association (ATC) and carried out organized land occupations, with the backing of students and workers in the urban centers. The organization of the ATC facilitated the participation of these peasants in the civil war. Thousands of them rose up during the recent period of upsurge against the dictatorship.

The plebian urban masses, the industrial proletariat, the agricultural proletariat, and the pauperized and proletarianized peasants were the driving forces behind the struggle against the dictatorship. Their actions and their degree of mobilization and organization will weigh heavily in the future of the revolution.

In addition, the student movement also played a role in the struggle against Somoza, standing at the head of a number of struggles. Teachers and hospital workers likewise contributed to the fight against the dictatorship.

Since 1977, an organization of women, comprising about 1,000 activists and with a wide peripheral influence, has stood in the front ranks of all the mobilizations in defense of democratic rights, for the release of political prisoners, and for the demands of women themselves. The Association of Women Concerned with the National Problem (AMPRONAC) was the only mass organization linked to the FSLN that could function legally. It had its roots in the poor neighborhoods and, given its origins, played a significant role in the formation of the MPU.

Somoza's Isolation

Underlying the crisis of Somozaism were the actions of these various sections of the toiling masses who, under the impact of the ever sharpening social and economic crisis, gave increasing support to the struggle initiated by the FSLN. That support was facilitated by the place of Sandinism in the historical memory of the Nicaraguan people. The people's identification of Sandinism with the struggle against American imperialism and the dictatorship is total. The ability of the FSLN to fuse itself with the Sandinista traditions greatly increased its prestige and authority.

The crisis of Somozaism was hastened by its structural inability to provide a democratic opening, aside from a few short-term maneuvers. The thirty-three-

month state of siege, from December 1974 to September 1977, led to an extreme political isolation of the dictatorship. The National Guard and imperialism appeared more and more as its only props.

This state of siege was used by the Somoza clique to increase to the maximum its economic advantages. The process of economic reconstruction following the earthquake made possible all sorts of speculative operations. The corruption reached heights undreamed of even in the Italian government.

The so-called opposition bourgeoisie, even important groups like the Pellas family, came to view Somoza and his lieutenants as disloyal rivals who made private use of the state apparatus to strengthen their competitive position in all sectors of the economy.

The dictatorship blocked the development of a new model of capitalist accumulation within the framework of the Central American Common Market, as well as of a new reorganization of the international division of labor. The conflict between these sections of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship could only grow sharper, especially given the former's consciousness of the necessity to anticipate the rise of the mass movement so as to contain it.

The repression during the nearly three years of the state of siege was so ferocious that the church, like the opposition bourgeoisie, had to take its distance. In the eyes of broad layers of the population, moreover, this repression legitimized armed struggle—direct confrontation with the dictatorship—as the sole path of political action.

By the end of 1977 deep fissures had appeared in Somoza's system of domination. This was the context in which the rise of mobilizations in 1978 and 1979 occurred, as well as the renewal and broadening of the FSLN's military offensives.

A Popular Insurrection

Outlines of the popular insurrection, which left an indelible imprint on the struggle to overthrow Somoza, could be seen as early as the beginning of 1978. After the bosses' lockout in January 1978, at the end of February a genuine insurrection broke out in an Indian neighborhood of Masaya, in Monimbó.

A similar uprising occurred in the Subtiava neighborhood in León, three days later, February 27. In September 1978 uprisings occurred along with FSLN military operations in León, Estelí, Masaya, Chinandega, and other cities. The fundamental tendency that was to burst forth in strength in 1979 had therefore already been present since 1978.

In September 1978 a counteroffensive by the National Guard blocked attempts by the FSLN to come in from Costa Rica and take first Peñas Blancas and then Rivas. Uprisings in these cities were bombed by the National Guard, an operation that claimed more than 10,000 lives.

Somoza adopted a policy of genocide. The fierce repression unleashed in September 1978 had a twofold result. On the one hand many young people left the cities to join the FSLN, which had not suffered many casualties. On the other hand the masses, driven to the wall by the National Guard's brutality, were impelled toward a definitive break with the dictatorship rather than toward any demoralization that the slaughter might have provoked.

This is the background for the offensives undertaken by the FSLN, whose three tendencies united in December 1978. In January 1979 they were confronted by an extremely harsh response by the National Guard, which unleashed an even more savage wave of repression, striking primarily at young people.

Literally every day, ten to twenty young people were killed in the major cities of Nicaragua. In March 1979, when the FSLN occupied Estelí, the city's population made clear their support for the guerrillas, attesting to the prestige they had won in the past few months. In April and May, military operations were launched in several sections of the country.

On June 4 the FSLN called for a general strike. Since February the FSLN united command had been preparing the insurrection, both militarily and politically, in the neighborhoods of the major cities. AMPRONAC, for example, took responsibility for setting up clandestine clinics, gathering bandages and medicine, and assembling the materials necessary for the construction of Molotov cocktails and contact bombs.

On June 10, without waiting for instructions from the FSLN, the people of Managua rose up in rebellion. By June 17, FSLN forces occupied León and other cities, which they held until the end. The plebian masses of the cities—the workers, the youth, and a large number of women—entered into combat with a courage having few precedents in history.

For more than eighteen days the people of the capital resisted aerial bombardment, artillery, and tanks before some 6,000 of them withdrew in orderly fashion to Masaya, about twenty-eight kilometers away. They had very little in the way of arms—just a few dozen automatic weapons.

The heroism of the combatants—many of whom were very young—and the ruses common to all insurrections took care of the rest. In face of the determination of the masses, the National Guard did not dare to attack the barricades unless they had tanks for protection. In several barricaded sections of the city they did not even dare enter.

The Committees

In the course of the insurrection, organs of the power of the masses began to develop. The insurrection was characterized by a strong tendency toward self-organization. This reflected the breadth of the forces that had come into motion,

which went far beyond anything foreseen by the FSLN leadership.

In cities such as Masaya, Diriamba, Jinotepe, León, and Matagalpa, the overthrow of the dictatorship was not limited to a military defeat of the National Guard. It resulted in the destruction of all the dictatorship's structures of domination, which were replaced by the instruments of power the masses had acquired in the course of combat.

The most widespread committees were called Civil Defense Committees. They appeared after September 1978; their function was to organize the response against repression and in defense of democratic rights. In one way or another, they frequently participated in the preparation of the insurrection.

In the course of the insurrection itself, they became not only the rallying point of the masses but also carried out tasks of a military nature, distribution of food, organization of health care, and, more generally, administration on the city-wide level. In the rural zones, such as Chinandega, rank-and-file committees of peasants arose.

Through the CDCs *popular militias* were often formed, which would participate in a real way in the urban military confrontations. While these militias arose in a spontaneous manner, they were in most cases rapidly given a structure by the FSLN, which enjoyed a great deal of military and political authority. The arming of the militias was completely done on a catch-as-catch-can basis. It was only after the liquidation of the National Guard and the fall of the regime that the members of the militias, by seizing the army's weapons, obtained quality arms.

The FSLN's military forces grew considerably during the insurrectional and preinsurrectional period through bringing in a large number of young fighters. This resulted in a deepgoing transformation of the organization, which had traditionally been made up of small groups of guerrillas.

The month and a half of popular insurrection, which came after a year and a half of intense struggles, stimulated the maturation of the consciousness of the masses as only a revolution can. This is even more important since the political, organizational, and combative traditions of the workers movement in Nicaragua are relatively limited.

The high degree of self-organization as well as the high degree of combativity of important sectors of the masses—on the social and political planes—were, in fact, to dictate the evolution of the situation during the crucial days of July 17-19. While the defeat of the maneuver by the Somozaist congressman Urcuyo precipitated the events, the result is understandable only if we take into account the relationship of social and political forces established by the insurrectional movement.



San Judas residents in August 2 march in Masaya.

Fred Murphy—IP/1

On June 17, 1979, a Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction (GRN) was established in exile. This government was composed of five members, among whom were representatives of the opposition bourgeoisie such as Alfonso Robelo Callejas (founder of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement—MDN), Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (wife of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro), and Sergio Ramírez Mercado (one of the members of the "Group of Twelve"). Daniel Ortega Saavedra (a member of the Joint National Leadership of the FSLN) and Moisés Hassan (one of the leaders of the MPU) were included in this coalition government.

The United States sought in every way it could to preserve the continuity of the institutions of Somozaism, especially the National Guard, in order to build a Somozaist regime without Somoza. They changed their tactics only when they saw that the defeat was inescapable.

Lawrence Pezzulo, the American ambassador to Managua, made an agreement with the representatives of the Junta regarding the means for the transfer of power. Urcuyo was to assume power for a very brief interlude, between the time that Somoza left and the GRN arrived. But once in the presidential chair, Urcuyo announced the formation of a cabinet and his intention to assure the transition until the presidential elections of 1981.

He even demanded that the FSLN lay down its arms. Simultaneously, factions within the National Guard proclaimed their opposition to the entry of the GRN into Nicaragua. Urcuyo, one last time, attempted to save Somozaism.

His maneuver caused the breakdown of the accords previously reached. The FSLN stepped up its military offensive and seized a number of cities and towns. The National Guard took big losses and came apart. On July 18 Urcuyo left Managua for Guatemala, passing the mantle to a National Guard lieutenant-colonel, Francisco Mejía. Mejía was given the rank of general in order to take command of an army that was falling apart and whose chiefs had already taken flight.

The same day the junta entered Nicaragua; making León the provisional capital.

On July 19 the people of Managua and the peoples militias dealt the *coup de grâce* to the dictatorship when they took the bunker, Somoza's fortified residence—the symbol of his tyranny. At the same time the FSLN's "regular" troops began to enter the capital.

In short, a popular insurrection resulted in a revolutionary overthrow of a forty-year-old dictatorship. With that a special *situation of dual power* opened up. On one side there was a dislocated bourgeois state, with an army—the National Guard—that had broken up and an administration that was melting away and that had already been absent from the cities for several weeks.

On the other side there arose a mass movement that was highly organized in committees and had militias. The new military power had no ties of continuity with the old military structure of the dictatorship. It rested entirely on the military forces of the FSLN which set off and led that first phase of the revolution.

The disintegration of the National

Guard changed the framework of the re-composition of the army that had been envisioned in the accords between the FSLN and the GRN. These can be found in the formulation of Article 23 of the Fundamental Statute of the Republic that was decreed on July 20, 1979:

The national army will be made up of the fighters of the FSLN, the soldiers and officers of the National Guard of Nicaragua who conducted themselves honestly and patriotically in face of the corruption, of the repression . . . and who participated in the struggle for the overthrow of Somozaism.

The formulation of the article itself shows that the FSLN did not want a fusion with the National Guard as such—since few of its cadres had participated in the overthrow of Somoza. However, it is clear that the integration of a portion of the National Guard in the new army was

There are 5,000 National Guard troops waiting in Honduras. . .

not excluded, with all the implications that would have flowed from this regarding the place and role of the army in the consolidation of the bourgeois state apparatus.

But *in fact* this did not take place. It was the forces of the FSLN and a portion of the members of the militia that made up the new army, whose leadership is composed of the military cadres of the FSLN.

Here we have the characteristic traits of a political, social, and military situation whose dynamic can only be grasped by starting from a concrete evaluation of the play of social forces on the scene, of their organization, and not by starting solely from the existence of a coalition government that, in fact, does not have any real power.

The extremely deep economic crisis and the permanent threat of a counterrevolutionary intervention from abroad represent additional radicalizing factors, especially in a situation where the bourgeois state apparatus is barely staggering along.

A Leadership That is Evolving

The entire struggle against the dictatorship since December 1978 has had its effect on the FSLN and on the structuring of the tendencies within it. The unification, in December 1978, of its three tendencies—"Tercerista," "Proletarian," and "Prolonged People's War"—gave birth to a joint national leadership of the FSLN (with nine members, three from each tendency) and to unified regional commands that prepared the new wave of military operations and the insurrection.

The months of war and of popular uprisings had the effect of eating away at all of the tendencies, whose functioning as such died out. On July 20 the FSLN's forces took power, but the FSLN as a front of three tendencies, each with its own ideological, political, organizational tradition,

no longer existed.

Furthermore, the terms of the debate between the tendencies changed radically. In the past the discussions dealt with the question of the armed struggle, of the respective place of the peasantry and the working class in the fight against the dictatorship, and above all of the nature and breadth of the alliance with the bourgeoisie.

Today the conceptions regarding the place and the unfolding of the "democratic state" have been overturned by the activity of the masses, in a context where the structures of the bourgeois state are extremely weak and the bourgeoisie is totally on the defensive.

It is from this angle that we must grasp the evolution of this pragmatic and heterogeneous leadership, which has been deeply influenced by its relations with the mass movement, especially during the recent months. Within it, the current that has the most advanced experience in mass political work has increased its influence and, above all, changes have taken place under the impact of the revolutionary uprising, as is always seen in the course of a revolution that is on the march.

Thus it would be an error to try to understand the situation in Nicaragua on the basis of an analysis that borrows the rules of the "China watchers" and tries to classify all the leaders on the basis of their past tendency affiliation.

That kind of approach makes it impossible to grasp the relationship between a fantastic rise in the class struggle and the evolution of a pragmatic leadership that propelled and led this formidable fight. It gives more weight to the a priori political characterization of such a leadership than to the role of the social and political forces on the national and international scale, and to their connection with the activity and decisions of the leadership of the FSLN.

In assessing the evolution of this leadership in relation to the progression of the real mass movement, we can reach only one conclusion: it would be absolutely incorrect to set an a priori limit to the decisions that the FSLN could take on the social, economic, and political plane to move in the direction of a workers and farmers government.

The Army and the Militias

In the declarations and actions of the FSLN's leadership, the creation and strengthening of an army—the Sandinista People's Army—remains the greatest concern. This is reflected in the nature of the principle slogans: "People, army, unity . . . guarantee of the victory," "A united, armed people will never be crushed," "We have confidence in the people transformed into an army."

After the overthrow of Batista, it took imperialism two years to organize the Bay of Pigs invasion. This time, however, the National Guard even today has more than

5,000 trained, organized men who have combat experience and are fully armed.

The bulk of these troops are concentrated in Honduras, on the Nicaraguan border, where they took refuge after the collapse of the dictatorship. This instrument of the counterrevolution could be easily strengthened there with soldiers of the armies of CONDECA (Central American Defense Council) and with mercenaries recruited by the CIA.

The danger of a counterrevolutionary military intervention is very real even though its form—which depends not only on the internal situation in Nicaragua but also on the situations of the brutal dictatorships of Honduras and El Salvador—cannot be predicted. This danger must be taken into account as an important element in any evaluation of the future of the revolution in Nicaragua and in Central America.

The building of a technically professional army with weaponry adequate for the task of defense of the gains of the revolution is rightly a major concern of the leaders of the FSLN.

On September 1, in Managua, the first parade of the Sandinista People's Army took place. The FSLN leadership chose that moment to bestow the title of comandante of the revolution to the nine members of the joint leadership: Tomás Borge, Bayardo Arce, Luís Carrión, Jaime Wheelock, Humberto Ortega, Daniel Ortega, Víctor Tirado, Henry Ruíz, and Carlos Núñez.

In addition, it is revealing that there was not a single member of the government on the reviewing stand at this first official parade of the army. Instead those who were invited to the platform of honor were the comandantes of the revolution, the twenty guerrilla commanders of the FSLN (who make up the officer corps of the army), and the companion and children of Carlos Fonseca Amador (the most prestigious leader of the FSLN, who was assassinated in 1976).

This ceremony conveyed a political reality—decision-making power is in the hands of the nine comandantes of the revolution and not the GRN. It is also significant that the only speech on that occasion was given by Tomás Borge. He

Building a proficient army is rightly a primary concern of the FSLN. . .

made no reference to the junta. He focused his remarks on the need to be prepared to repulse any attack from enemies outside or from within.

Borge stated: "We do not want them to return to Nicaragua to spill more blood, but if they return, the old slogan 'Be generous in victory and implacable in struggle' will be transformed into 'implacable in struggle and implacable in victory' . . ." (*Barricada*, September 2, 1979.)

This army is made up of FSLN fighters and a segment of the militia members who have been integrated into it. Without the latter it would be impossible to build an army of respectable size, given the country's extremely limited material and financial resources. On July 26, in the old Military Academy, before the initial contingents of the army, Daniel Ortega stated:

We are beginning to carry out this revolution. The determining factors are the armed and organized people, the disciplined people united around their vanguard and in the process of consolidating the military forces which, a short time ago, were nothing more than militias and guerrilla columns. . . . We don't ever want to say of this army that it is apolitical. No one was brought into the struggle through apoliticism, but because it was necessary to carry out politics with a rifle against the Somoza tyranny, against exploitation, against theft. . . . [Barricada, July 27, 1979.]

Increasing the technical competence of the Sandinista People's Army is rightly one of the Sandinista leadership's concerns, especially since this army must be in shape to fight with maximum effectiveness in the shortest possible time. To respond to this need the Sandinistas were able to call on the officers of Latin American bourgeois armies, as well as on Cuban military advisers.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisies of the Latin American countries, with the support of imperialism, hope to secure the "normalization" of this army by other means. One of these ways might involve offering to train officers and noncommissioned officers on a rather large scale in the military academies of Venezuela, Mexico, or Panama. Through this, more serious ties could be established with the bourgeois armies of the Organization of American States, ties that would enable them to stabilize this army that arose out of an insurrection and a guerrilla war, to turn back the revolutionary process, and to aid the counterrevolution. The fate of the army, more generally, cannot be separated from the evolution of the situation of dual power that exists today in Nicaragua.

The central segment of the September 1 march was made up of the people's militias, which marched behind a banner proclaiming "Long live the people's militias." Detachments of the people's militia were also in attendance at the demonstration in the Plaza of the Revolution. The FSLN leadership classifies the militias as "auxiliaries to the armed forces." For now it is insisting on maintaining the militias.

Since the middle of August there has been a campaign to discipline the militias in order to stop the rumors being propagated by *La Prensa* regarding "excesses," arbitrary arrests, and so forth. Thus the person in charge of the militias in Managua asserted:

We have ordered the militia members to make their headquarters into models of cleanliness and good order, and not to consume under any circumstances alcohol and especially drugs,

which are strictly prohibited by the revolution. . . . [Barricada, August 9, 1979.]

The strengthening of the army has meant a reorganization of the militias, including the concentration of weapons in order to homogenize the armaments of army units. At the present time there is no sign of liquidation of the militias. In Managua there are twenty-four militia barracks with 1,500 to 2,000 militia members. Clearly the number of militia members has fallen—immediately after the victory it had risen to 4,000 or 5,000—but this drop is related to the establishment of the Sandinista People's Army and the incorporation of militia members.

Moreover, leaders of the FSLN explain that they envisage giving military training to all the workers and young people in the army barracks.

Committees and Unions

The development of Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) is put forward by the front as a priority task. The CDS are the direct extension of the Civil Defense Committees or sometimes of other committees, especially in the countryside. Their birth thus differs from the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) that were created in Cuba after the 1959 victory.

Luis Carrión, a member of the national leadership of the FSLN, explained the function of the CDS.

Today they are the most important, the largest mass organizations our country has. The possibilities are many. They can participate in the literacy campaigns, the vaccination campaigns, and the work of maintaining vigilance in their sectors. They are mobilized around the interests of the masses and of the revolution. We ask that the CDS increase their discipline daily, that they be attentive to the orientations and directives of the FSLN. [Barricada, August 27, 1979.]

Julio López, a member of the FSLN National Secretariat, asserts that "the CDS permit us to strengthen democracy in our country."

The CDS are not just the continuation of the CDC and the rank-and-file peasant committees. They are more numerous and their social base is larger. Their development is uneven, depending on what cities and neighborhoods we are talking about. In a district like Belo Horizonte (the eastern section of Managua), which has 8,000 inhabitants, there are 73 CDS functioning. A Coordinating Committee of the CDS has been elected.

They have multiple functions: vaccination, distribution of the food aid, administrative tasks (problems of distribution of potable water and of electricity). Cultural and sports commissions are attached to the coordinating committee. Given the deep crisis of the administrative apparatus of the bourgeois state, the CDS fill the vacuum that has been created.

Their functions vary according to the degree of mobilization and politicization of the masses. In some cities like León and Estelí, delegates from the CDS were

elected, and they in turn named a municipal junta.

The CDS represent organs of people's power whose field of action is still limited. For that field of action to be enlarged there must be both a new stage in the deepening of the revolution and coordination and centralization of the CDS on a national scale.

Together with the development of the CDS, the front launched a campaign to build the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) and is pushing forward the unionization by using its authority among the masses.

Pedro Ortiz, the FSLN provisional coordinator of mass organizations, explained it this way:

[The CST] was born out of the need to unify all the workers, so as to guarantee the consolidation and development of the revolutionary process. This strength of the working class, if it is to play a vanguard role, must be unified with the aim of struggling for the workers' own demands on the economic, political, and social planes [Barricada, August 14, 1979.]

The movement toward unionization is part of the revolutionary upsurge and runs very deep. It is transforming the organizational level of the working class, which had always been very low. Since the middle of August, the establishment of unions has accelerated, as well as their affiliation to the CST. This trade-union movement still remains fragile, however, owing to the limited number of cadres and the weakness of trade-union experience within the working class.

Finally, the FSLN is stressing the creation of mass organizations of youth and women, and the formation of a "vanguard party" whose roots in the proletariat would be assured through the CDS.

An Extreme Crisis

The social and economic distress that Nicaragua is now going through weighs heavily and will continue to weigh heavily on a series of comprehensive decisions the leadership of the FSLN will have to make.

Since September 1978 more than 35,000 people have lost their lives. Eighty percent of those killed were civilians, to a large extent children, women, and old people who were unable to escape the bombing by Somoza's planes. This figure represents 1.5% of the country's population. According to CEPAL, another 80,000 to 110,000 persons were wounded, of whom 60,000 require intensive treatment.

The number of orphans approaches 40,000. A million people need food aid, of whom 45,000 are under fifteen years of age. Nicaragua requires more than 300 tons of food a day to fulfill this immediate need. The average aid that was arriving at the end of August was between 100 and 120 tons a day. Some 400,000 of those who need assistance are in Managua, the rest live in the cities of the interior.

The malnutrition of the children is often serious. The risk of epidemics of diseases

quite often fatal for poorly nourished children is high. Other classical infectious illnesses are already being seen.

The sanitary situation is disastrous, given not only the heritage of the past but also the partial destruction of the slight medical infrastructure that already existed (hospitals and clinics).

Material damages to the infrastructure (schools, water, electricity, communications, housing) are estimated by the United Nations to total \$80 million.

Agriculture was hit hard by the civil war. Normal planting was not carried out, and agricultural production for 1979-80 is expected to be 37% lower than the previous crop year. The biggest decline is in cotton, the main export item and therefore also the most important source of foreign exchange. Only a fifth of the normal cotton crop was planted. The drop in coffee production—a crop that can be gravely threatened by disease in case of lack of care—and in sugar is equally serious.

The lack of seed, fertilizer, and insecticide is preventing urgently needed measures and may call into question even the carrying out of the land reform.

The illegal sale of livestock to other Latin American countries increased greatly in the final phase of the civil war. The big cattle raisers liquidated their herds—often for ridiculous sums. CEPAL estimates that 100,000 head of cattle were lost through illegal sales. On top of this must be added the slaughter of livestock that took place during the fighting. Poultry was hit the hardest (70%), with disastrous consequences for current production of eggs, a primary source of protein.

More than a quarter of all workplaces were damaged during the fighting. This includes building and machinery as well as stocks of raw materials and finished goods. The total or partial paralysis of a high percentage of the industrial and commercial apparatus and the breaking of the agricultural cycle have had a catastrophic effect on unemployment. The Ministry of Labor estimates that 50% to 60% of the population is unemployed (*Barricada*, August 15, 1979).

The foreign debt is extremely high. Toward the end, the dictatorship's entire economic and military policy was aimed at rapidly inflating the amount of foreign loans. These rose from \$165 million in 1970 to \$1.5 billion in 1979 (both figures in 1976 dollars).

The structure of the foreign debt is in itself a reflection of the classical phenomenon that appears in all semicolonial countries. More than 50% of the medium- and long-term debt is contracted to private lending institutions (imperialist banks) at high (and often floating) rates of interest and with limited possibilities for renegotiation.

Meanwhile, monumental theft by Somoza, speculation, and the flight of capital left the central bank with less than \$3

million in its coffers.

The interest alone on the foreign debt is at present higher than this year's total possible revenue from exports, even under the Ministry of Economy's most favorable projections.

This situation of crisis raises four types of problems:

1. The number-one task of the government is simply to get the machinery of production back in motion again. It must assure that a minimum number of factories and farms return to production in order to prevent famine and a social catastrophe that would quickly and effectively be put to use by the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, the Latin American ruling classes, and imperialism.

2. The enormous difficulties are compelling the FSLN to maneuver to obtain food, medical, and financial aid. The aim is to gain time to reinforce its position, with the expectation of the explosion of a new phase of the crisis in December and January, a time at which the food situation will be even tighter.

3. The present shortages in nearly everything have presented a number of imperialist governments—as well as the Latin American bourgeois governments, who are sending a little aid and could send much more—with a situation in which negotiations for aid can easily be linked to political intervention into the revolutionary process.

Venezuela, Mexico, the European Social Democracy (as representatives of the West German and Swedish bourgeoisies) and the United States all intend to use aid as an instrument of effective or potential intervention to halt the development of the revolution.

We have already had a glimpse into the arsenal of international counterrevolution. The intent is to half-strangle Nicaragua while carrying out a campaign in the press about all the aid being sent—the better to defuse a genuine campaign of solidarity. They are also advancing loans directly to the employers' organizations, bypassing the government and the FSLN in the allocation of food aid, and increasing the conditions for financial aid.

4. Given the depth of the crisis, the FSLN leadership cannot navigate between all these obstacles for much more than a year. The gold chain of the foreign debt will become a rope that strangles the revolution. Aid sent by the Latin American or imperialist countries (aid that is absolutely essential today) can become in the medium term an instrument for assuring that Nicaragua remains in the international capitalist market, and even for making it an attractive market for such countries as Venezuela and Mexico.

This poses the question of whether this chain of gold can be broken, or whether a different type of integration into the world market is possible. The answer does not depend solely on the workers and peasants

of Nicaragua and the FSLN but also on the attitude of the bureaucracies in the workers states.

Role of Cuba

The Cuban leadership provided effective support to the struggle led by the FSLN for the overthrow of the dictatorship and, in this sense, has contributed to the unleashing of the revolutionary upsurge.

After the victory, it immediately provided material support. It sent considerable medical aid and promised to send a thousand teachers who will participate in the literacy campaign in the rural areas; there they could only facilitate the carrying out of the agrarian reform.

However, this orientation places the Cuban leadership before two objective contradictions. First, its relations with a segment of the Latin American bourgeoisies (Mexico, Venezuela) who will not accept a new Cuba in Nicaragua, even if they opposed the motion [for armed intervention] put forward by the United States

Immediate difficulties make far-reaching and rapid nationalizations risky. . .

at the OAS meeting. Second, its relations with the Soviet bureaucracy, which has the material resources required to respond to the needs that a new advance of the revolution would unleash, but which seeks to maintain the *status quo*, especially in this region of the world, about which the U.S. is very sensitive. Thus, a real test is arising for the Cuban leadership.

On another level, the leadership of the FSLN will have to choose between either breaking with the illusion of a mixed economy and pushing ahead further with the nationalizations, agrarian reform, state control of foreign trade; or else apply, in the future, the measures imposed by the advisers from the International Monetary Fund.

A Series of Decrees

Since July 20 the junta has published a series of decrees:

1. Among the first is the one concerning confiscation of all the wealth of the Somoza family and of the officers and functionaries who left the country since December 1977. This included mines (gold), agribusiness operations (cotton, coffee), stock raising, fishing, industry, commerce, construction, banking (Banco de Centroamerica), maritime transport (including port facilities), air and land transport, press, radio, and television.

The dictator even owned a blood plasma factory (Plasmaferesis); he became acquainted with the lucrative blood market when he was reselling the blood plasma that had been received after the 1972 earthquake!

In 1978 American experts estimated that Somoza's properties covered 25% to 30% of

the country's cultivatable land.⁷

At the end of August 1979, 168 businesses had already been confiscated, plus 19 plantations, 159 houses, and 40 vehicles. (*Barricada*, August 24, 1979.)

For the present a state institute is in charge of managing these expropriated properties of the Somozaists, with the exception of the land, which is under the control of the agrarian reform institute (INRA).

In addition, the government is intervening in nonnationalized enterprises in order to acquire a certain degree of control. This is the case, for example, with the gold mines which belong to an American company.

In the field of industry and services, the immediate difficulties make any far-reaching and rapid nationalization measures risky. First of all, management of the nationalized sector requires the establishment of an administrative structure that does not yet exist. Then too, only 20% to 25% of potential industrial production can be rapidly started up again. Even that will carry a quite high cost due to the devastation.

In the short term, therefore, Nicaragua is confronted with the problem of distribution of resources, and with the social and economic necessity of counting partly on restoration of production in the private sector.

In addition, the main enterprises are assembly plants that can easily be paralyzed if the home office decides to cut off supplies to its branch. To this we must add the blackmail by American imperialism regarding the quota for sugar exports to the United States.

For the moment the only means of combating the extreme weakness in managing nationalized enterprises is the activity of the trade-union movement which, through workers' control, can acquire a portion of the know-how needed tomorrow for workers' management in the nationalized sector.

Some union organizations have begun to adopt this perspective, rather than simply raise economic demands.

From the structural point of view, one of the weaknesses remains the state's lack of control over the construction industry—a key sector given the requirements of reconstruction.

2. Another decree concerns the nationalization of the banks. The three principal banks were the Banco Nicaragüense, Banco Centroamérica, and Banco América. Nationalization of the banks had repercussion on both industry and commerce since they controlled numerous companies.

Except for the Somozaists, the bank



Anibal Vargas/Perspectiva Mundial
Members of a Sandinista Defense Committee welcome Vietnamese delegation to Managua, September 14.

stockholders received five-year state bonds with an annual interest rate of 6.5% for their stock. Given the present rate of inflation and the fact that both the state and bank coffers have been drained, these bonds are certainly not seen by the capitalists as safe assets! The general direction that the revolutionary process takes will determine whether these bonds remain simple scraps of paper or permit the capitalists to recover part of their capital to invest elsewhere.

The existence of such state bonds certainly does not change the progressive character of the nationalization measure. Without the nationalization, and without the creation of a single bank—at a time when even the nationalized banks were showing a deficit, as is often the case after a long civil war—there would be no possibility of beginning to carry out a planned management of the economy.

The private foreign banks cannot receive deposits from the public (article 1b) and they will be subject to a special regulation.

3. On July 30 Jaime Wheelock, Daniel Ortega, and Bayardo Arce, all members of the FSLN leadership, announced the terms of the agrarian reform—that is, the most important social measures affecting the country.

Wheelock is directly in charge of the INRA. The land placed under that institution's control represents 50% of the tillable

soil.⁸ Somoza's land, on which he carried out stock raising, added up to more than 200,000 hectares. On just one of his plantations he had 15,000 head of cattle. Another of his big farms took in 20 million cordobas per year (US\$2 million) from the production of rice. All this land is included in the agrarian reform.

Given the lack of credit, fertilizer, and cadre, the leadership of INRA is correctly focusing the agrarian reform on the 64,000 poorest of the small farmers, each of whom owns less than a hectare of land, and on the agricultural workers. Among the latter, priority is given to those in the cotton industry (in the Chinandega region) who are threatened, due to the lack of planting, with serious unemployment unless steps are taken very soon. (*Barricada*, July 31, 1979.)

Different systems have already been applied within the framework of the agrarian reform: distribution of land to the peasants, creation of cooperatives with the participation of the ATC, and creation of big state farms. In the León region some land has been collectively turned over, following the communal model, to an Indian community in order to respect its traditions.

The agrarian reform, which requires a

7. *Human Rights and the US Foreign Assistance Program, Fiscal Year 1978, Part 1, Latin America*, Center for International Policy, Washington, D.C., 1978, p. 56.

8. CEPAL, *Informe sobre Nicaragua* [Report on Nicaragua], 1979, p. 97.

very high degree of organization, must at present function as an emergency plan. Given the food needs—with their social and political consequences—it would be absurd to shake up still further existing production on the farms that have for now escaped the agrarian reform.

Wheelock reports that when the peasants occupied land that did not fall under the agrarian reform, they were asked to give it up and “received in exchange Somozaist lands without the slightest problem.”

Therefore in agriculture as well we find a transitional situation that must be understood clearly in order to avoid making a hasty judgment on the concrete measures that have been taken. According to Wheelock, “an integrated, realistic agrarian reform will be carried out by people who are technically very well qualified and who have a high level of social sensitivity.”

4. On August 6 a decree placed a series of export products—coffee, cotton, sugar, and all fish products—under the control of the state through the Institute of Foreign Trade (INCEI). The decree provides for other products being included in the list later. The aim of the measure is to exert control over the prices of consumer goods on the domestic market and to obtain a more effective instrument for the sale of certain products on the world market.

It is significant that the bourgeois newspaper *La Prensa*, in an editorial August 29 hypocritically saluted the measure but asked that it not be applied since, according to *La Prensa*, the state’s administrative capabilities were not up to the task. The newspaper used the occasion to launch an appeal to the small and medium owners or renters of coffee plantations, suggesting that the prices that they will receive for their crop are not guaranteed. The bourgeoisie understands that such a measure could stimulate others that go in the direction of complete state control of foreign trade, which would have radical repercussions on the private agribusiness sector that is oriented toward export.

5. On Saturday August 25, the radio and press announced that all Nicaraguans had to deposit their 500 and 1,000 Cordoba bills (\$50 and \$100) in the banks. All such notes were to become invalid after two days.

The Somozaists had stolen tens of millions of cordobas, in 500 and 1000 cordoba denominations. Many speculators had ac-

back, with 8 percent interest, in six months.” Investigations were made and all funds of dubious origin were confiscated.

“We can be sure,” said *Barricada*, “that no Somozaist will dare to present himself at a bank branch. For the hirelings who are to be found in the embassies and abroad, this measure is a mortal blow because the money that they took no longer has any value; it cannot be used to finance the counterrevolution. . . .”

The reaction of rage from the Somozaists in the embassies was sufficient to make clear the character of this radical measure against numerous capitalists.

In the work places, the collection of bills belonging to the workers was centralized. It was announced that they would receive their money the following Tuesday—which was done.

Sixty percent of the deposits were of less than 1,500 Cordobas (\$150). Nevertheless, it would have been wrong to fix a limit on how much would be accepted for deposit



Lynn Silver/The Militant
TOMAS BORGE

since the Somozaists and the speculators would have immediately attempted to break down the sums in their possession in order to get around the measure.

The total of invalidated currency had reached 180 million cordobas on Monday August 27, while 352 million were accepted.

From a more general point of view, this measure will enable the state to carry out a redistribution of resources toward a series of specific projects even while it has only very limited funds.

To these decrees we must add those instituting a nationalized health-care system, social security, and a vast literacy campaign encompassing 700,000 people.

None of the measures taken up to now, measures that are not part of a fully worked out overall plan, have cut across the laws of functioning of capitalist accumulation. They have been taken in a very brief period of time, under the shock of the revolutionary upsurge and the crisis.

This is a transitional situation, whose general thrust will unfold more clearly in the six or eight months to come.

The Counterrevolution

The maintenance of capitalist accumulation feeds the counterrevolution, both socially and economically. At present the social obstacles the opposition presents to the progress of the revolution can be enumerated as follows:

1. The bourgeoisie can regroup itself in its employers’ associations and organize systematic pressure on the economic plan. The employers are taking a wait-and-see attitude and are not investing. They call for guarantees and are asking for loans in order to pay workers the two months “lost” wages that the government demands be paid out.

2. The daily *La Prensa*, with a circulation three times that of *Barricada*, functions as a rallying point for the bourgeois opposition, while at the same time acting with increasing wariness in its relations with the FSLN, which controls most of radio and, especially, television.

3. Serious difficulties in agriculture and the carrying out of the agrarian reform could stir up discontent of the small and medium peasantry. It would then provide a more solid social base for the bourgeois opposition.

4. The religious hierarchy has already, in communiqués (July 30) and in articles published in *La Prensa*, launched a vicious offensive around the theme of respect for individual freedoms—this from a hierarchy that supported Somoza for decades! It is true that the church is divided, which limits the hierarchy’s effectiveness.

On the political plane the bourgeois counterattack is clear. It is focusing around “institutionalization” and application of the laws (meaning the accords passed in June).

The September 1, 1979, editorial in *La Prensa* summarizes things perfectly:

At the time the final offensive was being prepared—that is, when the historic circumstances permitted and imposed a correct evaluation of all the elements and factors that participated in and contributed to the struggle—the fundamental statute of the state was forged, a new juridical procedure that was accepted by everyone. This means that the rules of normality were outlined at that moment, when the statute was established, when the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction was formed, along with its cabinet, its council of state, and its judicial power.

The revolution provided itself with a law, a system of new laws for organizing its victory. . . . The normalization, therefore, cannot mean anything other than the process of giving an ever more concrete reality to the juridical procedure that the revolution endowed itself with.

Forces that contradict or set themselves in opposition to legality must not exist. Privileges that permit people to ignore the general law because they have a weapon, because they have a position or orders from a party, must not exist.

The fate of the Nicaraguan revolution is not yet settled. . .

quired large sums through shady dealings during the civil war. A black market in currency had begun to develop, as in Chile.

The August 25 issue of *Barricada* reported that “all those who have obtained their money honestly will receive it all



Fred Murphy—IP/I

"Revolutionary workers from Casa Pellas" in August 2 march in Masaya.

Legal authority cannot be contravened through a hidden authority that creates a duality; those who have authority bestowed upon them by the law must be able to exercise it in fact; this must be the right exercised by the regime; this is the road of normalization.

Here we have a veritable handbook of the democratic counterrevolution. It is with this in mind that the bourgeois opposition is now insisting that a Council of State be set up, a body of thirty-three members in which all the bourgeois opposition parties would have representation, enabling them to regain their footing.

It is also with this in mind that the bourgeoisie is carrying out a campaign of carping criticism against the people's militias. They would also very much like to see the role of the CDS radically curtailed in favor of a normal bourgeois administration and institutions. For the moment they are not vociferously calling for elections. They are simply waiting for the social and economic crisis to provoke social differentiations and the appearance of an opposition to the FSLN, which will be presented as responsible for these difficulties. That would make it possible to broaden the base of the bourgeoisie's political formations.

If the process of self-organization of the masses were to undergo a significant ebb, that is, if the effective base of the FSLN were eroded, then the bourgeoisie would also play the card of the government. At present, however, the representatives it has there have no important decision-making power, given the relationship of social forces and the uncontested authority of the FSLN.

Minister of Finances Joaquín Cuadra Chamorro, Minister of Planning Roberto Yorga Cortes, and the governor of the central bank, Arturo Cruz, are all bourgeois figures whose professional training and activity ties them to American impe-

rialism.⁹ They will not stay quiet forever.

The greatest insurance against these maneuvers by the democratic counterrevolution rests in the strengthening of the self-organization of the CDS, in their local, regional, and national coordination, in their ability to draw the largest layers of the working masses into their multiple tasks, and in their ability to participate in the application of all the social and economic decisions that strike a blow at the process of accumulation of capital and thus limits the bourgeoisie's field of action.

To put forward the slogan for a constituent assembly today, at a time when the elections for coordinating committees of the CDS are multiplying, would mean proposing to substitute the "legal institutions" that the bourgeoisie desires for the de facto power that the masses have taken for themselves in their struggle. This would detour the dynamic of the mass movement back to the preferred terrain of the democratic counterrevolution.

The Beacon of Nicaragua

The shock wave of the revolutionary overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship has directly touched all of Central America. Nicaragua is not an island!

The weakest link is El Salvador. The demographic problems there (more than four million inhabitants) are intertwined with the agrarian question; the tradition of peasant struggle is deeply rooted; the organizations that are waging a frontal struggle against the Carlos Umberto Romero dictatorship have a very wide audience among the masses; in a climate of sharpened economic crisis there are increasing numbers of workers' struggles confronting the repressive forces; the flight

9. *Latin America Economic Report*, July 20, 1979.

of capital is reaching proportions that are disquieting for the bourgeoisie.

American imperialism is exerting pressure to force an opening in order to avoid a Nicaragua-style explosion. It has, of course, alternate bourgeois leaders to plug in, but a structural obstacle emerges: any opening must be combined with an agrarian reform. Given the combativity of the peasantry, there is an immediate risk that the process of agrarian reform would get out of control. A limited agrarian reform is very difficult to control. Therefore the opening that some sectors of the bourgeoisies hope for is doubtful at best.

The insurrectional uprising led by the FSLN has had an impact that goes beyond the borders of Central America, especially since it takes place in a context of an upturn in workers struggles in various countries (Brazil, Peru, Bolivia).

After the disintegration of the Iranian army under the hammer blows of massive demonstrations and strikes, this second defeat of an army designed to crush the masses can only increase the confidence of the workers all over Latin America in the possibility of defeating the military regimes. The difficulties that the leadership of American imperialism had in intervening in Nicaragua can only strengthen this sentiment.

Of course in the face of an acceleration of the revolutionary wave in Nicaragua and Central America, American imperialism will not fail to involve its forces, directly or indirectly. It will, however, be obliged to do this in relation with the Latin American bourgeoisies. Accordingly, the development of a powerful solidarity movement in Latin America can impede these maneuvers. Along the same lines, the working class in the United States and capitalist Europe can paralyze the criminal arm of imperialism. Organizing a campaign of solidarity is a priority task for all revolutionaries on a world scale.

As we said earlier, in Nicaragua a feverish process of permanent revolution has been unleashed. How it will end up is not yet settled. All the forces of social conservatism will intervene in this process to prevent the birth of the second workers state in the Western Hemisphere.

The Fourth International is neither neutral nor a spectator in this struggle that has already begun. It must intervene with all its forces and in all areas to help the permanent revolution triumph. To this end it must mobilize to the maximum degree possible the proletariat and the working masses of Latin America and of the whole world to defeat the counterrevolutionary maneuvers and interventions, and to support the revolutionary process and the struggle of the FSLN fighters. This is the only way to act that corresponds to the needs of the Nicaraguan revolution, the Latin American revolution, and the world revolution.

September 10, 1979

Class Conflict Mounts in Nicaragua

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Immediately after the Somoza regime was overthrown, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) enjoyed such overwhelming support among the masses that no other political force in the country dared to challenge it openly.

Even the FSLN's opponents tried to present themselves as "Sandinistas," while they looked for openings to press their own policies.

Now, with the revolution more than two months old, and allegiance to the FSLN among the workers and peasants as strong as ever, groups opposed to the Sandinistas have begun to organize and express themselves.

The opposition is taking two forms: procapitalist forces seeking to hold back the radical social transformations that are under way; and petty-bourgeois ultraleft groups that are growing impatient with the pace the FSLN is setting. While the proposals promoted by these two currents are quite different, they share the immediate aim of undermining mass support for the Sandinista Front. Each in its own way seeks to blame the FSLN—not the destructive legacy of Somoza, not the refusal of the imperialist countries to provide aid—for the objective problems the country faces.

The openly Somocista wing of the Nicaraguan capitalist class was expropriated outright as soon as the Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction came to power.

The timid capitalist opposition was discredited and dramatically weakened by the revolution. They have no armed forces and little influence over the state apparatus. No capitalist party has mass support. Many of the factories still in private hands are in ruins or bankrupt. The banks, which have large shares of the ownership of these concerns, have all been nationalized.

The capitalists are divided. Some are exhausting their stocks, selling private belongings, and abandoning the country. Others are biding their time to see how the revolution unfolds.

In recent weeks, four bourgeois parties—Social Christians, Democratic Conservatives, Independent Liberals, and Social Democrats—have made public statements claiming to support the revolution and the new government, while emphasizing the need for "pluralism" and "authentic democracy."

The most openly anti-Sandinista of these

groups is the Social Democratic Party (PSD)*. It held its first public gathering in Managua on September 23. Despite a prominent announcement in the capitalist daily *La Prensa* and publicity on at least one radio station, only about 200 persons showed up. The crowd appeared to consist almost entirely of upper middle class, hard-core PSD partisans.

The theme of the event was "Democracy yes, totalitarianism no." PSD leader Gladis Miranda deplored the FSLN's alleged "militarism" and likened the daily Sandinista newspaper, *Barricada*, to the slavishly pro-Somoza *Novedades* that was printed under the dictatorship.

Such charges ring hollow in Nicaragua today. The downfall of the dictatorship immediately brought more political freedom than Nicaraguans have ever enjoyed before.

The new government has adopted a "Bill of Rights" that guarantees freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. Three different daily newspapers as well as other

*The PSD originally tried to call itself the "Sandinista Social Democratic Party," but gave this pretense up after a government decree reserved for the FSLN and its organizations the right to the name Sandinista.

periodicals are appearing. Two of the dailies are totally independent of the Sandinistas and the government.

Political meetings and discussions take place constantly. Workers hold assemblies to democratically decide which of the several union federations to join. The FSLN has pledged to uphold all these rights and is doing so in practice.

What really bothers the Social Democrats is the proworker and propeasant thrust of the revolution.

This was clear from the speech presented at the September 29 rally by PSD political secretary Luis Rivas Leyva. While professing a desire for "socialism" sometime in the future, he declared that the first "stage" of the Nicaraguan revolution must be limited to "social and economic consolidation and reinforcement of capitalism under bourgeois democracy." He complained pointedly of "attacks on the private property of individuals who never were Somocistas."

The latter was a direct reference to the sorest point in the deteriorating relations between the FSLN and the capitalists.

The Sandinistas' declared policy is to allow the capitalists to operate—so long as they resume production, continue rebuilding the country, and heed demands for trade-union rights and payment of wages lost during the final two-month civil war against Somoza. But the capitalists are not inclined to live up to even these moderate demands. Instead, they are trying to cut their losses, salvage as much profit as possible, and grant only the most minimal concessions to the workers.

The result has been a growing number of strikes, sometimes accompanied by factory takeovers.

Simón Bolívar Brigade Dissolved

A public meeting was held in Bogotá September 1 by the Colombian Socialist Workers Party (PST) and the Coordinating Committee of the Simón Bolívar Brigade to announce the brigade's dissolution.

The brigade, organized by the Colombian PST, was expelled from Nicaragua in mid-August.*

The official statement of the brigade on its dissolution was printed in the September 14 issue of *El Socialista*, the PST's paper. It said in part:

"Today, the first day of September 1979, we declare the Simón Bolívar Brigade dissolved. . . .

"Our departure from Nicaragua by

decision of the Government of National Reconstruction and of the leadership of the FSLN was the result of our commitment to the interests and desires of the Nicaraguan people. Our expulsion succeeded in making clear that the commitment that prevails in Nicaragua today is to reconstruct the country for the benefit of the Nicaraguan bosses and in the interests of the capitalists of Panama, Costa Rica, the Andean Pact, and European Social Democracy. They invested millions of dollars in the fight against Somoza and today, in conjunction with the United States, they are making the Nicaraguan people pay dearly, forcing the revolution into the straitjacket of formal democracy and capitalist exploitation. . . .

"The Simón Bolívar Brigade has fulfilled its role and decided to dissolve itself. Now it gives way to other forms of solidarity with the people of Nicaragua."

*For the view of the delegation of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in Nicaragua on the expulsion, see the statement published in the September 24, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, p. 899.

When such conflicts arise, the Sandinistas' first concern is to assure that the workers' needs are met. In one recent example, the Ministry of Labor declared a "temporary intervention" at a private college where the employees were owed a large sum in back wages. The school has been placed under the control of the workers and teaching staff for as long as it takes to get the back wages paid.

The FSLN authorities have also initiated confiscation proceedings against landlords who, while not directly part of the Somoza financial empire, nonetheless relied on the National Guard to repress peasant struggles and who collaborated

All the Sandinistas' actions and statements point to their determination to carry the revolution through—as they put it—"to its ultimate consequences." The central obstacles they currently face in moving ahead are the shortages and destruction left by the civil war and the inadequacy of international aid.

Ultraleft Disruption

In this situation there are severe limits on the immediate improvements that can be made in the living standards of the masses. Playing on this objective problem, ultraleftist sectarians are trying to build their own political formations in opposition to the FSLN.

These groups thus fall into the bourgeoisie's game of trying to divide the masses from the FSLN. They divert attention from the real immediate tasks of defending and extending the the revolution's gains. And they let imperialism off the hook for its responsibility for the country's problems.

None of these ultraleft currents are particularly large. The main one is the Movimiento de Acción Popular (MAP—People's Action Movement), a group with Maoist origins. It functions in the trade unions as the Frente Obrero (FO—Workers' Front).

The MAP/FO has encouraged strikes in nationalized workplaces and seizures of privately held land that does not fall under the initial provisions of the agrarian reform. On nationalized lands it seeks to organize the peasants to oppose the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA).

Some workers and peasants have been taken in by the MAP/FO. It gets a sympathetic hearing among freshly radicalized layers, all the more so because it usually softpedals its opposition to the FSLN while using the Sandinistas' own slogans and red-and-black banners.

The FSLN's attitude toward the rank and file of those influenced by the MAP/FO has been to seek to educate them on the current problems and tasks of the revolution. Toward the ultraleft leaders themselves, however, the FSLN is taking a harder approach.

In a speech to thousands of workers and peasants in León on September 21, Comandante Henry Ruiz of the FSLN Joint National Directorate blasted those who

"are now pretending to be the most revolutionary" and who demand land, national liberation, and social justice "as if those weren't the very tasks of the revolution.

"We are being told," Ruiz said, "to put an end to economic problems just when we are figuring out how to feed one million Nicaraguans and how to get 300 tons of

food a day."

Ruiz's speech marked the opening of a campaign to counter the influence of the sectarians. This has continued in the pages of *Barricada*, on radio and television, through the Sandinista defense committees in the neighborhoods, and through the Sandinista Workers Federation. □

Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock:

'Land Belongs to Nicaraguan People'

Nicaragua's minister of agrarian reform, Sandinista leader Jaime Wheelock, described the plans the government has for improving the lives of the peasantry in an interview in the September 14 issue of *Barricada*, the Sandinista daily.

"Our country is primarily agricultural," Wheelock pointed out. "The majority of the population lives in the countryside, and

In Matagalpa more than 160 state coffee and livestock farms. . . .

"It is necessary to understand—this is clear—that we face limitations. We aren't going to have difficulties in distributing the land because we are clear on how we are going to do it. The problem is how fast we can bring housing and prosperity to the countryside. That is where the revolution will be shaped."

Asked about the main problems facing this work, Wheelock replied: "The most important enemy is Somozaism, which left all sources of income bankrupt and left a very deep social and economic problem—backwardness, illiteracy, and disorganization."

Somoza's looting operation was so thorough, he said, that Nicaragua's economy is now burdened with a national debt that amounts to \$600 for every man, woman, and child in the country.

"Our biggest obstacle," Wheelock continued, "is lack of finances and underdevelopment. We count on the absolute support of the Nicaraguan people. The FSLN [Sandinista National Liberation Front] has never had more popularity among the people than today. We have difficulties and problems but our people understand them; our army is being consolidated and acquiring greater skill, and we will overcome them. Only in moving ahead do we have any progress and future, and nobody can reverse that process."

Wheelock continued: "It is very difficult for those who would like to intervene militarily, as in 1927, because what would occur is a war of incalculable proportions. Nicaragua today is not alone, and we are going to ask for help as soon as we encounter difficulties."

In conclusion, Wheelock said: "Our people have very great confidence in the Sandinista Front, in its capacity for leadership. The most evident fact is that our people see a revolution, and in this clearest historical fact resides the great confidence that the people now have in their vanguard.

"There are some who wanted us to advance in an extremely rapid way, but that can't be done. There are many limitations, and we have to act in accordance with the conditions that exist today." □



Fred Halstead/Militant
Tenant farmer in Granada.

Nicaragua as a whole lives on the production of the countryside. For us, the patrimony of agricultural territory is both a national and a social question. Our Agrarian Reform has to settle from the outset that the land is the patrimony of the Nicaraguan people.

"The Agrarian Reform we are developing must establish the ownership of the state over the means of production. We are going to encourage a cooperative movement in order to organize socially individual peasant production. We are going to develop communal production. . . .

"In León we have eighty-five collectives.

AROUND THE WORLD



Juan Mari Brás Arrested on Way to UN

Juan Mari Brás, general secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, was arrested in San Juan September 24. He had been sought, along with PSP leader Pedro Baigés Chapel, on a contempt warrant issued by the United States district court. Baigés Chapel was arrested September 25.



The arrest stemmed from protests against the U.S. Navy's occupation and use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques for artillery firing practice. Baigés Chapel was among those arrested when Puerto Rican fishing crews and their supporters sailed into the restricted zone during recent Navy exercises. Mari Brás was acting as his attorney in the case. Both have refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the U.S. court in San Juan, blasting it as "a foreign court imposed by force on the Puerto Rican people."

What especially irked U.S. authorities when the two failed to appear at their scheduled hearing was the fact that they had gone to the Summit Meeting of Non-aligned Countries in Havana instead. At that meeting Mari Brás presented the case for Puerto Rican independence, and denounced the U.S. Navy presence on Vieques. The Nonaligned conference subsequently adopted a position along these lines.

Mari Brás also hailed the worldwide solidarity campaign that helped win the release of four Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners from U.S. prisons. He saluted Fidel Castro's election as chairman of the conference, and expressed solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution and the freedom struggle in Zimbabwe.

This defiant stand—more than his failure to appear in court—was the real act of "contempt" in the eyes of the imperialists.

An indication of the solidarity Puerto Ricans have shown for Mari Brás is the fact that U.S. police sent to arrest him were rebuffed on two occasions: first at a professional conference of Puerto Rican attorneys, where participants formed a human barrier to block the cops; and later at the *El Grito de Lares* pro-independence rally, attended by thousands, where the cops dared not move in to seize him.

Mari Brás was finally arrested at the airport in San Juan as he was on his way to New York to bring the case for Puerto Rican independence before the United Nations Decolonization Committee.

In Havana, the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) held a news conference at its headquarters September 26, urging an international solidarity campaign for the immediate release of the victimized independence fighters.

The arrests were also denounced by Andrew Pulley, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president of the United States. Pulley called them "another sign of Washington's racist and imperialist contempt for the rights of the Puerto Rican people."

East Germany Announces Amnesty

The official East German press agency reported September 25 that a special amnesty has been decreed to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the German Democratic Republic.

Although the official report does not specify how many prisoners will be included in the amnesty, it appears that most of the country's estimated 4,000 political prisoners will be released between October 10 and December 14, along with many common prisoners.

Amnesty International sources said they expect that among those released will be antibureaucratic fighter Rudolf Bahro, who was jailed in August 1977 after his book *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* was published by the Metalworkers union in West Germany. Bahro's case has been the focus of a broad, labor-based defense campaign in Western Europe.

Comrade Who?

Hungarian pollsters recently conducted a study on 800 officials of that country's Communist Youth League. These hand-picked functionaries undergo extensive political training, and are responsible for teaching Communist Party history and ideology to youth.

Of those polled, 17 percent knew nothing about Lenin, 31 percent had no idea who Stalin was, and 42 percent admitted to not knowing who Khrushchev was.

Protests Mark Anniversary of Martial Law in Philippines

Police in Manila attacked and dispersed a crowd of 1,000 students who tried to stage a rally in front of the Ministry of Education on September 20 to protest the seventh anniversary of the imposition of martial law in the Philippines. Thirteen students were reportedly arrested.

An estimated 1,500 students and workers had joined in an anti-martial law rally the day before at Maryknoll University in Manila.

Student leaders reported that protest actions also took place at five other campuses in the city.

Also on September 19, former Philippines President Diosdado Macapagal, on trial for "rumormongering" against the current regime, issued a courtroom statement declaring that he was ready to go to jail, or even to die, to protest the dictatorial regime.

When President Ferdinand Marcos assumed emergency powers on September 21, 1972, he claimed that it would only be a temporary measure to "stabilize the political situation, improve public safety, and promote economic development." But his "temporary" powers were extended year after year, and a new constitution imposed by Marcos effectively makes him president for life.

Despite brutal repression, however, the regime has been unable to suppress anti-government insurgents fighting in several areas of the country. In addition, prices of consumer goods are now rising at an annual rate of nearly 30 percent, while unemployment is estimated by foreign business sources to be roughly 25 percent. One result of rising prices and unemployment has been that even street crime in Manila has reportedly risen back to pre-martial-law levels.

And the recession is only beginning.

As a result, public criticism of the regime has mounted in recent months, with even bourgeois figures who initially accepted martial law now speaking out against it.

Jaime Cardinal Sin, the Catholic archbishop of Manila, told a BBC interviewer September 4 that the country could face "civil war" unless Marcos lifts martial law and resigns.

South African Police Attack Black Strikers

More than 300 striking African workers marched on the Marburg Manufacturing Company near Port Shepstone, seventy-five miles south of Durban, September 18 after Labor Department officials threatened to fire them for refusing to work. Police attacked the crowd of strikers, firing tear-gas canisters at them.

The attack occurred eight days after thousands of workers in the area launched a boycott of bus companies to protest against fare hikes. The workers, who earn between \$9.50 and \$20.00 a week, cannot afford the fare increases, which range up to \$1.00 a week.

Agostinho Neto Dies

Agostinho Neto, Angola's first president, died in Moscow September 10 after undergoing an operation for cancer. When his body was returned to Angola, hundreds of thousands of mourners followed the funeral cortege through the streets of Luanda.

A fighter against Portuguese colonial rule since the early 1950s, Neto became a leader of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA—People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) after its formation in 1956. Arrested several times by the Portuguese colonial authorities, Neto escaped in 1962 and from exile led the MPLA's struggle for Angolan independence.

Neto finally returned to Angola in 1975, at a time when Portuguese rule was crumbling and the MPLA was confronted by a civil war with two rival nationalist organizations, the Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). In October 1975, South African and Zairian troops, supported by Washington, invaded Angola on the side of the FNLA and UNITA. With Luanda beleaguered by opposing armies, Neto took office the following month as Angola's president.

The Neto government appealed to Cuba for help in fighting off the imperialist invasion, and soon thousands of Cuban troops arrived to defend the country. By early 1976, the Cuban and MPLA forces had been successful in defeating the FNLA and UNITA and pushing the South African army out of Angola. Imperialist policy in southern Africa was dealt a stunning setback.

Although Angola under Neto continued to maintain close ties with some imperialist companies, such as Gulf Oil, it also served as a base of support for freedom



fighters from Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. For that reason, the racist South African regime repeatedly carried out military raids into southern Angola and provided backing to the remnants of the UNITA.

Following Neto's funeral, the Interior Ministry warned Angolans that "enemies" would take advantage of his death to "step up their attacks."

Iraq to Send \$10 Million to Cuba

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein announced in Baghdad that the Iraqi government is sending \$10 million in aid to Cuba to help repair the damage done by Hurricane Frederic.

According to a report by Radio Havana, September 26, \$3 million of the aid will be sent in food, the rest in cash.

Right-Wing Terror in Guatemala

September 15 marked the 141st anniversary of Guatemala's independence from Spain. But this year's Independence Day celebrations were overshadowed by the wave of right-wing terror that has engulfed that Central American country of nearly seven million people.

On September 13 in the town of Chica-co, a terrorist squad calling itself the "Anticommunist Secret Army" (ESA) murdered two persons it had previously "condemned to death." The two, whose names had appeared on ESA leaflets threatening local activists, were taken from their homes at gunpoint, beaten with blunt instruments, and then shot. Their bodies were dumped on the outskirts of the town.

On September 15, in cities and towns throughout Guatemala, a total of fifteen corpses were reported found, some bearing obvious marks of torture.

University professors in Quezaltenango reported receiving death threats, and one narrowly escaped assassination when his car was fired on.

In addition to attacks by semiclandestine death squads, the official repressive forces were also busy over the Independence Day weekend. In Guatemala City on the eve of the independence celebrations, police attacked a crowd of some five hundred young people, who had gathered in the vicinity of the National Palace, arresting 106 of them.

The cops later claimed that they had only intervened when the crowd, consisting mostly of students, began vandalizing nearby businesses. However, many of those arrested were charged with the crime of "distribution of subversive propaganda." Police also complained that shortly before the alleged "vandalism" began, the crowd had been singing the Guatemalan national anthem "in a mocking tone."

On September 14 in Chiquimula, student leaders were forced to call off a planned demonstration when police and army units—including tanks—surrounded the university campus, virtually sealing it off.

Police alleged that leftists planted bombs and attempted to "distribute subversive propaganda" at Independence Day festivals in several cities. Among the underground groups mentioned were the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT), the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC), and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR).

There were also reports of a successful armed attack on a rural airfield in Quezaltenango Province by fifty PGT guerrillas.

The Guatemala City daily *El Gráfico* reported September 17 an incident in the town of San Martín Jilotepeque. Police there arrested two suspects on charges of distributing PGT propaganda, but were forced to let them go when the arresting officers were "attacked by townspeople."

On September 11 Amnesty International announced an emergency campaign "to halt the wave of political assassination,



torture, and kidnapping" in Guatemala. According to Guatemalan police statistics, in the first four months of 1979 alone there were over one thousand political assassinations. These included labor and student leaders, clergymen, lawyers, and Indians who died at the hands of government security forces or semiclandestine death squads.

On September 12 the Guatemalan presidential secretary for public relations rejected the Amnesty International appeal, dismissing it, according to the September 13 *El Gráfico*, as "totally biased in favor of the international conspiracy that has been orchestrated against Guatemala" in the wake of the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua.

Behind the Imperialist Lies on Afghanistan

By Ernest Harsch

The revolutionary upheaval that has been unfolding in Afghanistan for more than a year is drawing increasing fire from Washington. Through assistance to counterrevolutionary guerrilla forces, the imperialists are seeking to topple the Afghan regime and roll back the progressive social measures—such as the radical land reform—that have been carried out there.

Aiming to cover up their aggressive policies toward Afghanistan, the imperialists have also conducted a campaign of lies and vilification that has been mounting in intensity ever since the April 1978 overthrow of dictator Mohammad Daud.

Washington's hostility was further heightened following the September 16 change in the Afghan government, in which Hafizullah Amin replaced Nour Mohammad Taraki as president of the country and secretary general of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

An editorial in the September 22 *New York Times*, a newspaper that has played a prominent role in the imperialist propaganda campaign against Afghanistan, began: "The already grim news from Afghanistan has turned even grimmer. . . ." It pointed out that Amin "is no friend of the United States." Calling him "an extremist even among extremists," the *Times* said that as "the number two man [in the Taraki regime], he led the resistance to Soviet pressure for a political settlement" with the rightist guerrillas.

Three days earlier, State Department spokesman Hodding Carter III officially reiterated the White House's "concern" over the situation in Afghanistan and warned Moscow against continued assistance to the regime there.

Washington has not limited its "concern" to just verbal proclamations. It has taken action.

Attempting to make the peoples of Afghanistan pay a heavy price for their efforts to break away from imperialist and landlord domination and improve their living conditions, Washington has cut off all new economic aid to Afghanistan. The Carter administration has also voted several times in international financial agencies to block loans to Afghanistan.

At the same time the White House is backing the rightist forces fighting against the Afghan revolution. In one of his first news conferences as president, Amin, on September 23, lashed out at



Washington's support for these groups.

Led by dispossessed landlords, former military officers, monarchists, and religious figures, these armed bands operate over wide stretches of Afghanistan's rugged countryside, destroying bridges and schools, attacking villagers, and seeking to impede implementation of the government's land reform and literacy campaigns. Many obtain sanctuary, supplies, and training in neighboring Pakistan.

The bourgeois press in the United States and other imperialist countries has given much favorable coverage to the claims and statements of these groups. Several central themes are woven into many of the "news" reports, designed to mask the true aims of the guerrilla groups and justify American backing for them.

- The guerrillas are generally referred to as "Muslim insurgents" who are fighting a "holy war" against religious persecution by a "godless" regime.

While some Islamic religious leaders are involved in the fighting, it is not because of any "anti-Islamic" policy of the regime, but because many of them also happen to be landlords and moneylenders whose class interests are threatened by the land reform.

A report from the Afghan capital of Kabul in the September 1 *London Economist* acknowledged, "In fact no restrictions had been imposed on religious practice: the mosques were always open, and were particularly thronged with worshippers during the Id festival last weekend."

- The guerrillas are likewise portrayed as Afghan "nationalists" fighting against "Soviet domination." As evidence, reporters often cite the increase in the number of Soviet advisers in Afghanistan since the PDPA came to power, and occasionally even claim that Moscow had a hand in Daud's overthrow.

Although Moscow does have close ties

with the new government, it had also maintained trade and diplomatic relations with the former Daud regime. The Kremlin, in fact, was taken by surprise when the PDPA seized power in April 1978 under the impact of mass demonstrations and in response to moves by Daud to launch a large-scale crackdown.

According to a State Department official quoted in the May 18, 1979, *New York Times*, "We have no evidence of any Soviet involvement in the coup."

Since April 1978, Soviet assistance has been crucial to the new regime, but the role and number of Soviet advisers have been blatantly inflated in the imperialist press. According to Amin, there are now between 1,000 and 1,500 Soviet advisers, a level comparable to that in the early years of the Daud regime.

In a report from Kabul in the August 31 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, correspondent Salamat Ali revealed, "Until 1976 when Daud began changing his policy [and began moving closer toward Washington and the shah of Iran], Soviet military advisers had been appointed right down to company level. By the fall of Daud in April last year the advisers' presence had been reduced to battalion level. It has been restored to the old level by the present regime."

There is thus no reason to think that the guerrillas are motivated by fears of Moscow's "domination."

- Some correspondents argue that one element in the guerrilla actions against the regime is efforts by some of Afghanistan's smaller nationalities to win greater autonomy, in defiance of the government's alleged attempts to maintain domination by the Pushtun nationality.

The new Afghan regime, however, has taken major steps toward recognizing some of the national rights of the country's various peoples, in contrast to previous Afghan regimes. It has established schooling, newspapers, and radio programming in previously neglected local languages. A number of top ministers in the government are now non-Pushtun.

- The counterrevolutionary forces are said to have wide support, to control most of the countryside, and to be leading (in the words of correspondent Geoffrey Godsell in the September 6 *Christian Science Monitor*) a "virtual people's revolution." Prominent coverage is given to unsubstantiated claims by various guerrilla groups that they have killed large numbers of

Afghan and Soviet troops, that entire units and garrisons of the regular Afghan army have defected, and even that "governments" have been set up in "liberated" areas.

Given the scarcity of reliable information on the fighting, it is difficult to gauge the real strength of the rightist groups. But from the reports of some correspondents who have traveled through parts of Afghanistan, they have made less headway than is generally claimed.

Le Monde correspondent Jean de la Guervièrre reported in the August 8 issue of the Paris daily that while much of the countryside is "more or less unsafe," the areas of guerrilla activity are not heavily populated. The main roads from Kabul to the Soviet Union and Pakistan carry regular traffic.

In a dispatch from Kabul in the August 17 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Salamat Ali reported that "it is indisputable that every town of any significance remains under the control of the government," despite guerrilla claims to have captured some towns.

The September 1 *Economist* likewise admitted that the counterrevolutionary forces "have not been able to seize, hold and administer any towns or any large area of territory."

Despite the limited advances of the counterrevolutionary drive thus far, it nevertheless represents a serious danger to the regime and to the social gains that have been won by the workers and peasants. With outside support, even small fragmented groups can cause considerable damage and sap the energy and resources the country needs to move forward.

Although the Khomeini-Bazargan government in Iran is openly sympathetic to the rightist forces in Afghanistan, and has provided sanctuary for some of the opposition groups, the main backing for the guerrillas comes via Pakistan, which is ruled by the proimperialist military regime of Gen. Zia ul-Haq.

Under the guise of providing "humanitarian" assistance to Afghan refugees, Zia is funneling financial and military assistance to the guerrillas, many of whom operate from camps along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

According to the Afghan regime, the Chinese government has also been providing some assistance to the guerrillas.

• The Afghan government is portrayed as repressive and unpopular, hanging on to power only through the terrorization of the population and with the aid of Soviet military personnel. An article in the May 14 issue of *Time* magazine went so far as to claim that the regime's supporters numbered "only 2,500 people"—in a country of nearly 20 million!

Some reports in the bourgeois press have acknowledged, however, that the regime does in fact have wide support.

A dispatch from Kabul in the January

16 *Wall Street Journal* reported that when the country's flag was changed "more than 150,000 persons, one-third of Kabul's population, marched to honor the new flag on the day it was first unfurled. Similar demonstrations of support occurred in other cities. The marches were organized, but witnesses say the participants appeared genuinely enthusiastic."

Red banners and slogans like "Proletariat of the world unite" are posted up throughout the country. "From the looks of banners and slogans all over town [Kabul], Afghan loyalty to the government can scarcely be questioned," correspondent Jonathan Randal commented in the June 11 *Washington Post*.

Salamat Ali noted in the August 17 *Far Eastern Economic Review* that despite opposition claims of mass desertions from the army, the "loyalty of the troops is remarkable considering their meagre rewards."

The reason for the regime's popularity is simple. It has initiated a series of social measures that benefit the workers and peasants of Afghanistan, the overwhelming majority of the population.

One of the most important is the land reform. Initiated on January 1, it set a ceiling on land ownership of about fifteen acres. All surplus land was to be expropriated without compensation and distributed free to landless peasants and nomads. The government has announced that the first phase of the land reform, completed in June, distributed 1.4 million acres (out of a total of 1.6 million covered by the program) to 248,000 families. In addition, all debts owed by peasants were cancelled.

New schools and medical centers have been built in rural areas, and 800,000 persons have been enrolled in a literacy campaign.

In a country where women are extremely oppressed, special measures have been

taken to improve their status. Primary schooling has been declared mandatory for young women, and married women are offered special courses. Arranged marriages were banned and dowries have been reduced.

Trade Unions were legalized for the first time in Afghanistan's history.

Although the PDPA government has not moved directly against Afghanistan's small capitalist class, and has promised a continued role to "patriotic capitalists," the revolutionary process that has been unleashed in Afghanistan could advance further than the regime has planned to go. It has already raised the hopes and expectations of the country's workers and peasants and could open the way toward mass mobilizations that threaten capitalist property relations.

This process—both what has already been accomplished and the potential for further revolutionary change—is what has earned the intense hatred of the imperialists.

They are also worried that the example of the Afghan revolution will inspire the oppressed masses in other countries. Public sympathy for the Afghan revolution has already been expressed by some political organizations and trade unions in neighboring Pakistan.

The imperialists' concern is likewise connected to the series of setbacks they have recently suffered elsewhere: the overthrow of the shah of Iran, the advances of the Indochinese revolution, the rising struggles for Black majority rule in southern Africa, the growing international isolation of the Israeli state; the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua.

Their backing to the counterrevolutionary drive in Afghanistan is thus part of a global policy, aimed at defending imperialist interests wherever they are threatened and at holding back the world revolution wherever it moves forward. □

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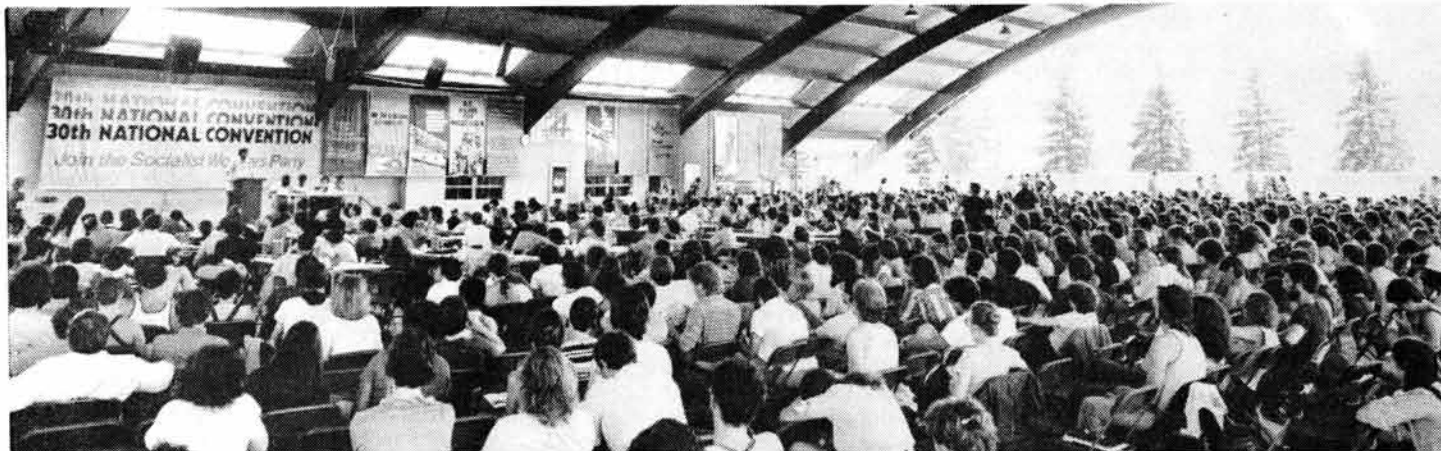
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Launch Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign

1,550 Attend 30th National Convention of SWP

By Will Reissner

More than 1,550 members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party from the United States and around the world attended the SWP's thirtieth national convention August 5-11.

Coming on the heels of the Sandinista-led revolution in Nicaragua, and amidst Washington's propaganda around the Vietnamese "boat people" and increasing U.S. military pressure against Cuba, the convention proceedings reflected the permanent interplay of foreign and domestic developments in shaping the course of American politics.

Delegates voted unanimously to launch a major campaign to get out the truth about the Nicaraguan revolution and to demand that Washington provide massive aid to help rebuild the country. The SWP pledged to be in the forefront of opposition to moves by the Carter administration to exert military and economic pressure against Nicaragua, or to step up threats against Cuba because of its support to Nicaragua.

The convention was the culmination of six months of political discussion and debate. The first three months were devoted to written contributions on international questions, followed by three months of written and oral discussion on both world and domestic issues. In all, twenty-seven discussion bulletins comprising 1,000 typeset pages were distributed to the SWP membership.

The convention registered the progress that has already been made in getting the overwhelming majority of SWP members into basic industry and industrial unions. The decision to do this was made at a February 1978 meeting of the SWP National Committee. It flowed from the SWP's evaluation that the worldwide capitalist austerity drive and the growing alienation of American workers from the

institutions of capitalist rule had created new opportunities for the party to do fruitful political work in the major workplaces and unions of industrial workers.

These openings, the NC decided, made it imperative that the SWP concentrate its efforts on becoming a party of socialist industrial workers through colonization of cadres who had been recruited in the movements for social change over the past two decades.

This view reflected agreement in the majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International about the need for Trotskyists to make such a turn toward the industrial working class throughout the world.

This orientation is embodied in a package of four resolutions submitted by the United Secretariat majority for consideration at the Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International, to be held later this year. Delegates to the SWP convention unanimously adopted this package of resolutions—the world political resolution and resolutions on Europe, Latin America, and the international women's liberation resolution—to serve as a guide for SWP leaders attending the World Congress.*

By the time the convention was convened, nearly 50 percent of the total SWP membership was made up of industrial workers. This means the SWP is well on the way to achieving its goal of having somewhere in the range of 80 percent of its members in basic industry.

Slightly more than two-thirds of the 124 elected convention delegates were industrial workers. The reports and discussion

*Although the SWP is prohibited by reactionary U.S. law from membership in the Fourth International, it is in political solidarity with the International and cooperates closely in the International's work.

at the convention demonstrated the wealth of experience SWP members are already gaining in functioning as class-struggle union militants and propagandists for socialism in industrial workplaces.

The convention also registered progress over the past year and a half in building national industrial fractions. National fraction meetings were held for party members working in five industries: steel, auto, rail, machinists, and electrical. Each fraction discussed how to carry out the party's campaigns in its industry and how to bring co-workers around and into the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance. Participants exchanged local experiences and discussed questions of special importance to each industry.

A session was devoted to the special concerns and problems of women in industry. Several hundred female comrades exchanged experiences on how to function most effectively in the workplaces and unions, paying particular attention to the question of how to combat employer-inspired antiwoman abuse and sexual harassment on the job.

The orientation toward building a revolutionary socialist party of industrial workers in the United States was outlined in the draft political resolution reported to the convention by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes.

A counterresolution was submitted by several party members in Miami. Entitled "Against the Workerist Turn: A Critique and Some Proposals," the counterresolution argued that the NC resolution was wrong in contending that there had been a big increase in the social and political consciousness of the working class in the past decade. These comrades argued that many key social struggles in the U.S. would continue to "bypass the unions" as they had in the past.

Jack Lieberman presented this position to the convention. After a full day's discussion, the National Committee resolution received all but one vote.

The convention devoted two full days of discussion to evaluating the current stage of the Cuban revolution and recent events in Indochina.

Larry Seigle, a member of the SWP Political Committee, presented the view that the Castro leadership is a revolutionary current that is carrying out an internationalist policy in Africa and Latin America. He called for the party to step up its campaign to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba and urged SWP members to visit Cuba to study the revolution for themselves.

Tim Wohlforth presented a resolution characterizing the Castro leadership as Stalinist and urged the SWP to favor political revolution in Cuba. This resolution was unanimously rejected by the elected delegates.

A third point of view was put forward by three comrades who had entered the SWP in its fusion with the Revolutionary Marxist Committee in 1977. They maintained that Cuba is a "state capitalist" state and needed a social revolution.

At the convention, Bruce Levine explained that in the course of the discussion he and his coauthors of the resolution became convinced that they were mistaken, and that Cuba and, by extension, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam were workers states.

The "state capitalist" resolution received one delegate's vote.

In the discussion on Indochina, Gus Horowitz reported on the views of the SWP leadership, while Charles Duret, a leader of the Fourth International, presented the views endorsed by a majority of the United Secretariat.

Horowitz argued that the military conflicts between Vietnam, Kampuchea, and China stem from U.S. imperialism's opposition to advances in the Indochinese revolution. He stated that the Chinese invasion of Vietnam served no interest of the Chinese workers state, but rather stemmed from the Chinese bureaucracy's desire to draw closer to U.S. imperialism.

Duret argued that the Pol Pot regime had established a workers state in Kampuchea, which Horowitz had denied, and that the use of Vietnamese troops in the overthrow of that regime had set back the world revolution. Duret also maintained that the SWP leadership exaggerated the role of U.S. imperialism in the conflicts, arguing that the Stalinist bureaucracies of each workers state had their own conflicting interests that could push them to full-scale war with each other.

Horowitz and Duret agreed, however, on the need to expose the imperialist propaganda around the "boat people," and both said it would be wrong now to call for the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea.

At the conclusion of the discussion, one delegate voted against the position put forward by Horowitz and for Duret's position. Another delegate abstained on both.

The internationalist spirit of the convention was heightened by the presence of nearly 200 guests from other countries.

It received further inspiration from the victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua. Convention participants heard a special report from SWP leader Pedro Camejo, who had just returned from Nicaragua, and heard extended greetings from a young FSLN fighter.

Delegates and guests also heard, discussed, and approved reports on perspectives for Chicano and Black liberation;

perspectives for women's liberation; a report on the Young Socialist Alliance, which is also leading its members into basic industry in order to do political work among young workers; and an organization and education report.

Among the concrete tasks outlined for the party were defense of Héctor Marroquín, whom the Carter administration is trying to deport to Mexico, and the international campaign to win the release of fourteen Trotskyists still in prison in Iran.

An election rally at the convention launched the SWP's 1980 presidential campaign. The SWP has nominated Andrew Pulley, a Black steelworker, and Matilde Zimmermann, who has been on the staff of the *Militant* and *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, as its candidates for president and vice president.

Delegates also approved the establishment of a leadership training school where leading members of the SWP can devote several months to full-time study of Marxism and revolutionary strategy.

The final point on the convention agenda was election of a new National Committee to lead the party until its next convention. The NC's composition reflects the progress made in turning to industry. Aside from those comrades asked to take full-time political assignments, a substantial majority of the members of the new National Committee are industrial workers.

Twenty-four percent of the NC members are Black, 8 percent are Latino, and 31 percent are women. The convention discussed the importance of continuing to pay special attention to developing leaders who are women or members of oppressed nationalities in order to ensure that the leadership of the party reflects not only the composition of the party membership, but also the objective needs of the class struggle in the United States. □

Conferences See Rise in Class-Struggle Mood

Socialists Discuss Trends in U.S. Industrial Unions

By Malik Miah

[The following article appeared in the August 3 *Militant*, shortly before the opening of the Thirtieth National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party.]

How are American workers responding to energy shortages and gas lines? To wage guidelines and soaring prices? To layoffs? To the *Weber*¹ case and other

attacks on affirmative action? To nuclear power? To attempts to drive women out of industrial jobs? To union-busting assaults?

What conclusions are workers drawing

about the Carter administration and the employers? About the two-party system? About how their unions can defend their rights and living standards against these new attacks?

What is the response to socialist proposals on how to fight back effectively?

These and other questions were discussed by socialist workers in the United Steelworkers (USWA), United Auto Workers, International Association of Machinists, and railroad unions during four national conferences organized this

Kaiser's contract with the USWA establishing a program to lessen the effects of discrimination against Blacks in hiring and job upgrading. In June 1979—following efforts by the USWA and other unions and civil rights groups to reverse the *Weber* ruling—the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the lower court decision, upholding the constitutionality of the affirmative-action program at Gramercy.—IP/I

1. Brian Weber, a white employee at Kaiser Aluminum's plant in Gramercy, Louisiana, had filed a successful legal suit against a section of

spring by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

The purpose of the four industrial conferences was to bring together socialist activists in these unions to discuss the impact of the capitalist offensive on each particular industry and its work force and to exchange experiences about how workers are resisting the antilabor assaults. Most important, the meetings were held to discuss and decide what socialist workers, acting together as a national team, can do to move these struggles forward and win new supporters and members to the socialist movement.

Helping to bring about a transformation of the unions—into powerful, democratic organizations controlled by the ranks and fighting for the workers' interests on every level, including politically—is the strategic goal of socialists in the unions. Only that kind of labor movement can successfully bring to power a workers government and begin the socialist transformation of society.

How to advance these goals in practice, in the new opportunities in the unions today, was the prime subject of the four conferences.

UNITED STEELWORKERS

More than 100 socialist steelworkers met in April. They came from Chicago, Illinois; Gary, Indiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Birmingham, Alabama; Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area, California; Phoenix, Arizona; Houston, Texas; and other cities. Participants included young workers in the Young Socialist Alliance, workers from the big basic steel mills, and others from small shops and other USWA-organized industries.

The main perspectives report was given by Dick McBride, a member of USWA Local 1010 at Inland Steel in East Chicago. Local 1010, with some 18,000 members, is the largest local in the USWA and has been a center of militant opposition to the international union bureaucracy.

McBride explained that the unsuccessful attempt to break the power of the United Mine Workers in last year's 110-day strike was the first frontal assault on a major industrial union in more than thirty years. The miners beat back the government and the coal operators. But the antilabor drive continues in other forms.

Steelworker Battles

McBride said that union officials such as USWA President Lloyd McBride, United Auto Workers President Douglas Fraser, and AFL-CIO President George Meany have "no political perspective on how to fight the capitalist offensive and defend our class." They preach reliance on the courts, Congress, and the National Labor Relations Board. They rarely bring into play the organized might of the member-

ship, fearing that the ranks may get out of control.

This false strategy of collaboration with the employers and the government has weakened the unions, strangling their potential power in the red tape of arbitration, mediation, and subservience to capitalist politics.

But, McBride said, "The rulers' offensive is changing our union. Our members feel it and are beginning to look toward the union for protection and a way to fight back. The Black workers have forced the union to defend them—to oppose the *Weber* case and come out for affirmative action. The women have forced the union to support the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)² and acknowledge the organizing of women's committees and special women's conferences."

McBride explained that on the one hand the union officials feel the pressure from the bosses' offensive, which threatens the existence of the union, and on the other, from the workers who want a powerful union to protect them.

"This is why the officials organized the first international USWA civil rights conference of more than 1,000 people. There they talked about the need to fight *Weber*, about women's rights. They talked about how important the Newport News strike³ is. They talked about how union organizing and civil rights go hand in hand.

"We know they are long on talk and short on action. But there were serious unionists at this conference. People who want civil rights committees to be real, who heard about *Weber* for the first time and got excited about Newport News. These are people we can work with to help strengthen our unions."

McBride said that the pressures on the union officialdom "provide new openings for those who want to make the union more effective. It is easier for women's committees to operate, easier to build the fight against *Weber*, easier to organize strike solidarity, to support the ERA."

Such activities, he said, strengthen the union against the employers. They teach the workers self-confidence and point the way forward. "We say the union movement must be democratic so it can use its

2. The Equal Rights Amendment is a proposed addition to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing women full equality under the law. It must be approved by the legislatures of three more states before ratification. Women's rights supporters are campaigning to ensure ratification before the 1982 expiration date.—IP/I

3. Workers at the huge shipyard in Newport News, Virginia, went on strike in January 1979 to demand company recognition of USWA Local 8888, which had won a union representation election the previous year. After a hard-fought battle that won solidarity in other unions around the country, Local 8888 temporarily suspended the strike in late April pending the outcome of court proceedings on the company's refusal to recognize the union.—IP/I

power. It must practice solidarity. And it is going to have to break from capitalist politics and build a labor party based on the unions."

Role of Socialists

"We are fighting for this strategy in the labor movement," McBride said. "We know that out of these battles a new, class-struggle leadership will be forged, and we will be an essential part of it.

"Today we are getting a hearing, which inspires us to be bolder with our ideas. We must remind ourselves that what we, the SWP, say and do means something to the workers. They are watching and learning from us. We are discussing with a growing layer of workers our day-to-day perspective in the unions. *Weber*, ERA, Newport News. What kind of union we need to fight back. What kind of party we need."

McBride concluded by summarizing the main tasks of socialists in steel:

- to get out socialist ideas by distributing the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and other literature, campaigning for SWP candidates, and bringing co-workers to forums and classes;

- to encourage the union to take up such major social and class issues as affirmative action, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and opposition to nuclear power;

- to build and strengthen the union by showing how it can act in defense of its members on questions of working conditions, health and safety, and other day-to-day clashes with the employers.

"Through these steps," McBride said, "we will win steelworkers to our party, which is part of the process of building a class-struggle left wing in the union."

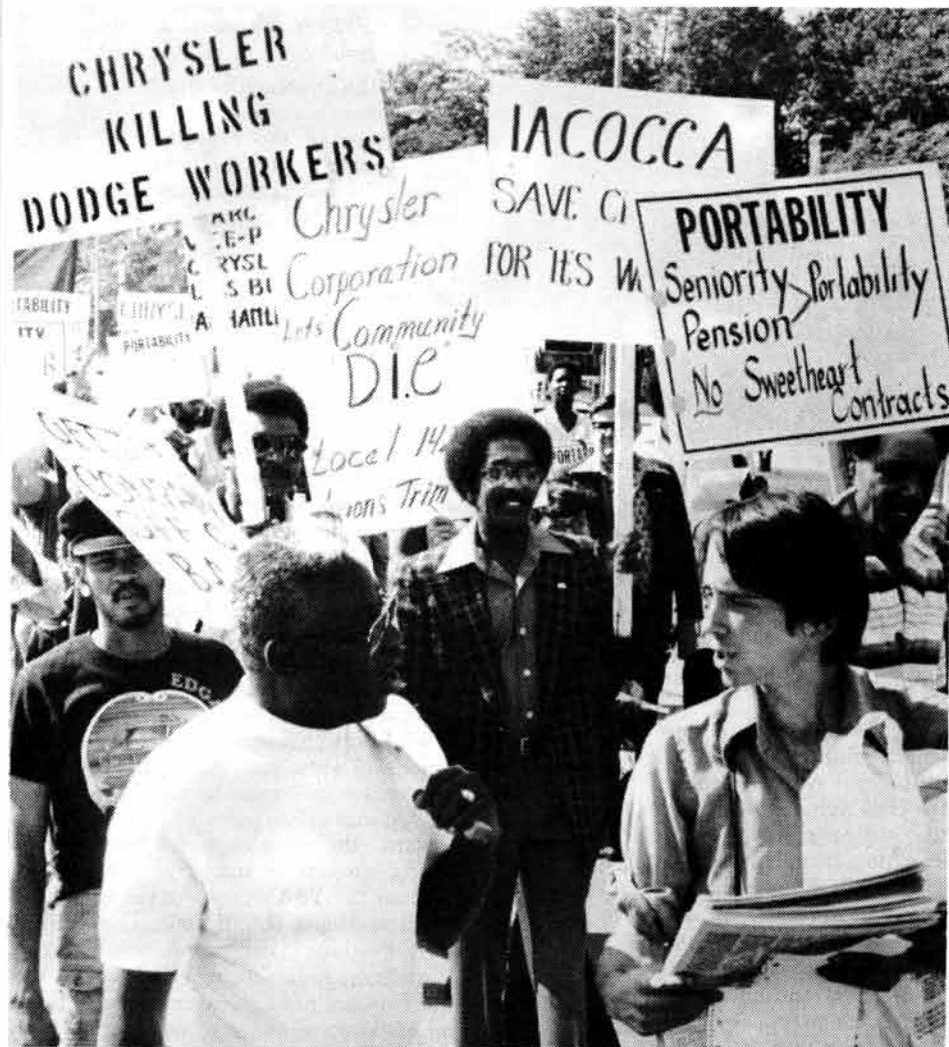
During the discussion period steelworkers spoke on the issues raised in McBride's report based on their own experiences.

Andrew Pulley (Local 1066, U.S. Steel Gary Works) spoke on the impact of his recent campaign for mayor of Chicago on the SWP ticket. The campaign got a good response inside the plants. One of the main ideas put forward by the Pulley campaign was the call for an independent labor party based on the unions.

"Once you lay out the labor party idea," Pulley said, "and the role workers in the union will play, it makes it clearer how workers can put into practice the other points in our program. It makes everything we say sound more realistic. When I spoke in front of union meetings I raised the idea of the union running its own candidates, right now."

Fight Against Nuclear Power

Since the Three Mile Island disaster, support has risen in the unions for protests against nuclear power plants. Even before that, the official position of USWA District 31 (Chicago-Gary) was against the con-



Elizabeth Ziers/Militant

July 18 UAW demonstration against threatened plant closures.

struction of the Baily nuclear plant in northern Indiana.

Mitch Rosenberg from Local 1066 told how steelworkers were more and more joining and playing a leadership role in the local antinuclear coalition. "We want to take the antinuclear movement into the unions," Rosenberg said, "and we want to take the unions into the antinuclear movement."

Charlie Rosenberg (Local 2609, Bethlehem Steel, Sparrows Point in Baltimore) explained that "health and safety is a big question for workers at the Point. Eight steelworkers have died there in the last twelve months. For example, a millwright died of poisonous gas because the company refused to add an odor to it so it could be smelled."

Newport News & Weber

Special points in the steel discussion took up the Newport News strike and the Weber "reverse discrimination" case.

Dick McBride said that one of the main lessons of the Newport News battle was

"the narrowing of the gap in consciousness between Black and white workers.

"The Blacks had taken the lead. The whites were getting more class consciousness. So they came together. The continuing offensive from the rulers will recreate this situation in more and more union locals.

"New blood will come to the fore," he said. "It is these people we look towards. It is this layer that will tend to agree with our perspective for labor. We will need to educate further on labor solidarity—from sticking together at Newport News, to organizing solidarity with anyone who has a hard time getting a decent contract.

"In this light we want reports in our union meetings on Newport News, on the Teamsters strike, on the auto workers' contract talks. We think that strike support committees ought to be a regular institution in our unions."

Jane Van Deusen (Local 13000, Kaiser Aluminum) from New Orleans, Louisiana, discussed the issues in the Weber case and experiences in organizing union opposition

to Weber's racist, anti-woman, antilabor lawsuit. Everywhere efforts were made to get meetings in defense of affirmative action initiated through the unions, success was the order of the day.

Most significant, the socialist steelworker noted, was the fact that the union took up defense of the rights of Blacks and women to affirmative action, and that more and more workers recognized this as a union issue, a working-class issue. The potential power this brings to the fight for Black, Latino, and women's rights was highlighted two months later when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld affirmative action and overturned Weber.

Women in Steel

A panel discussion on women in steel was held at the socialists' meeting. It noted that although the number of women in basic industry is growing, they are not yet viewed as a "normal" part of the work force. This is reflected in the fact that most steel mills still have women's washrooms and lockers in portable trailers, which can be easily removed.

Marie Head (Local 1014, U.S. Steel Gary Works) pointed out that there are a "disproportionate number of women being fired, especially while we're still on probation. This has come to be called 'the revolving door policy.'"

Other issues taken up by women's committees, Head explained, include fights against sexual harassment fueled by the companies' antiwoman positions, maternity leave benefits, fair apprenticeship testing and programs, child care, and such broad social issues as Weber and the ERA.

"We are for recognized women's committees in the locals," she said, "and on the district level and international level. We want women to become active in the civil rights committees and safety committees also. This is happening and will be important to revitalizing these committees."

Barbara Bowman (Local 2609) told of the formation of women's advisory committees in both locals at Sparrows Point. She said there are about 1,000 women out of a work force of 20,000 there. Most of the women are in their twenties and thirties.

Formation of the two union women's committees was spurred by the July 9, 1978, march on Washington for the ERA, Bowman said. Both committees were officially approved by their locals and have held meetings with up to seventy members. They received greetings from USWA President Lloyd McBride and from the District 31 Women's Caucus on their founding.

Iona Gersh (Local 1938, U.S. Steel Minntac) from the Mesabi Iron Range in northern Minnesota reported the formation of a women's committee in her local. Few women worked in the iron mines, she said, until the consent decree was signed in 1974. (The consent decree was an affirmative-action agreement between the basic steel companies, the union, and the

federal government.) Now more than 400 work at U.S. Steel's Minntac facility alone.

The majority of members of the National Organization for Women (NOW) on the Iron Range are women miners. "It isn't any mystery why," Gersh said. "These were the women who first took on the big companies on the Iron Range and had to battle their way for a decent-paying job." The women view both the NOW chapter and the union women's committee as their organizations. "The miners have helped give the NOW chapter a perspective on the main political questions of the day—like abortion and affirmative action."

MACHINISTS & AEROSPACE

The first national gathering of socialists in the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) was held in May on the West Coast. Most participants came from the Pacific Northwest and California. Many of those attending work in the aerospace industry, where the IAM has its largest concentration of members.

The IAM is the fifth-largest industrial union in the country and one of the most important on the West Coast. IAM President William Winpisinger is a major national political figure in the labor movement. He sometimes uses radical rhetoric and is widely portrayed as a left-winger in AFL-CIO councils. He is vice-chairperson of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, headed by Michael Harrington.

The report on tasks of socialists in the IAM was given by Craig Gannon, SWP District Organizer in the Puget Sound area of the state of Washington (Seattle-Tacoma). He outlined the bosses' offensive and its effects on IAM members. The IAM's large membership in the aerospace and military industries gives it a special role to play in the struggle against Washington's war drive and attempts to bring back the military draft. "The IAM has a brochure on the effects of military spending and how it causes inflation, how it does not create jobs or social wealth," Gannon reported.

The stance of the IAM leadership also legitimizes antinuclear discussion and activity in the union, Gannon noted. Winpisinger is head of the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition. "He calls for a moratorium on nuclear development and for government funding for alternative energy. He's a member of the solar lobby. He spoke at the big antinuclear demonstration in Washington, D.C., on May 6," Gannon said. One of the big Boeing locals endorsed a June 3 antinuclear protest in Seattle and members marched with an official union banner.

New Generation

Indeed, Gannon reported, socialist workers are finding great receptivity among IAM members on a wide variety of



Eric Simpson/Militant
Striking steelworkers demonstrate during Newport News shipyard strike.

issues. As in steel, a new generation of young militants is in the IAM. Their attitudes have been shaped by Vietnam, the civil rights movement, women's liberation struggles, and revolutionary upsurges in Africa, Iran, Nicaragua, and Indochina. They are looking to the union to fight back against the employers' offensive.

In San Diego, California, for example, IAM Local 685 put out a fact sheet on the *Weber* case, initiated a labor/community task force to oppose *Weber*, and helped organize an anti-*Weber* speak-out. At Boeing, in the Puget Sound area, several locals held educational sessions on the *Weber* case even though some local officials tried to squelch the events.

In 1972, Gannon noted, the IAM estimated that 30 percent of its members were Blacks, Latinos, other oppressed nationalities, and women. The figure can be assumed to be higher today. Thus solidarity with the struggles of these oppressed workers is a key question for the IAM.

The need for solidarity with other unions is also especially evident because in many companies IAM is not the only union. Other unions hold contracts with the same employer and even in the same plant. This calls for solidarity and coordinated activity on a day-to-day basis as well as in collective bargaining.

Behind the Rhetoric

Behind Winpisinger's "socialist" veneer, however, the IAM bureaucracy follows a class-collaborationist course not significantly different from other union officialdoms. Winpisinger is an outspoken advocate of protectionist trade barriers to protect "our" industries, for example. And with a union lawsuit in California against the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the IAM leadership is helping

make OPEC a scapegoat for the energy crisis caused by U.S. oil companies.

With the approach of the 1980 elections, Winpisinger's rhetoric about finding "alternatives" to the capitalist Democratic Party has gone by the board. Now he is openly boosting millionaire Senator Edward Kennedy as the best candidate for labor to support.

When it comes to confronting the employers over wages and working conditions, the IAM officialdom acts no differently from other union bureaucracies, eagerly seeking conciliation at the workers' expense and fearing to mobilize the power of the ranks.

It is pressure from the ranks that is leading Winpisinger and other union officials to speak out more, Gannon explained. At the same time, Winpisinger's stance prompts valuable discussions on social and political issues facing the union and provides openings for socialists to win a hearing. The 1980 SWP presidential campaign, which will emphasize the need for a labor party, will be an especially good vehicle for such discussions.

Winning members of the machinists' unions to socialism will be greatly aided by the recent decision by the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) to orient its membership toward the new opportunities among young workers in industry. A special report on the YSA's perspectives was given by Kris Huget (Local 1005, Freightliner) from Portland, Oregon.

At Boeing, it was reported, whole sections of the production process are made up of young workers straight out of high school. At one San Diego plant, 40 percent of the work force is retiring in the next two years, opening the way to a big influx of youth.

The socialists also discussed the need for the union to defend women co-workers from discrimination and from company-inspired harassment.

Summing up tasks in the IAM, Gannon said that "we want to be bolder. We want to open up and get out our ideas and talk socialism."

UNITED AUTOWORKERS

More than 100 socialists in the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers (UAW), primarily in the auto industry, met in May. They came from all the major centers of the industry and many other cities: Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland, and Toledo, Ohio; St. Louis, and Kansas City, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; the Bay Area of California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; New Jersey; and, New York.

The UAW is the second largest industrial union not affiliated to the AFL-CIO (only the Teamsters is bigger). More than 800,000 of its 1.5 million members work in the auto industry. This industry is central to the entire American economy, with especially close ties to the steel, rubber,

glass, aluminum, and rail industries.

"Ninety-three percent of the personal travel in the U.S. is by automobile," noted John Hawkins from the SWP's Trade Union Coordinating Committee, who reported to the meeting on perspectives. "One out of six people depend on the industry for jobs."

One-sided Class War

This centrality, Hawkins said, is one reason the UAW is a prime target of President Carter's 7 percent wage guidelines. The UAW contract talks this summer will be among the most important in the country.⁴ The contract has prompted a lot of discussion in the plants. So have comments by UAW President Douglas Fraser decrying the "one-sided class war" the bosses are carrying out.

Auto workers are intimately familiar with the results of this class war, Hawkins said, as "the victims of a constant drive to increase productivity through a steep intensification of labor and the widespread introduction of the ten-hour day, six-day week."

So far the response to the bosses' assault has been sporadic and uncoordinated. But auto workers are radicalizing and are also receptive to socialist proposals for how to fight back—through union democracy, working-class solidarity, and independent labor political action.

For example, the socialist proposal for a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay is gaining a wider hearing as a solution to the crisis of unemployment and overwork. So is the idea that workers themselves should control the speed of the line and other working conditions to protect their health and safety.

'Progressive Alliance'

This class-struggle strategy is in sharp contrast to that of UAW President Fraser, who, like Wimpisinger of the Machinists, portrays himself as a progressive and even left-wing union leader. Fraser has given lip service to progressive social causes while allowing working conditions for auto workers to deteriorate shamefully. His "Progressive Alliance" with civil rights, women's, environmental, and consumer groups aims to clean up the image of the Democratic Party, not to mobilize the ranks of these potential allies in independent struggles. Fraser is staunchly opposed to formation of a labor party and remains a supporter of the Carter administration.

Nevertheless, the positive stands Fraser sometimes takes under pressure from the ranks, like those of Wimpisinger, help to give socialists opportunities for both dis-

cussion and action in the union. Many examples were cited in the discussion period.

Rick Smith from Local 1058 in Toledo explained how his local had established a solidarity committee for ongoing support of other union battles. "The solidarity committee is an important way to build democracy in the union," he said. "Our committee elects its own chairperson and is open to all members. It is not a caucus. We see the committee giving workers the self-confidence that they can make a difference."

George Johnson (Local 1364, GM Fremont) from California said that "in the last five or six months there has been an obvious shift to the left among workers, because of Three Mile Island, the Iranian revolution, and the gas shortage."

Jeff Powers (Local 451, Baker Material) from Cleveland said that the contract talks "will allow us to discuss many things, including government intervention. Fraser says he is against it. So are we. This leads into discussing the labor party. And it will help us get our socialist candidates before local meetings and CAP [Community Action Program, the UAW's political arm] councils."

A report on the YSA's turn toward young industrial workers was given by Sue Skinner, SWP candidate for mayor of Toledo and a member of UAW Local 12. These young workers, she said, "are most interested in broad social questions such as nuclear power, the draft, and other issues." She gave examples of the good response Toledo socialists have gotten among young auto workers.

Labor Party in Canada

The socialist gathering heard a report on the recent Canadian elections from Art Young, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvrière Révolutionnaire.

The UAW is one of the most powerful unions in Canada. But unlike the U.S. wing of the union, the Canadian UAW does not support the two capitalist parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. The UAW and other major industrial unions in Canada back the labor party there, the New Democratic Party.

The existence of a party based on the unions—even though its program and leadership are class-collaborationist—represents an advance for the Canadian workers. And the ruling-class profit drive in Canada is pushing more workers there toward involvement both in their unions and in the NDP, Young explained.

Coverage in the U.S. news media of the Canadian elections has made more workers here aware that their unions follow a different political policy north of the border. It has sparked increased interest in forming a labor party here.

In the discussion on Young's report, American socialists sought to learn more

about the NDP and pointed to the importance of collaboration between socialists in the "international" unions that span both countries.

Women on the Line

The UAW is perhaps the only major industrial union that already has official women's committees. The big job is to make them functional.

Mary Jo Vogel (Local 980, Ford Metuchen in northern New Jersey) pointed to the wide range of issues these women's committees deal with—from inadequate restrooms, coveralls and workgloves for women, to child care, affirmative action, the ERA, and the need for a shorter workweek.

Women's position in the auto industry is not yet secure, she said, which makes every fight for job protection crucial. "Sexist discrimination is a weapon the bosses use to keep the number of women in industry small and to drive us off the job. It includes discrimination in hiring and the day-to-day harassment and discrimination on the job," Vogel said.

"Sexist attitudes on the part of our co-workers are ultimately the fault of the bosses, too. These attitudes are a tool of the rulers to keep us divided. They weaken the potential power of the union. So it is not at all in the interest of male workers to propagate these ideas, and we can convince the majority of them that this is true."

Describing a fight against sexual harassment that drew support from many Metuchen workers, Vogel concluded that male co-workers "are against violence or harassment against any worker, especially when it comes from the boss. Whether male workers know it or not, they see sexist treatment as a class issue—if the boss can drive women out of the plant, then cracking down on the men too is that much easier."

Elizabeth Ziers (Local 600, Ford River Rouge in Detroit) told how she and other women in the stamping plant there got a committee going. They secured the approval of the local president and an article was printed in the Local 600 newspaper, *Ford Facts*. "Our first meeting in September 1978 drew about twenty women, mostly Black."

From Cleveland, Linda Joyce (Local 1747) described how the National Organization for Women's Labor Task Force helped bring together women in auto and spur the activities of union women's committees.

RAILROAD UNIONS

In the rail industry the capitalist offensive has taken the form of a systematic drive to reduce the size of train crews, intensify the work of the remaining rail workers, and force thousands of workers out of the industry.

This crisis and the response of rail

4. Union and company officials reached a contract agreement in mid-September. As of the time *IP/I* went to press, the results from the restricted membership contract ratification procedure were not yet known.—*IP/I*

workers were vigorously discussed at the conference of socialist rail workers held in the Midwest in June. Participants came from all over the country and from many of the rail unions, including the United Transportation Union (UTU), the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC), the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and others.

The political perspectives report was given by Lynn Henderson (UTU Local 1000 on the Burlington Northern) from Minneapolis. "Rail service is vital to the functioning of the economy," he began.

"The capitalists have a deep appreciation of the vital role the railroads play," Henderson said. "That explains why the railroad unions are throttled with the Railway Labor Act and numerous other legal blocks that make it practically impossible for railroad unions to carry out a legal strike. And that is why the government moves so quickly—as it did in the national BRAC strike last year—to bring court injunctions and force striking rail workers back to work."

The capitalists aim to consolidate the entire rail system into as few as half a dozen or so major carriers. They intend to make massive cuts in jobs and service to the point where they can maximize profits on what is left. "The reductions in rail service will adversely affect all workers, farmers, small businesses, and hundreds of towns and cities across the nation," Henderson said.

Social Issue

Thus the rail crisis is a prime social issue. For example, the government plans to eliminate most long-distance passenger train service just when the energy crisis has forced more and more working people to look to trains for transportation.

In addition to fighting against specific aspects of the carriers' attacks, Henderson explained, socialists should explain the need to resolve this crisis by nationalizing the rail industry and turning it into a public service. To assure that society's transportation needs are met, the railroads should be publicly owned, with conditions and safety controlled by the rail workers.

The changing composition of the railroad work force heightens receptivity to such radical solutions, Henderson noted. Although Blacks and women have historically been excluded from rail, "Blacks have now successfully broken into the work force on a large scale. Women are beginning to make significant gains. The median age of rail workers is falling rapidly and will continue to fall in the near future."

Adding to the anger of new rail workers will be the fact that the recently signed rail contracts set their wages at only 80 to 85 percent of the wages of those hired before the contracts.

A key aspect of the carriers' antilabor

drive is reduction of crew sizes. "They started with the Milwaukee Road and Conrail, which they correctly figured were weak links," Henderson said. "The excuse was, 'These roads are on the verge of bankruptcy. If you don't accept crew reductions they're going to go under.'"

In fact, the Milwaukee Road is bankrupt despite crew cuts. The bankruptcy threatens the jobs of 5,000 to 10,000 workers.

Resistance

These attacks are provoking resistance and protests, although the capitalist news media have largely blacked out the truth. In contrast to this combativity among the ranks, the top officials of the UTU and the other rail unions have refused to put up a fight against the carriers' demands. They look to peaceful collaboration with the employers and reliance on capitalist politicians. At a militant protest meeting of 300 rail workers in Minneapolis June 5 to protest the Milwaukee Road bankruptcy swindle, the ranking UTU officials who spoke lamely urged members to send letters to Congress.

New Strategy Needed

A growing number of rail workers realize that a new, class-struggle perspective and leadership are needed. Central to the development of a class-struggle left wing will be the fight for union democracy, including the right of the members to ratify contracts with one person, one vote, and to exercise democratic control over union functioning generally. The lack of any rank-and-file vote on contracts is an especially sore point among UTU members.

Developing working-class solidarity is also necessary for the rail unions—still divided into more than a dozen crafts—to become effective, fighting organizations.

In addition, he said, every struggle of railroad workers "puts them in direct conflict with the government," because of the antiunion Railway Labor Act. "Explaining the need for a labor party comes naturally in this situation."

Henderson said that socialists should "take the lead in initiating, participating in, and projecting a class-struggle response in and through the union to the day-to-day class warfare being waged against the workers." Examples ranged from getting the union to act against safety violations to defending the Milwaukee Road workers. We should think and act as leaders of the union, Henderson said, whatever our formal position in the union.

In Minneapolis this approach led to a successful public protest forum against the Milwaukee Road bankruptcy, sponsored by a half-dozen union locals and organized by an official union committee.

Only recently have women gotten into rail operating crafts. Women's committees have not yet emerged like in steel or auto. But pressure on the union to defend women rail workers is increasing.

The conference included a panel discussion on the fight against nuclear power. Doug Hord (UTU Local 620, Burlington Northern) from Chicago reported that "the railroads carry much of the high-level radioactive waste. The tonnages involved are too high for highway travel. In Chicago one shipment came through under armed guard that weighed 200 tons."

Hord reported that he had given presentations on the nuclear issue before three UTU locals and gotten a good response.

In the aftermath of Three Mile Island, antinuclear resolutions were adopted by rail union locals in a number of cities. A Philadelphia rail worker reported that "for about a week and a half the company couldn't get anyone to go to Harrisburg."

Sylvia Zapata of UTU Local 539 in Denver, Colorado told how her co-workers became politicized around Three Mile Island since "we work over three uranium dumps."

Hord explained that using coal as an alternative to nuclear power for generating electricity should have special appeal to rail workers. "Sixty percent of the coal now travels over the rails. There is no other way that such a bulk commodity in large quantity can be economically shipped across country."

The United Mine Workers (UMWA) union opposes nuclear power and urges burning coal instead. The UMWA explains that coal is plentiful; it can be mined safely and burned cleanly. Conversion to coal would open up thousands of new jobs both in mining and on the railroads.

Hord urged getting rail workers involved in antinuclear coalitions. Active involvement of the UMWA and rail unions in the antinuclear fight would be a big step toward building the kind of powerful movement that can force a halt to the nuclear danger.

One of the major tasks decided at the conference was to continue helping to organize a union campaign against the Milwaukee Road bankruptcy scheme. It was agreed that the momentum of the successful protest meeting in Minneapolis should be extended, with union speak-outs in other cities where possible. Demands for no layoffs and no reductions in service should have a wide popularity among rail workers, farmers, and other working people. Demanding that the books of the Milwaukee Road be opened to reveal the financial shenanigans that led to bankruptcy, and the attempt to boost capitalist profits by firing thousands of workers, also helps expose the real nature of the carriers' plan.

Socialists also discussed the need to concentrate a majority of their forces in the UTU as the largest and most important rail union. Other railroad jobs, of course, can serve as stepping-stones toward UTU-organized positions. And fruitful political work can be done in all these unions. □