

# Intercontinental Press

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## Nicaragua's Road to Victory

Cuba's *Bohemia* Interviews FSLN Commander Humberto Ortega



"We had thought the masses would support the guerrillas in taking power. But that's not how it happened. Instead the guerrillas ended up supporting the mass insurrection that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship . . ."

**Also: Capitalists Step Up Resistance to FSLN Plans**

### THE BRITISH STEEL STRIKE



G.M. Cookson/Socialist Challenge

**Bani-Sadr  
Attacks Students**

**How the  
Embassy  
Exposures  
Accelerated  
Iranian  
Revolution**

**Problems of  
the Afghan  
Revolution**

## How Students' Exposures Deepened Iran Revolution

By Janice Lynn

The newly elected president of Iran, Abu al-Hassan Bani-Sadr, has publicly attacked the militants occupying the U.S. embassy in Tehran—the Muslim Students Following the Imam's Line.

In a February 6 interview published in the Tehran newspaper *Kayhan*, Bani-Sadr said, "How can one rule a country when a group called 'Students Following the Path of the Imam' acts in a self-centered way and behaves like a government within a government?"

The specific incident that prompted Bani-Sadr's statement was the students' charge that Minister of Information Nasser Minachi had cooperated with the CIA.

The students had appeared on television and produced U.S. embassy documents to support their charges. One of these, dated December 8, 1978, said of Minachi, "He has been very truthful and frank with the embassy staff and has been passing information."

Following the broadcast, revolutionary guards arrived at Minachi's home with a warrant for his arrest, and he was brought to Evin Prison for questioning.

In the *Kayhan* interview, Bani-Sadr branded the accusation and arrest "a disrespectful deed by children who don't know what they're doing." He also criticized the directors of the state radio and television, asking, "Why do they always put these children on the air without consulting the authorities?"

Mehdi Hadi, director of state radio, defended giving the students air time and said there was no reason to consult the Revolutionary Council before doing so.

Later that day, the Revolutionary Council ordered Minachi's release and also ordered the state broadcasting system to stop giving the students air time. The Council said that from now on it must first review whatever evidence they might have.

In response, a spokesman for the students in the embassy said that if they were denied radio and television time, they would use the newspapers to continue the disclosures of documents they have found. He also reaffirmed the students' position that the shah must be returned to Iran to stand trial for his crimes before the hostages can be released.

The students' exposures of the U.S. embassy files have played an important role in accelerating the anti-imperialist and anticapitalist dynamic of the Iranian revolution.

The documents showed U.S. embassy collaboration both with Iranian government officials and with certain capitalists in Iran.

The students had first come under heavy fire in late December after they released embassy documents on Amir Entezam, the first deputy prime minister under Mehdi Bazargan. The documents showed that Entezam had met with U.S. officials in January 1978, before the shah fell. He was acting as a representative of Bazargan's opposition organization, the Liberation Movement. Entezam had offered to accept a compromise whereby opposition figures would merge with the shah's regency council in a coalition government acceptable to Carter.

After these files were released, Bazargan and others called for the students to be punished.

But on December 28 tens of thousands of Iranians rejected the attack on the students. They marched to the U.S. embassy chanting, "Students, continue the exposures!" On the same day in the city of Qazvin 400,000 participants in a memorial demonstration chanted: "Students, continue the exposures!"

The exposures coincided with what Iranian workers were finding from their day-to-day experiences. They saw how the imperialists were sabotaging the economy by refusing to provide needed spare parts; how the Iranian capitalists were hoarding goods and closing plants, as well as blocking efforts to establish workers' control over production; and how the Ministry of Labor was often frustrating workers' attempts to deal with these problems.

Iranian workers were convinced that bringing the shah into the United States signalled a serious move by the American government to reassert its domination over their country. The files in the U.S. embassy were seen as conclusive proof of U.S. imperialism's attempt to subvert the Iranian revolution.

Thus, the occupation of the embassy in early November opened a new stage of the Iranian revolution, inspiring months-long, daily mobilizations by Iran's workers and farmers against any compromise with imperialism.

An important aspect of the mobilizations was their independent character. The workers *shoras*, elected factory committees, began to take the initiative in calling and building the protests.

The *shoras* have also been taking bolder and bolder measures against the bosses,

organizing to win improvements in working conditions, wages, and other needs.

Similarly, the small farmers, many of whom have seized estates of big landlords, have intensified their calls on the government to carry out land reform.

Thus, the workers and farmers have begun to assert their right to a voice in how to overcome the economic and social legacy of the shah's tyranny—unemployment, underindustrialization, inequitable land distribution, inflation.

One of the signs hung by the students from the embassy building says: "The only way to cut off all the imperialistic dependence is by revolutionary action."

Many Iranian workers and farmers have concluded that revolutionary action must be directed not only at the imperialists but also at the landlords, factory owners, and those figures in the government who are openly blocking efforts to achieve independence from U.S. imperialism.

For example, the Islamic Workers Shora, consisting of representatives from shoras in 128 Tehran factories, marched to the U.S. embassy December 23. They presented a resolution calling for the extradition of the criminal shah as well as a break with Iran's dependence upon imperialism in the economic, commercial, and military fields.

The resolution also declared, "Abolish capitalism and plunder! The government should take complete control of industrial planning and run industry in the interests of national growth. . . . in collaboration with the shora in each plant."

The resolution also supported the demands of the farmers for land reform; called for the development of basic industry; and demanded a purge of persons linked to SAVAK and the CIA from all offices and factories, particularly those elements in the Ministry of Labor.

The students at the embassy hailed the workers as "the arm of the revolution." A representative told the December 23 workers demonstration, "You are organizing yourselves in shoras, which you consider

### Tenth HKE Prisoner Freed

On January 30, Hamid Shahrabi, a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party (HKE), was released from prison in Ahwaz. This brings to ten the number of HKE prisoners who have been freed on bond.

The remaining four prisoners are Hormoz Fallahi and Mustafa Seifabadi, imprisoned in Karoun Prison; Mahsa Hashemi, one of the two women prisoners, who is in Behbahan Prison; and Fatima Fallahi, the other woman prisoner, who has been hospitalized in Ahwaz.

the only way to cut Iran's ties to imperialism."

The anti-imperialist upsurge has also given another impulse to the struggle by the oppressed nationalities. Large protests took place in Azerbaijan during December, and renewed struggles have broken out in Kurdistan.

This time the government felt pressured to take an overall posture of negotiations rather than military action. This reflected the experience of the government's war against the Kurdish rebels in mid-1979, which became very unpopular among Persian and non-Persian workers. It also reflected the prevailing popular sentiment that the peoples of Iran should be fighting Washington, not each other.

Many Azerbaijani and Kurdish rebels supported the anti-imperialist struggle, and many Iranian workers became more open to seeing that the overall struggle against Washington would be strengthened by granting the oppressed nationalities the right to govern their own affairs, choose their own leaders, and observe their own culture.

The events at the U.S. embassy have also deepened the internationalist consciousness of the Iranian masses. Their solidarity with other anti-imperialist struggles has been enhanced and their suspicion of the U.S. role in other countries deepened.

This can be seen in regard to Afghanistan. The official position of the Iranian government is one of condemnation of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and support to the right-wing guerrilla forces, who are falsely portrayed as Islamic revolutionaries. But there appears to be little enthusiasm among the Iranian masses to join with the U.S.-backed Afghan rightists in the battlefields.

The conference of foreign ministers of Islamic countries held January 27-28 in Islamabad, Pakistan, sparked considerable controversy in Iran. The purpose of this imperialist-inspired conference was to condemn the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

The students at the embassy denounced the conference as a "conspiracy against the Iranian revolution." But when the conference agreed to add U.S. threats against Iran to the agenda, the Iranian government sent a deputy foreign minister to Islamabad.

Iranian government officials have since reiterated their support to the Afghan rightists.

Ayatollah Khomeini, who for six weeks had not made a public statement on the Soviet actions, broke his silence February 4 in a statement read by his son. The statement pledged "unconditional support" for the forces fighting the Afghan government.

Bani-Sadr also attacked the Soviet troops, but rejected sending Iranian soldiers to fight them. The January 28 *Le Monde* quoted him as saying, "Certainly we intend to resist Russian expansionism,

but we are not going to give that to the Americans as a pretext for retaking a foothold here."

The new Iranian government faces big tests in coming months. The workers have won significant economic gains, established a certain amount of control on the job, and have enjoyed relative democratic freedoms. This has raised their expectations. They now expect the new government to take moves to solve the social and economic problems of their country, and they have become vigilant against any possible collaboration by Iranian officials with the U.S. government.

The Iranian people have made it clear

that they support the demands of the students in the embassy and support the continuing release of U.S. spy files.

Tehran radio reported a march February 8, by a "huge crowd" calling for the state radio and television network to give time to the militants to air their accusations against those suspected of cooperation with the shah and the U.S. government.

No matter how the situation with the hostages in the U.S. embassy is resolved, the actions of the students has propelled the Iranian workers and farmers further along the road of independent political struggles. They will continue to make their voices heard. □

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## Sandinistas Set Ambitious 1980 Economic Reactivation Plan

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Acting in the framework of the 1980 Plan for Economic Reactivation adopted at the end of December, the FSLN-led Government of National Reconstruction is continuing to take measures aimed at improving the living standards of working people.

The plan itself sets ambitious goals for boosting the production of domestic food supplies; of key agricultural export products such as cotton, coffee, and sugar; and of basic industrial goods such as medicines and veterinary products, clothing, educational materials, construction supplies, and fertilizers and pesticides needed for agriculture.

The plan calls for domestic production of 68 percent of the country's four basic food grains—rice, corn, beans, and sorghum—with the rest to be imported.

Industrial output is to be raised by 17 percent over 1979, when production was severely disrupted by the civil war and Somoza's deliberate destruction of many factories. This would mean matching the 1978 levels. An overall increase of 22 percent in the Gross Domestic Product is planned.

As part of the plan the revolutionary government is pressing for cooperation from private capitalists, who still retain control over a substantial portion of Nicaragua's industry and export agriculture. The implicit trade-off is simply that the property of these capitalists will not be seized so long as they keep production up and follow the guidelines of the economic plan. The plan seeks to subordinate the capitalists to the government's overall social goals and investment priorities, calling for the maintenance of a "mixed economy" in 1980. The Sandinistas hope to enforce the subordinate role of the capitalists through taxation and government control over bank credits and foreign exchange.

### Social Programs

The government's own budget for 1980 sets aside a whopping 62 percent of expenditures for health, education, and housing. This is in striking contrast, for example, to the Somoza dictatorship's 1978 budget, which devoted a meager 17 percent to the same categories.

To reduce unemployment—which now stands at 32 percent and is expected to rise further in coming months—the 1980 economic plan calls for the creation of 90,000 new jobs, 15,000 of which will be in construction. A major nationwide literacy campaign has been launched. Six new hospitals, more than 200 primary schools,

and 2,500 housing units are to be built this year. Work is to begin on the first all-weather highway connecting the densely populated western part of Nicaragua to the far-less-developed Atlantic coast region. Already under way is an extensive children's park in the central Managua area destroyed by the 1972 earthquake.

The rate of inflation topped 60 percent in 1979. This year the government hopes to hold price increases to 19 percent. The plan will increase the minimum wage. But the government will encourage most employed workers to limit their demands for higher pay. The newly appointed minister of

planning, Commander of the Revolution Henry Ruiz, explained this policy in a December 30 interview with the FSLN daily *Barricada*:

... we have outlined a policy of maintaining real wages as the most adequate way to avoid the creation of a great mass of currency in the country that would lack a real counterpart in consumer goods. That would provoke an uncontrollable escalation of prices. Inflation only benefits the capitalists and merchants, who speculate by taking goods, hiding them, and waiting for better prices. . . .

So real wages means maintaining the market basket or improving it to the extent that the economy permits. But if the economy does not

### Some Economic Problems

MANAGUA—During the first several weeks of 1980, the Nicaraguan government has had to confront several problems in implementing the Plan for Economic Reactivation.

Despite the far smaller amount of cotton to be harvested—owing to the fact that 1979 planting was disrupted by the revolutionary war—some areas of the country have experienced a shortage of labor to pick cotton. The reasons for this are not altogether clear: it may be due to the abnormally late planting of food crops, which meant that many campesinos are now involved in harvesting beans on their own small plots rather than seeking work picking cotton; to the fact that in years past many cotton pickers came from Honduras and El Salvador but have stayed away this year; or to difficulties in transporting workers from the cities and towns to the cotton fields owing to the disruptions left by the war. INRA, the ATC, and the Nicaraguan Cotton Enterprise (ENAL), which is part of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, are working to solve this problem. Special appeals have gone out for experienced cotton harvesters.

Some 15,000 of the 90,000 jobs to be created under the 1980 economic plan were to be financed by a special fund set up for donations of Christmas bonuses by employed workers. Thousands of workers volunteered to make such contributions. Employers were to withhold the bonus from participating workers and turn the funds over to the government by December 31. But as of that date, only a small fraction of the money had been turned in.

The economic situation of the workers and campesinos remains quite difficult owing to the high unemployment and inflation. Some sectors of employed workers—particularly those who were organized in reformist-led unions and were relatively better paid during the dictatorship—carried out brief strikes for higher wages in December and January. These included health workers, construction workers, and sugar mill workers. The work stoppages were all led by non-Sandinista forces inside the labor movement, such as the ultra-left Stalinist current that leads the Frente Obrero (FO—Workers Front); the Independent General Workers Federation (CGT-i), controlled by the pro-Moscow Socialist Party (PSN); and the Christian Democratic-led Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers (CTN).

In handling the strikes, the Sandinistas sought to explain to the workers their policy of discouraging pay increases while upgrading the "social wage" through food price controls and big reductions in the cost of services such as health care, housing, and education. When such explanations failed to convince the workers, the wage demands were granted, usually along with other measures such as the establishment by ENABAS of reduced price food stores at the work places. In no case was repression used against striking workers.

The most serious of the strikes involved some 4,000 construction workers employed on the children's park project in downtown Managua (see last week's *IP/I*). □

permit this the answer is not to raise nominal wages. If the working class and the campesinos understand this we will have solved one of 1980's thorniest problems.

Moderate wage levels in nationalized enterprises will also allow more resources to be allocated to job creation for the unemployed and upgrading the "social wage" through food price subsidies and increased spending on housing, education, and health.

Related to this policy is the FSLN's insistence on the need for "austerity" if the 1980 goals are to be met. In Nicaragua today the term "austerity" has quite a different content from the attacks on workers' living standards that it has come to be associated with when used by capitalist governments. Henry Ruiz explained in the *Barricada* interview:

... when we talk of austerity we have to understand who is to get less and who is to get more. Clearly, we are telling the bourgeoisie to consume fewer luxury goods, moderate their way of life... demand fewer cars, less cosmetics, fewer imported televisions, all those things that have been indispensable to them owing to the abundance in which they have lived. ...

We ask private enterprise to be moderate, to limit itself, to make sacrifices in their manner of living as a demonstration of patriotism and commitment to this revolution. ...

But when speaking of "austerity" to the

workers and campesinos, Ruiz continued:

We have to say what this consists of. We can't tell the campesino who has never had anything to consume to stop consuming. Nor are we going to tell the unemployed worker who hasn't even been able to pay for his home and electricity to be austere. ... We can't talk about that kind of austerity. But rather what we should say is that what one earns should not be spent on secondary items. ...

#### New Measures

Further measures to better the living conditions of working people and small proprietors have been taken since the economic plan was adopted. These include:

- A 50 percent cut in mortgage payments on housing financed by the nationalized banks and savings and loan institutions. This complements earlier cuts of up to 60 percent in rents.

- Establishment of childcare centers for working women by the Ministry of Social Welfare. Thirty *centros de desarrollo infantil* (CDI—child development centers) are to be set up by the ministry this year. They will be complemented by many more CDIs that the FSLN-led Association of Nicaraguan Women will organize.

- A rent limit of 300 córdobas per man-

\*Ten córdobas equals U.S. \$1; one manzana equals .709 hectare or 1.75 acres.

zana\* on all cotton-growing land. This will benefit cotton producers at the expense of wealthy landowners who had been collecting up to 2,000 córdobas per manzana. Some 40 percent of all cotton land is rented. The Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) is preparing a similar measure to apply to all other rented agricultural land.

- Steps to halt hoarding and speculation by private food wholesalers. The newly established Ministry of Domestic Commerce is setting up local *comités de abastecimiento* (supply committees) with the collaboration of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), Sandinista police, Rural Workers Association (ATC), INRA, and organizations of small merchants. These committees will establish better control over food distribution and detect and punish speculators. The Nicaraguan Enterprise for Basic Foods (ENABAS) is setting up a distribution network that bypasses the exploitative middlemen. Among other things this will involve establishment of direct food sales by ENABAS through special stores in neighborhoods, factories, and other workplaces. A new "consumer defense law" is in preparation and is to be discussed by the CDSs, trade unions, and other mass organizations before being adopted. □

## Trade Unions Strengthened In Response

# Capitalists Step Up Resistance to Sandinista Revolution

By Pedro Camejo and Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Bourgeois resistance to the 1980 Plan for Economic Reactivation and to the Sandinista revolution has been mounting steadily during the first weeks of the new year. With large parts of the economy still in the hands of private capitalists, the projections of the Sandinista-led government are continually running up against the capitalists' drive for profits, which puts social needs last.

Some private coffee growers are refusing to complete the final stages of the harvest and are laying off workers. The Chamber of Commerce has rejected cooperating in the efforts of the Ministry of Domestic Trade to control price speculation, insisting instead that the "law of supply and demand" be allowed to take its course.

Top priority in the 1980 economic plan has been placed on raising the "social wages" of all working people—holding food prices down through government subsidies, expanding health care and educational opportunities, creating jobs, slashing housing rents and mortgage payments, and so on.

Inflation topped 60 percent in 1979, and government measures are being taken to get it under control. Basic food grains are imported by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and sold to consumers at below cost. Housing rents have been cut by up to 60 percent.

But the capitalist market makes itself felt in many ways. Landlords resort to all kinds of subterfuge to sidestep the rent decree. Private merchants take advantage of shortages of food and other goods to hoard supplies and force prices up. Even government-supplied food has been finding its way into the hands of these speculators.

#### Capitalists' Complaints

Meanwhile, imperialist pressure on the Sandinistas is intensifying, and local capitalists continue to drag their feet on putting their industries into full production.

On February 3 big advertisements were taken out in the bourgeois daily *La Prensa* by the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and the Union of Agricultu-

ral Producers (UPANIC), an organization of big landowners. One reiterated COS-EP's earlier complaints that the capitalists had been excluded from political power,\* and the other called on the government to adopt laws enabling expropriated landowners to challenge seizures of their property in the courts. Cotton growers in Chinandega Province have given the government until March 31 to define its pricing, tax, and labor policies in the cotton industry, with an implicit threat not to invest in planting the 1980 crop.

News commentators on several bourgeois radio stations have become increasingly shrill in their criticisms of the government, while columnists and editorial writers in *La Prensa* have used the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and reports of economic difficulties in Cuba as pretexts for denouncing what they call "totalitarianism." Billboards have begun appearing

\*See the article "Nicaraguan Bourgeoisie Complains About Sandinista Power" in the December 17, 1979, *IP/I*, p. 1236.

in Managua boosting the Democratic Conservative Party as the party of "God, order, and justice."

In Washington, the U.S. Congress has suspended action on a proposed \$75 million loan and aid package for Nicaragua at the same time that the Carter administration has begun pressing for quick approval of millions in aid for the bloodstained junta in El Salvador.

#### **Sandinista National Liberation Front**

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction have made several moves in face of this mounting pressure from the forces of the capitalist counterrevolution.

Hoarders and speculators have been warned that they will face prosecution if they do not desist; several have already been arrested. A new law setting price ceilings on ten basic commodities was announced by Planning Minister Henry Ruiz on February 3. These prices will be closely monitored by the Sandinista Defense Committees, trade unions, and other mass organizations.

The first new unit of the People's Militias has been set up at the San Antonio sugar mill. Minister of Interior Tomás Borge has denounced Washington's efforts to place conditions on the \$75 million aid package promised to Nicaragua. "We have told them," Borge said, "that the Sandinistas will not sell out for a few dollars more."

The Union of Nicaraguan Journalists expelled radio commentator Oscar Leonardo Montalván from its ranks on February 2. His broadcasts on the bourgeois station Radio Mil had provided a platform for capitalist figures to attack the revolution. Montalván's news program was cancelled by the station's management the same day.

In this situation, the FSLN has recognized that only by deepening the involvement of the organized and class-conscious workers and campesinos can the revolution move forward. Increasing emphasis is being placed on strengthening the trade unions and broadening the workers' understanding of the key role they themselves must play in achieving the goals of the revolution.

The need for this was especially brought home by a series of recent strikes for wage increases, mostly in nationalized workplaces and all led by non-FSLN forces in the unions. The Sandinistas sought to convince the striking workers to forgo pay hikes in the interests of the class as a whole. But the government granted the increases when these efforts failed, usually along with other measures such as the establishment of reduced-price food stores on the worksites.

One strike, in the private sector, involved workers at the San Antonio sugar mill, which is the largest factory in Nicaragua. Sugar from the mill is sold on the

international market. Taxes on the sales will produce important revenues for the revolutionary government this year. Thus, the Sandinistas have urged the San Antonio workers—who are among the highest paid in Nicaragua and already earn more than their counterparts in the nationalized sugar mills—to exhaust all other avenues in resolving their disputes with the mill's owners before striking. (Because sugar cane must be processed immediately or it loses its value, any halt in production brings immediate losses.)

Canecutters at San Antonio, who are paid by weight, recently came to suspect that they were being cheated owing to lack of supervision during the weighing process. Members of Frente Obrero (FO), a small union led by an ultraleft Stalinist grouping, showed up at the mill and urged the workers to immediately go on strike, arguing that the "bourgeois" government would not respond otherwise. The FSLN immediately sent Commander Henry Ruiz to address a crowd of 500 workers about the economic and political situation in the country.

#### **Sectarians Shout Down Sandinista**

According to several accounts, FO members shouted the FSLN leader down and would not let him speak. "We don't want to hear anymore politics," the FO members shouted. Ruiz was forced to leave the platform.

The strike ended after three days. FSLN supporters at the mill then organized a rally on February 3 at which Ruiz was able to explain what he had wanted to say at the earlier meeting. He emphasized to the workers that all aspects of their union's contract with the mill owners would be fully enforced by the government.

Assembled under a blazing sun at the San Antonio Mill's sports stadium, the crowd of canecutters, mill workers, mechanics, and their families heard Ruiz explain in detail the harsh economic reality facing Nicaragua and the efforts of the government to put the needs of the workers and campesinos above all other considerations.

"Now that the honeymoon of victory is ending, we have to look at what we really have," Ruiz said. How many are without homes, without jobs? "We've found that 33 percent of those who were working before the revolution are now unemployed—some 200,000 in all."

Under the 1980 plan, Ruiz went on:

We hope to create 94-96,000 jobs, but if there are strikes, boycotts of production, sabotage in the workplaces and on the farms, in the factories belonging to the state, we won't have those 94,000 jobs this year.

We have won the battle for political freedom, but we have yet to win economic independence.

Ruiz explained the critical need for dollars to pay for imported commodities vital to economic betterment for the masses. Nicaragua needs many things it cannot

produce at home—even the pencils and paper required for the literacy campaign.

Near the end of his presentation, Ruiz reminded the workers of the rising struggles elsewhere in Central America, and said that the peoples of those countries would be watching the course of the Nicaraguan revolution. "We have a duty to succeed, so that our example will inspire others to liberate themselves."

Finally, Ruiz took up a theme that he and other FSLN leaders have been emphasizing—that a revolution that does not use its power to defend itself will fail. "The Sandinista revolution will not fail. Fifty thousand did not die for us to stand idle when the revolution is threatened."

#### **Managua Construction Union**

While Ruiz and other Sandinista leaders were speaking at the sugar mill, Managua construction workers were healing a split that had developed several months ago in their union, the Union of Carpenters, Masons, Laborers, and Related Trades (SCAAS).

Soon after Somoza was overthrown, some SCAAS leaders had tried to affiliate the union immediately to the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST). The majority of the SCAAS's traditional leadership had opposed this, with the result that two SCAAS's came into existence—one belonging to the CST and one remaining in the Independent General Workers Federation (CGT-i), which is controlled by the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN).

The union affiliated with the CGT-i had retained the loyalty of most construction workers. This was made clear on January 9 when thousands of SCAAS members marched to the Ministry of Labor to demand recognition of their CGT-i leadership, and again on January 14 when workers on a government-sponsored park project in downtown Managua launched a three-day strike to demand higher wages. That strike was led by the CGT-i and also had the support of the FO (see last week's *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*).

Part of the strike settlement involved a pledge by the Ministry of Labor to supervise new elections in which all employed SCAAS members could choose between competing slates of CST and CGT-i candidates. In the days preceding the February 3 vote, however, leaders of the CST, CGT-i, and a third union organization, the Confederation of Trade Union Action and Unification (CAUS—led by another pro-Moscow group, the Communist Party of Nicaragua), reached agreement on a series of previously disputed questions and set up the National Inter-Union Commission (CNI). The first fruits of this agreement was the formation of a unitary CST/CGT-i slate of candidates for the SCAAS leadership.

The 3,000 construction workers who met at the España Sports Complex in eastern

Managua greeted the announcement of this unity agreement with enthusiasm; more than 90 percent of them voted for the joint slate.

After the elections, FSLN Commander Tomás Borge addressed the construction workers and stressed the importance of this step by the workers. He began by pointing out that the capitalists in Nicaragua have various organizations of merchants, industrialists, and landlords, and are also united in one leadership body that defends their common class interests—the COSEP.

"It is logical that they are united," Borge said, "But isn't it also logical that the working class, which has a unity of interests, should also be united?" The SCAAS assembly was historic, Borge declared, "because it is the first step toward unity of

the working class."

The unification process must continue, Borge emphasized. "In all workplaces a single trade-union leadership should be put together."

#### Unity with Independence

Borge made clear that trade-union unity could not be imposed by the revolutionary government. "We don't want an official or progovernment union organization," he declared, "but a union organization that responds to the interests of the workers."

The working class must have the right to say "no" when that is called for, Borge said. And the unions "must be able to confront . . . the Government of National Reconstruction itself when that is necessary."

An editorial in the FSLN daily *Barricada*

on February 4 drove Borge's point home:

Commander of the Revolution Tomás Borge pointed to the essential fact that since the sectors that hold an important part of capital in their hands are pressing to materialize their economic power in the political leadership of national reconstruction—which would mean no more nor less than laying the basis for deciding the course of the process—the workers of the cities and countryside have the duty and the necessity to consolidate their force and cohesiveness above all. . . .

[The Sandinista] fist will have to strike against those who at a certain moment will want to impede the advance of the revolutionary transformations and who will utilize more and more violent methods because it is undeniable that to defend their own narrow interests the owners of big capital will resort to all available resources before giving up the battle. □

## Measures Raise Important Issues for Revolutionists

# Nicaraguan Government Closes 'El Pueblo,' Jails FO Leaders

By Pedro Camejo and Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Against the background of a sharpening confrontation between the Sandinista-led government and the Nicaraguan capitalists, a series of harsh measures have been taken against an ultraleft sectarian Stalinist current here, the MAP/FO (see accompanying article).

On January 23, Sandinista security forces took over the offices of the Frente Obrero's (FO) daily newspaper *El Pueblo* and arrested seven FO leaders. Charges were brought on January 31 against the detainees and two others, including the paper's editor Melvin Wallace, who turned himself in February 4. They are charged with violating Article 4, Section C of the Public Order and Security Law, which prohibits distribution of propaganda "that seeks to damage the popular interests and abolish the conquests achieved by the people."

Junta member Sergio Ramírez Mercado announced January 30 that *El Pueblo's* printing equipment would be turned over to the Ministry of Education for use in the literacy campaign.

On February 2 vice-minister of the interior and chief of State Security Hugo Torres displayed to reporters a large assortment of firearms that he said were part of an FO arms cache found at a farm on the outskirts of Managua. According to the February 2 *Barricada*, FO leader Isidro Téllez admitted to Sandinista security personnel that he was responsible for the weapons and "that he had a political justification" for possessing them.

The government had called on all citizens not belonging to militia units to turn in their arms last October. The FO had said at that time that its armed unit—the

Anti-Somoza People's Militias (MILPAS)—was disbanded after the fall of the dictatorship.

Vice-minister Torres also stated that the MILPAS had been involved in several bank robberies and other assaults. On February 6, State Security announced the arrest of four individuals—including the brother of a MILPAS leader killed in the insurrection, for planning to rob Nicaragua's Central Bank.

#### How FSLN Explains Moves

After shutting down *El Pueblo* and arresting the MAP/FO leaders, the FSLN launched a campaign to explain the reasons for these repressive moves. The main themes have been that the sectarians are either themselves "counterrevolutionaries" or at least are "objectively kind to the counterrevolution"; that by encouraging strikes they have "sabotaged production" and tried to "divide the working class"; and that while the revolution guarantees "freedom of the press," there is no such freedom for those who engage in counterrevolution or practice "destructive criticism."

The Sandinistas have also sought to clarify where the sectarians go wrong politically and to answer their arguments. The January 28 *Barricada* carried an extensive interview with FSLN Organization Secretary Carlos Carrión.

We cannot say that all the members of the Frente Obrero are mal-intentioned individuals with counterrevolutionary instincts. The great majority are confused elements who lack an objective knowledge of reality and only know what their theory tells them.

Historically the strike has been a form of struggle of the organized workers. But the situation of our country calls for strikes to be used only as measures of extreme urgency when all other means of negotiation have failed.

The problem with the FO, Carrión said, is that "they show up at a factory and present to the workers the isolated situation at that workplace and do not relate it to the overall situation of the country."

Several rallies, each involving several thousand persons, were organized by the CDS's, CST, and other FSLN-led mass organizations in Managua and other cities to support the closure of *El Pueblo*. At a rally of some 10,000 here in the capital on January 29, Commander Henry Ruiz took up the sectarian's charge that the FSLN was "betraying" the revolution. He affirmed that the goal of the revolution is "to pass out of the exploitation under which we have lived" and achieve "truly human conditions of equality and justice." Ruiz continued:

But that, *compañeros*, requires a material base, and thus at certain times the position of the revolution confuses those who want to be confused. . . .

We emerged from the war into economic tasks . . . and we want to say that that too is a war which we cannot lose if we want to think about having a free and sovereign country.

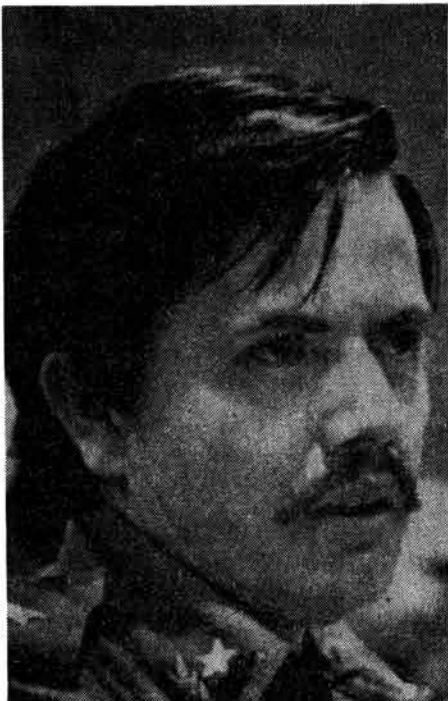
The vanguard [the FSLN] demonstrated that it had the capacity and will to triumph, but we also want to declare that we have sufficient will to remain in power. Let there be no illusions that this revolution is going to betray or that it is not going to make use of the resources it holds in its hands.

The revolution, the vanguard that hesitates to exercise its power is a revolution that dies, and

the Sandinista revolution has been born to stay, to triumph, and not to betray.

### Important Political Issues

The FSLN's actions against the MAP/FO and *El Pueblo* raise important



Commander Henry Ruiz: "Let there be no illusions that this revolution is going to betray or that it is not going to make use of the resources it holds in its hands."

questions for revolutionists to consider. What does it mean to say that an organization is "counterrevolutionary"? Under what circumstances can a revolutionary government use repression to protect itself? What should the revolution's policy be toward the press and organizations inside the workers' movement?

The FSLN is trying to lead the Nicaraguan people forward, to end exploitation and imperialist domination. Growing resistance to the FSLN's course is being put up by those who have a stake in the old system. While some capitalists may cooperate with the revolutionary government for a time, they will do this only in hopes of getting in a better position to resist and smash it further down the line.

Only the workers and their allies, including the poor peasants, represent progressive social forces in semicolonial countries such as Nicaragua. The bourgeoisie—because it is inextricably tied to the private profit system of capitalism and therefore to imperialism—cannot play a progressive role. All revolutionary processes in our epoch either go forward to the elimination of capitalism and the formation of a workers state, as happened in Cuba, or else fall back toward the reestablishment of imperialist domination.

## Who Are the MAP/FO and 'El Pueblo'?

MANAGUA—The Frente Obrero (FO) is the trade-union arm of a group called the People's Action Movement (MAP), which originated in a split from the FSLN in the early 1970s. The MAP held pro-Peking positions until around 1977, when it moved into the orbit of Enver Hoxha's Stalinist regime in Albania. The MAP/FO now holds that both the Soviet Union and China are "state capitalist" societies, and it considers Cuba to be dominated by "Soviet social-imperialism."

*El Pueblo* echoed the hysterical imperialist propaganda campaign against the Soviet intervention against rightist forces in the Afghan civil war. The MAP/FO's hostility toward the Cuban revolution was grotesquely demonstrated when *El Pueblo's* final January 23 issue reported as fact the rumor spread by counterrevolutionary Cubans in Venezuela that Fidel and Raul Castro had wounded each other in a shoot-out!

The MAP/FO holds that the FSLN has sold out the revolution to the bourgeoisie. Taking advantage of the objective problems facing the country, the MAP/FO has sought to blame them on the FSLN—without regard to the massive destruction left by Somoza and the refusal of the imperialists to provide adequate aid.

The FO's organizing efforts have focused on workers employed in nationalized factories and campesinos on the big farms that have been taken over by the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA). These sectarians have totally ignored the FSLN's efforts to move toward workers administration in such workplaces and to raise the consciousness of employed workers about

the economic crisis and their responsibilities toward the poor and unemployed. Instead, the FO has tried to get workers to view the revolutionary government simply as the "new boss" and has pressed for work stoppages to demand immediate wage increases.

The sectarian hostility of the MAP/FO toward the Sandinistas has at times led it into opportunist blocs with the counterrevolutionary bourgeois parties. Last September and October, it joined in a campaign, organized by the Chamber of Commerce, to demand immediate convocation of the Council of State—a legislative body whose original composition would have enabled the bourgeois forces to block the measures being taken by the government junta and the FSLN in the interests of the workers and campesinos.

*El Pueblo* has also featured interviews with politicians and union officials associated with the right-wing, bourgeois Social Christian Party (PSC). The PSC in return lent financial aid to the paper through the purchase of large blocs of advertising.

The general approach of *El Pueblo's* editors was to go out of their way to distort news and report rumors so as to put the FSLN in as bad a light as possible. An example of their irresponsible approach was publication on their front page last September of a report that troops of the Sandinista People's Army had attacked a Honduran customs post with machine guns and left two civilians dead. The rumor had emanated from a right-wing radio station in the Honduran capital and was quickly shown to have no basis in fact.

It is out of this struggle between the workers and the capitalists that the forces of revolution and counterrevolution define themselves. There is only one counterrevolution—the one spearheaded by the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Suppression of this counterrevolution is the unavoidable task that every revolutionary workers government must accomplish at a certain point if it is to survive and move forward.

The *El Pueblo* case raises a different question, however. What is involved here is a sectarian current in the workers movement that is committing serious errors and acting provocatively and irresponsibly. In explaining its recent moves against MAP/FO, the FSLN has tended to mix together two sets of problems whose solutions involve differing considerations.

On the one hand, if the MAP/FO has

indeed violated revolutionary legality by hiding arms, or planning or carrying out armed actions or sabotage, then the revolutionary government has the right and duty to take repressive steps to put a stop to this.

But the Sandinistas often argue as though the sectarians' incorrect ideas alone are sufficient grounds for branding them as "counterrevolutionaries" and suppressing them. The formal charges against the FO leaders so far, for example, deal not with the arms but with distribution of propaganda "that seeks to damage the popular interests." *El Pueblo* has been accused of "destructive criticism."

Any serious error committed in the camp of the workers and peasants is, of course, an objective help to the counterrevolution. But that does not mean that those commit-



ting the errors are necessarily themselves counterrevolutionaries.

The FSLN's first attempts to deal with the gross political errors and irresponsible actions of the MAP/FO came last October when a public campaign was launched to brand the sectarians as "counterrevolutionaries" and "Somozists." Several dozen MAP/FO members were jailed at that time but no formal charges were brought. No moves were made to close the paper *El Pueblo* in October (See *IP/I*, November 12, 1979, p. 1095).

In responding to the initial campaign against them, the MAP/FO modified its hard anti-FSLN stance somewhat and offered to join in a "dialogue" with the Sandinistas. It also turned away from its earlier bloc with bourgeois forces that were calling for immediate convocation of the Council of State.

The FSLN in turn softened its tone against the sectarians, released the detainees, and opened talks with MAP/FO leaders.

At around the same time, an opposition current arose inside the MAP/FO. Pablo Martínez, a long time leader of the organization, and other militants argued for dropping the sectarian line and collaborating with the FSLN. According to Martínez, his current was bureaucratically blocked from presenting its view to the membership. He and some thirty other militants eventually left the group and joined the FSLN.

The "dialogue" between the sectarians and the Sandinistas evidently bore little fruit, and by the beginning of January the anti-FSLN tone of *El Pueblo* was becoming increasingly sharp. The paper again opened its pages to bourgeois forces.

#### Lenin and the Bolsheviks

When Lenin was leading the Bolshevik Party to power in Russia, he carefully elaborated a set of principles for handling differences that arise both within the vanguard party and within the workers movement as a whole.

Lenin argued for discipline, centralism, and combativity. To secure the necessary commitment of the party's ranks to its centralism, he held that the party must debate and decide its policies democratically, with conflicting and minority views being guaranteed a hearing. The right to tendencies and internal democracy was taken for granted in the Bolshevik Party.

Once decisions were made by majority vote or by the democratically elected leadership, all members were required to carry them out. Lenin himself was on occasion voted down in the Bolshevik's debates.

Within the broader workers movement, the Bolsheviks fought politically and ideologically against other currents who were against the revolution becoming socialist and the workers taking power. The Bolsheviks defeated such currents by winning the majority of workers to their positions

in the unions and other mass organizations.

The soviets (councils) of workers, peasants, and soldiers deputies were constantly the scene of sharp debates between the Bolsheviks and other workers parties, such as the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, and Anarchists.

The Soviet government that came to power in October 1917 had a clear policy toward the rights of political tendencies in the workers movement. So long as they did not go over to the side of the capitalist counterrevolution, they had the full right to organize, publish their newspapers, and present candidates for election to the soviets.

When currents such as the Anarchists, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries did in fact go over to the side of the capitalist armies that were battling to overthrow the soviets, however, they were correctly repressed by the workers state.

The problems the Nicaraguan revolution faces and must immediately cope with are real and cannot be waved aside. It is sometimes necessary for a revolutionary leadership to make tactical concessions to the capitalists to avert economic reverses and premature confrontations.

Sectarian groups such as the MAP/FO are wrong in their tendency to view such necessary concessions as incorrect in principle or betrayals of the revolution. At the same time, these organizations can sometimes reflect, in a distorted way, moods that exist in sections of the masses.

This factor points to the risk that repressive measures against these groups on grounds other than crimes against the revolution may cause some sections of the toilers themselves to begin to feel reluctant to express their viewpoint and their criticisms. As the FSLN has already demonstrated by its own practice, feedback from the workers and peasants is the best barometer for a leadership in gauging the tempo of the process of revolutionary change, spotting turning points, noting problems, and determining what to do next.

In order to effectively lead the masses, the revolutionary vanguard should openly explain its considerations to the workers and peasants when it believes concessions are necessary—as Henry Ruiz did at the San Antonio sugar mill and as other FSLN leaders did to striking Managua construction workers (see preceding article).

An important part of this process of interaction between the masses and their vanguard, the FSLN, is politically confronting the ultraleft sectarians and explaining what is wrong and dangerous about their infantile positions. Repression based solely or mainly on their wrong ideas cuts across this political clarification, and makes it more difficult to win sections of the masses who may look to them for a genuinely revolutionary course.

In addition to its ultraleft stands, the MAP/FO has made opportunist blocs with the bourgeoisie and has championed openly counterrevolutionary positions, such as supporting imperialism's campaign against the Soviet Union and Afghanistan and attempting to whip up opposition to revolutionary Cuba. These rightist campaigns must be vigorously fought and decisively defeated. The best way to do this is through open political struggle and explanation to the broad masses. This is especially important, since the much more powerful bourgeois forces around *La Prensa* are banging away on the same reactionary themes.

All these are important considerations raised by the recent measures against the MAP/FO and *El Pueblo*. As more facts become known about the charges against this sectarian Stalinist current, the factors that are most directly related to this particular case will become clearer.

#### Preparing for Showdown With Capitalists

The FSLN has made it clear that it upholds the right to criticism. It is defending the independence of the trade unions and mass organizations from the state. It has opposed any acts of coercion against strikes or demonstrations by workers and peasants.

The fact that the government's charges against the MAP/FO leaders have so far been based on the dissemination of incorrect opinions stands as an exception to the FSLN's overall course, which has been toward a broad expansion of democratic rights for the masses and the development of mass popular organizations. Further steps in this general direction, consolidating workers democracy within the bounds of revolutionary legality and security, will maximize the mobilization and political commitment of the toilers in the coming decisive showdown with the forces of imperialist-backed capitalist counterrevolution.

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## Problems of the Afghan Revolution

By Ernest Harsch

In less than two years, the revolution that began in Afghanistan in April 1978 has already brought important gains to the country's workers and peasants.

The last remnants of the monarchy were wiped out. The first trade unions were formed. A land reform eliminated most of the semifeudal landlord class and gave 1.4 million acres of land to 248,000 poor and landless peasant families. Measures have been taken to improve the social position of women and the various national minorities. The masses have taken their first steps toward political mobilization.\*

However, even under the best of circumstances, carrying through a revolution in a country as economically and socially underdeveloped as Afghanistan would be no easy task. Enormous objective difficulties would have to be overcome. In addition, the Afghan workers and peasants confronted other obstacles: stiff imperialist opposition, attacks by counterrevolutionary bands, and the Stalinist political orientation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

All have hampered the revolution's progress.

### Carter Stokes Counterrevolution

By far the most serious impediment to the revolution has been the intervention of Washington and other imperialist powers.

Within days of the insurrection in Kabul that brought the PDPA to power, the White House and the imperialist press made their displeasure known.

The *New York Times*, one of the more influential capitalist newspapers in the United States, ran an editorial on May 5, 1978, entitled, "A Communist Coup in Afghanistan." It advocated giving sanctuary and other aid to opponents of the revolution, stating, "Countries in the region should be prepared to lend a hand, and the wealthier nations should help them carry the burden."

A little more than a month later, about 270 generals, admirals, diplomats, and government officials met at the NATO Atlantic Command in Annapolis, Maryland, to assess the impact of the Afghan upheavals and to discuss possible responses.

Although the new Afghan regime appealed for financial and economic aid from

Washington and other imperialist powers, it received very little. The U.S. government's reaction was to suspend all new economic aid and reduce from \$20 million to \$13 million the aid that had previously been pledged for 1978. It later cut off all assistance and used its domination of international financial institutions to block loans to Afghanistan.

A propaganda campaign was launched to portray the Afghan regime as exceedingly repressive and unpopular. At the same time, the facts about the progressive measures undertaken there were hidden.

With encouragement from Washington, opponents of the revolution stepped up their activities. Afghan landlords, merchants, usurers, monarchists, capitalists, opium smugglers, former military officers, bandits, and others—all those who feared the new social reforms—began organizing armed resistance.

The new Afghan regime placed no restrictions on freedom of religion, yet these reactionary forces claimed to be fighting in the name of Islam. A number of Islamic religious figures did go over to the counterrevolution, but they did so for reasons of politics and social class, not because of any religious persecution. Some of them also happened to be landlords and moneylenders whose class interests were hit by the land reform and cancellation of peasant debts.

Right-wing terrorist attacks against supporters of the revolution began within weeks of the April 1978 upheaval, but it was not until early 1979—after the land reform program started to take effect—that they increased substantially.

Hit-and-run attacks were made against government offices, military outposts, schools, villages, bridges, and even mosques, particularly in those areas where the revolution had significant support and the land reform was taking root. Anyone who favored the regime's measures became a potential target. Peasants, workers, teachers, PDPA cadres, women seeking to exercise their rights, land-reform administrators, members of local defense committees, all fell victim. Some were killed outright, others were tortured to death and mutilated, their bodies left out in the open to spread terror among the population.

Such actions were not confined to outlying areas. In mid-March 1979, rightist forces provoked a brief rebellion in Herat, the third largest city, in which about 120 PDPA members and their families were massacred. Smaller armed actions have been carried out in Kabul itself.

Counterrevolutionary attacks have been reported throughout much of Afghanistan, but the most sustained activity is in the provinces of Paktia, Nangarhar, Kunar, and Badakhshan. All border on Pakistan.

The major Afghan rightist groups, though they claim to have substantial support within Afghanistan, actually operate out of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. With the approval and backing of the dictatorship of Gen. Zia ul-Haq, they use Pakistan as a sanctuary for their guerrilla forces. Dozens of guerrilla camps, including some in former Pakistani army bases, are scattered along the border region.

The Zia regime officially claims that it is not backing the guerrillas. Instead, it says, it is aiding Afghan "refugees," to whom it gives about \$5 million a month (according to its own figures). A report from Pakistan in the January 28 *Philadelphia Inquirer* explained what happens to this money: "Thousands of refugees have signed up for aid from the Pakistani government through one of the political parties. The parties then keep the aid and the refugees get nothing."

Besides supporting Zia's efforts, Washington is also directly involved itself. A study of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan published in the Washington-based *CounterSpy* magazine in late 1979 revealed that American intelligence agents were active in the Afghan-Pakistani border region, either directly or through such U.S. institutions as the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Asia Foundation. Some were reported to be involved in the training of the guerrillas.

The Afghanistan Islamic and Nationalist Revolutionary Council, one of the major counterrevolutionary groups, has particularly close ties to Washington and to some of the more proimperialist regimes in the Middle East. Its leader, Sayed Ahmad Gailani, a former landlord and businessman in Kabul, spends much of his time in Saudi Arabia raising funds. Zia Nassry, a key spokesman for the group, met with American State Department officials in March 1979. Nassry is himself an American citizen.

The U.S. ruling class has been quite open about its sympathy for these right-wing terrorists, whom it frequently refers to as "freedom fighters." An article in the March 2, 1979, *Wall Street Journal* proclaimed, "The large-scale opposition in Afghanistan provides the anti-Soviet forces in the region and the world with an

\*For a more detailed examination of the revolution's social gains, see "How the Afghan Revolution Unfolded," *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 11, 1980, p. 112.

opportunity to increase significantly the price of expansionism for the Soviets and reduce the likelihood of the consolidation of a Cuban-style regime in a crucial part of the world."

### Imperialism's Legacy

The retarded level of Afghanistan's social and economic development—a legacy of 140 years of imperialist domination—is another major restraint hampering the implementation of the social reforms.

Afghanistan is a predominantly agricultural country, in which the vast majority of the population is employed in tilling the land or herding livestock. Very little industry was developed under previous regimes. The country does not have one mile of railway.

The development of industry and the improvement of health care, housing, education, and other social services require tremendous resources. Afghanistan alone does not have enough of an economic base to underwrite the needed programs; it must look abroad for aid. Ultimately, economic modernization in a country such as Afghanistan depends on the extension of the world revolution and international economic cooperation.

Only the mobilization of the Afghan workers and peasants can provide the human energy needed to begin combatting the debilitating effects of these objective problems. But mass mobilization, too, is not easy in a country with such primitive social structures.

The urban working class—the one social force that can provide a consistent perspective to lead the Afghan revolution—is very small, numbering only several hundred thousand out of a total population of nearly 20 million.

Under the monarchy and the "republican" regime of Mohammad Daud (who was overthrown and killed during the April 1978 insurrection), the population was kept in utter ignorance. Between 90 and 95 percent of all Afghans could not read or write.

All but a few women were barred from the limited educational opportunities that existed, and women were denied their most basic rights. Political activism by women was extremely rare.

In the countryside, particularly among the Pushtun people (the largest nationality in Afghanistan), tribal structures still survived. Like the frictions between the various nationalities, these tribal cleavages tended to divide the oppressed from each other. They gave the khans (tribal chiefs and landlords) a continued social and political influence over large sectors of the rural populace. The counterrevolution sought to take advantage of that influence and perpetuate traditional divisions.

In many respects, the material and social problems facing the Afghan revolution are similar to those in Ethiopia. There, a popular revolution in 1974 led to

the overthrow of the Ethiopian monarchy and the implementation of a sweeping land reform in a country that had long been dominated by imperialism and semi-feudal lords and that had one of the lowest living standards in the world. Afghanistan's problems are also similar to those in neighboring Iran.

So far, however, the Afghan revolution has not been of the same popular scope or depth as either the Ethiopian or Iranian revolutions. In the latter two countries, huge independent mobilizations of the



workers, urban masses, and—particularly in Ethiopia—the peasants developed for months before the overthrow of the monarchies. In the process, the masses became highly politicized and gained confidence in their own strength and ability.

In Afghanistan the overthrow of the Daud regime was preceded by only ten days of relatively modest demonstrations, numbering in the tens of thousands at most, and confined almost entirely to Kabul. The insurrection was carried out by a section of the military under PDPA influence.

The country lacked trade unions, peasant associations, or other mass organizations at the time of the upheaval. In recent decades, the masses' experience in struggle had been limited.

### A Stalinist Leadership

Even a revolutionary socialist leadership would have confronted enormous difficulties in Afghanistan, although a clear-sighted political direction would have done much to help solve them. The Afghan revolution, unfortunately, did not have such a leadership. All it had was the PDPA.

When it came to power, the PDPA numbered under 10,000 members, concentrated in a few major urban centers. It had weak roots in the working class and peasantry (most of its members were teachers, students, or government employees).

The leaders of the party—Noor Mohammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal, Hafizullah Amin, and others—were Stalinists by political training, experience, and conviction.

Like their mentors in Moscow, they claimed that what was needed in Afghanistan was a "national democratic revolution." The socialist revolution, they insisted, could only come at a later stage. Until then, the working class had to tie itself to a bloc with all "national democratic" forces—which in the PDPA's vocabulary included supposedly "progressive" sectors of the ruling classes.

Under both the monarchy and the Daud regime, the party put its approach into practice by seeking alliances with "patriotic" merchants and "national" capitalists. One wing of the PDPA—the Parcham (Flag) faction of Babrak Karmal—initially supported Mohammad Daud and was rewarded with four posts in his regime. It was caught unawares when the "progressive" Daud then turned against the party, as well as against the toiling population.

When the PDPA did finally carry out the insurrection against Daud, the choice was not entirely its own. It had been compelled to act partly out of self-defense (in response to Daud's crackdown on the PDPA leadership) and partly under pressure from its supporters in the streets.

Since coming to power, the PDPA has sought to control and limit the revolutionary process, to keep it within the party's schema of a "national democratic" revolution. The overtures to sectors of the old ruling class continued.

Although the PDPA had to allow—and even encourage—a certain amount of mass organization and mobilization to carry through the reforms, it did so carefully, under strict party supervision, for fear that the actions might develop their own momentum and escape control.

As a consequence, the initiative of the masses was kept to a minimum. The trade unions and women's and youth organizations grew only moderately. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution—the armed militia units set up to fight the counterrevolution—played only a secondary role.

This limited level of mass mobilization—resulting from the PDPA's bureaucratic constraints—was one of the greatest weaknesses of the Afghan revolution.

Coupled with the Afghan leadership's hesitancy to call out the masses was its over-reliance on the state apparatus to try to carry through the reform program. Since the civil service, police, and army had only been purged following Daud's overthrow—not dissolved and replaced with new mass-based, revolutionary institutions—they were far from reliable instruments. Under the pressures of the counterrevolution and the sharpening class struggle, fissures developed. Some army units mutinied and some defected to the enemy (although the extent of defections has been greatly exaggerated in the capitalist press).

The party's bureaucratic approach—

without the self-correcting feedback from mass participation and involvement in decision-making—also left the leadership more prone to error and misjudgement.

Under the literacy campaign, for example, the PDPA activists who went out into the villages to organize classes immediately attempted to introduce coeducation, without regard to the problems of doing so in areas where women were still commonly segregated from men in public life. Rather than carefully and patiently trying to overcome conservative prejudices against women's emancipation, they sought to force the process.

When the regime cancelled the debts of poor peasants in 1978, it failed to make adequate provision for alternate sources of financing for the peasants.

Similarly in carrying out the land reform, insufficient attention was paid to organizing the provision of agricultural assistance to the new peasant proprietors, who had previously relied on the landlords for seed, fertilizer, farm implements, and access to sources of water. An effective land reform requires careful organization and political preparation. Its results must be immediately tangible, easing the burdens on the peasantry; otherwise, the dispossessed landlords can play on discontent.

In dealing with the counterrevolution, the regime's response was likewise bureaucratic and arbitrary. Its basic answer to all opposition was repressive force. Since it was carried out with an army that had been formed under the monarchy, there were undoubtedly excesses, tarnishing the revolution's image in the countryside and making it more difficult to defeat the counterrevolution politically.

Repression, moreover, was not just used against the right. Any political dissent, even from supporters of the revolution and party members, was met with dismissal, imprisonment, or execution. The Aqsa (Agency for the Preservation of the Interests of Afghanistan), a secret police force assisted by Soviet advisers, was set up to deal with such opposition.

The absence of basic democratic rights for the toilers, combined with the regime's bureaucratic methods, gave the counterrevolution openings that could be exploited. The reactionaries were able to play on the uncertainty, confusion, and doubts that existed among sectors of the Afghan population. The conservative tribal chiefs were able to retain a degree of influence in some rural areas.

Besides restricting the revolution's base of support within the country through its methods, the PDPA regime also helped isolate the revolution abroad by adopting a sectarian stance toward the struggles of the Iranian masses. In a speech before party members in Paktia province on April 20, 1979, Taraki hailed the overthrow of the shah, but added that the Iranian

masses had simply jumped "out of the frying pan into the fire" (as paraphrased in a Tass news agency dispatch).

#### Factionalism Weakens Regime

The political weaknesses of the Afghan leadership were further magnified by sharp factional disputes.

The reunification of the PDPA's Khalq (Masses) and Parcham factions in 1977 had been an uneasy one. Within months of the PDPA's coming to power, the old disputes and rivalries erupted once again, with renewed vigor. If there were clear political disagreements involved, they were not made public.

Karmal's Parcham wing has often been termed in the bourgeois press as more "pro-Moscow" than the Khalq, but the evidence is not clear. Moscow itself has not consistently lined up behind either faction against the other. When Karmal attempted to win Soviet backing against the Khalq during the factional fights of 1978, he failed to get it.

Parcham lost the first round. In June and July 1978, Karmal, Anahita Ratebzad, and other Parcham leaders were removed from key positions of authority and "reassigned" as ambassadors abroad.

In August, Abdul Qadir and two Parcham members of the cabinet were arrested and accused of plotting to overthrow the Taraki regime. Qadir was a popular military figure who had played a key role in the April insurrection (as well as the overthrow of King Zahir Shah in 1973); although he was originally a Parcham member, he was not now closely identified with either faction.

"Confessions" were extracted from Qadir and the others, and they were tried and sentenced. Taraki claimed that Karmal and other Parcham leaders were also implicated in the alleged plot and expelled them from the party. When he called them back from their ambassadorial posts abroad, they prudently declined to return.

A few Parcham leaders survived the purge, but the bulk—accounting for a sizable minority of the party leadership—ended up in prison or in exile. Among the ranks, hundreds of Parcham supporters were dismissed from their posts or detained.

In 1979, as the growth of the imperialist-backed counterrevolution put greater strains on the regime, new rifts appeared within the Khalq faction itself.

As the year progressed, Hafizullah Amin steadily consolidated his position within the regime and party. In March he took over as prime minister from Taraki (who retained the post of president). In July he acquired the Defense Ministry, nudging aside Col. Aslam Watanjar, another central figure of the April 1978 insurrection. On September 14, after a shoot-out at the presidential palace, Amin emerged as head of state. Radio Kabul later announced that

Taraki was dead, having succumbed to an unnamed "illness."

The circumstances of the September coup are murky. But on the basis of the scrappy evidence available (including an internal party memorandum by Amin supporters), it appears that Taraki, with Soviet backing, had attempted to remove Amin from the government as a prelude to a possible reconciliation with the Parcham. Just days before the fighting in Kabul, Taraki had visited Moscow, where he received a warm public welcome from Brezhnev and reportedly met with Karmal. The plan to dump Amin backfired, however.

After Amin seized power, the strains with Moscow were evident. Amin's foreign minister, Shah Wali, virtually accused Moscow of having sided with Taraki. Under pressure from Amin, the Soviet ambassador in Kabul was replaced. Substantial ties with Moscow remained, however, and Soviet economic and military aid continued to pour in.

The change in government did not result in any basic shifts in policy, although Amin did put greater emphasis on the use of military force and repression. Aqsa, the secret police branch under Taraki, was disbanded and replaced by the KAM (Workers Intelligence Institute), headed by Amin's cousin, Assadullah Amin. Some political prisoners were released, only to be replaced by others.

A new wave of purges swept the government and party, further undermining their base of support. Colonel Watanjar and several other top military figures, under the threat of impending arrest, took refuge in the Soviet embassy. Suleiman Laiq, a long-time leader of the PDPA and one of the few Parcham figures still around, was expelled from the Central Committee.

In November 1979, the president of the Workers Union of Afghanistan, the central trade-union federation, was replaced by Hassangul Wafa Kargar, a new Amin appointee to the PDPA Central Committee. When he was presented before an assembly of workers, it was secret police chief Assadullah Amin who introduced him.

The sectarian attacks against the Iranian revolution became even more virulent. Each month, the *Kabul Times* carried at least one editorial devoted to condemning the "tyranny and despotism" of the "reactionary and fanatic regime of Iran, led by Khomeini."

Amin's efforts to contain the counterrevolution through armed might were unsuccessful. A major Afghan army offensive in Paktia in October inflicted heavy casualties on the guerrilla bands, but within weeks the rightists began to filter back.

The continual purges and the mounting pressures of the war weakened the regime. In October, troops mutinied at Rishkur, Kabul's largest infantry garrison. The tank corps at Pul-i Charkhi failed to come

to Amin's assistance, although he managed to put the mutiny down without it.

### Moscow Forced to Intervene

The danger that the regime in Kabul might eventually succumb to the counterrevolution was growing. If the guerrilla armies had managed to oust the PDPA and march into Kabul, all the social gains of the Afghan revolution would have been in jeopardy. The workers and peasants would have faced severe repression. Imperialism's stranglehold over the country would have been reasserted and immeasurably strengthened.

Moscow watched the developments in Afghanistan with anxiety. It feared the possible establishment of an openly proimperialist regime right on its southern border—in a country that had previously served as a military "buffer" state.

Although that danger had been growing for some time, the conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin hesitated for as long as they could. The regime in Kabul had requested greater Soviet military assistance ever since December 1978. But it was only a year later that Moscow finally decided to act decisively.

To bolster the Afghan regime's fight against the counterrevolution, tens of thousands of Soviet combat troops began pouring into Afghanistan during the last days of 1979. It was a stunning blow to the reactionary bands, who have so far been incapable of putting up much resistance.

In the process of striking against the counterrevolution, however, Moscow also helped overthrow Amin and bring Karmal, the exiled Parcham leader, to power. Amin was promptly executed, along with Assadullah Amin and several others. They were then posthumously accused of having been "CIA agents."

There was little sign of mourning in Kabul for Amin's passing. But the bureaucratic way in which he was overthrown hindered the defense of the Afghan revolution. It made it much easier for the imperialists to launch an international propaganda campaign against Moscow and the new Afghan regime, to try to politically isolate them.

Inside Afghanistan, what was needed were not scapegoats, branded as "imperialist agents," but honest explanations of the difficulties facing the revolution—and sober assessments of past errors in dealing with them.

Despite Moscow's bureaucratic methods—and its own counterrevolutionary policies and conservative motivations—the dispatch of troops to Afghanistan was an important aid to the revolutionary process. It was not directed at the social gains of the workers and peasants, but against those who want to overturn them. Objectively, it leaves open the door to further revolutionary advances by the Afghan masses.

From the outset, Karmal's new government made it clear that it was basing itself on the program of the April revolution. It promised to defend the social gains that had been achieved.

According to Deputy Prime Minister Sultan Ali Keshtmand, the slogans of the regime are "Work for the jobless," "Land to the peasants," and "Illiteracy is the enemy of the revolution." He stated, "The liquidation of the vestiges of feudalism, the expansion of the state sector in the economy, the provision of assistance to artisans, medium-size and small land-owners, and the continuation of the democratic land reform—such are our most pressing tasks."

At the same time, like the previous two



BABRAK KARMAL

regimes, Karmal has also made overtures to the small number of capitalists and merchants. He announced that private ownership of business would be recognized and that "our direct objective in the present conditions is not the introduction of socialism. . . ."

The composition of the new government, announced on January 11, marked a conscious effort to try to heal the factional rifts that had torn apart the PDPA. Half of the posts in the new twenty-member cabinet were filled by party leaders who had been in Taraki's initial cabinet of April 1978, before the purges. Ministers were drawn from both factions, including three who had served under Amin. Abdul Qadir and Aslam Watanjar, the two leaders of the April insurrection, were named to the Presidium of the new fifty-seven-member Revolutionary Council.

Concurrently, as part of Karmal's attempts to reassure business circles, three nonparty figures were also appointed to the cabinet for the first time since the beginning of the revolution. One, Mohammad Khan Jalal, had been commerce minister under the Daud regime.

More significant, however, were the regime's efforts to rebuild and expand the revolution's base of support among the workers and peasants. A key aspect of that has been a campaign to convince the population that arbitrary arrests, detentions, and executions were a thing of the past.

Amin's secret police, the KAM, was abolished. A general amnesty was declared and thousands of political prisoners were released, many of them PDPA members. Karmal announced that a new constitution would be drafted and that other political parties that supported the revolution would be free to form. Freedom of religion was reaffirmed and stressed.

American and European reporters in Kabul who have generally been hostile to the regime acknowledged that no new wave of repression has taken place since Karmal took over.

Together with these steps have been pledges to continue the social reforms begun in April 1978, minus at least some of the bureaucratic mistakes that had previously been committed. Coeducation, for instance, is now being introduced in a more experimental manner, not as a mandatory requirement for participation in the literacy classes. The new land reform drive announced by Karmal may help overcome some of the difficulties that accompanied the earlier one.

New resources will be made available for social programs and economic development. The initial draft of the first five-year plan, originally released in 1979, is being revised and expanded to include a substantial increase in Soviet assistance. Moscow had pledged to provide electricity, help set up the first oil refinery, and aid the development of Afghanistan's copper, coal, natural gas, and oil resources.

The sectarian stance of the Taraki and Amin regimes toward Iran has been dropped. Karmal issued various statements in support of the Iranian revolution and in a letter to Khomeini proposed that the two countries work together against "international imperialism."

The results of Karmal's efforts to win greater popular support are not yet in. But the party has held some mass rallies and assemblies in Kabul and other parts of the country. According to a report in the January 27 *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, "The new regime appears to have more backing in Kabul itself than that of Hafizullah Amin. . . ."

To securely safeguard the revolution—and to definitively defeat the U.S.-backed counterrevolution—much more needs to be done. Above all, the workers and peasants will have to be mobilized and organized to advance their class interests against those of imperialism and the local exploiters.

Any efforts by the PDPA or Moscow to hold back the revolutionary process will only further endanger the gains that have already been won. □

## Mideast Rulers Fearful of Provoking Masses

By David Frankel

Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of President Carter's top advisers, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher arrived in Saudi Arabia February 4 seeking support for Washington's latest moves to maintain the Middle East as an American sphere of influence.

"It is good to be in a country of friends," Christopher told his hosts.

To which Prince Saud ibn Faisal pointedly replied: "Friends are sometimes better than allies."

Although the Saudi royal family is well aware that it needs the backing of U.S. military power against its own people, it—like most other Arab regimes—has been skeptical about whether Washington's moves toward a more direct military presence in the Middle East will help contain the Arab masses.

Declaring his readiness to commit American troops to combat half way around the world, Carter said in his State of the Union message January 23: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the [U.S.]. And such an assault will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force."

Carter urged Congress to restore registration for the draft and to remove "unwarranted restraints" on the CIA. His proposed defense budget, presented five days later, called for a whopping 12 percent increase in military spending "to contain Soviet aggression."

Meanwhile, Washington has speeded up its search for new bases in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and is moving ahead with plans for a permanent fleet in the Indian Ocean and a "rapid deployment force."

All this, according to Carter, is in reply to a supposed Soviet threat in the region—one he claims was confirmed by the use of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. But the events in Afghanistan have merely served as a convenient pretext for the U.S. rulers. Their real fear is the threat of popular revolution. The main enemy they are aiming at are the workers and peasants of the Middle East—and of the rest of the world as well.

From southern Africa to Indochina, from the Middle East to Central America, the toiling masses are in rebellion. Even as Carter issues threats over the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, his envoys are desperately trying to stem the revolutionary tide in El Salvador. Even as the State Department inveighs against the consoli-

dation of the Vietnamese-backed government in Kampuchea and worries about the future of the military dictatorship in Thailand, the revolution in Iran continues to deepen.

Currently, the Pentagon's base of operations in the Indian Ocean is the island of Diego Garcia. Washington's attitude to the peoples it claims to be defending was shown in miniature when it set up its base there. The entire population—about 1,200 people—was evicted and dumped in the slums of Port Louis, some 1,500 miles away.

As Hubert Bruyere explained in the December 30 issue of *Le Monde*, "the Americans had adopted a 'no population, no problem' policy, 'displacing' the islanders to Mauritius." Petitions by the islanders asking that they be repatriated have been refused.

But the Pentagon considers Diego Garcia, although useful, to be too far away from the Mideast oilfields. This problem was underscored by the Iranian revolution.

### Camp David Accords and Iran

The Iranian monarchy was finally overthrown during the insurrection of February 9-11, 1979. Also on February 9, U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown began a ten-day trip to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Egypt.

Brown promised these proimperialist regimes that Washington was preparing to take a more direct role in trying to crush any revolutionary upsurges in the Middle East. At the same time, he proposed a "consultative security framework"—that is, a counterrevolutionary alliance—that would be backed up with U.S. arms, money, and ultimately, troops.

However, the very factors behind the renewed attempt to form a counterrevolutionary alliance in the Mideast also made it more difficult for Arab regimes to take a too openly proimperialist stance. Like other peoples around the world, the Arab masses have been inspired by one victory after another since the triumph of the Vietnamese revolution and the collapse of the Portuguese empire and the Ethiopian monarchy in Africa. The Iranian revolution, right in the heart of the Middle East, further altered this shift in the relationship of forces against imperialism.

Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat agreed to sign the Camp David accords in March 1979. But King Hussein of Jordan and King Khalid of Saudi Arabia, having just watched the shah of Iran lose his throne, were not prepared to go along with

such an open betrayal of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Instead of the new unified alliance it had hoped for, Washington was left with Sadat in a dangerously isolated position.

Meanwhile, the instability of the other proimperialist regimes in the area remained evident. In March 1979 Carter responded to a crisis in Yemen by rushing an aircraft carrier to the Arabian Sea. In November, Saudi Arabia was hit by a simultaneous rebellion in Mecca and in its oil-producing Eastern Province, and anti-government protests took place in some of the smaller Gulf states.

"At a National Security Council meeting on Dec. 4, [that is, three weeks before the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan] it was decided to initiate exploration of improved U.S. access to military facilities—the word 'bases' is anathema in the Third World—and to do so quickly," Don Oberdorfer reported in the January 24 *Washington Post*.

On December 17, a Pentagon team was in the air, on its way to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Somalia, and Kenya.

"Nobody is looking for a big permanent U.S. air base in the Middle East," claims one Pentagon official. "We want to be more flexible. We don't want large targets put down in areas where they could become focal points for discontent."

Despite such reassurances, the Saudi regime flatly refused to grant Washington "military bases or facilities." The Saudi royal family fears that the process of getting U.S. forces into position to intervene against any revolution in the Arabian Peninsula might well be the provocation that sets things off.

Summing up the anti-imperialist sentiments of the Arabian masses, *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Karen Elliott House noted January 18 that "any appearance of granting favors to Western governments might weaken the grip of the Saudi royal family."

Although the Kenyan and Somali governments have gone ahead with negotiations, both have tried to keep the affair quiet, and both have denied offering Washington bases. "The price for these facilities goes up every time an article appears in the press," one source told House.

### Islamabad Conference

Carter seized on the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan to push forward the war plans that were already in progress. With the Saudi and Pakistani regimes acting in its behalf, Washington

had no trouble in getting the conference of Islamic foreign ministers in Islamabad, held January 27-28, to condemn the Soviet move. Defense of the revolution in Afghanistan is not in the interest of any capitalist government.

When it came to action, however, it was

a different story. In his opening remarks to the conference the military dictator of Pakistan, Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, had insisted that it would not be enough to "demonstrate by words alone our grave concern at the flagrant violation of the sovereignty and national independence of

brotherly Afghanistan. . . ."

But in the end, the strongest action taken by the conference was to urge those attending to "envision" their "non-participation" in the Moscow Olympics. Eleven governments dissented from even this vague resolution.

Far from joining in the kind of military alliance that Washington wants as a cover for sending its forces into the Middle East, proimperialist Arab governments openly attacked the threat of military force in Carter's State of the Union Message.

"The people of this region are perfectly capable of preserving their own security and stability," declared Kuwaiti minister Abdul Aziz Hussein. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah added: "The occupation of Arab territories and Jerusalem by Israel, with American support, is no less worrisome than the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan."

King Hussein insisted that the Palestinian issue was more important than Afghanistan and should be given priority, and Saudi Crown Prince Fahd reiterated Saudi opposition—in public at least—to foreign military bases in any Arab country.

These rulers, so painfully aware of their own weakness, have in recent years come to a better appreciation of the underlying weakness of the entire imperialist structure. Strong as the Pentagon is, they wonder whether it can fight the whole world.

Carter promises a new fleet in the Indian Ocean. But George C. Wilson points out in the January 24 *Washington Post*:

"The U.S. Navy does not have enough warships to cover the Indian Ocean on a permanent basis without going short in other critical areas such as the Mediterranean and the Pacific.

"Carter is recommending a much bigger shipbuilding plan than he did last year—95 ships over five years rather than 67. But they take up to ten years to build. And by the time they start entering the fleet in number, others will be wearing out."

Wilson estimates that it will take at least four years to build the cargo planes needed to deploy Carter's ambitious "rapid deployment force." Moreover, the plan for the rapid deployment force calls for supply ships to be kept in position near potential trouble spots.

According to Wilson, "some Navy leaders complain that this part of Carter's plan fails to reckon with the possibility that even a Third World country could sink the unarmed, prepositioned ships manned by civilian crews.

"Rather than risk having a floating arsenal sunk, Navy leaders fear that policymakers will assign warships to protect the prepositioned ships, further committing an already overcommitted Navy fleet. . . ."

Such technical objections don't even touch on the biggest fear of all in ruling-

## The Exiles of Diego Garcia

By Martin Meteyard

[The following is from the January 31 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, a weekly newspaper sponsored by the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

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In the slums of Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, 434 families from Diego Garcia have been living in poverty-stricken exile for the last ten years. Many of their shacks are made from no more than beaten tin cans. They are the human price for the imperialist war machine that is being put together in the Indian Ocean; a problem that the Thatcher government is now trying to sweep under the carpet.

Diego Garcia, and the other islands which make up the Chagos Archipelago, were historically attached to Mauritius, a British colony from 1814. But in the 1960s there were growing demands for Mauritian independence. How was Britain to retain control of the vital shipping routes?

Bribery was the answer. In return for 40 million rupees the Mauritian government abandoned all claim to Diego Garcia. The inhabitants were not consulted as the islands of the Chagos Archipelago were lumped in with other far-flung islands to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

Two years later, on 25 April 1967, the US and Britain concluded a 50-year agreement to use the BIOT islands jointly for defence purposes. There was still the problem of the people living there. But who cared about them?

In 1970, when the decision to establish a naval communications base on Diego Garcia was announced, the American administration told Congress that the island was "uninhabited." It was the truth—but not the whole truth. Over the previous two years some 1,200 people, making up 434 families, had been forcibly evacuated in the face of general international indifference.

The islanders found themselves dumped in the Port Louis slums, a different world for which they were totally unprepared. In compensation the British government came up with the grand sum of £665,000, which was handed over to the Mauritian government to finance a rehousing

scheme. And not a penny of this money found its way into the islanders' hands until 1978, by which time it was worth much less.

The inhabitants of Diego Garcia were effectively left to their fate. But they didn't give up. Of the 434 families, 422 signed a petition to the British and American governments demanding that they be repatriated to Diego Garcia. Public meetings were held, and the issue was taken up by the left-wing opposition party, the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). The Diego Garcians threatened to become a public embarrassment to both imperialism and the Mauritian government.

Enter a London barrister named Bernard Sheridan, bearing a new British offer of no less than £1/4m (about £1,000 per person). There was just one little snag. In order to get hold of the money, the islanders had to sign a paper declaring that "we abandon all titles and rights which would permit a return to the British Indian Ocean Territory."

Initially the islanders' response was favourable. Most of them are illiterate, and all they knew was that somebody wanted to give them some money. But fortunately they were not without friends.

A Port Louis docker, Michel Gerard Nina, made it his business to find out what was going on and then began to contact all the Diego Garcians to tell them: "Don't sign anything. You have to talk it over with the MMM and the government and keep the newspapers informed."

The British-sponsored secret deal was blown. Now a general meeting of the islanders has voted not to accept any strings on the compensation offered, and steps are being taken to invalidate documents already signed in which they gave up the right to return to their homeland.

The moral of this little tale: that Carter and Thatcher's military build-up in the Indian Ocean has nothing to do with anyone's "self-determination." So next time some Tory collars you with a lecture about the threat to the "free world," ask them when they intend to dismantle the military bases on Diego Garcia and hand the islands back to their inhabitants. The reply should be interesting. □

class circles: will they be able to convince American workers to die for the Saudi royal family and the U.S. oil industry?

Understandably enough, the Saudi rulers prefer not to have to test these questions.

#### Role of Israel

Israel, with its massive military machine and total dependence on U.S. imperialism, remains Washington's most important counterrevolutionary bastion in the Middle East. But no U.S. administration has been able to find a way of both maintaining its essential ties with the Zionist state and at the same time drawing the Arab regimes into the kind of formal counterrevolutionary alliance that has been a goal of American foreign policy since the days of the Baghdad Pact in the 1950s. The identification of the Arab masses with the Palestinian liberation struggle is just too strong.

Carter's political offensive around the events in Afghanistan has not changed this basic fact. The only important figure in the Arab world to rally to Carter's side following his State of the Union speech was Sadat, whose regime was barred from the conference at Islamabad because of the Camp David Accords.

"Isn't it a tragedy that they accuse Washington of being an enemy of the Islamic world while Soviet tanks are running over women and children in Afghanistan?" Sadat asked January 28. He went on to attack the Saudi monarchy for not being sufficiently servile to Washington.

While welcoming whatever mileage they can get from Sadat's antics, U.S. policymakers are worried about how isolated and vulnerable his regime is. Since Sadat appears incapable of exercising some of the caution displayed by the Saudis, Washington has had to play the role of a dotting parent trying to keep a favorite child out of the fire. Sadat's offer to take in the exiled shah of Iran was vetoed by Washington, as was his offer of a U.S. military base.

Along with the faithful Sadat, Carter may have been able to draw in Sultan Qabus bin Said of Oman, whose corrupt and hated regime is seeking a commitment of U.S. assistance against its own people. The Sultanate of Oman has been able to maintain itself this long only with the support of some 600 British officers. Until the Iranian revolution, there were also more than 4,000 Iranian troops stationed in Oman.

Henry Tanner reported in the January 28 *New York Times*: "Very soon, if all goes well, the first United States transport planes will be landing at an Omani military base [near Muscat] carrying supplies that will be taken to American warships in the Indian Ocean by helicopter and small craft.

"Planes will also be landing at Thamrit,

a large new air base in the southernmost part of Oman. . . .

"As specialists see it, the crucial question is whether the United States will be able to build up its air and naval power in the region without provoking political storms making the military gains illusory."

Finally, Carter's initiative has been welcomed on the other side of the Arabian Sea, in Pakistan. Pakistani dictator Zia, as he was once again postponing long-promised elections, made his view clear:

"Forget your Western ideals and your Western standards of freedom and democracy. Here you are in a Muslim country, the only one in this part of the world, from

## A Prop for King Hassan

### Carter Pledges Arms Against Saharan Struggle

By Jim Atkinson

The Carter administration is rushing to the aid of Morocco's beleaguered monarch, King Hassan II. U.S. arms worth \$232.5 million are to be delivered to the Moroccan armed forces fighting the Polisario freedom fighters in Western Sahara.

The Sahraoui guerrillas, who have been fighting for independence since Morocco invaded their country in 1975, have been striking hard blows against the 50,000 Moroccan troops in the Sahara in recent months.

So to shore up the Moroccan monarchy's war drive, the Pentagon announced on January 24 that Washington will sell Hassan twelve helicopter gunships worth \$45 million, twenty F5 jets worth \$170 million, and six OV-10 Bronco planes worth \$17.5 million.

The announcement followed a detailed examination of U.S. policy options on the Western Saharan war at a special meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on October 16, 1979.

White House spokesmen announced shortly after the NSC meeting that Washington would now supply Morocco with counterinsurgency arms, such as Cobra helicopter gunships and OV-10 Broncos, which had been used extensively in Vietnam and had previously been barred from sale to Morocco.

The spokesmen also let it be known that the Carter administration would no longer require Moroccan compliance with clauses of a 1960 U.S.-Moroccan military agreement that, on paper, prohibit Morocco from using U.S.-supplied arms beyond its recognized borders.

"We believe an outright military victory over Morocco by Morocco's adversaries would constitute a serious setback to major

Turkey to Vietnam, where the American presence would be accepted."

Zia's invitation is being eagerly taken up by Carter, who is now urging a longterm military aid program for the Pakistani regime. But, as the editors of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* pointed out in their January 20 issue:

"Today in Pakistan the army rules with great unease. Politicians are locked up or banned or flogged or hanged. Baluchistan is once more simmering. . . .

"A struggling dictator, towards the end of his tether, is no bastion of freedom, however copiously armed. . . ."

But such are the forces in the Islamic world that have rallied to Carter's call. Sultan Qabus, General Zia, and Sadat. □

U.S. interests," explained Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders on January 24 at a Congressional hearing on the planned arms sales.

"The U.S. cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that Morocco has historically been a good friend and indeed, in a practical sense, an ally," Saunders went on. "Morocco identifies itself with the U.S. and the West on key East-West issues. Its support for U.S. positions on Iran and Afghanistan in recent weeks has been strong and public."

Hassan, a despotic monarch who has incarcerated hundreds of political prisoners in his jails, had won high marks in the White House by agreeing to rush Moroccan troops to Zaïre in 1977 and 1978 to help suppress uprisings in Shaba province against the ailing Mobutu dictatorship. He also won praise in Washington for his role in helping to initiate the contacts between the Egyptian and Israeli regimes that culminated in President Anwar el-Sadat's sell-out of the Palestinians at Camp David.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, is afraid that the U.S. 6th Fleet's facilities in Moroccan ports might be threatened if a Moroccan defeat in the Sahara undermines the fragile Moroccan monarchy.

The imperialists also fear that a successful struggle for independence by the Sahraoui people could set an inspiring example for oppressed peoples elsewhere.

Now, as the forces of world revolution are again on the rise, the White House is more determined than ever to keep Hassan on his throne. Carter does not want him to go the way of Somoza or the shah of Iran.

The direct victims of this policy are the oppressed Sahraouis, and the Moroccan masses themselves. □



## Hawk from Vietnam War Masquerades as Friend of Kampuchea

By Fred Feldman

The famine in Kampuchea is over.

This was acknowledged January 23 by Victor Palmieri, the U.S. State Department's coordinator for refugee affairs. Palmieri's statement is an implicit admission that President Carter was lying when he said that the Vietnamese and Kampuchean governments were deliberately withholding food from starving Kampuchean.

According to the January 24 *New York Times*, Palmieri even admitted that "the Cambodian authorities for the most part allowed inhabitants to keep food harvested in November and December." This directly contradicts assertions by the Carter administration that Vietnamese soldiers were barring Kampuchean farmers from harvesting rice.

The end of the famine is a victory for the people of Indochina and the world.

Kampuchea survived because the governments of Vietnam and the Soviet Union provided food.

Kampuchea survived because relief agencies such as Oxfam in Britain and Church World Services in the United States refused to be party to Carter's efforts to use famine as a weapon against the Heng Samrin government.

Kampuchea survived because tens of millions of working people all over the world, including in the United States, felt that food aid must be given to Kampuchea with no strings attached.

But the U.S. government is trying to keep economic and military pressure on Kampuchea in the expectation that a new famine may occur in the spring.

Washington's immediate goal is to keep Kampuchean and Vietnamese troops from mopping up the remaining military forces of mass murderer Pol Pot. Thailand's military dictatorship is involved in organizing and protecting Pol Pot's military encampments on both sides of the Thai border.

There have even been hints of possible U.S. military reprisals if the fighting with

Pol Pot spills over the Thai border.

In the face of new setbacks to Washington's drive against Indochina, the imperialists' propaganda campaign against Vietnam and Kampuchea is being pushed harder.

The latest ploy is the "March for Survival" at the Thai-Kampuchea border.

It has been organized by figures such as Leo Cherne, head of the International Rescue Committee; Bayard Rustin, a leader of Social Democrats USA; pacifist folksinger Joan Baez; and French "new philosopher" Bernard-Henri Lévy. It has also gained support from French historian Jean Lacouture, Norwegian actress Liv Ullman, and others.

In the United States Leo Cherne has been a key organizer of the "March for Survival." This is not Cherne's first venture into Indochina.

After a visit to Saigon in 1954, Cherne played an important part in trying to sell the Ngo Dinh Diem dictatorship in South Vietnam to the American people as a bastion of democracy. His "International Rescue Committee" was a front for this operation, as it has been for many other big lie efforts for Washington.

Cherne supported the U.S. war in Indochina to the bitter end.

There is grim irony in Cherne's recent emergence as a "relief official" at the Thai-Kampuchea border. If Cherne had his way, B-52 bombers would still be ripping up the Kampuchean countryside.

Cherne and Baez assert that the "March for Survival" is bringing food to the Kampuchean people. But march organizers have refused to cooperate with the Pnompenh authorities in distributing food.

Instead, they demand that Kampuchea throw open its border with Thailand. This is in the midst of stepped-up fighting with Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge and growing tension with the Thai regime, which shelters and equips Pol Pot.

Their blatant hostility to the Heng Samrin government has drawn criticism from "relief workers, who say no extra publicity is needed to get aid into Cambodia, and from the Vietnam-backed Cambodia government, which calls it a provocation," reported the February 6 *Newark Star-Ledger*.

Some supporters of the march, such as Lacouture, belong to the group of Western intellectuals (including François Ponchaud and William Shawcross) who view Prince Norodom Sihanouk as the ordained ruler of Kampuchea, regardless of what the Kampuchean people may think of him.

They keep quiet about the prince's demands for an end to international food shipments to Kampuchea.

On February 6, some 150 "March for Survival" participants staged a short sit-down vigil at the Kampuchean border for the benefit of photographers from the capitalist press.

Whatever the delusions of some of the participants, the purpose of the "March for Survival" is as transparent as Leo Cherne's pose as a humanitarian. The demand that Heng Samrin open the border is part of the effort to protect Pol Pot's marauders as a viable fighting force against Kampuchea.

Working people should have nothing to do with Carter's efforts to salvage Pol Pot. They should demand instead that Washington, Paris, and other imperialist capitals recognize the Heng Samrin government and provide massive aid for the reconstruction of Kampuchea. □

### Chinese Dissidents Urge United Campaign Against Repression

A mimeographed appeal dated January 10 has been sent to dissident groups in China urging a united response to repression by the Stalinist regime. According to the mimeographed appeal, signed by three unofficial Canton magazines—*Upsurge*, *People Street*, and *Life*—"frenzied reprisals and repression (are) being launched by the malevolent forces of the old against the new things."

Following the sentencing of dissident leader Wei Jingsheng to fifteen years in prison on charges of "subversion" last year, the regime shut down Peking's "Democracy Wall." Recently, Vice-premier Deng Xiaoping attacked the democratic rights guaranteed in the Chinese constitution as "not beneficial."

The appeal urged the dissidents to prepare for a long "trial of strength." Ruling out "isolated, individual guerrilla" actions, it urged dissident publications to attempt to gain legality through registration with the government.

"Do we have to wait for all the chopsticks to have been broken before we start to pull them back together in one pile?" the appeal asked.

Citing the freedom of publication guaranteed by a 1952 law and reaffirmed by the National People's Congress last year, the appeal called upon activists to "struggle firmly against the diehards who refuse to take the law into account."

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## 200,000 Down Tools in Solidarity with Steel Strike

[The following is reprinted from the front page of the January 31 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, a newsweekly sponsored by the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

\* \* \*

When the Tory government decided to take on the steelworkers they thought they were choosing a soft target.

They were wrong. How wrong was shown on Monday when 200,000 Welsh workers went on strike.

They struck in defence of the tens of thousands of jobs threatened by the steel closures. But the spirit and anger shown in Wales on Monday went beyond that.

It was a demonstration of solidarity with the steelworkers who are striking for a decent wage.

It was a gesture of defiance against an old rich gentleman who sits in London with a wig on his head. Lord Denning is his name, and on Saturday he ruled that "secondary"—in other words effective—picketing was illegal.

Even Margaret Thatcher didn't know that, because she intends to pass a law in

Parliament for just that purpose. Whether or not the Denning judgement is reversed the Tories will proceed on that course.

Steel union leader Bill Sirs declared on Monday that to defend jobs the TUC [Trades Union Congress] "might be forced into a general strike." And Bill Sirs is "a moderate."

The South Wales National Union of Miners has called indefinite action on jobs from 10 March. In South Yorkshire a day of action against the Tory attacks is planned for 18 February.

The TUC must bring these protests together and start now to organise for all-out, indefinite strike action against the Tory offensive from 10 March.

The planning of such strike action would mean establishing co-ordinating bodies up and down the country. The steelworkers and miners must take the lead in setting these up.

Whatever the immediate reaction of the TUC, rank and file trade unionists can start campaigning and calling for such bodies now.

The Tories think that with their parliament, their steel bosses, their judges, and

their press they have everything on their side.

But they are mere insects compared to the strength of the working people.

Let them point to their laws. But let us point to the 200,000 who struck in Wales on Monday. And then let us say that this was only the beginning. □

## A Day of Defiance

By Valerie Coultas

[The following is from the January 31 issue of *Socialist Challenge*.]

\* \* \*

Public industry in Wales came to a halt last Monday when 200,000 workers struck in protest at the threatened closures in the steel industry and the prospects of pit closures in the valleys.

There were no trains and the docks were at a standstill. In Gwent the buses did not run and council offices in the Rhondda were closed. 30,000 miners joined the 40,000 steelworkers in South Wales in an all-out strike on the day of action called by the Welsh TUC.

The message from the industrial heartland of Wales was loud and clear. Steel union leader Bill Sirs, quite overwhelmed by the degree of solidarity of the Welsh workers, put it this way at a rally in Cardiff:

"Today is the starting point of a revolution—a revolution against policies that are crippling this country and which will force us to become a nation looking after tourists. I'm prepared to go to jail if my executive instructs me to.

"This is not just a problem for Wales but for the workers throughout Britain. What about a general strike? A general strike is the last thing people in responsible positions like me want—but if it's the only thing left to you . . ."

"To our dying shame we let them divide us at Shotton, Corby, East Moors and Ebbw Vale. Now we're all in it together at Port Talbot, at Llanwern and in the pits. Pay and jobs are part and parcel of the same issue. We're not going to take it."

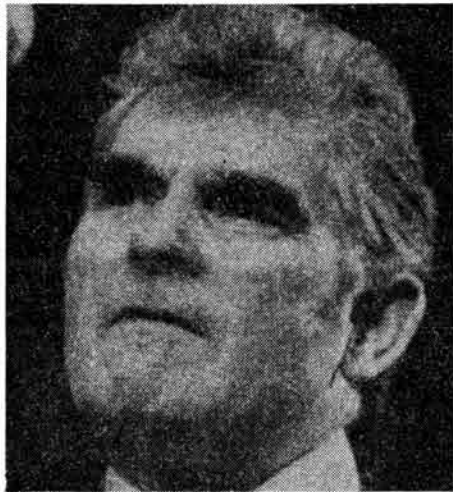
This was the mood of the AUEW [Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers] contingent from Llanwern and it was the unanimous feeling of the marchers in Cardiff on Monday. "Save steel," "Save pits," "Save Wales," "Coal not dole," said the placards carried by steelworkers and lodge after lodge of miners as the 15,000-strong demonstration made its way through the city to rally at Sophia Park.



Part of the march of 10,000 in Cardiff on January 28.

As South Wales miners' leader Emlyn Williams pointed out, Thatcher had stepped on the toes of the miners in trying to teach the steelworkers a lesson, and in doing so "she's caught a tiger by the tail." But Williams was a little worried about the postponement of indefinite strike action on jobs in Wales to 10 March, because the "need of the steelworkers is immediate."

The closures in steel are expected to mean the loss of 7,500 jobs in mining, and if the BSC [British Steel Corporation] goes ahead with its plan to import twice as much coking coal from abroad the figure



Steel union leader Bill Sirs.

could double. The Welsh TUC wants a "stay of execution" for two years in order to attract new industry to Wales.

Lawrence Daly, speaking for the NUM [National Union of Mineworkers] executive, pointed out that some people would try to use the "two years delay in preparing the case for a further run-down of major industries. Lord Robens started doing it with the coal industry in the '60s, Lord Beecham did it with the railways, Edwardes is doing it at Leyland, and now Villiers is doing it with steel."

"We will oppose any pit closures that take place," he told the eager crowd. "If we get the same subsidies as foreign coal we can produce all the coal the British steel industry requires."

#### Turn Out Tories!

As in 1974, so in 1980 the miners would be "prepared to give the people of Britain a chance to turn out the worst administration this country has ever known."

To rapturous applause, Daly announced that the NUM nationally had donated £20,000 to the steel strikers.

Then Labour deputy leader Michael Foot, MP for Ebbw Vale, rose to speak. There was a chorus of boos, and shouts of "What about Ebbw Vale?" Miners and steelworkers at the back of the rally began to file out.

One miner commented that it was people like Foot, who had sold out to Callaghan,

who were responsible for the state they were in today. It was Foot who allowed the Ebbw Vale steelworks to be run down while Labour was in office.

## Will Wales Become An 'Industrial Desert'?

By Gerry Foley

CARDIFF, Wales—More than 10,000 union activists marched here in the capital of Wales on January 28 to protest planned layoffs in the nationalized steel industry. The British Steel Corporation has announced its intention to eliminate 11,300 jobs in South Wales before the end of 1980. The Welsh Trades Union Congress (TUC) estimates that the spin-off effects of these cuts will mean 130,000 jobless by the end of this year in this small country of 2.5 million inhabitants, which is incorporated into the United Kingdom and has no government of its own.

The march was the largest in many years in this city of a quarter of a million, which is a predominantly white-collar and service industry town. Cardiff is also the center of Tory strength in Wales. It is a heavily anglicized city, although the power of Welsh national sentiment in recent years has forced the British government to put all the public signs in Welsh first.

In fact, the march was swelled by contingents of coal miners from the valleys to the north of Cardiff. It was the lodges of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) that formed the backbone of the demonstration.

The Welsh NUM enjoys considerable autonomy within the union, which includes workers throughout Britain. Toward the head of the march, I noticed a big red banner that said "Undeb Genedlaethol Glowyr"—that is, National Union of Mineworkers.

The style of the NUM Lodge banners dates back to the nineteenth century, if not earlier. They are made of a velvet-like material and bear embroidered pictures. Some of the pictures were of tools of the trade, others of historical figures, such as Keir Hardie.\*

Some of the Lodge banners illustrated the contradictions in British labor history in a very striking way. The slogan on the banner of the Lady Windsor Lodge of the NUM was "Workers of the World Unite!"

It was a boisterous and vibrant march. There was a lot of slogan shouting and some singing. The most popular chant was "Maggie [Thatcher], Maggie, Maggie—Out, Out, Out."

Almost all the contingents were from unions, but one or two constituency branches of the Labour Party had banners on the march. And there was a large banner

\*A socialist agitator among miners around the turn of the century and the first independent labor representative in Parliament.

The rally ended with the singing of the Red Flag, fists raised. Margaret Thatcher had better watch out—this was the message from Wales. □

and leadership delegation from Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, as well as a banner from a group called "Women Against the Cuts."

There were groups selling *Socialist Challenge*, the newspaper of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International, as well as the papers of the British Socialist Workers Party and the *Militant* group. The newly formed Welsh Socialist Republican Clubs handed out a leaflet.

I asked Gwynfor Evans, former member of Parliament and president of Plaid Cymru, what his party's position was on the action of the Welsh TUC. "We support it completely," he said. "The Welsh TUC has taken the leadership of the national movement." This statement was echoed by other Plaid Cymru leaders.

The march went from the Welsh National Museum to the Sophia Gardens, a park and auditorium just outside downtown Cardiff, where a rally was held. It started with the singing of a Welsh hymn: "*Nid wyf fi'n gofyn am bywyd moethus, aur y byd neu perlau mân. Nid wyf fi'n gofyn ond am calon lan a llawn daioni.*" (I seek not a luxurious life, gold, or fine pearls, but only a pure heart filled with goodness.)

Although a march of this size must have been made up predominantly of union stalwarts, there were also many teenage youth on it. The high spirits of these young people and other sections of the marchers contrasted with the general conviction that Wales is facing an economic catastrophe because of the planned layoffs and plant closings. Even the *Western Mail*, the main daily paper for South Wales, said in an editorial January 29:

"The rally, the most impressive in many years, demonstrated the depth and extent of feeling over an imminent economic disaster."

Gwynfor Evans and other Plaid Cymru officials told me that they thought their country was threatened with becoming "an industrial desert," and that they thought their movement had to give full support to the workers.

It is clear from the demonstration that the Welsh industrial workers are drawing the nationalist movement—which represents a considerable section of the youth, intellectuals, farmers, and rural and small-town workers—behind them in their struggle. It is also clear that the future of the Welsh nation, as well as of all workers in Wales, depends on the outcome of their struggle. □

## Nicaragua—The Strategy of Victory

[The following interview appeared in the January 27 issue of the weekly English-language edition of *Granma*. It originally appeared in the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*.]

By Marta Harnecker

"Without the monolithic unity of the Sandinistas; without an insurrectional strategy counting on the masses; without the necessary coordination between the guerrilla fronts and the military fronts in the cities; without effective wireless communications to coordinate all the fronts; without a radio broadcasting system to guide the mass movement; without hardhitting technical and military resources; without a solid rear guard for introducing these resources and preparing the men, training them; without previous victories and setbacks, as happened in Nicaragua beginning in October 1977, when the masses were subjected to the most savage repression but that was, at the same time, a great source of learning; without a flexible, intelligent and mature policy of alliances, there would have been no revolutionary victory."

This brief summary of the conditions that made possible the people's victory in Nicaragua flowed in a quick, animated and assured manner from the lips of one of the most outstanding Sandinista commanders, Humberto Ortega, who is today the top military leader in Nicaragua. It was the sequel to a long conversation in which, in response to the journalist's questions, he made a critical review of the highlights of the armed struggle waged by the FSLN and the Nicaraguan people beginning with the October 1977 offensive. The purpose of the interview was to make known the political and military experience that led to the revolutionary victory in Nicaragua from the standpoint of one of its most clear-sighted protagonists. It was one way of refuting the wrong interpretations that are often given abroad—with either the best or the worst intentions—to revolutionary processes. Didn't the same thing happen in the case of the Cuban Revolution? Before we delve into the interview, let us first glance at the political background of the man being interviewed.

A veteran anti-Somoza fighter in spite of his being only 33, Humberto Ortega was the main strategist of the armed insurrectional offensive that led to the overthrow of the tyrant in July 1979. Thirteen years before, Humberto Ortega and several of his comrades, armed with a pistol, a Molotov cocktail and a handful of tacks had tried to kill the tyrant, but the attempt had failed. Three years later, in 1969, he was wounded and taken prisoner in an action organized by the FSLN to free Carlos Fonseca, the top Sandinista leader, who was in prison in Costa Rica. The action failed and Humberto Ortega partly lost the use of his left hand and totally lost the use of his right.

He did not remain in prison for long. On October 10, 1970, he was released thanks to an action carried out by an FSLN commando led by Carlos Agüero, that hijacked a Costa Rican plane with four United Fruit Company officials aboard and then exchanged them for the imprisoned Sandinista leaders. As a result of the action, Humberto Ortega came to Cuba for the first time.

He was born in Juigalpa in 1947 of a family of modest means but thoroughly revolutionary. His parents were imprisoned for their activities against the dictatorship. His younger brother Camilo was killed while trying to channel the uprising of the Indians of Monimbó in February 1978. His older brother Daniel, now a member of the National Leadership of the Sandinista Front and of the Government, spent seven years in Somoza's prisons and was also freed by an FSLN commando group in 1974. When still very young, Humberto Ortega became an activist in the anti-Somoza and anti-imperialist student movement and began physical training to prepare himself for the armed struggle. Between 1965 and 1966 he formally joined the Sandinista Front and in 1972 he became one of its top leaders. When the Front split into three tendencies in 1976, he took over the lead of the insurrectional or *tercerista* one. Following the reunification in March 1978, he became a member of the Joint National Leadership. A few months after the triumph of the Revolution, he was named commander in chief of the Sandinista People's Army.

The interview that follows will reveal the tenacity and firmness and, above all, the revolutionary daring of Humberto Ortega.

*M.H.—The armed struggle of the Nicaraguan people for liberation has been a long one. I have read your book 50 años de lucha sandinista (50 Years of Sandinista Struggle) in which you described the highlights of the struggle up to 1975. However, two years ago there seemed to be little likelihood that victory would be obtained so quickly. What made possible the big gains registered by the revolutionary process which led to the overthrow of Somoza and his regime?*

*H.O.—Well, before I answer your question directly, I would like to briefly sum up the key points of the book you mentioned—though this is very hard to do without falling into oversimplifications and omissions.*

*The revolutionary movement which took shape in our country in the '30s as a result of Sandino's struggle. . . .*

*M.H.—Which took shape or began?*

*H.O.—Well, we say that it took shape because it summed up all previous efforts at revolutionary struggle in Nicaragua, and because Sandino assimilated the most revolutionary ideas of his time and was able to integrate them into our historical process.*

*He undoubtedly began it and in the course of its development he included a number of political, ideological, anti-imperialist, internationalist and military facets. That is what we mean by the movement taking shape. That is, the struggle Sandino carried out against the Yankees for seven years left us with a number of historical and programmatic elements and revolutionary views which we assimilated.*

*We must bear in mind that, if we include Sandino's movement, by that time there had already been 33 armed movements against imperialism and the oligarchy, headed by the liberals who upheld revolutionary positions in that period.*

*The struggle Sandino led suffered a bitter setback as a result of his death and that of other members of his General Staff. However, in one way or the other, the people always reacted against the oppression. The reaction was poor, limited and fragmented, but it increased little by little.*

*The most significant upsurge in these struggles took place in the '50s, the decade when Anastasio Somoza García, founder of the tyranny, was executed by Rigoberto López Pérez. It was an individual action but it was not simply a case of tyrannicide. As Pérez himself put it, it turned out to be "the beginning of the end of the tyranny."*

*Then, in 1958, while Fidel was in the*

Sierra Maestra, an armed movement led by Ramón Raudales began, and the following year it was the guerrilla group led by Carlos Fonseca. From 1958 to 1961 there were 19 armed movements that sought to do battle against the dictatorship.

The victory of the Cuban Revolution caused a tremendous political upheaval. It made a big impact on our people who witnessed a practical example of how it was possible to overthrow a tyrant.

The 1959-60 period was one in which conditions were created to set up a revolutionary vanguard that could lead the popular and revolutionary war in the same way and with the same effectiveness as Sandino.

In 1961 the Sandinista Front emerged from several armed groups as an alternative to the forces that at that time led the struggle against Somoza, the so-called historical parallels or liberal-conservative forces.

The Sandinista Front was a new alternative, but at the same time it followed up on the legacy of the revolutionary movement Sandino started.

After it was founded there was a long period in which, in addition to very important organizational and military experience which was of great value for the future of the movement, the FSLN acquired moral standing, dedication, tenacity and set an example which made it possible to reach out to the masses, organize them and win their confidence. During that period, the repression of the regime was focused on the guerrillas.

The most important operation carried out by the Front to make itself known to the world was undertaken on December 27, 1974, when a house full of top officials of the regime was taken over. We obtained a million dollars, for the first time the Sandinistas' revolutionary views were broadcast on TV and radio and political prisoners were rescued.

The main objective of this rather isolated operation was not achieved: to strengthen the guerrillas in the mountains. Somoza unleashed a tremendous repressive campaign in the cities, the countryside and the mountains, where the movement was trying to set up guerrilla forces that were in the stage of making contacts and setting up their columns. From 1974 to 1977 thousands of people were killed and thousands of others disappeared.

That repression combined with our weakness prevented the guerrillas from going on the offensive. We were unable to channel the political potential and capitalize on the agitation resulting from the Sandinista operation. That made it possible for the enemy to deprive us of the initiative, and press censorship, a state of siege, martial law and courts-martial were all imposed.

This period of relative stagnation ended in October 1977 when a Sandinista offensive began with the capture of the National Guard garrison at San Carlos, near

the border with Costa Rica, on the 13th, and it continued with the attack and capture of the town of Mozonte, five kilometers from Ocotol, in the department of Nueva Segovia, on the 15th. The guerrillas held a meeting in the public square of Mozonte before withdrawing. Two days later there was an attack on the main

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**We always thought the masses would support the guerrillas so we could defeat the National Guard. But that's not how it happened. In fact, the guerrillas supported the masses, who overthrew Somoza through an insurrection . . .**

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garrison in Masaya, less than 20 kilometers from the capital, and there was an important ambush of enemy forces on the move. For over four hours, four comrades managed to contain all the enemy forces coming from Managua to Masaya. On the 25th, three squads from an FSLN column took the town of San Fernando, and the soldiers stationed there surrendered.

These developments paved the way for a qualitative change in the political and military picture. That's when our flexible policy of alliances began, and from it emerged the Group of Twelve.

*M.H.—But what made possible the events of October 1977?*

*H.O.—October 1977 came about thanks to an offensive shift that was given to the armed struggle at a time when the crisis of Somoza's regime was very acute.*

Following the 1972 earthquake, the situation of Somoza's regime became more acute and bureaucratic and military corruption more widespread. While this administrative corruption chiefly affected the masses, it also began to affect the petit and intermediate bourgeoisie, thus increasing the scope of opposition to the regime.

On the other hand, groups of businessmen started to lose faith in the dictatorship's ability to guarantee the necessary conditions for the development of the country. There was growing internal resistance from all segments of the population, in addition to the growing opposition internationally due to the regime's repressive policy.

While Somoza lost more and more political and moral authority, we gained it, in spite of the difficult conditions facing our tenacious guerrillas in the northern mountains, where the forces of the Pablo Ubeda column were striving to regain the initiative of which the dictatorship had for all

practical purposes deprived us by late 1975.

This tenacious effort in addition to the daily ant-like tactics of our members all over the country made it possible for our movement, far from being wiped out, to remain in action even under those difficult conditions. If this had not been accomplished, it wouldn't have been possible later on to transform the political and moral potential into military power, into a large force, as happened.

The acute economic crisis and the growing resistance of the people led to a political crisis in the country. Business groups which until then had adjusted their interests to the terms imposed by the dictatorship shifted to a position of overt opposition. A group of members of the Conservative Party led by the editor of *La Prensa*, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, joined the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL), an anti-Somoza opposition organization led by dissatisfied sectors of the bourgeoisie. UDEL demanded political and trade union freedoms; an end to the press censorship, the state of siege and the repression; and called for amnesty and a general pardon for political prisoners and exiles.

In mid-1977 there was great political activity among the bourgeois opposition resulting from the shift given to U.S. foreign policy by the Carter administration.

Imperialism and reaction were seeking ways of making changes in the regime without touching the basic strings of power: the tremendous economic and repressive power of the National Guard.

The political situation forced Somoza to try to improve his image. On September 19 the state of siege and the martial law were lifted, and the dictator convened municipal elections.

We must keep in mind that these efforts at democratization or overhauling took place in 1977, when imperialism and reaction were convinced that they had been able to wipe out or practically wipe out the FSLN.

From 1975 to 1977, they had played all their cards to try to crush us militarily. In order to do so they devastated vast portions of the countryside, repression was stepped up in the cities and courts-martial were instituted. Nearly all our leaders, Carlos Fonseca, Eduardo Contreras, Carlos Agüero, Edgar Munguía and Filemón Rivero, had been killed.

It was very difficult for the FSLN to mount a military response and that response was very limited.

Somoza and the Yankees swore that they had eliminated us and, therefore, that we would be unable to serve as the catalyst for the crisis. When they felt that we were hard hit, scattered and divided, they decided it was time for a democratization plan.

It was at that time and in order to

prevent such maneuvers that we decided to go on the offensive militarily speaking.

We regained the initiative which we had taken on December 27, 1974, but this time we aimed to avoid losing it again. We didn't have a big mass organization, but we did have our activists and the organizational potential which little by little allowed us to organize and mobilize the masses. We didn't have superior forms of organization of the vanguard, but we did realize that, given the situation, military action would allow us to make our presence felt in the political and organizational fields, paving the way for the establishment of an insurrectional strategy.

*M.H.—How could you have decided on an offensive if the Front was in such a precarious situation?*

*H.O.—It's true that we were in a precarious situation and that in spite of our efforts we were unable to stay on the military offensive. In practice we were on the defensive, and we had to try to overcome that situation while avoiding the twin pitfalls of adventurism and an overly conservative analysis of this difficult and precarious situation.*

In order to undertake offensive operations we had to overcome a certain conservative frame of mind which led our movement to passively accumulate forces. When I say "passive," I mean in general, not in particular, because there were operations in which we regained the initiative militarily speaking.

*M.H.—Could you explain further what you mean by passive accumulation of forces?*

*H.O.—What I mean by passive accumulation of forces is a policy of not getting involved in the conjunctures, of gaining strength while standing on the sidelines; a passive policy of alliances. It's a passive view which holds that it is possible to pile up weapons and gain in organization and number without fighting the enemy, while sitting on the sidelines, without involving the masses—not because we didn't want to do so but because we felt that if we showed our claws too much, they would come down hard on us and shatter the movement.*

We knew we would be going on the offensive under difficult circumstances, but we knew we had the necessary minimum of resources to tackle this new stage.

By May 1977 we had drawn up a programmatic platform which outlined an insurrectional strategy that served to sum up the strategic viewpoint of insurrection which I, along with Carlos Fonseca, had prepared in 1975. This was in turn an outgrowth of the efforts made along these lines after the death of Oscar Turcio and Ricardo Morales in September 1973, following the Chilean coup. This marked the start of the debate within our ranks over the two strategies: guerrilla warfare cen-

tered in the mountains, on the one hand, and armed struggle focused on the masses, on the other.

That was the first debate. It was a bit immature and categorical: it's either the mountains or the cities. Raising this question as one or the other was not correct.

*M.H.—I'd like to know why you associate the masses with the cities and not with the guerrillas.*

*H.O.—The truth is that we always took the masses into account, but more in terms of their supporting the guerrillas, so that*

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## **The Cuban Revolution had a big impact on our people, who saw how it was possible to topple a tyrant . . .**

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the guerrillas as such could defeat the National Guard. This isn't what actually happened. What happened was that it was the guerrillas who provided support for the masses so that they could defeat the enemy by means of insurrection. We all held that view, and it was practice that showed that in order to win we had to mobilize the masses and get them to actively participate in the armed struggle. The guerrillas alone weren't enough, because the armed movement of the vanguard would never have had the weapons needed to defeat the enemy. Only in theory could we obtain the weapons and resources needed to defeat the National Guard. We realized that our chief source of strength lay in maintaining a state of total mobilization that would disperse the technical and military resources of the enemy.

Since production, the highways and the social order in general were affected, the enemy was unable to move his forces and other means about at will because he had to cope with mass mobilizations, neighborhood demonstrations, barricades, acts of sabotage, etc. This enabled the vanguard, which was reorganizing its army, to confront the more numerous enemy forces on a better footing.

Getting back to what I was saying: the reactionaries were planning to cope with the crisis and come out on top. We realized what was happening, took note of the fact that the enemy had taken a step forward by lifting the state of siege and was considering an amnesty and saw that if this happened we would be in a difficult position. So we decided to speed up the offensive.

*M.H.—An offensive which, as far as you are concerned, was limited. . . .*

*H.O.—Well, since we had never experienced an insurrection, we felt that that was the way to mobilize the masses to support those operations. But practice*

showed us that we were still unable to meet all the conditions required for a response by the masses so that the drive would take on an insurrectional character. Two years had to pass before this was accomplished.

This offensive took place as part of an insurrectional strategy, but it was not an insurrection although we called for one. As it turned out, these operations served as propaganda for insurrection.

*M.H.—Did you consider what failure would have meant?*

*H.O.—Yes, we did. If we failed it would be a terrible blow for Sandinism. We had to run the risk. We knew we wouldn't be wiped out because we knew our enemy. Of course, there was always a risk, but being wiped out without going on the offensive was worse than being wiped out on the offensive, because by fighting we could begin a process leading to victory. If we didn't take the political and military offensive, defeat was certain. That was the problem we faced.*

*M.H.—Then you don't feel the October operations were a failure even though the insurrection didn't come about?*

*H.O.—We view October as a historic achievement, because, first of all, it enabled us to defeat the imperialist scheme. When the enemy felt that we had been destroyed, we appeared on the scene stronger than ever, we struck harder blows than ever before. They were surprised when we began operations in the cities, because they thought the cities were sacred.*

On the other hand, although there was a crisis, the masses did not react to it. All they could see was that the vanguard was being hit hard. These operations served to restore Sandinism's hegemony over the masses and the confidence of the masses in their economic and political struggles. This led the regime to make serious mistakes, the biggest one being murdering Pedro Joaquín Chamorro on January 10, 1978.

This assassination led the masses to take to the streets for the first time, to express their long pent-up feelings of support for Sandinism. So we can say that October served to deepen the crisis which imperialism and reaction were on the brink of turning to their own advantage.

*M.H.—When did you start preparing for the October operations?*

*H.O.—Even before May 1977 we were acquiring weapons and laying the political and strategic groundwork, like the programmatic platform I mentioned, trying to see how we could organize the people who shared our views.*

We reacted to the situation with what we had, given the situation. We had been

stockpiling, stockpiling for something bigger, but you can't stockpile on the sidelines because then you never really stockpile.

We plunged into the offensive realizing that our effort would bear fruit because we took note of the prevailing crisis, the enemy plots, the fact that we were on the

accumulate forces and strike once again.

To prove the point, four months later we captured two cities and encircled an anti-guerrilla camp in the Nueva Segovia area for the first time.

Had October been a failure, we would not have been able to undertake new actions in just a few months. From Oc-

*the adoption of even more repressive measures by the dictatorship?*

*H.O.—Yes. In its desperation, the regime adopted a series of indiscriminately repressive measures. The revolutionary movement was brutally repressed by the Somoza regime. The repression that had been gradually increasing became even sharper in retaliation for the October operations.*

*M.H.—In that case wouldn't your operations be considered a sign of adventurism, resulting only in even stronger repression against the people?*

*H.O.—Yes. Some sectors of the left that were engaged in setting up trade unions, etc., claimed that those actions had destroyed the organization and the resurgence of the mass movement, but this wasn't so. It is true that the repression would affect the open, legal organization of the masses, but it wouldn't affect their organization under really revolutionary conditions. To go along with such claims would mean falling prey to the big show the imperialists were mounting with all the talk about the bourgeois democratic way out, in which the trade union movement was to participate. For us it was preferable that such a castrated trade union movement not be formed.*

Summing up, the big jump ahead occurred in October 1977 and this sharpened the crisis. Then came the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, which made the situation even worse, and with the masses in the cities, in the neighborhoods, everywhere, participating more and more in the uprising, the process became completely irreversible.

After that came the capture of the city of Rivas along with the city of Granada on February 2, 1978. Present in these actions were several comrades who were later killed in the struggle, such as commander Camilo Ortega Saavedra, who led the attack on Granada; the commander, guerrilla priest and Spanish internationalist Gaspar García Raviana; and Panchito Gutiérrez, among others.

*M.H.—When did the masses begin to join the insurrectional process?*

*H.O.—The operations of October 1977 gave a big boost to the mass movement, but it wasn't until after the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro that they really came out in full force and made crystal clear their potential, their determination and their Sandinista will to join in the armed struggle.*

I would like to make it clear that the uprising of the masses as an aftermath to Chamorro's assassination was not led exclusively by the FSLN.

*M.H.—Was it a spontaneous action?*

*H.O.—It was a spontaneous reaction on the part of the masses which, in the end,*



Commander Humberto Ortega with journalist Marta Harnecker.

defensive and had to respond then and there. Had we been conservative and said "No, we'll stockpile in silence," we would have lost our chance to the enemy, and he would thus have been able to eliminate us for once and for all, or at least put us out of action for a long while, because the people would have been confused by the regime's granting a few concessions and it would have been harder for them to understand our views.

The October operations made it possible to shatter the enemy maneuver and Sandinism appeared on the scene with renewed vigor. Also, in military terms it was not a complete failure. We weren't able to capture the Masaya garrison but at least most of the attackers survived. In the north the guerrillas remained active from October to May 1978 on what was called the Carlos Fonseca Northern Front. A few comrades were killed in the attack on San Carlos, but it was a military victory for us. We weren't able to hold on to it, but it wasn't like the attack on the Moncada in Cuba, in 1953; we were able to strike, pull back,

tober on we grew in political and military strength all the time.

*M.H.—What about the masses in October?*

*H.O.—In October there was no mass response as far as active participation was concerned.*

*M.H.—Then they were actions by a vanguard only?*

*H.O.—Yes, by a vanguard, which not only contributed to sharpening the crisis, frustrated the schemes of reaction and enabled the vanguard to gather renewed strength, but also began to strengthen a series of activities that the masses had been carrying out, in spite of the repression, and which consisted of struggles for social gains, trade union and political struggles. Therefore, these actions strengthened the mass movement, which later became openly insurrectional.*

*M.H.—But didn't the offensive lead to*

the Sandinista Front began to direct through its activists and a number of military units. It was not a mass movement responding to a call by the Sandinistas; it was a response to a situation that nobody had foreseen.

Now then, our capacity for introducing ourselves into that mass movement was still limited at the time and was aimed at reaffirming our political and military presence among the masses, but not yet from a concrete organic standpoint because we didn't have the necessary cadres.

In October we began to take steps in that direction: the activists, the mechanisms . . . and new permanent forms of mass organization began to take shape quickly: the neighborhood committees, the work done in a number of factories and in the student movement. Furthermore, the United People's Movement was already beginning to take shape even before October. This was the result of the Sandinistas' efforts to regroup the revolutionary organizations around their program in order to fight against Somoza's regime and gradually lead the people in our process of national and social liberation.

When the bourgeois opposition sectors began to retreat during the strike, the FSLN made its presence felt with the armed actions of February 2. This is why we decided to capture Granada, Rivas and the antiguerrilla camp in Santa Clara, Nueva Segovia.

The capture of the antiguerrilla camp was led by Germán Pomares, Víctor Tirado and Daniel Ortega. Camilo, our younger brother, led the attack on Granada and the capture of Rivas was led by Edén Pastora and the priest Gaspar García.

It was the first really serious blow dealt in the crisis. These large-scale actions redoubled the masses' enthusiasm and their determination to fight Somoza. They now saw a strengthened vanguard capable of fighting, of dealing blows to the enemy, of capturing cities. In other words, the masses saw a considerable advance from the operations in October to these operations, in the same way they considered the operations in October to be a considerable advance over the previously defensive position of the Sandinistas. Therefore, we were gaining momentum, for the operations in February were superior to those in October.

*M.H.—Wouldn't the fact that you had to withdraw from the captured cities be considered a failure?*

*H.O.—No, not at all, because we took the cities, seized the weapons of the National Guard, overpowered them, harassed the enemy and kept on hitting them every chance we got. Everybody stayed in or around the cities.*

By then the Carlos Fonseca Column was operating in the northern part of the

country, without having suffered a single tactical defeat.

At the same time, the guerrilla forces of the Pablo Ubeda Column, operating in the mountain areas, were able to get back together due to a respite in the intense pressure that the National Guard had been putting on them. The guerrilla movement in Nueva Segovia had much more effect on the vital economic, social and political centers because it was operating nearer to them. But it was the traditional guerrilla movement and the movement in the mountains that made possible the growth and the moral and political hegemony of the Sandinista movement until October.

In other words, October was the continuation of the armed struggle mainly in the mountains because that was what the existing operational conditions called for, but the time came when the armed struggle had to be transferred to zones of greater political importance.

It wasn't a question of storing away what we had accumulated, but of reproducing it. If we remained there we'd be holding on to what we had but if we moved to other zones we'd be reproducing ourselves.

The greatest expression of the impact of the February actions is the insurrection of the Indians in Monimbó. It was the first of its kind, organized and planned ahead of time by the Indians and Sandinistas who were there. The battle lasted for almost a whole week, until February 26. The enemy crushed that uprising, which was partial. . . .

*M.H.—You mean it was the only one in the whole country?*

*H.O.—Yes, but at the same time, that partial uprising was the soul of the masses on a nationwide scale and became the heart of the insurrection that was to take place throughout the country.*

*M.H.—When you were planning the Monimbó uprising weren't you aware of the limitations of an isolated action?*

*H.O.—But we didn't plan the uprising. We just took the lead in the action that was decided upon by the Indian community.*

The Monimbó uprising began around February 20 and continued for about a week. The capture of several cities (Rivas and Granada, for example) and the action carried out by the Northern Front had aroused a feeling of great expectation, of agitation among the masses, and the insurrectional propaganda spread by the FSLN beginning in October through pamphlets, etc. distributed throughout the country was beginning to bear fruit. The vanguard, however, hadn't been able to make contact in a more organic form with those sectors of the masses with the greatest political awareness. The actions of that sector, encouraged by the telling blows dealt the National Guard by the

FSLN, in the midst of the Somoza regime's political crisis and the country's social and economic problems, surpassed the vanguard's capacity to channel all that popular agitation.

The neighborhood of Monimbó, which is a district of Masaya with some 20,000 inhabitants and both urban and rural zones, began in a spontaneous fashion to prepare for the insurrection. They began to organize block by block, set up barricades around the whole district and take over the key spots. They also began to execute henchmen of the regime, to apply people's justice for the first time. They began to work as a Sandinista unit when they still lacked the organized leadership of the Sandinista movement.

And this doesn't mean that there were no Sandinistas there. There certainly were and that's precisely why Camilo Ortega went to Monimbó, with contacts we had there, to try to lead the uprising, and he was killed in the fighting.

*M.H.—I understand now. Therefore, it was not an uprising that you had planned. Now then, would you have stopped it if you had been able to do so?*

*H.O.—It would have been very difficult to do that, because the uprising responded to the objective development of the community. Of course, in keeping with our plans, maybe we would have postponed it or planned it differently. Maybe we wouldn't have organized an armed insurrection but rather some other kind of mass activity, but that's the way things turned out. This was the way this Indian sector responded immediately to the incentive provided by the capture of the cities by the FSLN several days before.*

In late February the organization of the vanguard was still limited and we didn't have the cadres to channel the determination and fighting spirit that existed among the masses.

*M.H.—An isolated uprising like that one meant that the enemy could concentrate all its forces against it.*

*H.O.—Exactly, and that's something we learned by experience.*

*M.H.—Then, it's important to know about other historical experiences in order to avoid making mistakes.*

*H.O.—Of course. We, the vanguard, knew of those historical experiences, but the masses didn't.*

*M.H.—So it was actually a lesson for the people.*

*H.O.—Yes. We, the vanguard, knew it from the classics. The principle of concentration of forces has been one of the basic principles in warfare since ancient times.*

What's important is that, in our case, we went through that experience in spite of



the vanguard. The vanguard was certain that the uprising would be a setback, but a setback that would be transitory, because the decision of Monimbó contributed to raising the morale of the rest of the people who joined the uprising.

To what extent can the action be considered to have been a historical mistake? To what extent was the action an error on the part of the people, or was it simply their only option at that time? The fact remains that that example contributed both nationally and internationally to the development and ultimate triumph of the insurrection. Perhaps without that painful step which entailed great sacrifice it would have been more difficult to achieve that moral authority, that arousal among the country's masses, that spirit of support for one another that came from having witnessed how they had sacrificed themselves and, at the same time, to win the support of the whole world for a people that were waging a struggle singlehanded. Perhaps without that example it would have been more difficult to speed up the conditions for the uprising.

That was an experience we and the people learned from.

With the experience we had acquired from October to Monimbó we were able to verify that the masses were willing to stage an uprising, but they needed more military organization, more mass organization. There was a need for riper political conditions and there was a need for more agitation, for better means of propaganda, such as a clandestine radio station.

It was necessary to mobilize the masses for war through the most elementary forms of organization.

*M.H.—You began to consider the matter of the radio station then?*

*H.O.—*We'd been thinking about it since October but we hadn't been able to set it up. We had a radio set that the first anti-Somoza fighters had used in 1960, but it was old and we weren't able to put it in working order at that time.

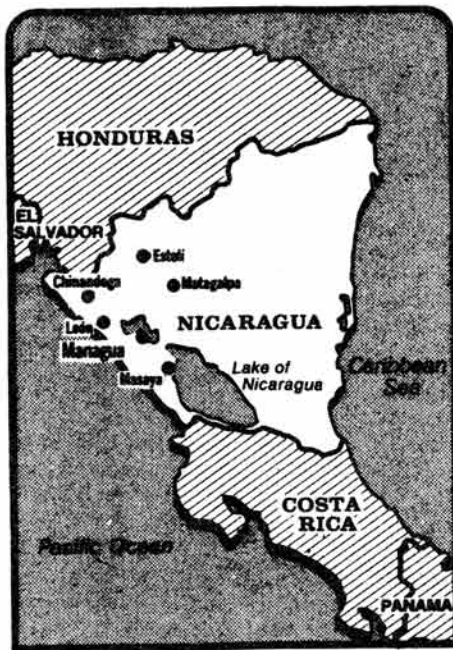
However, we managed to fix it later and we put it in operation in those months of 1978. It was heard in Rivas, but very faintly. By then we were fully aware of the need for a radio station, of a way to communicate with the masses in order to prepare them for the insurrection.

But to get back to the idea I was developing. A gradual strengthening of forces was achieved amidst an enormous amount of activity that included the execution of General Regualdo Pérez Vega, chief of the General Staff of the National Guard, the capture of the Palace in August and winding up the first stage of this insurrectional movement that had begun in October 1977, with the nationwide uprising in September 1978.

*M.H.—At that time, when you issued a*

*call for the uprising, did you think it would be successful?*

*H.O.—*We issued a call for the uprising. A series of events, of objective conditions came up all of a sudden that prevented us from being better prepared. We could not stop the insurrection. The mass movement went beyond the vanguard's capacity to take the lead. We certainly could not oppose that mass movement, stop that



avalanche. On the contrary, we had to put ourselves at the forefront in order to lead it and channel it to a certain extent.

In this sense, the vanguard, aware of its limitations, decided to adopt the general decision taken by the masses; a general decision that was based on the example of the Indians of Monimbó which, in turn, had been inspired by the example of the vanguard.

In other words, the vanguard set the example in October, the masses followed suit for the first time in an organized fashion in Monimbó; the vanguard created the conditions on the basis of that example and the masses moved faster than the vanguard because a whole series of objective conditions existed, such as the social crisis, the economic crisis and the political crisis of the Somoza regime.

And since the regime was in such a state of decomposition, every one of our actions far surpassed the impact we expected would result from them. But we had to keep on hitting. It was very difficult to hit the target. We hit it, but it wasn't precisely a bull's-eye.

We were inspired by a spirit of victory, but we were aware of our limitations. We knew that it would be difficult to win, but we had to wage the struggle with that kind

of spirit, because it's only with that spirit that people are prepared to shed their blood.

Furthermore, if we didn't organize that mass movement it would have fallen into general anarchy. In other words, the vanguard's decision to call for the uprising in September made it possible to harness the avalanche, to organize the uprising for the victory that was to follow.

*M.H.—What conditions were ripe for insurrection?*

*H.O.—*The objective conditions of social and political crisis existed. But the conditions of the vanguard, in terms of organizational level to lead the masses and especially in terms of weapons, did not exist.

We didn't have the necessary weapons but everything else was ripe.

*M.H.—There was a very significant economic crisis, but Somoza still held many elements of power, chiefly the army. . . .*

*H.O.—*Right, exactly, the army. And we didn't have the experience of participating in a national uprising, the training such an experience gives the masses and the knowledge of the enemy, who showed up all his weaknesses. We didn't have enough weapons, but we did know that even if the uprising was not victorious it would be a blow from which the regime would never recover. We were absolutely convinced of this and so great was our conviction that a month later we were already calling for insurrection again.

There were some comrades on the left who held the view that September practically negated all possibility of a short-term victory, that the operations had been a strategic mistake, a defeat, and they thus had delayed the day of victory.

They were mistaken because September was not a victory but it wasn't a defeat in strategic terms either. It was a historical achievement with both positive and negative aspects.

*M.H.—So, what is the final verdict, then?*

*H.O.—*That it was an accomplishment, because we grew as a vanguard. One hundred and fifty men participated in that uprising and our forces were multiplied several times over: three- or fourfold, plus the potential for recruiting thousands of others. We grew in size and in firepower because we captured weapons from the enemy. The vanguard suffered very few casualties. There were people killed as a result of Somoza's genocide, but very few cadres were killed in combat. In other words, we were able to preserve our strength.

*M.H.—What is your verdict from the military standpoint?*

*H.O.*—We preserved our forces, acquired military experience, captured weapons, learned about the enemy and destroyed some of the enemy's means of mobilization, including armored vehicles. The enemy suffered more casualties than we did; the people had a hand in this as did our own firepower, and we were able to retreat—this is a great lesson—successfully. For the first time we were able to engage in military maneuvers, pulling back to other places in the city and countryside to accumulate forces for the new insurrectional struggles of an offensive nature which soon materialized.

So, we can't say it was a defeat. It would have been a defeat if they had exterminated us, if they had seized all our weapons, if we had been broken up and dispersed.

It was not a military victory since we were unable to capture the garrisons in the five cities where there was fighting, but it was a significant political accomplishment.

I repeat, we called for insurrection because of the political situation which had developed and to prevent the people from being massacred alone, because the people, just like they did in Monimbó, were taking to the streets on their own.

*M.H.*—Wouldn't the people have been massacred just the same, with or without you?

*H.O.*—No, it would have been worse, because at least we channeled the will of the people, just as happened in Monimbó, but on a much larger scale. That is why I told you we went forward; we never went around in circles.

In the final stages, the peasants came down to join the struggle in the cities. In Chinandega, the safe houses were filled with people taking three-hour classes. The people were going to take to the street: The people were the ones in the vanguard of that struggle. There was no alternative but to put oneself at the head of that upsurge and try to obtain the most positive outcome.

We placed ourselves at the head of that movement and led it in five cities. It was the first national uprising led by the FSLN but that was chiefly due to pressure by the masses.

*M.H.*—You mean that on calling for insurrection you took into account above all the mood of the masses.

*H.O.*—That's right, because their morale was high and became higher when the Palace was captured in August—that paved the way for the September insurrection.

*M.H.*—When you planned the capture of the Palace, did you consider the impact this would have on the masses?

*H.O.*—We knew the mass movement was

coming to a head, but we preferred that it come to a head than that it not come to a head.

The important thing was to foil the imperialist plot which consisted of staging a coup in August to put a civilian-military regime in power and thus put a damper on the revolutionary struggle.

The Palace operation had to do with the plot. We felt that since we didn't have a large-scale party organization, since the working class and the working people in general were not well organized, the only way to make ourselves felt in political terms was with weapons. That's why we carried out many operations that were military in form, but profoundly political in content. That was the case in August.

It was a military operation which was an outgrowth of a political rather than a military situation. That was also the case in October 1977 when we had to regain the military initiative and counteract a political maneuver.

*M.H.*—So, when some people ask why you called for the September uprising without having achieved the unity of the three tendencies, this is explained by . . .

*H.O.*—Conditions for unity did not exist then. First we had to strengthen the struggle, and all the tendencies were working on this.

Little by little we came to an understanding but around a line which was called for in practice; it was not our line but the one the people demanded.

After Monimbó we dissolved the Carlos Fonseca column and sent its members to the nerve centers of economic, social, and political activity in the country. As far as we were concerned there was no choosing between mountain and city; it was a case of being with the masses.

We sent some of the 40 men in the column to Estelí, others to Managua and others to León. . . . The column served as a means to educate people. It made possible more all-around training because they were gathered there under the wing of members of the leadership like Germán

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### **The uprising of the masses after Chamorro's murder was not led exclusively by the FSLN . . .**

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Pomares and other members of our national leadership. That was how we trained a small group of cadres whom we later sent to the cities to prepare the insurrection, using what we learned in Monimbó.

Given all that had happened from October to Monimbó, we held the view that it was necessary to put ourselves at the head of the mass movement in order to prevent

the repressive forces from wearing it down, because if that had happened, no matter how many guerrilla columns we had, victory in the short term was out of the question.

The crux of victory was not military in nature, it was the masses' participation in the insurrectional situation. We always struggled to keep the activity of the masses going, and at the end it was showing signs of decline, given the fact that there had been two years of uninterrupted activity after October and repression was getting steadily worse. National Guard members would dress up as guerrillas, and, since nighttime belonged to the guerrillas, they would move into neighborhoods and kill people.

The repression was so severe that some people were starting to fall back.

As far as we were concerned, the entire strategy, all the political and military steps taken were focused on the masses, on preventing a decline in their morale. This is why we undertook operations that did not fit within a specific political-military plan but they did serve the purpose of continuing to motivate the masses, to keep the mass movement going in the cities, which, in turn, allowed us to gain in strength. The masses made it possible for the armed movement to accumulate the forces the masses themselves needed.

We strived to keep the masses in action. That's why at times it seemed as though operations were disconnected from a military plan but, in fact, they were in line with a political-military strategic situation aimed at keeping the mass movement going because that was the only way to obtain a military victory.

Our insurrectional strategy was centered on the masses not on military considerations. It's important to understand that.

*M.H.*—But didn't the fact that the emphasis was on urban insurrection as opposed to the guerrilla column lead to an unduly great loss of life and destruction? The fact that the struggle was centered on the cities makes it easier to repress, for example the bombing of the cities. . . .

*H.O.*—That question is meaningless, because that was the only way to win in Nicaragua. If it had been otherwise, there would never have been a victory. We simply paid the price of freedom. Had there been a less costly means, we would have used it but reality showed us that in order to win we had to base ourselves on situations that had been taking shape, for better or for worse, in a disorderly manner and which implied a very high social price.

Trying to tell the masses that the cost was very high and that they should seek another way would have meant the defeat of the revolutionary movement and more than that: falling into utopia, paternalism and idealism.

Liberation movements must realize that

their struggle will be even more costly than ours. I personally can't imagine a victory in Latin America or anywhere else without the large-scale participation of the masses and without a total economic, political and social crisis similar to the one in Nicaragua.

I myself feel it is very difficult to take power without a creative combination of all forms of struggle wherever they can take place: countryside, city, town, neighborhood, mountain, etc., but always based on the idea that the mass movement is the focal point of the struggle and not the vanguard with the masses limited to merely supporting it.

Our experience showed that it is possible to combine the struggle in the city and in the countryside. We had struggle in the cities, struggle for the control of means of communication and struggle in the guerrilla columns in the rural and mountainous areas. But the columns were not the determining factor to bring about victory; they were simply part of a greater determining factor which was the armed struggle of the masses. That was the main contribution.

In May, after the September developments, the movement gained in military and political strength, the activity of the masses became more far-reaching, the barricades were erected, the daily struggle in the neighborhoods continued. None of this would have been possible had there been a strategic defeat.

From September until we launched the offensive in May, the brunt of military activity was borne by the guerrilla columns of the Northern Front and the ones in Nueva Guinea, in rural and mountainous areas. The final offensive began with the capture of El Jícaro, in Nueva Segovia. In March Commander Germán Pomares was active in the area and was able to overpower the enemy garrison and set several ambushes for National Guard contingents coming to aid the forces defeated at El Jícaro. These operations continued with the capture of Estelí in April by the Carlos Fonseca Northern Front column. Estelí was taken by a guerrilla column, not an uprising. The masses joined in afterwards.

*M.H.—But why did you capture a single city again? Isn't that a repetition of the Monimbó experience?*

*H.O.—No, because we weren't defeated in Estelí; the National Guard was unable to rout the guerrilla fighters there. Our comrades withdrew by breaking through the encirclement and demonstrated that thousands of soldiers had been unable to defeat a column of less than 200 men. It's true that the forces used in the capture of Estelí should have been larger. What happened was that orders had been given to carry out a series of operations in the area of Estelí and our comrades launched a direct attack on the city. These were ac-*

tions that were within the perimeter of the Northern Front, they were mutual support operations between the forces of the Northern Front. But the situation in the country had deteriorated to such an extent that the capture of the city created a nationwide

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### **Our experience showed that it is possible to combine the struggle in the city and in the countryside . . .**

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feeling of expectation that accelerated the insurrectional offensive.

After September the brunt of the war was borne by the guerrilla columns of the Northern Front. At the same time, all over the country the militia and the combat units of the Sandinista forces continued to harass the enemy. Hundreds of the regime's henchmen and informers were executed. After the insurrection the people realized that they had won and were incensed by the repression.

*M.H.—In other words, the blows that were being dealt the enemy had a greater effect than the repression?*

*H.O.—A much greater effect. By this time the people were already experienced in battle and their thirst for victory was so great that the September crimes, rather than dampening their spirit, strengthened it even more. Everybody had had a relative or friend killed in the struggle and there was a great thirst for revenge. The people wanted revenge and we weren't going to go against their wishes.*

The final offensive began in March 1979 with the capture of El Jícaro. The different tendencies were beginning to unite by then. Everybody was in favor of beginning an offensive in the north, and there was a general consensus regarding the uprising. The capture of El Jícaro was followed by that of Estelí. After Estelí there was Nueva Guinea, a military setback for us, but it served to bog the enemy down, to wear him down. It cost us 128 men. . . . The plan was correct, but our comrades were unable to cope with a number of tactical problems and the enemy hit them hard.

*M.H.—What was the plan for Nueva Guinea?*

*H.O.—To infiltrate a column there, to bog the enemy down, to carry out guerrilla operations. This would create the conditions in the rest of the country for carrying out political-military work in the cities once the National Guard was dispersed. The repression would be less because the National Guard would be bogged down in Nueva Guinea. But instead of sticking to guerrilla warfare, our comrades operated on flat terrain and became an easy target for the enemy.*

*M.H.—In other words, by then the center of the struggle had shifted to the guerrilla units.*

*H.O.—The mass movement did not allow the enemy to concentrate all its military force against the columns and, at the same time, the columns' operations forced the enemy to go out in search of them. This, in turn, made the mass struggle in the cities a little easier.*

The enemy found himself in a dead end. If he left the cities, the mass movement would get the upper hand, and if he remained, this would help the guerrilla columns' operations.

*M.H.—This way of organizing the armed struggle, was it planned beforehand or was it something that you learned as you went along?*

*H.O.—Well, these are things that you learn in the course of the struggle and use them to your advantage. We knew that it would be that way. We planned an operation in the north to force the National Guard to go there, giving us a chance to better organize the rest of the country.*

*M.H.—However, that statement you made about the mass struggle in the cities making it possible for the guerrillas to gain military strength is a conclusion you arrived at later. You didn't plan it that way, did you?*

*H.O.—You're right. It was a conclusion based on practical experience. Getting back to the series of operations, after Nueva Guinea we captured Jinotega in May and this was followed by the battle in El Naranjo, on the Southern Front. It was then that we called for the final uprising.*

*M.H.—What made you issue the call for the insurrection in May?*

*H.O.—Because by then a whole series of objective conditions were coming to a head; the economic crisis, the devaluation of the cordoba, the political crisis. And also because, after September, we realized that it was necessary to strategically combine, with respect to both time and space, the uprising of the masses throughout the country, the offensive by the Front's military forces and the nationwide strike in which the employers, as well, were involved or in agreement.*

There would be no victory unless we succeeded in combining these three strategic factors in the same time and space. There had already been several nationwide strikes, but not combined with the masses' offensive. There had been mass uprisings, but not combined with the strike or with the vanguard's capacity to hit the enemy hard. And the vanguard had already dealt blows, but the other two factors had been absent.

These three factors were combined to a

certain extent in September, but not completely, because the process still wasn't being led entirely by us. We made it clear after September, in an internal circular, that there would be no victory unless these three factors were combined.

It would have been very difficult, without the Sandinistas' unity, to gather and synthesize into a single practical line all the achievements that the various tendencies had accumulated. This is why we can say with certainty that unity played and will continue to play a major role in the Revolution.

*M.H.—But shouldn't there have been still another factor? I'm saying this because—at least from outside—there seemed to be a balance of forces that was very difficult to break.*

*H.O.—Well, that's the military aspect. I'll explain that later. Now we're dealing with the strategic factors. From a strategic standpoint, as of May, Somoza had already lost the war. It was only a question of time.*

*M.H.—But if you hadn't received the weapons you received in those last few weeks would you have been able to win?*

*H.O.—I'll go into that presently, but first I want to say that it's very important to combine these three factors. After September we captured El Jicaró and we tried to take Estelí, too, but we couldn't coordinate the operation well. Later, Estelí was captured, and this was practically an action by the vanguard, a hard blow, but still another isolated action. The Nueva Guinea operation was aimed at supporting Estelí, but the forces in Estelí were already withdrawing. The operation in Nueva Guinea aroused nationwide interest, and when the forces were being mobilized to continue the advance, to combine all those factors, Nueva Guinea fell and then came Jinotega, which arose in an attempt to coordinate it with Nueva Guinea and then gradually coordinate everything.*

The taking of Jinotega coincided with the activity on the Southern Front and the capture of El Naranjo—on the Costa Rican border, where the National Guard had stationed a large force—which the Southern Front's General Staff decided to capture in coordination with an attack on the city of Rivas, thus beginning the final offensive on the Southern Front of Nicaragua.

The Southern Front wanted to take advantage of the dispersion of the enemy forces resulting from the capture of Jinotega, but when it went into action the forces in Jinotega had already withdrawn. That was the action in which Germán Pomares was killed.

We came to the conclusion that if we continued this way the enemy would cut us to pieces, because they would be weakening us bit by bit. If we lost El Naranjo we

would lose the chance of scoring a short-term military victory. We just couldn't afford to lose at El Naranjo. We worked out a plan that, at that time, concerned chiefly the internal front, that is, the fronts having to do mainly with the cities, since at that time the guerrilla columns

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### **It was possible to combine three factors—strike, insurrection, and military offensive . . .**

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were dispersed and recovering from the battles they had fought and, therefore, wouldn't be able to go into action immediately. Thus, the insurrection was launched with the full awareness that the columns of the Northern Front, in the mountainous areas, would not be able to take part in the action immediately but would do so later.

The way we saw it, the insurrection had to last, at a nationwide level, for at least two weeks in order to give the columns a chance to regroup and go into action at the right moment, making the enemy's situation completely untenable and subjecting the enemy to a constant strategic siege, with victory only a question of time, of wearing down the enemy before launching the final attack. We planned to wear down the enemy by cutting off his means of communication, isolating his military units, cutting off supplies and so forth, thus forming a nationwide battlefield that the Somoza regime wouldn't be able to cope with.

And that's just what happened. We worked out the insurrectional plan. What was planned, basically for the cities, was that when the Benjamín Zeledón Column of the Southern Front went into action in El Naranjo, the uprising was to be launched a few days later in the Rigoberto López Pérez Western Front, which would create a very difficult situation for the National Guard: major blows in the north, blows in the west and more blows in the south. Several days after the battles in El Naranjo, our forces in Masaya, Granada and Carazo were to go into action, cutting off the means of communication to Somoza's forces on the Southern Front. The uprising in Managua was to start as soon as fighting had begun on all those fronts.

*M.H.—Excuse me for interrupting, but wasn't it in El Naranjo that the Sandinista forces were defeated and had to retreat?*

*H.O.—No. We didn't suffer a defeat at El Naranjo. What happened there was a military maneuver, that is, we left the El Naranjo hills, and several days later we captured Peñas Blancas and Sapoá, the National Guard's major military bases on the Southern Front. We succeeded in get-*

ting Commander Bravo out of Sapoá and after that we waged a positional war in the entire area until the war was over.

*M.H.—Going back to my question about the military balance of forces and the matter of the weapons, what was your original plan?*

*H.O.—We planned to seize our weapons from the enemy.*

*M.H.—But it didn't turn out that way.*

*H.O.—Well, it did, in part. This is what actually happened: beginning with the actions in El Naranjo, we succeeded in launching the offensive by the vanguard and coordinating with the other fronts. We succeeded in calling a strike, which turned out to be a general strike and in which Radio Sandino played a decisive role. Without the radio station it would have been difficult to keep the strike going. The mass insurrection also took place. Therefore, the three factors we were talking about were combined. After that, when Somoza began to get bogged down and was unable to destroy our forces, his defeat was only a matter of time, in fact, a matter of days. The strategic situation was already defined. From a strategic standpoint, the enemy had lost; they were only defending themselves, but we couldn't win, either, due to a question of firepower. Solving this problem made it possible to hasten the end of a war that the enemy had already lost. They could still win a few battles, but never the war. Somoza would never have been able to get out of the hole he was in. Now then, if we hadn't had that armament, maybe the war would have lasted longer, had a higher social cost, caused more bloodshed and greater destruction. With less armament we would have won anyway, but at the cost of greater destruction.*

We got the weapons but they didn't reach all the places they were needed; and in those places it was possible to defeat the National Guard by resorting to destruction, by burning entire city blocks in order to surround the army garrison by fire. Wherever there was an army garrison and we didn't have enough weapons we got the people out of their houses—which were already practically destroyed by the enemy's bombs and mortar shells—and we proceeded to occupy the houses nearest the garrison in order to bring our forces up close and keep it under control. The houses that were already destroyed were set afire to force the enemy to abandon the surrounded garrison.

What few weapons we had we deployed near the exit and other key spots, and we fought the enemy with contact bombs. In other words, thousands of people fought with machetes, picks and shovels and home-made bombs. That was the armament and it showed that it was capable of destroying and was destroying the enemy,

except that it meant a longer war. Only a solution to the problem of firepower could hasten the end of a war that the enemy had already lost.

By then Somoza had no foodstuffs, no gasoline, couldn't use any of the highways, could no longer control the country; the economy was already in ruins, everything was paralyzed. Somoza could no longer rule and his position was untenable. To this we should add the international pressure. It was only a question of time before Somoza was overthrown.

*M.H.—But couldn't that time factor also be harmful to the mass movement by drawing all the strength out of it?*

*H.O.—No.* At that stage of the game there was no danger of its being exhausted, because even though there weren't enough weapons, they were being captured from the enemy and the enemy was being defeated. Needless to say, the armament that was received played quite a decisive role in hastening the victory and, in some cases, in deciding a few battles which otherwise would have been lost. We don't know if losing those battles would have had any effect on the spirit of the masses and on the military situation in the rest of the country and we would have lost the war. In this sense, we can say that the armament played a strategic role and that it is necessary to have a minimum reserve of war matériel—bazookas, explosives and armament with high firepower—rather than large quantities because they would never be enough to meet the needs of the people. What counts is the people's will to go out into the streets and fight with whatever they have at hand.

To sum up, it was possible to combine those three factors—strike, insurrection and military offensive—and, before that, the unity of Sandinism was achieved, without which it would have been difficult to keep those factors combined and coordinated. Furthermore, there was an excellent rear guard network that made it possible to have the technical backing necessary to end the war quickly. The means of communication were also of vital importance: wireless for coordination among the various fronts, and the radio. Without them it would have been impossible to win the war, because it would have been impossible to coordinate it either from a political or military standpoint. We succeeded in organizing Radio Sandino, which was the main means of propaganda for the uprising and for the strike. Another factor was our ability to maintain broad alliances, a policy that succeeded in isolating the Somoza regime, achieving nationwide anti-Somoza unity and neutralizing the reactionary currents in favor of intervention.

Without the monolithic unity of the Sandinistas; without an insurrectional strategy supported by the masses; without the necessary coordination between the

guerrilla fronts and the military fronts in the cities; without effective wireless communication to coordinate all the fronts; without a radio broadcasting system to guide the mass movement; without hard-hitting technical and military resources; without a solid rear guard for introducing these resources and preparing the men, training them; without prior training; without previous victories and setbacks as happened in Nicaragua beginning in Oc-



Young urban insurrectionaries tear Somoza's picture.

tober 1977, when the masses were subjected to the most savage repression but that was, at the same time, a great source of leaning; without a flexible, intelligent and mature policy of alliances on both the national and international levels there would have been no revolutionary victory. The victory was the culmination of all those factors.

It all sounds very simple, but you can't imagine what it cost us to do it. . . . It cost us an October, a February, a Palace, an insurrection in September, all the battles after September in El Jícaro, Estelí, Nueva Guinea. It cost us all the efforts made in the zone of the Pablo Ubeda Column in the mountains, in the Atlantic coast zone. That's what we had to pay for our victory.

*M.H.—About the rear guard—something that was absent in many Latin American guerrilla movements—when did you start organizing it?*

*H.O.—We always had a rear guard.* The movement had direct experience with a rear guard dating back many years. Our country is not an island like Cuba, we have to rely on neighboring countries, and the revolutionary movement relied on support from the neighboring movements from the very beginning. Sandino himself went to Mexico, to Honduras. . . . Many Hondurans and Costa Ricans joined Sandino's struggle. . . . So we counted on

support from Honduras and Costa Rica to meet some needs of the rear guard that were difficult to meet in Nicaragua.

We operated clandestinely in Costa Rica and Honduras. And in order to set up the rear guard at higher levels it became necessary—along with finding resources and setting up clandestine schools—to begin arousing—to begin arousing a feeling of solidarity with our cause among the main progressive political sectors in each coun-

try, without being sectarian, and not with the left-wing sectors alone, because that would have meant isolating ourselves. Nobody gave us a rear guard; we won the right to have one.

The alliances we achieved through our efforts were of vital importance in our obtaining heavy weapons and sophisticated equipment.

*M.H.—Considering that yours was an armed movement, how did you manage to put into practice a broad policy of alliances? It would seem easier for an election-oriented movement to put into practice a policy of that kind. . . .*

*H.O.—We succeeded because we earned respect for ourselves, and this is something that other movements have not achieved; they are not taken seriously, they are not respected. We won the right to establish alliances, we imposed our right. If they hadn't seen us as a force to be reckoned with they wouldn't have approached us, but they realized we constituted a force and thus had to become our allies. And they did so due to our political program, even though ours was an armed movement with a revolutionary leadership.*

The progressives realized that ours was a revolutionary movement and that we weren't totally on accord with their ideology, but they also realized that we had a political program that was, to a certain

extent, of interest to them and that we had military power. Those three factors made it possible for us to establish true alliances, not paper ones. We made no agreement of any kind. We just set down the rules of the game and acted accordingly, and as a result we went on gaining political ground.

*M.H.—Can you tell us what effect the international balance of forces had on your victory?*

*H.O.—The international balance of forces, the international situation, the state of the various forces in the area, the contradictions of the Western developed countries, etc., must definitely be taken into account.*

It would have been very difficult for us to win by depending only on internal development. We realized that the internal gains had to be reinforced by the forces that existed abroad. And the only way to achieve this was to practice a mature, flexible policy by disclosing our revolutionary, democratic and patriotic program for national reconstruction. That was what made it possible for us to count on the support of all the mature forces the world over, the revolutionary forces, the progressive forces.

*M.H.—Mature forces, you say? What do you mean by this?*

*H.O.—I'm speaking of the bourgeois forces that go through a process of maturity and don't rush into adventurous undertakings like those of the CIA and the reactionary sectors. There are mature forces in the world that, realizing the quality and strength of a revolutionary movement, even if they have contradictory interests, end up respecting it. It is even possible, in fact, to form certain alliances, to agree on certain political issues, that have a bearing on the balance of forces necessary for the final attack. In order to achieve this it is important to have a program which responds to the country's real problems, that proposes solutions that everybody will consider correct.*

We defined the objective problems: that Nicaragua must undergo reconstruction for such and such reasons, that national unity was necessary for such and such a reason, and so forth. . . .

Moreover, it was necessary to win everybody's support, not the support of the left-wing sectors alone. The Sandinista Front made it a point to set up an infrastructure of solidarity in each country, seeking, firstly, the support of all and, secondly, the support of those who best understood our problems.

Now then, there's a big difference between sympathizing with our cause and providing material aid. And who's going to provide such material support? Whoever wants to do so, without political commitments of any kind attached, without jeopardizing principles.

Getting that support was a great accomplishment on the part of the Sandinistas. We wanted to get as much support as we could abroad in order to frustrate any scheme of foreign intervention. And in doing so we even won the support of sectors in the United States itself.

*M.H.—As far as the Sandinista movement is concerned, what bearing did the*

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### **Women played a very important role in the insurrection. In some columns all the officers were women, women who commanded hundreds of men without any problem . . .**

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*existence of the three tendencies and their later reunification have on the process?*

*H.O.—As I said, Sandinista unity was a decisive factor in the victory. However, in order to understand the process of reintegration we must go back a bit into history.*

What happened in Nicaragua was not a profound division in the FSLN but rather a sort of split-up of the vanguard into three parts as a result of our lack of maturity at the time. . . .

*M.H.—When did that happen?*

*H.O.—It started between 1976 and 1977.*

*M.H.—And what was the reason for it?*

*H.O.—I was coming to that. More than a question of ideology, of program, it was a question of the leaders' concern over finding a solution to the problems of the revolutionary movement and channeling the revolutionary activities in that direction.*

*M.H.—I don't quite understand what you mean. . . .*

*H.O.—Well, the leadership's way of dealing with the problems was primitive. In actual practice, there was virtually no coordinated leadership. As a result of the repression and due to the fact that we remained out of contact with one another for long periods of time, plus the lack of a common line, of a political commitment set down in writing, everyone worked as they pleased. And this led to clashes. The split was not caused by profound ideological and political differences, although this type of problem did exist. If we had been better organized, perhaps we could have settled the contradictions—which are always present in the initial stages of every movement—in a positive manner, encouraging criticism while maintaining unity. The lack of this necessary framework for discussion along with our immaturity as*

individuals, as revolutionaries, coupled with the repressive atmosphere led to our gradual split, breaking up into the three tendencies that everybody knows about.

The split coincided with the death in combat of Oscar Turcio and Ricardo Morales, both members of the national leadership. It arose out of the growth of the Sandinista movement itself, and came at a time when the very development of the movement called for a radical improvement in our organization and leadership, a more organized vanguard capable of effectively leading the mass struggle, of charting a sure path for the armed struggle in Nicaragua. We were aware of this need, but we were not able to accomplish this, to assimilate the experience of our older comrades, more experienced in party work, in working with the masses, with more military experience and more experience in dealing with political forces at home and abroad, and to combine this with the dynamism of the young people who were already beginning to join the movement in significant numbers.

It was necessary to combine the old with the new and, in practice, this created clashes. The older comrades began to mistrust the younger ones, who were beginning to assume responsibility for a number of tasks, and the young ones, who had no idea how hard the struggles of the preceding years had been, underrated the older comrades because the veterans still resorted to primitive methods of work which the young ones thought should be eliminated.

*M.H.—You consider yourself among the veterans?*

*H.O.—I think so, no? I was among those who started years ago.*

*M.H.—How do you explain the implicit division of labor between the three tendencies by virtue of which the Proletarian tendency worked chiefly with the urban masses and the Prolonged People's War tendency with the guerrillas in the mountains?*

*H.O.—I want to explain that the division of labor of which you speak was not the result of the division into tendencies; it existed before the division of the front.*

Let me explain. . . .

The leaders of the three tendencies were concerned with the overall problems of the revolution. What I'm trying to say is that when, at the time of the split, the comrades working on the different tasks assigned to them by the FSLN realized that they were unable to come up with solutions for the problems they faced—because of the drawbacks and weaknesses I've already mentioned—they started to organize themselves and the work they had mastered on the spot and seek solutions to the problems they faced according to the structures within their reach. You must remember

that we were working amidst brutal repression; it was impossible to do nationwide work, everybody worked according to what the situation dictated. The comrades who worked in the mountains continued doing so in line with the prevailing situation; those who worked more closely with sectors in production, with students and in making known scientific revolutionary theory continued to do so; and those who had been doing chiefly military work, seeking insurrection, pursued that line.

Actually the efforts made by the three separate structures were furthering a single struggle, were giving rise to a single policy and were evolving a single strategy for victory.

That explains why none of the tendencies thought of setting up a new FSLN.

*M.H.—So you didn't have three general secretaries. . . .*

*H.O.—Of course not. And that explains why, when the unity of the movement was reestablished, the work the three tendencies had done was complementary.*

*M.H.—So this sort of division of labor existed before the split. . . .*

*H.O.—Yes, the different areas of work had been decided upon by the movement. The fact that we all came from a common root was very helpful. It led us to respect the work of the other tendencies. For example, the insurrectional tendency did not try to set up another revolutionary student front, it let that organization, which played such an important role in Nicaragua, remain under the control of the other tendencies. Nor was there any interference with the work the "Proletarian" comrades did in several factories, and they didn't interfere either. They didn't try to set up another Northern or Southern Front, which was the most important military work done by the "Insurrectionals." The efforts were coordinated and they complemented each other.*

*M.H.—Besides, no one of the three could have triumphed without the help of the others.*

*H.O.—That's right. The problem was that each one wanted to lead the process, wanted to be the one that stood out the most, but that was overcome in the course of the struggle itself and everybody realized the importance of everybody else's work. Thus we come to the unity agreements which we started to work on in late 1978 and which were concluded in March 1979, based on a single policy, without anyone having to give ground to the other. The whole Sandinista movement agreed on a single policy which upheld the insurrectional nature of the struggle, called for a flexible policy on alliances and the need for a broad-based program, etc. This programmatic, political and ideological foun-*



National Guard troops move through Masaya.

dation made it possible for us to coordinate our efforts with increasing effectiveness and pave the way for our regrouping. I think it would be more correct to say that we regrouped rather than reunited. The three tendencies all had a great desire to become a single FSLN once again, as shown by the enthusiasm, love and zeal with which this unity is preserved now, and we're sure it is irreversible. Just as Sandinista unity was vital for victory, the unity of all the left around Sandinism and of the entire population around the left and Sandinism is vital to consolidate the process and achieve our goals.

*M.H.—We understand that women played a very important role in the armed struggle in Nicaragua, that in the cities they fought shoulder to shoulder with men and in the columns they came to constitute 25 percent of the force; that there were several women commanders. What are your views on this? Was it something new or was there a tradition of women participating in such activities?*

*H.O.—The Sandinista Front was heir to the tradition of women's participation in the struggle, not only in Sandino's time but also in the past century and even further back. You already know about the role of women during Sandino's struggle, of his comrade, of internationalist comrades like the Lía Toro sisters. Or the case of the women who were murdered by the Yankees in 1912. There was a woman from El Salvador involved; her name was Lucía Matamoras. She was drawn and quartered for having fought against the intervention of that time. There was also Comrade Concepción Alday, the wife of the first liberal guerrilla to fight the Yankees in Chinadega, who was killed in 1926.*

The FSLN inherited and followed up on this participation. But it's important to point out that Sandinism not only developed the participation of women in the vanguard organization but in all sectors, and not just in support work for key tasks but in key strategic tasks. Such is the case of guerrilla Commander Dora Téllez, better known as Commander 2; guerrilla Com-

mander Mónica Balteano; and other guerrilla commanders such as Leticia Herrera. These three comrades played a very important role, not just in support work for the revolutionary struggle but as political and military leaders. In the course of the insurrection, they were leaders on the battlefield, as in the case of Dora Téllez (Claudia), who headed what was called the Rigoberto López Pérez Western Front, one of the most important fronts of the war.

Sandinism did not close the doors to women's participation; that would have been a backward, sexist way of underestimating them. Women played a very important role in the insurrection. There were columns in which all the officers were women, women who commanded hundreds of men without any problem.

*M.H.—Before we end this interview, would you like to say anything else?*

*H.O.—Well, first of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to discuss these issues which are vital to an understanding of our revolutionary process. I would have liked to give more thought to the answers but the daily tasks we face have made this impossible. What I said here should not be viewed as the last word, as the definitive analysis. I've just expressed my particular views which I hope will contribute to a better understanding of our process, of our brave and inspiring revolutionary struggle. □*

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## Blanco's Presidential Campaign Popular Among Workers

By Jean-Pierre Beauvais

The formation of the ARI (Revolutionary Left Alliance), the electoral coalition in support of the campaign of Hugo Blanco for president of Peru, caught the military dictatorship by surprise.

The regroupment behind Blanco of nearly all revolutionary organizations and the forces of the workers movement who are fighting for a "government without generals or bosses" did not enter into their plans. To the contrary, they had counted on a continuation of the traditional division and atomization of the revolutionary and workers forces of Peru.

This united candidacy, imposed by the pressure of the masses, had a considerable impact once it became a concrete reality.

For example, in the poverty-stricken shantytowns surrounding Lima where more than half the city's population lives, dozens of support committees for the ARI have been formed spontaneously. Volunteers have trooped into the headquarters of the various parties that make up the ARI, offering their aid to the campaign. In these same shantytowns, a recent poll showed that nearly a quarter of the residents intended to vote for Blanco in the May 18 election.

The dictatorship's response was not long in coming. In the press, which is still under strict control, a hysterical campaign is being waged presenting the ARI and Blanco as the major threat to "harmonious democratization" of Peru and to the actual holding of the elections.

The ultrareactionary sector of the army, which favors maintaining the dictatorship and opposes the army returning to the barracks, points to the danger represented by the personal prestige of Blanco and the united character of his candidacy to try to reinforce their position. This sector is at present a small minority inside the armed forces.

With the avowed objective of dividing the ARI, the state-controlled radio and television have launched a campaign of slander against Blanco's party, the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party, the Peruvian section of the Fourth International).

The PRT is presented as an illegal formation, the Peruvian instrument of an "international operation of Trotskyism and the Fourth International" whose aim is to use Blanco's candidacy to implant itself in the rest of Latin America.

Apart from seeking to sow divisions in the ARI, the slander campaign is also intended to justify the refusal to legalize the PRT. According to Peruvian election law, drafted by the dictatorship, only

legally recognized parties have the right to present candidates.

ARI, an electoral alliance, includes the UDP (Democratic People's Unity), which was legalized at the time of the elections for the Constituent Assembly and which can therefore legally present candidates. Because of this, Blanco's candidacy cannot be challenged on the basis of the election law.

But parallel with the organization of the electoral front, many parties are carrying out a campaign for their own legalization. This is the case for three organizations in Peru that claim adherence to Trotskyism—the PRT, POMR (Revolutionary Marxist Workers Party, affiliated with the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International), and the PST (Socialist Workers Party, affiliated with the Bolshevik Faction, which recently split from the Fourth International).

None of the organizations in the ARI coalition that are seeking legalization have as yet obtained such status. The only revolutionary organization at present legalized is, as if by coincidence, the only one that is not a member of the ARI and has refused to support Blanco's candidacy—the PST.

The PST was officially recognized as a legal party almost immediately after it

made known that it refused to participate in the ARI or support Blanco's candidacy.

The PRT and POMR, which both collected the same number of signatures as the PST (some 60,000 each, although 40,000 was the official requirement), are still awaiting a response, although the time allowed for such rulings by the national election court has already expired.

According to the court, a large number of the signatures obtained by the two organizations will not be validated. The argument was that their lists of signatures contained too many "illiterates," and the court declared itself incompetent to "verify their signatures"!

Since the Constituent Assembly had granted the right to vote to illiterates, who comprise more than 35 percent of the population, this decision in effect annuls part of that right.

It was also argued that some of the signers had already signed, in 1978, for the legalization of APRA (American Peoples Revolutionary Alliance—a bourgeois-nationalist formation headed, until his death last year, by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre). Two years later, they are still officially considered supporters of APRA and are not allowed to sign for the legalization of another party. □

### Blanco Begins Sit-In, Hunger Strike

On February 4 Peruvian PRT leader Hugo Blanco began a sit-in and hunger strike in the headquarters of the National Elections Court in Lima.

He is demanding (1) an end to the slander campaign by the ruling dictatorship against the PRT (see accompanying story); (2) respect for the elementary democratic rights of illiterate people, which have been called into question by rulings of the elections tribunal; and (3) legalization of organizations such as the PRT and the POMR, which have fulfilled all the requirements imposed by the dictatorship.

Blanco's action was supported by all the forces composing the Revolutionary Left Alliance (ARI), which is supporting Blanco for the office of president of

Peru in the elections scheduled for May 18.

The sit-in and hunger strike by Blanco, the most popular candidate for the presidency among the working masses of Peru, became a major national issue within a few hours. The offices of the elections tribunal were immediately encircled by the army, backed up with heavy weapons.

Blanco and the PRT have requested that supporters of democratic rights around the world send messages to the president of Peru supporting the right of the PRT and POMR to legal recognition.

The address for such messages is: President Francisco Morales Bermúdez, Palacio Presidencial, Lima, Peru.

—Jean-Pierre Beauvais, Feb. 5, 1980