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***Workers Mobilize
Against U.S.
Imperialism in
Iran, Cuba,
Nicaragua***



**Bolivian Unions Move to Center Stage,
Confront Threat of Rightist Coup**

New Exposures on Carter's Iran Raid

By Janice Lynn

As new details about Washington's April 24 military raid in Iran begin to unravel, more and more questions are being raised about the real aims of this operation.

It is becoming clear to an increasing number of people that Carter's "humanitarian" mission had nothing to do with bringing the hostages back alive, as some of the families of the hostages were the first to declare.

According to a dispatch in the May 1 *Christian Science Monitor*, one alleged CIA report estimated that 60 percent of the hostages would have been killed had the raiding party reached the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, although U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown denied any knowledge of the report.

Even the editors of the *New York Times*, in their defense of Carter's raid, stated on April 29, "Mr. Carter decided this month to put the stature of the United States ahead of even the safety of the hostages." By "stature," the editors meant Washington's self-assumed "right" to intervene around the world in defense of its imperialist interests.

Among the new details that have surfaced about the raid is evidence that Washington was prepared to carry out a much broader attack against Iran, beyond a straight-forward "rescue" mission.

Just After the Hostages?

U.S. government officials have now admitted, according to the May 3 *New York Times*, that they were ready to use C-130 gunships to "strafe any Iranian troops" in Tehran. At least two of these C-130's were armed with 20-millimeter cannons and rapid-fire machine guns. The officials also acknowledge that they were prepared to swiftly move in with fighter bombers from Washington's aircraft carriers in the Arabian Sea, which are equipped with the most advanced combat planes, the F-14 and A-7 Corsair attack aircraft.

Documents found in the wreckage of the U.S. aircraft in the Dasht-e-Kavir desert included maps pinpointing various locations in Iran, such as the city of Qum, the residence of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and the site of Tehran's Friday prayer meetings.

U.S. government officials have also revealed that their plan relied on the cooperation of CIA operatives infiltrated into Iran during the last months and of Iranian counterrevolutionaries. One administration source reported that the fluent Farsi-

speaking infiltrators and counterrevolutionaries had planned to create a "diversion" near the U.S. Embassy.

There has been speculation in the American press that the desert landing site was selected by former members of SAVAK, the shah's secret police, working undercover in Iran for U.S. intelligence. It seems SAVAK used to consider that site a safe place for tossing anti-shah political prisoners out of helicopters.

Washington claims its paramilitary agents have now all left Iran. Iranian leaders suspect otherwise.

Given this evidence of the scope of Washington's military plans, Iranian officials say that the aborted raid was actually part of a planned effort to overthrow the Iranian government.

Questions and More Questions

Giving voice to the widespread suspicions in the United States about the real character of the raid, Seymour M. Hersh, a former *New York Times* correspondent, raised a series of "hard questions that need answers now" in the May 1 issue of that paper.

Did Carter take into account the popular mass support for the students in the embassy? he asked. Did he take into account the fact that the population is armed and "as soon as the gunfire at the embassy started, the people would come running?" And what were the anticipated casualties?

These and other questions still remain unanswered. Just how big an operation was actually planned? How could the technical failure of three helicopters have been the real reason for aborting the mission when Washington admits it had hundreds of aircraft ready to take off at a moment's notice? How could such plans have been carried out without an untold number of deaths, including the deaths of the hostages?

The new revelations and questions they raise only serve to increase popular suspicion that the purpose of Carter's raid was to try to deal a blow to the Iranian revolution.

Suspicions were further heightened when White House Press Secretary Jody Powell admitted that a conscious decision had been made to lie and mislead the entire public about Washington's military plans. In an interview shortly after Carter's raid, Powell told how a book entitled *Bodyguard of Lies* was particularly instructive to him in how to mislead the

public and declared, "... there's no question that my intent, my motive, was a conscious one. If I had to do it over again, I'd do it."

This brings back bitter memories of Washington's lies and deceit during the Vietnam war era.

The U.S. rulers are doing whatever they can to try and reverse the American working people's opposition to any new wars like the one against Vietnam.

Some people at first believed Carter when he said this was a "humanitarian" mission; others were confused. But as more information leaks out about this raid, and as more people learn the truth about the Iranian revolution, an increasing number are becoming skeptical.

Rifts in Washington

Reflecting the difficulties Washington is having in reversing what it calls the "Vietnam syndrome" (the American working people's resistance to Vietnam-type wars), rifts began to appear in U.S. ruling circles over what tactics to adopt in combatting the Iranian revolution.

Several members of Congress called for an investigation into violations of the War Powers Act, which states that Congress must be notified in advance of military actions.

Then on April 28, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance resigned, claiming his opposition to the raid.

Vance, and those who think like him, are fearful that Carter—by pressing too far and too fast with warlike acts—will only fuel the antiwar attitudes of American workers they are all trying so hard to push back. They are also worried that ill-conceived actions like the Iran raid may simply fuel anti-imperialist sentiments and mobilizations around the world.

Carter's use of military force likewise failed to win wholehearted support from his imperialist allies in Europe or Japan.

Carter Presses Ahead

But despite these rifts and despite Washington's failure to whip up sentiment for a new major war, Carter has continued his belligerent moves.

At the president's April 29 news conference, one reporter, referring to the years of suffering by the Iranian people under Pahlavi rule, asked, "... will you now make a gesture to the people of Iran so that the bloodshed and suffering can be put behind after 27 years?"

"... there is no guilt that I see on behalf of our nation," Carter responded, refusing to even consider such a gesture.

By May 5 Washington's naval strength in the Indian Ocean area had reached record levels. With the arrival of the aircraft carriers *Constellation* and *Eisenhower*, along with six escort ships and two nuclear-powered cruisers, the number of warships reached thirty-seven. They hold about 400 aircraft and 34,000 troops.

In a further provocative move, U.S. jet fighters from the aircraft carrier *Nimitz* intercepted an Iranian patrol plane flying over the Strait of Hormuz April 29 and forced it back to Iran.

As the confrontation sharpens, Iranian leaders are seeking to win greater solidarity around the world against the U.S. threats. Iran recently announced new trading agreements with the Soviet Union, Romania, and East Germany. Reflecting the popular sentiment throughout the Arab world, the press in the Persian Gulf oil states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain were highly critical of Carter's move. The Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the government of Syria, condemned Washington's raid.

Cuba Offers Support to Iran

Seeking to help concretize such support, Cuban President Fidel Castro called on the member states of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to demonstrate their solidarity with Iran by refusing to sell oil to any country that joins with Washington in imposing an economic blockade against Iran.

"This is the moment of truth for OPEC; this is the moment of truth for the Non-aligned countries; this is the moment of truth for the Third World," Castro declared at the Havana May Day rally.

On May 4, Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca Peoli met in Tehran with Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr to discuss convening a special conference of members of the Nonaligned countries to discuss Washington's military raid in Iran.

Malmierca was quoted on Tehran Radio as pledging complete support for Iran. He said that "in case of need [Iran] will be given not only moral but also material support by Cuba." □

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Iranian Workers Celebrate May Day

By Janice Lynn

May Day, the international workers' holiday, was celebrated in Iran this year with large marches and rallies in cities throughout the country. Factories and workplaces were closed so that workers could participate in the celebrations.

The Tehran march was organized by the Islamic Workers Shora, a federation of workers *shoras* (committees) in the Tehran area. An estimated 250,000 people turned out, with contingents of workers carrying banners from their factory shoras.

This large outpouring is testimony to the growing role Iran's workers are playing in the revolutionary process.

One year ago the factory-based shoras only existed in embryonic form. The May Day actions in Tehran at that time were not called or organized by workers organizations.

Coming one week after Carter's abortive military raid, the dominant theme in this year's May Day rallies was strong opposition to any further military moves by Carter and support for the militant students occupying the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The workers expressed their firm determination to defend their revolution against Washington's attempts to reassert its dominance over their country.

"America! America! the army of 20 million is prepared to fight," was one of the popular chants, referring to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's call for the Iranian population to arm themselves and undergo military training to counter the military threats from Washington.

At the Isfahan rally, Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr denounced what he said was an "American plot" to overthrow the Iranian government. Bani-Sadr has charged that Washington's raid was part of a "creeping coup d'état."

In a message to United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, Bani-Sadr declared that Washington's actions were "carried out with the aim of toppling the revolutionary regime and reestablishing U.S. domination over Iran."

Having failed to crush the Iranian revolution by organizing a coup, as it tried to do in January, 1979, Washington is now seeking to "destabilize" the Iranian government, using methods similar to those used against the Allende government in Chile. The economic blockade being organized by the imperialists has been accompanied by armed attacks, including bombings and assassinations, within Iran.

Khomeini had to cancel his appearance at the Tehran May Day rally when bombs were discovered along the parade route.

Since the failure of the U.S. raid, bombs have exploded in several Iranian cities and shots have been fired at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Iranians are rightly suspicious that these attacks have been carried out by the CIA infiltrators or Iranian agents who U.S. officials have admitted were working inside Iran in conjunction with the planned military attack.

Iranian officials have announced that a special committee has been formed to search for these agents.

During the last year Iranian workers have been demanding that all former supporters of the shah and agents of SAVAK, the shah's secret police, be purged from their positions in the economy

and military. Many top army officers are the very same ones who served under the shah's regime.

On April 27, Khomeini called for an international conference on Washington's crimes against Iran. Bani-Sadr has invited representatives from various countries to come to Iran for this meeting. Among those invited are Cuban President Fidel Castro, head of the movement of Non-aligned countries, and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yassir Arafat.

In addition to the huge workers' demonstration in Tehran, the Fedayeen and Mujahedeen held their own May Day rallies in separate parts of the city. These attracted some 50,000 to 60,000 people each. Both rallies were disrupted by the right-wing gangs that have been responsible for the attacks against members of these groups on the campuses.

The Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party (HKE) participated in the workers' demonstration. On April 30, the night

'Oil Workers Imprisonment Is Threat to All Shoras'

At the Tehran May Day rally, the Islamic Workers Shora, which represents a number of *shoras* (committees) in the Tehran area, distributed a leaflet calling for the release of four Abadan oil workers who are imprisoned in Tehran. The four were arrested April 10.

These oil workers were active in the Islamic Shora of Oil Workers and the Islamic Anjoman (Association) of Oil Workers. They were outspoken in demanding that all SAVAK agents be removed from the oil industry.

The Tehran workers declared, "We see their imprisonment as a threat to all shoras in other industries."

The Tehran workers' shora explained the background leading up to the oil workers' arrest: "With the appointment of Mr. Moinfar [as Iran's oil minister] a new hope came to the hearts of the oil workers. They hoped that after so many years of struggle and exploitation, a new beginning would appear."

"But they were mistaken," the statement continued, explaining that the same hierarchy as before continued to exist in the oil industry.

Mr. Moinfar, "who thinks along the old lines, could not accept the concept of shora and started opposing the shora," they explained. This even extended to opposing the oil workers' publication, *Payan*, the organ of the Islamic Shoras of the Oil Refinery and Service Industry.

Representatives of the oil worker's shora traveled to Tehran to discuss

their concerns with Iranian president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and to give an interview to the newspaper, *Engelab Eslami* (Islamic Revolution) "so that everyone in the country would know the situation in this industry."

They wanted to discuss the bad conditions and the fact that "remnants from the old regime" were still within the oil industry. They also wanted to discuss how Moinfar "spread opposition to the shora."

But four of these oil workers were arrested and thrown into prison. No formal charges were brought against them.

The Tehran workers' shora asked, "How can we accept that agents of the old regime are still in the administration [of the oil industry], yet these Islamic fighters are in prison?"

They demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the four imprisoned oil workers: Mousa Souri, Hajali Shahkari, Abdullah Jafari, and Ahmed Golisourani; and the resumption of publication of the oil workers' organ, *Payan*. And, they supported the oil workers' call for a nationally televised debate before the nation's workers and toilers on the problems in the oil industry.

They also demanded that the "shora have the right to oversee the affairs of the industry and in cooperation with the administration, cleanse this country's vital industry from the betrayers and agents of the old regime."

before, the HKE held its May Day celebration which also marked the ninth anniversary of the founding of the Iranian Trotskyist movement. Some 350 people

attended. The featured speakers were Fatima Fallahi and Mahsa Hashemi, the two HKE women who were recently released from prison. □

'Whole Sections of Baneh Have Vanished'

Fighting Intensifies in Kurdistan

By Gerry Foley

Attacks on Kurdish population centers by Tehran military forces escalated in the final week of April into a full-scale offensive against the people of these areas.

On April 25, according to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, the military demanded that the entire population of Sanandaj, a city of more than 100,000 inhabitants, leave their homes in order to clear the way for a "mopping up" operation against alleged rebels.

The attacks on Sanandaj reportedly began after the Kurdish population, which is struggling for its national rights, rallied in a peaceful demonstration to block the entry of a column of Tehran troops.

The national-religious leader of the Kurdish people, Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, issued a statement saying that the military "which runs from our *peshmergas* [guerrillas]" had launched a "massacre of the innocents," training its "American guns" on children, women, and old people.

He said that the only two hospitals in Sanandaj had been destroyed by artillery fire, as well as the mosques where Kurds driven from their homes in the city and elsewhere in the region had taken refuge.

Apparently a general offensive was launched on Thursday, April 24 against Bukan, Saqqez, Baneh, and Paveh, as well as Sanandaj—that is against most of the main Kurdish mountain towns and cities.

Baneh, the scene of fierce fighting between government forces and Kurdish guerrillas in August 1979, was devastated. An April 28 Agence France-Presse dispatch quoted a refugee's description of the attack:

"The streets were full of people [Thursday is the start of the weekend in the Muslim world]. Then two helicopter gunships began strafing the town. Bodies piled up everywhere. People ran in all directions looking for cover."

But there was no escape. "Then the army opened fire from its positions on the surrounding hills. We were caught in a trap."

The population was pinned down by an "inferno" of machine-gun and cannon fire until late in the night, when the *peshmergas* managed to lead the women, children, and old people to refuge in the high, barren mountains.

The *peshmergas* then launched attacks

on the military's hillside positions. At 6:00 a.m. on April 25, the Phantom jets of the Iranian air force attacked the Kurdish fighters, firing rockets, while the military



Kurdish leader Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini (seated, left) defends Iranian revolution despite attacks against Kurds.

continued to machine-gun the town from its emplacements.

"Whole sections of Baneh have vanished," Agence France-Presse reported. "The emergency room in the hospital has been destroyed by a bomb. The corridors are filled with wounded. Surgery has been halted because of the lack of medicine."

Saqqez was a "ghost town," the dispatch said. "The entire population has fled the bombings. The deserted streets of this town, which had almost 40,000 inhabitants are being patrolled by *peshmergas*, while automatic weapons fire sounds intermittently."

On April 20, four days before the government's all-out assault on Saqqez, the Tehran Kurdish community issued an international appeal for aid to the shattered city. It said that the Tehran forces had refused to heed repeated calls for a ceasefire.

Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-

Sadr ordered the army to stop shooting, *Le Monde* reported April 27. "But the military seem not to have heeded him." Subsequent attempts to establish a truce also failed.

The fighting in Kurdistan, Bani-Sadr claimed, was "part of the American imperialist plan to break our revolution."

It is actually the outrages of the Tehran forces against the Kurdish people that benefit U.S. imperialism. At a time of increased U.S. military provocations, such attacks on an oppressed people can only further divide the ranks of the Iranian masses and weaken their anti-imperialist struggle.

The attacks on the Kurds also play into the hands of the Iraqi regime, which is acting more and more openly against the Iranian revolution. Tens of thousands of Kurds have been driven into Iraq by the fighting since August 1979, and the Iraqi regime is trying to use the Kurdish struggle as a cover for its own reactionary intervention.

Despite the bitter experiences of the large-scale fighting in Kurdistan last year, the Kurdish leaders have constantly reiterated their determination, and the determination of their people, to defend the Iranian revolution and the borders of Iran.

In a statement published in mid-April in a number of Persian papers, Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini said: "The Kurdish people will not permit any foreign government, the U.S. or the Baathist regime in Iraq, to attack Iran."

Hosseini went on to say that "despite the fact that sections of the Kurdish people have been driven from their homes . . . the Kurdish people do not see themselves as separate from the other peoples of Iran, and they will not deny them their solidarity and help."

In fact, the Kurdish Democratic Party, one of the major Kurdish organizations, reported that *peshmergas* had already fought Iraqi forces early in April, according to the April 20 Los Angeles Persian-language weekly *Iran News*.

The resumption of the Kurdish war, however, can only undermine the efforts to build anti-imperialist solidarity between the Kurds and the rest of the Iranian population. It strengthens the hands of the bourgeois and procapitalist forces in Iran, who are opposed to the advance of the revolution and put the interests of Iranian capitalism above those of the anti-imperialist struggle.

In the first Kurdish war, the Tehran forces were defeated mainly by mass mobilizations in the population centers. The present attacks seem designed to break this kind of resistance by dispersing the Kurdish people.

The effect, however, may be to weld the Kurds together for a new revolutionary advance. Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini has reportedly called for the immediate formation of a Kurdish "People's Government" to organize the resistance to the attacks. □

Huge Outpouring for May Day in Nicaragua

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—An enormous crowd of workers and peasants estimated at between 200,000 and 350,000 overflowed the Plaza of the Revolution here on May 1. It was the first time in Nicaragua's history that working people could celebrate May Day without the threat of repression and they did so in numbers even beyond that of the massive rally that celebrated the revolutionary victory last July 20.

From the early hours of the morning, contingents organized by the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), the Rural Workers Association (ATC), and the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) arrived in trucks and buses from cities, towns, and peasant villages across Nicaragua. From four designated assembly points in different parts of the capital they marched under huge banners and homemade signs through the main streets. Central Managua was one big mobilization.

Gold miners from the remote Atlantic Coast region marched in their own contingent, wearing hard hats and bearing picks and shovels. Employees from the various ministries of the revolutionary government participated and marching beside them were ministers, vice-ministers, and other top officials.

Hundreds of workers filed through the streets in military formation, marching with their own units of the Sandinista People's Militias, which are now being organized and trained in workplaces across the country. Many marchers wore T-shirts emblazoned with the letters MOA—the Workers Literacy Militias, which are part of the campaign to teach one million Nicaraguans to read and write.

Politically, the huge outpouring for May Day represented a reaffirmation of the vast support the revolutionary government and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) enjoy among the poor and working people of Nicaragua. It also revealed how far the process of self-organization of the masses has advanced.

The FSLN has recently come under criticism and pressure from capitalist and right-wing forces because of its decision to broaden and make more democratic the Council of State, a legislative body that is to convene May 4. By providing representation to the CST and other trade-union federations, the ATC, the CDSs, and so on, the FSLN has ensured that the council will have a substantial worker-peasant majority.

Support for this change was obvious in the chants of "People's power!" and "The people are organized in the Council of State!" that rang out continually during

the May Day demonstration.

Anti-imperialism and support for the revolutionary struggle in neighboring El Salvador was another important theme of the day's events. In his speech opening the rally, CST General Secretary Iván García condemned "the aggressive plans of Yankee imperialism" and pointed to "the numerous occasions" on which such plans have been defeated—"Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Mozambique, Algeria, Angola, Cuba, Nicaragua. . . ."

"From this Plaza of the Revolution," García continued, "our militant Sandinista solidarity goes out to all the peoples who are struggling for their liberation, in particular to our brothers the people of El Salvador, who are in a war to the death against the military junta, the oligarchy, and imperialism. And we do not doubt that they will achieve their freedom."

García closed with a call to all workers to join the militias—"which are nothing other than the people armed and organized." The crowd responded with a chant that is fast becoming the most popular one here—"One single army! One single army!"

Other speakers at the rally included Government Junta member Moises Hassán, ATC General Secretary Edgardo García, Minister of Labor Virgilio Godoy, and leaders of two other important union federations, the CGT-i and the CAUS. The latter has recently renewed its collaboration with the CST and the CGT-i after

several months of friction and hostility. A contingent from the CAUS and the Nicaraguan Communist Party, which leads it, participated in the march with their own banners.

Members of the People's Social Christian Party (PPSC), a generally pro-FSLN grouping, distributed their own caps with their party initials.

Several papers were being hawked in the crowd, such as the FSLN daily *Barricada* and the weekly *Poder Sandinista*. The most visible was the new *Voz de la Mujer* (Voice of Women), the monthly paper of the Association of Nicaraguan Women.

Commander of the Revolution and Minister of Planning Henry Ruiz ("Modesto") spoke for the FSLN National Directorate. He pointed to the massive May Day turnout as the answer to the bourgeois forces that have claimed that support for the FSLN "has been declining after nine months of struggle."

"You have the floor," Ruiz told the crowd, which responded with prolonged applause and chants of "People's power!"

The rally closed with Commander Tomás Borge leading the singing of the FSLN anthem. Then the FSLN National Directorate and junta members Hassán and Sergio Ramírez led tens of thousands in a spirited march from the Plaza of the Revolution to the headquarters of the Sandinista Workers Federation. □

Cuban May Day Rally Hits U.S. Threats

In a massive display of revolutionary determination, one and a half million Cubans poured into Havana's Revolution Square on May 1 to mark the international working class holiday, express their support for the Cuban government, and demonstrate their militant defiance of Washington's increased threats against Cuba.

The May Day rally was the second in a series of three major mass mobilizations that have been called in response to the White House's propaganda campaign around the Cuban "refugees" and the planned American military maneuvers in the Caribbean, which will include a marine landing at Guantánamo Bay, a part of Cuba illegally occupied by an American naval base.

The first mobilization, on April 19, saw more than a million Cubans march past the Peruvian Embassy, where several thousand Cubans seeking to emigrate to the United States have gathered. The third

is scheduled for May 17, and is to involve demonstrations around the country.

The May Day rally in Havana underlined Cuba's active solidarity with revolutionary struggles in the rest of the Caribbean and in Central America. In addition to Fidel Castro, the key-note speakers included Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Prime Minister Maurice Bishop of Grenada.

In his speech, Castro denounced the U.S. aggression against Cuba and called for an increased military alert. He announced the formation of new regional defense militias and told Cubans to prepare for the possibility of an "American naval blockade."

Castro also predicted that some five million Cubans—one half of the entire Cuban population—would be mobilized on May 17 to protest the American occupation of Guantánamo Bay, U.S. surveillance flights over Cuba, and the U.S. economic blockade. □

WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR AID TO NICARAGUA



Canadian Conference Wins Broad Labor Support

Representatives of the Canadian labor movement, churches, solidarity groups, and political activists came together in the prairie city of Saskatoon April 5 and 6 for a Conference on Solidarity With Nicaragua.

Speaking at the opening session of the conference, Pastor Valle-Garay, Nicaragua's permanent representative to Canada, said:

"Nicaragua is now becoming the focal point not just in our hemisphere but in the world. What may happen is a challenge and victory over capitalism and imperialism. . . .

"We need your constant support. Make no mistake about it . . . as Nicaragua goes, so goes the rest of Latin America. If for any particular reason we fail, it will be a failure for the rest of the countries. . . . But I can promise you that we are not going to fail. And we are not going to fail because we have the help of people like you. . . ."

Valle-Garay pointed out that aid from Canada since the victory in Nicaragua has been higher per capita than from any other industrialized country. But he noted that most of this aid has come from church and labor groups, with little or nothing from the Canadian government.

The extent of labor support was evident at the conference. Javier Sandoval, an observer from the 2.3 million-member Canadian Labor Congress, brought greetings from the CLC. Sandoval expressed solidarity "with a popular movement that over-



Barricada

Literacy brigade member works with peasant woman.

threw one of the worst dictatorships in the world," and said that "the CLC will do the most possible to contribute to the campaign for Nicaragua. . . ."

The conference passed a motion urging the CLC executive to sponsor an emergency resolution at the CLC convention in May that would call on affiliated unions to raise \$1 per member for Nicaragua's literacy crusade. Some Canadian unions have already done this.

Setting an example for workers all across Canada, the Quebec Teachers Federation (CEQ) launched a drive for funds and supplies for the literacy campaign

March 16. Ads were placed in newspapers throughout Quebec announcing that "students, parents, and staff in all schools and colleges in Quebec will be approached for contributions."

A special teaching manual outlining how to present lessons about Nicaragua in different subjects and grade levels was issued by the CEQ, and 100,000 leaflets promoting the campaign were distributed. In greetings to the conference, the CEQ reported that as of April 1, more than \$100,000 had been raised for the literacy campaign, and that the fund drive was not yet over.

On Canada's Pacific coast, the 29,000-member British Columbia Teachers Federation voted at its annual general meeting March 30-April 2 to send one dollar per member to aid the literacy campaign.

With these inspiring examples in front of them, the 150 participants at the conference voted for a campaign to raise \$200,000 for the Nicaraguan literacy drive, and to organize a speaking tour for a representative of the CEQ.

Solidarity with the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador was also voiced by the conference. Greetings were brought by Alfredo Monge, a representative of the united mass movement in El Salvador, and the final motion passed by the conference called on the Canadian government to oppose any U.S. or other foreign military intervention against the Salvadoran liberation struggle. □

Solidarity Appeal Issued in Guadeloupe

Nine trade union federations, political parties, and women's groups in the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe have issued an appeal for solidarity with Nicaragua and Grenada.

Citing the progress made in both countries, the appeal calls on the people of Guadeloupe to "defend the gains of these revolutions and support all the struggles of the people of the Caribbean and Central and Latin America against imperialism and colonialism."

Among those signing the appeal were the General Workers Confederation of Guadeloupe (CGTG), the Guadeloupe National Education Federation (FEN), Workers Federation of Guadeloupe (FTG), Guadeloupean Communist Party (PCG), and the Socialist Revolution Group (GRS), Antilles section of the Fourth International.

British Labour Party Hosts Solidarity Conference

More than 200 delegates came to the founding conference of the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign in London March 29. The conference, which was cosponsored by the Labour Party, drew representatives from eight trades councils.

Local solidarity committees in Britain have been raising money for the literacy campaign and for health projects. More than £100,000 have been raised so far.

Three pamphlets are being produced on Nicaragua—one by the Labour Party itself.

A special session at the conference was devoted to the struggle in El Salvador. A resolution was passed condemning U.S. intervention there and welcom-

ing the formation of an El Salvador Committee in Britain.

The Labour Party's International Committee also passed a statement on El Salvador April 15. It condemned the massacre at Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero's funeral and declared:

"The US appears to be backing the Salvadorean armed forces in an attempt to protect its own interests in the country."

The resolution concluded that "the people of El Salvador should be allowed to determine their own future and we deplore any attempt by the United States to influence El Salvador's internal affairs."

Behind U.S. Claims of Chemical Warfare in Afghanistan

By David Frankel

Within days of the Soviet army's entry into Afghanistan last December, the capitalist press began issuing reports that the Soviets were using poison gas. "Afghan Rebels Say the Russians Have Already Used Gas in Some Attacks," said the December 29, 1979, *New York Times*.

It later turned out that the pitched battles reported in the capitalist press in late December and early January never took place. (See *IP/I*, January 21, 1980, p. 31.) It seems a safe bet that if the battles didn't occur, neither did the gas attacks.

British television cameraperson Nick Downie, who left Afghanistan in December after spending four months with the rebels in Kunar Province, pointed out in the April 4 *New Statesman* that he had seen no chemical weapons used. In a number of cases in which rightist forces claimed that gas had been used, Downie was there and said it wasn't true.

Furthermore, Downie noted that the charges were hardly credible on the face of it. He told the *New Statesman*:

When I was there . . . Russian pilots were flying helicopter gunships. There was certainly no concerted policy to kill civilians, and this is exactly what you would achieve with nerve gases. . . . The tribesmen are so thinly spread out over large areas—one group here and the other miles away—that gas would be ineffectual. To saturate the area, you would have needed colossal quantities and thousands of civilians would have been poisoned. With the refugee camps just a few days distant, news of this would have filtered out to the outside world. It hasn't.

Nevertheless, there has been no let-up in the poison gas charges in the four months since the Soviet intervention. The only thing lacking is a shred of proof.

An indication of the painstaking documentation behind these charges was the *Wall Street Journal's* February 4 editorial, which declared: "Government officials privately confirm that Soviet forces have used nerve gas known as Soman against Afghan tribesmen."

Exactly who were these unnamed "Government officials"?

What was the basis for their information?

What about the news report in the *Journal* that same day admitting that "U.S. analysts conceded that some of the rebel reports . . . aren't believable"? Included in this unbelievable category were reports "asserting that the Soviets are using chemical weapons."

Such details didn't stop the *Journal's*

editorial page editor from winning a Pulitzer Prize this April.

In fact, the claim that the Soviets were using Soman—a nerve gas developed by the Nazis during World War II—was reported by UPI on January 23. Anonymous U.S. intelligence sources in Washington and New York, themselves quoting Afghan refugees, said that Soman had been used against rightist positions near Fajzabad and Jalalabad.

Exactly how were these Afghan refugees able to identify the nerve gas Soman? Sussex University Professor Perry Robinson told the *New Statesman*, "Even a trained chemist would have needed a well-equipped laboratory and a sample of the agent concerned to reach that conclusion."

Undeterred by such minor points of fact, the Carter administration has decided to raise the ante in its propaganda war. *Washington Post* correspondent Michael Gotler reported April 25:

"A team of U.S. chemical warfare experts will tour overseas capitals next month to gather support for creation of an international commission to investigate charges that the Soviet Union or its allies are using poison gas in Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan."

Testifying before members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee April 24, administration spokesperson Thomas Davies noted that "many countries, including some friendly to us, may suspect that our principal motivation is to embarrass our adversaries; this is not the case."

Of course not. Who would be so cynical as to think that? Especially after being reassured by Mr. Davies.

There was one sourpuss at the House hearing. Harvard University Professor Matthew Meselson pointed out that reports on the use of poison gas in Laos have been circulated for years without any hard evidence. He said that he believed the reports on Laos to be false. And he had his doubts about those on Afghanistan too.

Why is Carter trying to get an international commission going? *Post* reporter Gotler explained, there is "an awareness that charges by the United States alone would be viewed as propaganda in many parts of the world."

Washington has been caught lying too many times. As Peter Niesewand reported in the April 27 *Manchester Guardian Weekly*:

"There is so far no evidence to prove that the Soviet army has been using poison gas in Afghanistan. . . . Although Afghan rebel groups based here [in Pakistan]

continue to make such claims, they are not borne out by eye-witness accounts, by the evidence of injuries, nor by the reports of senior doctors in the main government hospitals here, where the worst cases are supposed to have been treated."

According to Niesewand, even officials of . . . Western nations say flatly that they do not believe there is any truth in the allegations."

A senior official at the 700-bed Khyber Hospital in Peshawar told Niesewand: "We have not received any cases here that would indicate the use of poison gases."

Why is Carter pressing ahead with a propaganda offensive that has already fallen flat outside the United States?

One reason was indicated by John K. Cooley in an article in the April 25 *Christian Science Monitor*. In a rewrite of a Pentagon press hand out, Cooley said:

"Persistent and increasingly detailed accounts of Soviet chemical warfare in Afghanistan and elsewhere are strengthening arguments that the United States should develop its own neglected chemical warfare capability as a deterrent."

Cooley's concern about the Pentagon's "neglected chemical warfare capability" is misplaced. According to journalist Alexander Cockburn, "The stockpile in this country stands now at about three million artillery shells containing such noxious vapors as GB (or Sarin), originally developed by the Germans before World War Two, several thousand GB aerial bombs, and hundreds of thousands of two-gallon VX land mines. VX is another nerve gas." (*New York Village Voice*, April 21.)

This catalogue, of course, represents only what is publicly known.

Following an incident in 1968 in which a whiff of VX gas did away with some 7,000 sheep downwind of the army's testing ground in Dugway, Utah, the chemical warfare department fell on hard times. Appropriations in the military budget were hidden under other headings, and the hardworking researchers weren't given the respect and admiration they felt they deserved.

Apparently Carter hopes that this lack of enthusiasm for chemical warfare projects can be reversed by the old ploy of pointing to the supposed threat from Moscow. Thus, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown recently sent a letter to Congress urging stepped-up chemical warfare programs as a "deterrent" against the Soviets.

Although most of the propaganda has

been in regard to Afghanistan, in March the State Department raised a hue and cry over an outbreak of anthrax in the Soviet Union, claiming that this was due to Soviet germ warfare research.

Professor Meselson, in his testimony before the House committee April 24, cast

doubt on this claim. He said that anthrax is a major health problem in the Soviet Union, and that about one million Soviet citizens are inoculated against it each year.

But even if Moscow is working on anthrax bacteria, there's no cause for alarm.

The Pentagon is on top of things, developing new ways to defend the American people. For example, the U.S. Army has come up with a botulism toxin for which there is no known cure. One ounce could kill 60 million people. What could make you feel safer than that? □

'We Have to Give Full Support to Cuba'

Grenada Condemns U.S. Aggression in Caribbean

By Ernest Harsch

WASHINGTON, D.C.—“If the imperialists touch Cuba, they also touch Grenada,” declared Selwyn Strachan, a leader of the Grenada revolution. “And they also touch Nicaragua and the revolutionary process around the world.”

Speaking before more than 100 persons here on April 26, at the founding conference of the U.S.-Grenada Friendship Society, the Grenadian minister of labor, works, and communications appealed for international solidarity with Cuba in face of Washington's latest threats against that country.

Specifically, Strachan drew attention to planned U.S. military maneuvers in the Caribbean on May 8, an operation called Solid Shield 80. It will involve forty-two U.S. warships, 350 planes, and more than 20,000 troops over a period of three weeks. The operation will include a landing of 2,000 marines at Guantánamo Naval Base, a U.S.-occupied enclave in Cuba, and the transportation of an additional battalion

of 1,200 troops to the base.

“The present tactic of imperialism is to increase its military presence in the region,” Strachan said. “Imperialism will be once again moving to do maneuvers in revolutionary and free Cuba. We have to see this as an act of provocation. We all have to get up and give full support to the revolutionary process in the region. We have to give full support to revolutionary Cuba.”

Strachan likewise lashed out at Washington's propaganda campaign against Cuba. He pointed to the hypocrisy of Carter's professed sympathy for those Cubans seeking to leave Cuba, while ignoring the plight of the thousands of Haitian refugees seeking asylum in the United States. “When refugees come from Haiti—because they don't want to stay under dictatorship and oppression—they are immediately kidnapped and sent back to Haiti,” he said. “That is the reality. We must also speak out against such things.”



SELWYN STRACHAN Ernest Harsch/IP-I

Turning to the imperialist pressures against the revolution in Grenada itself, Strachan declared:

“It is no accident that imperialism and their allies have been waging a vicious campaign against Grenada, against the people of Grenada. But we have said to them, and we will continue to say it: Nobody will turn back our revolution.

“We understand the military might of imperialism. We understand the economic might of imperialism. We know that they can destroy us in one day. We know all of that. But we are saying in Grenada, and what we are going to continue to say in all the international forums, if they want to wipe us out, they can come. But we will stand up on our feet and fight them to the very end. . . .

“The people of our country have been under the oppression of the Gairy dictatorship for the past two-and-a-half decades. The people have been exploited by the forces of imperialism and local reaction for the past several decades. But under the leadership of the New Jewel Movement, the vanguard party of the working people of our country, which has waged a consistent struggle for the past several years, they were able to win their freedom.

“And now that the people have tasted freedom, now that they are enjoying freedom, now that they know what freedom is, they intend to safeguard and defend that freedom.

“No imperialist force will be able to take that away from the people of our country. They are determined to fight.” □

Demand Extradition of Gairy From U.S.

Like Somoza of Nicaragua, the shah of Iran, and other ousted dictators, former Grenadian Prime Minister Eric Matthew Gairy has found sanctuary in the United States, where he has lived ever since his overthrow by the revolutionary New Jewel Movement in March 1979.

While he ruled Grenada, Gairy was responsible for a continual reign of terror against political opponents and the population in general, carried out by the “Mongoose Gang,” a band of thugs recruited by Gairy from the island's jails.

The Gairy regime was also responsible for widespread corruption, pilferage of the economy, and squandering of international financial assistance.

Following his overthrow, Gairy went to San Jose, California, from where he attempted to establish a mercenary

force to try to overthrow the new government of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

Within weeks of its establishment, the new government of Grenada requested Gairy's extradition from the United States, so that he could be put on trial on charges of murder, corruption, and other crimes against the people of Grenada. Evidence of Gairy's crimes was provided to the U.S. government. Finance Minister Bernard Coard recently announced that Grenada had fulfilled all legal requirements for Gairy's extradition.

Although officials of the U.S. Justice Department have visited Grenada to discuss the issue, Washington has been dragging its feet on the Grenadian requests. The White House was a strong supporter of the Gairy dictatorship, and has made little secret of its hostility to the revolution under way in Grenada.

Two-Day General Strike in Martinique and Guiana

By Janice Lynn

Workers in the French Caribbean colonies of Martinique and Guiana participated in a two-day general strike on April 17 and 18.

The strike was sparked by the French government's dispatch of riot police to Martinique in March in response to a spreading wave of strikes, demonstrations, and anticolonial protests that swept that island (see *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, April 14, 1980, pp. 380-81).

The strike was called by a majority of the union federations in the two colonies. They demanded the withdrawal of French troops from Martinique, an increase in the monthly minimum wage, more jobs, unemployment compensation, no cuts in government employees' wages, and a higher standard of living.

In Martinique several thousand workers turned out for a march through the capital city of Fort-de-France on the first day of the strike. The April 26 issue of *Révolution Socialiste*, weekly newspaper of the Socialist Revolution Group (GRS), Antilles section of the Fourth International, reported that there were contingents of dockworkers, construction workers, municipal workers, teachers, bank workers, and workers from the electricity and gas companies.

GRS members carried a large banner demanding the expulsion of the colonial troops and chanted: "Our time has come— independence and socialism!"

The strike was estimated to have been at least 70 percent effective among the dockworkers and 50 percent among teachers. All stores in the capital were closed down.

The government did everything it could to sabotage the strike. The day before, government employees discovered that their wages had been deducted for several days they had been on strike last October.

The media conducted a propaganda campaign to try to undercut support for the strike, stressing that the unions in Guadeloupe had decided not to participate and that one of the union federations in Martinique had called for a boycott of the strike.

The press also spread false reports that the workers in Guiana were not participating in the strike. In actuality, however, several large workplaces in Guiana, such as the shrimp packing plants and the docks were completely paralysed and many schools effectively closed.

After the second day, the unions in Martinique and Guiana decided to end the strike. Although not as effective as was hoped, the actions were an answer to the colonialist policies and provocations of the French government and indicated the deep

discontent that exists among workers in the French-ruled Caribbean.

French officials have accused the Cuban government of being behind the ferment in the French colonies. The Cubans, in responding to these charges, have pointed instead to the French colonialist policies as the real source of the unrest. The April 15 issue of the Cuban Communist Party

'We Have a De Facto State of Emergency'

Repression Fails to Break Brazilian Auto Strike

Some 150,000 auto and metal workers, defying Brazil's military regime, are now in the second month of a strike that has already cost the country's auto industry an estimated \$400 million.

Strike leader Luís Inácio da Silva was arrested by the regime on April 18, charged under the National Security Law that forbids "inciting to strike." Lula, as Silva is known, could be jailed for as much as twelve years under the National Security Law, which also bars him from resuming his post in the Metalworkers Union.

But Lula's arrest, instead of intimidating the workers, "has strengthened the majority of his members in their determination to continue" the strike, reported the April 25 issue of the London newsletter *Latin America Weekly Report*.

Mass meetings of strikers to protest Lula's imprisonment and to vote on continuing the strike were called in the São Paulo suburbs of São Bernardo and Santo André. The meetings, which were banned by the government, went ahead anyway in churches. São Bernardo Mayor Tito Costa estimated that the April 22 meeting in his town "involved at least 30,000 persons in Matriz Square. But inside the church there were only 1,500."

Brazilian President João Baptista Figueiredo has hinted that he may impose a state of emergency if the strikers continue to defy the government. But Costa told the Brazilian daily *Folha de S. Paulo*, "We already have a de facto state of emergency, because everything that the constitution authorizes in a state of emergency has already been carried out, with the exception of press censorship."

Along with Lula, the military arrested thirty-three other people, including union leaders, two lawyers belonging to the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Com-

mission, and two former political prisoners, Ricardo Zaratini and Antônio Espinosa.

daily *Granma* charged Paris with maintaining "a repressive colonial regime in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Guiana."

In their efforts to retain control over their Caribbean colonies, the French authorities have received open backing from Washington, which has stepped up its own military threats and presence in the region.

In March, the U.S. helicopter carrier *Nassau* stopped off in Martinique as a show of support for the French government. On board was Adm. Harry Train, commander of the American fleet in the Caribbean and Atlantic, who declared that Washington favored "stability" in the Caribbean. □

mission, and two former political prisoners, Ricardo Zaratini and Antônio Espinosa.

Some of the arrested unionists, as well as the lawyers and former prisoners, were not themselves on strike. However, all those arrested were involved in the extensive support network that has been organized to raise funds and provide food for the strikers.

Support for the strike has also come from the Archbishop of São Paulo, Paulo Evaristo Cardinal Arns. The archbishop, who heads the largest Catholic diocese in the world, allowed Lula's wife to speak at a special mass.

According to the strike leadership, about 60 percent of the workers in Santo André and almost all the workers in São Bernardo remain out.

With inflation in Brazil now running at a rate of 83 percent a year, the government is making the familiar claim that wages must be held down if inflation is to be reduced. The workers, for their part, are demanding the right to elect stewards to defend their interests on the shop floor, and job security for the next year, as well as wage increases.

But more is involved than just economic issues. One reason for the government's desire to get Lula out of his trade-union position is that he is in the leadership of a movement for the formation of a labor party in Brazil. In the state of Minas Gerais, just north of São Paulo, the labor movement has already organized 100 branches of the incipient party.

Clearly, the government would like to halt this development and drive the labor movement back. If the reaction of the auto and metal workers is any indication, however, the regime will not have an easy time of it. □

Court Report Admits FBI Crimes Against Socialists

By Gus Horowitz

[The following is from an article that appeared in the May 9 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly the *Militant*.]

* * *

A court report released to the public April 22 shows that the role of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informers in the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance has been to facilitate a constant pattern of FBI and local police harassment and disruption of party and YSA activities.

The FBI, the court report says, acting on information provided by informers, has instigated physical assaults against party meetings and individual party members. It has arranged shootings, break-ins and thefts at party offices, has caused party members to lose their jobs, and has carried out many other criminal and disruptive acts.

"This is a landmark report," said Andrew Pulley, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president and one of the party leaders who filed suit in 1973 against the FBI and other police agencies. The \$40 million lawsuit demands that the government halt its illegal forty-year campaign against the party.

"This is a victory, not only for the SWP and YSA," Pulley said, "but for the entire labor movement; for the Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican movements; for antidraft and antiwar fighters; for the women's rights movement; for the antinuclear-power movement; and for everyone fighting for justice and a better world.

"Now we can move ahead to a trial. We're going to put the government on trial. We're going to expose them before the entire country. And we're going to make it much, much harder for them to continue their crimes against us."

Pulley noted that this major new development in the SWP and YSA lawsuit comes at a time when the Carter administration is trying to crack down on democratic rights and give new legitimacy to FBI and CIA activity.

"They're trying to end the 'Watergate syndrome' of opposition to police spying along with the 'Vietnam syndrome' of opposition to war," the socialist candidate said. This gives added importance to the possible upcoming trial in the socialist suit.

The recently released court report is a product of the SWP's long efforts to compel the government to make available evidence needed in the party's lawsuit. In particular, this represents the outcome of a

four-year fight that the SWP has been waging to obtain the files of a representative group of eighteen people who have acted as FBI informers inside and outside the party.

In May 1977 Judge Thomas Griesa, who is presiding over the case, ruled that the FBI should turn over the eighteen files to the SWP. Griesa's ruling was upheld by the Supreme Court.

But Griffin Bell, who was then attorney general of the United States, refused to turn over the files, asserting that his duty to protect the identity of the informers was paramount. In July 1978 he was held in contempt of court, the first time an attorney general had ever been put into such a position.

It was headline news from coast to coast. The Court of Appeals, however, overturned the contempt ruling in March 1979, thus saving Bell from having to go to jail, as he should have.

Since the files would not be turned over to the SWP, Judge Griesa then appointed former New York state judge Charles Breitel as a "special master" in the case, assigned to study the eighteen files and prepare a report on their contents.

Breitel's report, which has the effect of a finding by the court itself, was completed February 4 and just released to the public.

The most damning portions of this report implicate FBI informers in thefts and crimes of violence against the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance.

In 1973 and 1974, for example, the right-wing National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) was organizing goon squads to attack left-wing groups and individuals with clubs, lead pipes, hammers, chains and other weapons. There were many assaults and some serious injuries to members of the SWP, YSA, and other groups before the NCLC was finally forced to back off.

Breitel discloses that in 1973 the NCLC was sent a letter containing names, home telephone numbers, and addresses of SWP members—clearly an attempt to foment NCLC violence against them.

After studying the informer files Breitel says that "it should be conclusively presumed that the letter was sent by the FBI."

The information in the letter was provided to the FBI by informers.

By the legal term, "conclusive presumption," Breitel meant the following:

The government had objected to his citing of specific details in the files, on the grounds that the SWP and YSA would then be able to identify the informers. But

if the details were left out, the SWP and YSA would be deprived of the information needed to pursue and prove their case against the FBI. To resolve the matter, Breitel decided that the details would be left out of his report, but it was "conclusively presumed" in each incident that the case against the FBI was proved.

Some of the other "conclusive presumptions" in Breitel's report were that:

- In 1963 informers provided the FBI with diagrams of an SWP headquarters. The FBI requested the diagrams "to facilitate clandestine entries to the SWP headquarters."

- On one occasion (no date given) smoke bombs were thrown at a YSA gathering; "the smoke bomb tossing was attributable to FBI activity."

- On another occasion (no date given) shots were fired at a local SWP headquarters; "the shooting was attributable to FBI activity."

- In 1975 members of the SWP and YSA were attacked at a local SWP office by a group of young men; "the activity was attributable to FBI activity."

- Again in 1975 an SWP member was attacked while selling newspapers; "the attack was attributable to FBI activity."

In addition to threats and illegal acts of theft and violence, the FBI caused SWP members and people in contact with the SWP to lose their jobs. Breitel cites many examples. In one case, someone was denied a government job because informer reports stated that the individual "had been in attendance at an SWP meeting 14 or 15 years earlier."

In another instance, an SWP member "ceased receiving unemployment compensation as a result of FBI activity."

Another SWP member was evicted from her apartment.

A student non-citizen, married to an SWP member, was deported.

People selling SWP and YSA newspapers in public places were harassed and arrested.

An SWP member speaking at a public street meeting was arrested.

People were sent into SWP public meetings to create disturbances.

What the informer files *do not* show is also evident from Breitel's report. They do not show any evidence whatsoever of violence or illegal activity by the SWP.

Breitel's report, says Andrew Pulley, "shows beyond any doubt that the role of informers in the SWP and YSA is not a mere information-gathering task, as the

government claims. . . .

"The function of FBI spies is provocation. Their job is to help the various police agencies disrupt the SWP and YSA, and injure the organizations and the individual members.

"This police campaign against us must stop, and it must stop now!"

Margaret Winter, an attorney for the SWP and YSA in their suit against the government, called Breitel's report "precedent-setting" for exposing the role of police informers.

Winter also pointed out that "Judge Breitel's report is based on the study of only eighteen files, covering the years 1960-1976. The FBI admits that during those years it had about 300 informers

inside the SWP and YSA at one time or another, and an additional 1,000 who spied on the party and YSA from the outside. So the real damage done to the SWP and YSA is many times more than that noted by Breitel."

After he received Breitel's report Judge Griesa said that he now wanted to move ahead to a trial in the next few months.

"That's fine with us," says Andrew Pulley. "We've been fighting for a long time for our rights. We've got the proof against the government. We want satisfaction of our claim. Most of all we want a court order declaring it illegal for the government to continue its spying and disruption against us." □

'Our Skin Has Turned Dusty Grey'

Ireland's Armagh Prison is Women's H-Block

By Valerie Coultas

[The following is excerpted from an article in the April 24 issue of the British weekly *Socialist Challenge*.]

* * *

Armagh prison in the North of Ireland is becoming notorious. It is inside these walls that women prisoners, who dare to demand prisoner-of-war status, are being subjected to regular beatings and have been denied washing and toilet facilities.

The harassment goes on non-stop. On Wednesday, March 26, four women prisoners were attacked in the prison yard and suffered cuts and bruises. On Sunday, March 30, while the women were at mass, prison warders entered their cells and emptied chamber pots over their beds. Warders switch lights on and off, bang cell doors, and rattle the door shutters back and forward.

The governor has also prevented two women, Dolores O'Neill and Anne Bateson, from getting the regular visits to which they are entitled.

Patricia Craig, another prisoner, has contracted a rash called impetigo. The rash is highly infectious but because of Pauline's refusal to be "criminalised" she has been denied medical treatment.

In a note smuggled out on Tuesday, April 8, which was reprinted in *Republican News*, the women describe what it is like to be denied washing and sanitary facilities.

"We have been here in "A" wing for six weeks now. Our cells are covered in excreta and urine. The dust and dirt are building up to a marked degree. When one walks across the cell floor the dust rises catching at our chests and throats.

"We ourselves are completely filthy. We have not washed nor have we had any change of clothes since February, so we are in a filthy state.

"Many of the girls already have infections which, through time, will only get worse. Since it is six weeks since we were denied toilet and washing facilities all of us have now gone through our menstrual cycle in these filthy conditions. It is a dangerous time, the risk of infection is high. Sanitary towels are just thrown into us without wrappings.

"Although we have combs it is pointless to use them because our hair is thick with dust and dirt, it is impossible to get a comb through it. Our skin has turned a dusty grey, not only because we are locked in our cells twenty three hours per day. The windows of our cells are boarded up with large pieces of wood thus allowing little air or daylight through.

"As regards the food situation it is a major problem. Breakfast consists of porridge which is so thick and lumpy it is inedible. Bread is rarely seen and if by chance we get some, it is stale. Supper consists of one pancake or one sandwich.

"The quantity and quality of food is totally inadequate. Many girls have lost weight—weight they can ill afford to lose. We are unlocked one at a time to collect our meals and because of this time-consuming method, the majority of the girls' meals are, by the time they receive them, freezing.

"The attitude of the screws is extremely hostile; they are clad in protective clothing, including masks. Quite frequently when a girl is out to collect her meal and the screws think she is talking too long, they drag her back to her cell making sure they get a good few punches and kicks at her. We are constantly subjected to physical and verbal abuse from the screws."

The inhuman conditions in Armagh are not a product of vindictiveness by the prison warders, although they are vindictive towards the women. This brutality is authorised and sanctioned by the British government in Westminster. The women in "A" wing, like the men in H Block, are not "criminals" as the British press and government would have us believe. They are ordinary people who are fighting for the British army to get out of Ireland and leave the Irish people to live in peace.

The government in Westminster, that protests so loudly about the violation of human rights in Afghanistan, has no qualms about its own record in Ireland.

But it seems as if it will not be long before the European Parliament will be brought onto the scene to prick Britain's conscience a little.

It is shortly to consider a motion from George Marchais, a leading member of the French Communist Party, calling for the Parliament Legal Committee to: "conduct an inquiry into the denial of human rights in the Six Counties."

The women in Armagh are demanding four basic rights:

1. The right to wear their own clothing.
2. Free association with other prisoners.
3. One food parcel, one letter and a visit each week.
4. Educational and recreational activities. □

Thousands in Derry March Against H-Block

A march of several thousand people took place in Derry, Northern Ireland, on April 20 in support of the demands of the prisoners in the H-Blocks.

The prisoners are resisting the attempt of the British government to force them to accept criminal status. They are locked up continually naked in filthy cells with no reading material and very little contact with the outside world.

Other H-Block protests have been held previously in Northern Ireland, in Coalisland and Newry. The Irish Re-

publican weekly *An Phoblacht/Republican News* reported participation by local political figures, athletes, community groups, unions, and small businesses in the Derry action. Rally speaker Fergus O'Hare, a teachers' union delegate to the Belfast Trades Council, appealed for more labor involvement.

An Phoblacht/Republican News cited the Derry march as "proof of the ever-widening support being given to the broad-based National H-Block Committee."

Needs of Cuban Working Women Discussed at FMC Congress

By Janice Lynn

The struggle to advance the role of women in the economic, political, and social life of Cuba was the main topic at the Third Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) in March.

There was substantial discussion both in preparation for the FMC congress and during its sessions. Reports not only pointed to the impressive gains made by Cuban women, but also voiced strong opinions on the need for further measures to advance the fight for equality.

In his March 8 speech* to the more than 2,000 FMC delegates, President Fidel Castro called this an "historic struggle" and pledged that the revolutionary leadership of the Cuban government would stand squarely on the side of women in their fight for liberation.

The Castro leadership approaches the fight against women's oppression from a materialist standpoint. It recognizes the origin of that oppression in class-divided society and how this inequality is basic to maintaining capitalist exploitation and political rule.

As a result, the Cuban leaders understand that the conquest of political power by the working class is the necessary first step in taking the anticapitalist measures that can begin to combat the oppression of women: expanding the economic productivity of society; and taking greater social responsibility for childrearing, housework and other traditional household duties that have historically been relegated to women.

Castro explained this key Marxist concept in an important speech in 1966:

"The conditions for the liberation of women, for the full development of women in society, for an authentic equality of women with men in society, require a material base; they require the material foundations of economic and social development."

In this same 1966 speech, Castro explained why vastly expanding the number of women working in industrial production was so central to their liberation, as well as the steps necessary to achieve that goal: ". . . we must have thousands of children's day nurseries, thousands of primary boarding schools, thousands of school dining halls, thousands of workers' dining halls, thousands of centers of social services of this type must be set up. . . ."

"In other words," Castro went on, "in order to reach the social goal of liberating

women from all these activities that enslave her and impede her from full incorporation into work outside the home and all these activities she can engage in society, it is necessary to create the necessary material base to attain the necessary social development."

Gains of Revolution

The progress that has been made and changes that have occurred since 1966 were reflected in the discussion among the women at the FMC congress. In the last five years alone, 200,000 women entered the work force in Cuba. FMC President Vilma Espín reported that women now make up 30 percent of the work force. A total of 800,600 women are currently employed.

One of the biggest changes is that almost a quarter of these women (189,476) are industrial workers.

The largest number of women (300,000) are employed in education and medicine. Castro's March 8 address paid tribute to the decisive contribution of Cuban women in helping to achieve the revolution's advances in health care and the elimination of illiteracy.

The qualitative change in the composition of the Cuban work force—the large number of working women—was reflected in the issues that dominated the discussion at the FMC conference.

Cuba's current economic difficulties—under the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis and Washington's twenty-year blockade—has led to concern in the FMC about maintaining women's job gains and continuing to bring women in the work force. The large numbers of young Cubans now entering the labor force has also put a spotlight on this question.

The FMC delegates discussed the kinds of jobs available to women and the importance of continuing to open up nontraditional jobs to women.

Another big topic of debate and discussion was the quality and availability of services for working women. Of particular concern was the hours that these services are open—the laundries, hairdressers, food and clothing stores, child-care centers.

Delegates spoke out strongly about the need to have services available in the evenings, making them accessible to the large numbers of Cuban women who are now part of the work force. They recognized the importance of this discussion in providing the material basis in their battle for liberation.

In its short twenty years, the Cuban

government has consciously allocated a substantial share of the country's scarce resources to establish and upgrade the services that enable women to hold jobs without suffering under the pressures of full-time child care and housework. For example, there are currently child-care centers for more than 90,000 children.

There are no illusions that these social services are by any means sufficient to free women of the burden of traditional responsibilities, but there is tremendous pride at what has been achieved and the resulting improvements in the lives of women.

'Affirmative Action' in Cuba

In his speech to the FMC congress, President Castro addressed himself to the concerns and problems discussed by the delegates.

He also commended the FMC and Cuban women for their internationalism, for their participation in the teams of Cuban teachers, doctors, and technicians that are helping the victims of imperialist oppression in countries around the world such as Nicaragua and Angola.

Since the Cuban leadership is internationalist, it views the extension of revolutionary struggles as key to the survival and advancement of the Cuban revolution—and, therefore, of Cuban women. A significant portion of the speech to the FMC was devoted to assessing the revolutionary upswing in the Caribbean and Central America and warning Washington against any intervention to crush those struggles.

The bulk of Castro's remarks, however, dealt specifically with the challenges facing Cuba in advancing women's equality.

Hailing the progress that has been made in the numbers of women now employed, Castro pointed out that "it's not just a matter of numbers but a change in the composition since formerly many of those jobs were as servants, in bars and jobs of that sort to which women were relegated under capitalism."

Citing the rapid tempo of progress over the past decade, Castro explained, "In coming years it won't be easy for our country, for our Revolution, to keep up that pace; for an underdeveloped country, 30 percent is a high rate. . . ."

Further progress "requires investments and new jobs opportunities," he continued. "We feel that the Revolution has the duty, the Party and state have as their first duty doing all they can to come up with answers, with solutions to the employment problem."

In this regard, Castro stressed a number

*Portions of this speech were reprinted in last week's *IP/I*, p. 468, and in the issue dated April 4, p. 382.

of principles of particular interest to women in capitalist countries who have been battling for affirmative action in hiring and job upgrading, and against the devastating last-hired/first-fired impact of discriminatory layoffs.

"But, mind you," Castro told the FMC delegates, "no matter what, . . . what we have to avoid is falling back in any way. That's very important! That there be no falling off of that 30 percent; and if it's possible to advance some, we will advance as far as reality permits."

Even to hold on to conquered ground, Castro emphasized, it is not enough to simply stand still or be complacent.

" . . . we are decidedly in favor of having preferential posts for women in work places, decidedly in favor. I think we should keep that up," Castro said. In Cuba, certain jobs vacated by men have by law been reserved for women.

The Cuban leader concurred with the FMC on the need to open up more jobs that are presently thought to be too physically strenuous or dangerous for women. Castro cited the progress already made, with increasing numbers of women in the construction industry and in the sugar mills.

Cuban women in the FMC waged a long fight against regulations that made it illegal for women to hold certain jobs. These have now been replaced by recommendations that women not hold certain jobs, which leaves the choice up to the woman. And this entire question is an ongoing topic of discussion in Cuba, as it was at the FMC congress.

In addition, Castro pointed out that 31 percent of working women were taking courses in schools and that women make up 44 percent of higher education enrollment figures. This, he said, would help increase the number of qualified women who would have greater access to technical jobs.

Combined with the equal education now provided to boys and girls in the primary and secondary grades, this means that more and more women are gaining useful job skills. The FMC reported that 162,141 housewives have now acquired at least a sixth-grade education.

Castro also addressed himself to the concerns expressed by the FMC about the Cuban government's recent decision to give each enterprise, rather than the Labor Ministry, the task of hiring personnel. Delegates voiced the concern that this would result in discriminatory hiring and the loss of past gains.

Castro pointed to the role the FMC must play in preventing any backsliding. He explained that the managers are expected to consult with the trade unions and the women's federation about the hiring of employees.

The new policy "doesn't mean that the manager is accordingly given complete free rein," Castro said.

"We can't go just by a strictly economic

criterion," he explained, "without ever taking into account a question of social justice. We're not capitalists; we're socialists, and we want to be Communists."

Time and experience will be needed to assess these new procedures, and the FMC will make an important contribution to this evaluation.

Availability of Social Services

Castro also commented on the availability of social services to working women. He recalled that it was women working in light industry who, several years ago, had first brought up the problem "that the schools closed at 4:30 p.m. and that day-care centers closed at such and such a time and that Saturday mornings were a headache and you yourselves began to come up with the solutions, with the idea of teacher's aides."

That women are bringing such problems to the attention of the government is positive, Castro said. But he noted that it is also an indication that there is a way to go in implementing the provision of the 1975 Family Code that requires men and women to share equally in household chores.

"I haven't yet heard a single man, let me tell you, protest about" such questions, Castro said to laughter and applause. "Not a single one! And there must be some reason! Despite the Code!"

These problems require much more attention, he said, to "help create the conditions so that women workers don't go out of their minds" as a result of an unjust double burden on the job and in the home.

Castro concurred with suggestions that many services—laundries and hairdressers as well as the food and clothing stores—be open in the evenings to make them accessible to more women. Many child-care centers are already available on a twenty-four-hour basis.

Fighting Prejudice

The material advances that have helped improve the lives of Cuban women are also paving the way for the ideological battles that remain to be fought to overcome the prejudices and backward attitudes that have been instilled in both men and women as a result of centuries of class oppression.

Stressing the way that progress on the material level helps undermine backward attitudes and promote enlightened ones, Castro told the FMC delegates:

" . . . we've had to work very hard and struggle very hard against incomprehension and prejudice to bring about a climate of equality, to overcome prejudice, backward ways of thinking.

"And of course, if we fall back as regards jobs," he warned, "if we fall back in the economic field, we will start going back on everything else we've gained."

The FMC has played a key role in the battle against chauvinist prejudice and in

the efforts to broaden the horizons and increase the consciousness and self-confidence of Cuban women. It has organized classes and study groups on women's role in society. It organized the first schools for peasant women.

Today, more than 2 million women belong to the FMC—an achievement in its own right.

Today, women's role in society is one of the most widely and hotly discussed matters in Cuba. And this discussion is being consciously promoted by the Cuban leadership. The role of women has been especially brought to the fore with the recent entrance of women into the work force, and the changes in the lives of both men and women this brings with it.

The recent Cuban film, *Retrato de Teresa* (Portrait of Teresa), deals with these questions and it sparked intense debate. The film is about a woman textile worker with three children who is caught between her desire to escape the limits of domestic life and the demands placed on her by her husband. The film raised such controversial issues as the double standard in sexual morality and the responsibility of men for housework and caring for the children.

As one young Cuban woman told a visitor to the island last summer, combating prejudices and stereotypes "is a very long process, because it's not just changing someone's opinion on something, but changing the way people live."

With the government's introduction of the Family Code at the beginning of 1975, many rights of women were put on the books in Cuba that go beyond those guaranteed by law in any other country. It formally proclaimed women equal in marriage; provided equal control of joint property; decreed equal rights and responsibilities for raising children; equal right to have a job or profession and participate in social activity; and, as previously pointed out, stipulated that men should share equally in the housework.

Of course, few Cubans—including leaders in government, the party, and the FMC—believe that simply putting something on the books means that it will happen.

But with the law on their side, Cuban women are given encouragement to speak out for their rights—in the family, at work, and in society as a whole. Moreover, discrimination against women is punishable, and these laws can be enforced as part of the battle for equality.

Women in Party and State

Another subject discussed by the FMC and addressed by Castro was the advancement of women in political and administrative positions. It was reported that considerable progress has been made in the trade unions, where women now constitute more than 40 percent of the leadership. In the Federation of University Stu-

dents, women make up 46.4 percent of the leaders, and in the Federation of Students of Intermediate Education, 50.6 percent of the leaders are young women.

In the Pioneers (composed of children from the ages of six to fourteen), girls hold 75 percent of elected positions.

"You can see the children are not prejudiced, . . ." Castro said. "I think this is really promising and interesting."

Within the Cuban Communist Party, however, women only make up 18.9 percent of the membership and only about 10 to 15 percent of the leadership. (In the Young Communist League, women make up 40 percent of the membership—a positive sign for the future.)

Women comprise 21.8 percent of the deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power. Castro pointed out that this figure represents a step backward from the first election.

"Of course, there are some explanations that can be given," Castro said, "some were given here, the many responsibilities women still have, how difficult things become. But isn't there some prejudice too?" Castro asked.

Stating the problem even more starkly and frankly, Castro said: ". . . I think that our Party is still largely a Party of men, and our state is still largely a state of men."

That fact, he stressed, shows the importance of the struggle for the advancement and integration of women into leadership positions within the party and within society as a whole.

"I am absolutely convinced that society stands to gain insofar as it is able to develop and make use of the moral, human and intellectual qualities and capabilities of women. I'm absolutely convinced of this," Castro declared. "And this is precisely what sets a just society, a socialist society apart from a capitalist one."

"But I'm by no means convinced that the idea of equality has even triumphed on a world scale," he continued. "There aren't many examples. And I'm including the socialist countries."

Cuba Is a Model

In this, Castro is certainly correct. In no other country—either capitalist or the workers states—has the government consciously set out to raise the economic, social, and political position of women and to combat discrimination, inequality, and prejudice.

Of course, because of Cuba's heritage of colonial and semicolonial underdevelopment, its overall achievements in integrating women into the labor force still lag behind either the advanced capitalist countries or the industrially developed workers states. But the priority given this question in Cuba—and the emphasis on moving women out of traditional jobs into industrial production, medicine, and technical and administrative positions—stands in

stark contrast to all capitalist nations and, although to a lesser extent, the bureaucratized workers states as well.

In the advanced capitalist countries,



Harry Ring/Militant Technician in sugar mill. Cuban leadership gives priority to placing women in technical positions in industry.

women face strong ruling-class resistance to their demands for equal rights. Women are battling just to get their foot in the door of basic industry; for equal pay for equal work; for child-care and maternity benefits; against harassment and discrimination by employers; and so on. In the United States, the Equal Rights Amendment—a simple statement of women's equality—continues to be blocked by the U.S. rulers from becoming a part of the Constitution.

Moreover, many of the gains women have won, as a result of hard-fought battles, are now being taken away in the intensifying austerity drive by the world's capitalist rulers.

And there is simply no comparison between the conditions facing Cuban women and the wretched existence of women in colonial and semicolonial capitalist countries.

As for the Soviet Union, China, and other Stalinist-ruled workers states, here too Cuba stands out in sharp relief with regard to the struggle against women's oppression. While significant job and social gains have been won in all these countries as a result of the abolition of capitalism, women who work are still expected to shoulder the responsibilities for home and children. There is no systematic effort to elevate the social and economic position of women; to the con-

trary, the privileged bureaucratic layers that rule these countries seek to preserve the second-class status of women inherited from capitalism.

On the political level, the story is much the same.

In the imperialist centers, the oppression of women is reflected in the overwhelming male domination in big business, government, and the ruling-class parties. Despite cosmetic changes under the pressure of the women's movement, and an occasional Margaret Thatcher or Golda Meir, this will not change fundamentally. How can a social and political system that requires the oppression of women not reflect that oppression in its own ruling institutions?

The government and party apparatuses in the Stalinized workers states are also entirely male-dominated. This, too, will not change fundamentally so long as these countries are ruled by bureaucratic castes interested only in preserving and extending their own material privileges.

This year's FMC congress and the frank discussions that took place contrast sharply to what occurs in the Stalinist-ruled countries. In the Soviet Union, for example, the recent appearance of the first women's samizdat publication, raising issues of concern to Soviet women, was greeted with fierce repression by the Kremlin's political police.

The policies of the Castro leadership contrast extremely favorably to those of the labor movement in the advanced capitalist countries, too. Not only do women workers have to fight to get the current labor officialdoms to throw the unions behind equality on the job and in society, but women also face a big battle against the policies of the bureaucracy that have virtually frozen them out of leadership positions in the unions, especially at the top levels.

Similarly, in contrast to Stalinist and social-democratic currents, only the revolutionary socialist organizations have consciously set out to develop and bring women into leadership in all arenas of political life.

Role of the FMC

The FMC's twenty years of working for the "full integration of Cuban women into Cuban society on the basis of full equality, not only in the laws and in theory, but also in practice" has played a major role in the progress already made by women.

As Castro pointed out, "Not only does the Federation play a very important role in economic tasks and in the services; it also has the duty to pay close attention to all the questions that concern women, that are of interest to women, and to defend those interests in the Party and in the state."

As the Federation of Cuban Women states: "We will have to exist until discrimination and all its vestiges have been totally eliminated." □

Union Federation Moves to Center Stage in Bolivian Politics

When General Hugo Banzer seized power in Bolivia in August 1971, he initiated seven years of a military dictatorship that was the most severe that the Bolivian working class has experienced in half a century.

The Banzer coup put a bloody end to the prerevolutionary situation that had existed in 1970-71 in Bolivia. It was also the first shot in a series of right-wing coups that inflicted major defeats on the mass movement in other countries in Latin America.

In 1973 there was the military coup in Uruguay, as well as the bloody overthrow of Salvador Allende's government in Chile. In 1975 the ruling Peruvian military made a sharp turn to the right, and the following year a military coup in Argentina overthrew the Isabel Perón regime.

But this period of defeats for the workers movement is drawing to an end. Mass struggles are again on the rise in Latin America, as can be seen in the resurgence of workers struggles in Brazil and Peru, and now in Bolivia, while the right-wing dictatorships are on the defensive.

The high points of this tendency thus far have been the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in July 1979 and the current revolutionary crisis in El Salvador.

In January 1978 the Bolivian military dictatorship, realizing that it was increasingly isolated and unable to solve the country's economic crisis, decided to institute a return to civilian rule with the hope of being able to turn power over to a stable capitalist regime.

This move, however, has not had its intended effect. While the bourgeois parties have squabbled and been unable to propose any solution to the crisis in Bolivian society, the limited and contradictory "liberalization" process has allowed the workers movement to rebuild its organizations and wage new struggles.

The May 1979 congress of the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), and the August 1979 general strike the COB waged against the military's brazen stealing of the July 1979 elections, showed that the Bolivian workers movement was again a decisive factor on the political scene.

Since August 1978 Bolivia has had ten heads of state, seven of whom have been officers.

Question. What are the main features of the present crisis that Bolivia is going through?

Answer. Today the situation in Bolivia is one characterized by the disintegration of Congress and of the government, which is to a certain extent based on Congress. This crisis in turn flows from a much bigger setback, the setback that bourgeois democracy has suffered in Bolivia.

In January 1978 a timid process of democratization began in Bolivia. But that democratization has still not been able to provide any stability whatsoever for the bourgeoisie. Since January 1978 the results of two presidential elections have been annulled because of fraud. There have been three coups, and two provisional governments (one involving current President Lidia Gueiler) have been established by a weak, divided, and completely paralyzed Congress.

The Bolivian masses have seen all this as a resounding failure for bourgeois demo-

cracy, which incites the reactionary forces to act with greater impudence.

It was the masses who defended what could be called democracy in Bolivia. Last November, during the coup by Col. Natusch, where 300 people were killed, it was only the giant mobilization of the masses that made it possible to defeat the reactionaries' plans. In addition to the total political instability, the increasingly difficult economic situation has led to a declining standard of living and terrible work conditions. Together, the political and economic problems provide a fuller picture of the harsh Bolivian situation.

There was a massive response throughout Bolivia to the attempted coup by Col. Natusch. It was a strong, audacious, and spontaneous response by the masses, without a trace of faint-heartedness [see "Strikes Oust Coup Leaders," *IP/I*, November 26, 1979, p. 1159].

The masses have radicalized. They have been discussing questions in their workplaces, neighborhoods, peasant communities,

In November 1979 a wing of the military, led by Col. Alberto Natusch Busch, staged a coup that aimed to stop the "liberalization" process and set up a dictatorship along the lines of those in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina.

But Natusch's coup was met by a mass uprising led by the COB, and Natusch was forced to step down after two weeks in the presidential palace. An interim regime was set up under the presidency of Lidia Gueiler, with new elections scheduled for this June.

The central role that the COB is playing today in Bolivian politics is indicative of the specific characteristics of the new rise of the mass movement in Latin America.

It is indicative of the central role that the industrial working class is playing (in this specific case the tin miners). The industrial working class has been qualitatively strengthened as a result of the increased industrialization and urbanization that have marked the last decade.

The role the COB is playing also highlights the desire for workers' unity and class independence that is felt by massive sectors of the workers movement.

Discussions are taking place in the COB over the question of running working-class candidates sponsored by the COB in the upcoming legislative elections. These discussions reflect the same concerns that have led important sectors of the Brazilian workers movement to begin to try building a labor party, and that led to the high vote for the independent workers and peasants FOCEP slate in the June-July 1978 campaign for the Constituent Assembly in Peru, as well as the pressure for working-class unity that resulted in the temporary establishment of a united left slate in Peru in January.

The right-wing and sectors of the Bolivian military are making no secret of their preparations for another coup. These preparations make it all the more imperative to build and strengthen the revolutionary Marxist tendency in the Bolivian working class and to strengthen the revolutionary Marxist party.

The following interview is with a member of the COB who is also a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR-*Combate*), the Bolivian section of the Fourth International.

in the universities, in their families, everywhere. Over the past two years there has been a stunning increase in the radicalization and political consciousness of the masses.

Q. Who is leading the people's movement?

A. Unquestionably the Bolivian Workers Federation, the COB, is at the head of the masses and has the most authority. This became obvious in the events around the November coup, when the COB led the mass mobilization against the coup.

The bourgeois parties showed they were totally powerless in face of the coup. The Democratic People's Unity (UDP), a front that includes the pro-Soviet Bolivian Communist Party, made no attempts to mobilize people.

Instead, the bourgeois and reformist groups negotiated with the putschists behind the back of the workers movement led by the COB. For example the alliance around the MNRH (Historic Revolutionary

Nationalist Movement), led by former president Victor Paz Estenssoro, an alliance that includes the Maoist Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (PC-ML), tried to work out a compromise with the putschists, Gen. Banzer and Col. Natusch.

A new stage in the political situation was reached last September. In response to the severe economic crisis, the COB formulated a national plan to "bring Bolivia out of the economic crisis," which includes the following central points:

- Strengthening the state companies, and nationalizations with a system of co-management and collective workers' control;
- Expropriation of the "medium-sized mines," which actually means the remaining large private mines;
- Monopoly of foreign trade;
- An agricultural policy involving participation of the workers and peasants in the distribution of agricultural products.

When the coup took place in November, Col. Natusch and his fellow putschists clamped down with a series of decrees censoring the press, "abolishing Congress," establishing martial law and a state of seige, and the like. The capital city, La Paz, was occupied by tanks and armored cars, and warplanes and helicopters were constantly overhead.

More than 300 people were killed, 200 disappeared, and more than 400 were wounded during the fighting against the coup. But the mass mobilization was so big and so widespread that the putschists had to retreat. They had badly miscalculated the potential opposition to their coup. They suffered a defeat in their attempt to destroy the democratic process when Natusch was forced to return to his barracks two weeks after the coup began.

Divisions developed inside the army. The disoriented bourgeoisie did not know what side to take.

On the whole, then, this situation led to the strengthening of the COB. This strengthening was carried out thanks to the increased participation of the revolutionary Marxist parties within the COB itself. For example Workers Vanguard (VO), a group led by Filemon Escobar, is participating, as is our party the POR (*Combate*).

Q. What happened in the countryside, among the peasants?

A. The way the peasants are acting shows that Bolivia is going through a process of revolutionary growth rather than simple democratic liberalization. Among the peasants there has been a great desire for unity with the working class, seen most clearly in the establishment of the United Bolivian Peasant Federation, which involves all the peasant groups and parties.

This peasant federation has become part of the COB, which has severely cut the bourgeois parties' maneuvering room and represents an important step forward in

Facts About Bolivia

Although larger than France and Spain combined, Bolivia has less than 6 million inhabitants. About 55 percent of the population speaks Spanish, while the rest speak Quechua or Aymara, two Indian languages.

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America. Life expectancy at birth is less than 50 years. According to official figures, 60 percent of the population is illiterate, while the real figure is undoubtedly higher still.

Two-thirds of the population is engaged in agriculture, most of it of very low productivity. Tin exports are the backbone of Bolivia's economy. Many Indian tin miners earn as little as \$45 per month for working six-day weeks under appalling conditions.



the struggle to establish the worker-peasant alliance.

Q. What were the repercussions of the unsuccessful November coup for the bourgeoisie?

A. The bourgeoisie's political weakness was clearly highlighted. Congress, which was under attack from the bourgeois parties themselves, was powerless to resist the coup, and was forced to seek the aid of the COB.

Q. Could you give us some concrete examples of the disintegration of the bourgeois forces?

A. There are a whole range of coups now being organized. In Bolivia it is impossible to hide anything for very long. The ferment of the masses has reached such a level that in the end everything becomes known. For example, the National Federation of Private Businessmen sent a circular to all its affiliates asking them to collect money to finance a coup to stabilize the situation.

We don't know which particular putschist current these funds are destined for, but in the final analysis that hardly matters. What matters is whether or not the coup takes place.

This generalized political crisis is reflected even within the government. Some ministers are already involved in the preparations for a coup, using arms smuggling, embezzlement of weapons, and cocaine smuggling to raise the funds needed to recruit paramilitary gangs.

The ministers and vice-ministers are cooperating very closely with the various groups and parties that, in their opinion, have the best chance of succeeding in the next coup.

In the streets people talk about Vice-Minister X, who has contacts with this or that party and is providing it with weapons and money; about Vice-Minister Y, who is fraudulently manipulating government funds; about General Z, who is selling weapons to the Brazilian army for half the price that the Bolivian army paid for them.

La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz—all the Bolivian cities—are the scene of plots, coup preparations, and subversive plans by the bourgeoisie against the government. There is a climate of constant tension, and everyone knows that the decisive confrontations still lie ahead and not behind us.

Q. What is being done to develop a revolutionary solution to the crisis?

A. Politics are being carried out with an eye toward the elections scheduled for June 29. Within the masses, a broad current favoring electoral independence from the bourgeoisie is already taking shape, which is expressed with great force through the COB. The Socialist Party-1 (PS-1), led by Quiroga Santa Cruz, and the Revolutionary Party of the Nationalist Left (PRIN), led by COB-head Juan Lechin, have taken up the call for the establishment of a left front, although they have not clearly stated what the COB's role should be within it.

Because of both the desire for workers unity and the confusion over the COB's potential role, a joint document of the POR (*Combate*), the National Liberation Movement (MLN), the Revolutionary Party of Bolivian Workers (PRTB), and the Communist Vanguard of the POR (VC-POR) called for the establishment of a united front around the COB, the unions, and the

workers and left parties—a united front that would struggle for national liberation and socialism. Up to now the attitude of the SP-1 has prevented the formation of such a front.

For Workers and Peasants Candidates Supported by the COB

In the present period the COB has a central function and a central role. It constitutes an organizational pole for the broad masses who are awakening to politics. The COB encourages the independent organization of the masses due to the perspectives of class independence that it can present to the masses. This can be seen in the various mass movements. In particular, we should mention the Congress of Peasant Women held a few weeks ago in La Paz, which was attended by more than 5,000 people. They enthusiastically came out in favor of running worker and peasant candidates supported by the COB.

On March 28, the Congress of the COB will decide—and this is a crucial point—its tactics regarding the elections, the candidates it will run, and its program. [*IP/I* has not yet received a report on the outcome of the COB Congress.]

In Bolivia the importance of the working class has always been a basic, daily fact of political life. But in the crisis that began with the fall of Banzer in 1978, the importance of the working class has grown qualitatively. Nothing can be done without the proletariat, and only the proletariat can lead the country out of the crisis.

I'll give you a concrete example of the COB's importance. When the person at the U.S. State Department who is in charge of Inter-American Relations visited Bolivia,

his itinerary gave a clear picture of the political situation in the country today. He went straight from the airport to the COB headquarters, then to the military high command, and then finally to the presidential palace to meet with Lidia Gueiler.

Q. What are the general political objectives of the revolutionary movement beyond the elections?

A. The outcome of the June 29 elections is not at all sure. For that reason the unions, as well as the workers and left parties have begun negotiations on what strategy to implement if there is a military coup, and on the possibility of moving toward consolidating a united instrument of revolutionary leadership so that we can develop a revolutionary solution to the present crisis of capitalism and of the bourgeois state in Bolivia.

In the unions and in the urban centers, moves have been made to form committees of defense, resistance, and vigilance in all the workers centers against the escalation of right-wing terrorism (in the past month there have been countless attacks on union headquarters, radio stations, independent newspapers, etc.). In fact, this political initiative by the revolutionary parties corresponds to a quite widespread movement among the ranks. The need to prepare against a possible coup is becoming widely understood.

We are living under the shadow of an imminent new military offensive. In fact there are reports that Natusch has had to restrain his supporters from carrying out another coup that he felt would be "premature."

Given this situation, it is not surprising

that in the neighborhoods and in the unions the masses are spontaneously beginning to organize themselves into military groups and committees to resist the military coup.

Q. What is the situation within the Bolivian left?

A. The political situation is very favorable for the growth of the revolutionary Marxist positions and organizations, and that is what is taking place in Bolivia today.

The Trotskyist Movement in Bolivia

The revolutionary Marxists have grown significantly since 1978, overcoming the difficult situation they were in during the more than seven years of the Banzer dictatorship, which was the harshest, fiercest, and longest dictatorship in Bolivia's entire history.

In particular, two revolutionary Marxist organizations have grown: Workers Vanguard, led by comrade Escobar, and the POR (*Combate*), which is the Bolivian section of the Fourth International. These two organizations have very good mutual relations, and we expect a fusion process in the near future.

There are other organizations that also describe themselves as Trotskyist: the Communist Vanguard of the POR, the POR, and the Socialist Workers Organizations (OST). The Communist Vanguard of the POR is in the process of fusing with the POR (*Combate*). The other two groups, the POR and the OST, are going through splits. There have been several splits in the OST, which is affiliated internationally with the Bolshevik Faction, with one important sector heading toward Workers Vanguard.

The Maoist current, which was the largest current on the left in 1978, principally organized in the PC-ML, has gone through constant splits as a result of its establishment of a popular front with the nationalist bourgeoisie. The pro-Soviet Communist Party has not recovered from the difficult era of the years 1967-71, during which it betrayed Che Guevara's guerrilla struggle. The Maoists became much more important than the CP during the last decade.

In Bolivia a historic chance is developing for the workers movement and its revolutionary organizations. A new situation opened up in Latin America with the revolution in Nicaragua and its direct repercussions in Central America. The events in Bolivia are taking place within, and are in turn strengthening the perspective of a new revolutionary upsurge in Latin America, this time clearly led by the working masses of the cities, by the proletariat. □

Imperialists Put Squeeze on Bolivian Economy

Bolivia is in a severe economic crisis, which feeds the perennial instability of Bolivian politics. The country is heavily in debt to imperialist financial institutions and private banks; it may have to default on its foreign debt payments.

When Gen. Hugo Banzer seized power in 1971, he undertook to develop Bolivia on the basis of large international loans to be used to spur industrialization. There has been growth in industry in the past decade, with industrial production tripling between 1970 and 1975. But given the extremely low level of industrialization when this process began, it has not been able to reduce the Bolivian economy's dependence on tin exports, which represent three-quarters of the country's total export income.

Although there has been a rise in world tin prices in 1978 and 1979, Bolivian tin production has been declining, partially

cancelling the effects of the higher prices. In addition, the Bolivian economy is severely threatened by the Carter administration's January 1980 decision to begin selling off 35,000 tons of tin from its strategic stockpile. This move will drive down prices for tin and deprive Bolivia of some sales to U.S. customers.

By 1979 Bolivia's foreign debt had reached \$3 billion, while its total foreign currency reserves were only \$15 million. Following the failure of the November 1979 coup, Bolivia negotiated new loans from international financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund. But the IMF insisted that President Lidia Gueiler first agree to devalue Bolivian currency 25 percent against the dollar and increase consumer prices for petroleum products, both of which had a severe impact on the already impoverished standard of living of Bolivia's workers and peasants.

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Organize Now to Defeat the Coming Coup!

[The following statement issued by four Bolivian organizations on March 6, 1980,* calls for the formation of resistance committees in the workers neighborhoods, factories, and workplaces to fight against the possibility of a rightist military coup.]

* * *

We, the signatory parties, conscious of our responsibilities to the people, and vigilant in the face of the crisis that the country is going through, state:

1. The political process [of liberalization] that was engendered by the rise of the people's movement is now rapidly breaking down. The causes of this breakdown are two-fold: the government's inability during the November days [the fighting against the Natusch coup] to respond to the demand that it defend the freedoms that the people had regained after two years of struggles; and the conciliationist policies of the Social-Democratic groups, which have held back the mass mobilizations and continually helped to disorient the workers.

2. During the last period, this deterioration of the political situation had reached such a point that the groups favoring a coup felt that there was no longer any doubt that the time was ripe for them to launch another try.

Military officers like Garcia Mesa, Luis Arce, and Vargas Salinas, together with others who took part in the defeated November coup such as Sandoval Moron, have emerged as the visible heads of a coup that the government could not or would not oppose.

These officers have been joined by other leaders—followers of Paz Estenssoro, and of Oscar Zamora's [pro-Peking] PC-ML, as well as Falangists and supporters of Gen. Banzer—who operate both inside and outside of Congress. Supporters of a coup have also emerged within the UDP [Democratic People's Unity, an electoral front that includes the Bolivian CP]. For example parliamentary deputy Ruben Sanchez declared that the armed forces had the right and even the obligation to intervene when they saw fit.

3. The feeling in official circles was that a coup was inevitable. That was the dominant mood in the government and in Congress, and members of the government and Congress were making prepa-



GEN. HUGO BANZER

rations for the new situation that would result from a coup.

Thus the Congress, which is the self-proclaimed representative of the people, did not provide any leadership in confronting the fascist adventure, and did not put forward any means of defending democratic rights. This situation allowed the coup organizers to be inside both the government itself and Congress, and to organize and prepare the coup from there.

4. But these conditions did not suffice for the putschists. They also needed to provoke splits and confusion inside the workers and peoples movement. Whether consciously or unconsciously, certain sectors of these movements lent themselves to these maneuvers. That is what happened during the strike led by the La Paz teachers, who were involved in the putsch preparations, and who, in disagreement with their national confederation and disobeying the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB) slogans for unity, provoked a split within the masses and helped the plans of the conspirators.

There were also the attempted provocations by the transport owners, who carried out a strike in aid of the putschists' plans, and there is the use of regional funds for the benefit of groups planning coups.

The right-wing conspiracies are taking place within a context of an escalation of terrorism, with attacks designed to sow terror in the population, and of the consolidation of paramilitary groups, especially in La Paz where there were as many as ninety mercenaries whose mission was "to suppress" the political and trade-union leaders.

5. The people know that the only way to defend the democratic process that began in January 1978 is through their own mobilizations. For the people, defense of the democratic process means defense of and exercise of political and trade-union

rights (union rights, class independence, unity with the peasants through the CSUTCB, university autonomy, etc.).

We must not blind ourselves to the situation facing us today. Today the struggle for economic demands, which are the basic concern of the workers, of necessity takes place through defense of this democratic process. We must therefore state that the priority, for the moment, is to mobilize the people to confront the fascist threat and to speed up our preparation of the conditions that will enable us to push back the threat from the right.

We cannot conceal this reality, nor try to maintain that it is possible to continue speechifying about the elections, which seem less and less likely every day, without first defending the actual exercise of the peoples rights.

6. The *Bolivian Workers Federation*, which provided political leadership for the people during the Bloody Week in November, has obligations that flow from its responsibility. The COB must be the pole around which the masses organize and mobilize to resist.

But, in addition, the workers and revolutionary parties have a responsibility. They must provide the masses with a leadership that will prepare for this mobilization, that will take charge of the needs of organizing and planning the resistance by the workers and the people as a whole.

Unity of these political forces is the basis for resistance. The peoples' and revolutionary parties have an obligation to respond to this historic calling.

7. The people do not have illusions about the activity of the government, the Congress, or the electoral blocs. The united front that can lead resistance to a coup can only be organized by preparing for that resistance. Therefore, among the masses, we must begin organizing ourselves into antifascist resistance committees in every neighborhood, in every factory, in all the workplaces. These resistance committees must form the nuclei that will oppose any attempted coup.

8. The conspirators must not succeed. The disorganized and spontaneous resistance in November was able to stop Natusch's adventure. Now the people, organized and prepared, can deal a definitive defeat to fascism and can advance toward their own historic goal: national liberation and the construction of socialism in Bolivia.

La Paz, March 6, 1980

Antonio Peredo L.—PRTB-ELN
José Antonio Moreno—POR (Combate)
Victor Sossa—VC-POR
Loyola Guzman—MLN

*The four groups are the Revolutionary Party of Bolivian Workers-Army of National Liberation (PRTB-ELN); the Revolutionary Workers Party-Combate (POR-Combate), which is the Bolivian section of the Fourth International; the Communist Vanguard of the POR (VC-POR); and the National Liberation Movement (MLN).

Behind Arson Attacks on Holiday Homes in Wales

By Derek Davies

[The following two articles appeared in the April 17 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the weekly newspaper sponsored by the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The crisis in Wales is not just about job loss and falling real wages. Although unemployment is the biggest threat to the stability of Wales as a whole, it is not the only issue to have grabbed the headlines in recent weeks.

While the core of the South Wales working class teetered on the brink of general strike, the predominantly Welsh-speaking people of the North and West directed their anger against the selling of local property as holiday homes.

Arson attacks have resulted in over 30 "second" homes being burnt down since Christmas. The fact that widespread police operations have only just succeeded in rounding up some suspects shows the sympathy of large numbers of Welsh people for the motives of the arsonists.

The buying of holiday homes undermines the Welsh-speaking communities in particular. In some of the "well-sited" villages more than half the houses now belong to outsiders, usually English, who use them at weekends, holidays and for retirement.

The middle class English who move in often have little regard for Welsh language and traditions, treating them with arrogance and disdain, or viewing them as "quaint." The intrusion of large numbers of English has even influenced voting—for the first time Anglesey returned a Tory MP [Member of Parliament] at the last election.

The biggest disruption resulting from the purchase of holiday homes is that it literally causes homelessness, particularly among young Welsh people. Buyers from England can pay much more for homes than local workers, causing house prices to rocket out of the reach of local people.

Young people either have to live at home with their parents, or move away to new areas. With hardly any rented accommodation available, the communities are broken up; villages become ghost towns, the Welsh language suffers and so on.

Despite the adverse publicity the conversion of housing into holiday homes still continues apace. Official figures estimate that there will be a 10 per cent increase in holiday homes from 1976 to 1981; in some areas the rate is as high as 13 to 14 percent. For parts of North Wales the rate

is shown at 47 to 49 per cent, and over 20 per cent for parts of the West. 20,000 homes in Wales are already owned by nonresidents.

The new Tory Housing Bill, will allow even more Welsh homes to find their way on to the holiday home market as [local government] council-owned homes are sold to private tenants.

The Tories have supposedly included safeguards in the Bill to protect those who live in rural areas. The clause applying to such areas states that council homes once purchased can only be re-sold to someone who has lived in the area for at least three years, or to the council.

But despite repeated requests the Tory minister at the Welsh Office has refused to say which areas will be classified as "rural."

The campaign against holiday homes was begun jointly by Plaid Cymru [the Welsh nationalist party] and Shelter, but they did not attempt to build a mass movement, confining their activity to lobbying MPs and trying to win over the media.

Police Face Wall of Silence

By Derek Davies

"The police have called on scores of people without a shred of evidence," said Robert Griffiths, secretary of the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement, describing present police activity in Wales.

In a desperate attempt to get a lead on the holiday home fires, the police have detained and arrested many people for questioning. Incendiary bombs at the Tory offices in Shotton and Cardiff have added to the frenzy of police activity.

The harassment has been aimed at the left of the nationalist movement, the Welsh Socialist Republicans, and the militant language groups Cymdeithas and Adfer.

At least 10 Welsh Socialist Republicans have been arrested and had their homes searched, including Robert Griffiths. Three of Plaid Cymru's 1979 election candidates in South Wales—all recognised as left-wing Plaid members—were also arrested.

The Special Branch [political police] have denied detainees access to solicitors and have retained their possessions like address books, files and documents although not making any charges whatsoever.

"Suspects" have been picked up coming

off work, at home with their families, going out for the evening, at all times of the day and night. And what reasons have the Special Branch given? None except the people concerned have certain political views, which the police consider "extremist."

As Robert Griffiths says: "Search warrants are coming down like confetti. The police have obtained them so easily, you might as well dispense with them as worthless. The police come and go as they want."

Clearly, the Special Branch are using the recent bombs and fires as a pretext to gather information on the Welsh nationalist and socialist left, and to launch through the media a campaign of slander and innuendo. Already Robert Griffiths has been sacked from his job as recruiting officer by the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union.

The Special Branch have also singled out Gerry MacLochainn, a Provisional Sinn Fein [Irish Republican] member living in South Wales. He has been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The intention is obvious—to deport Gerry

□

and prevent him from raising the Irish struggle in the Welsh labour and national movements.

In North and West Wales, police activity has been aimed at the entire predominantly Welsh-speaking population. Here road blocks are set up and cars searched, whilst in the towns and villages door-to-door enquiries are carried out.

In Blaenau Festiniog, the police ended their doorstep interrogations with "Who did you vote for in the last election?" Any Plaid Cymru voter, any person with known nationalist sympathies, is a suspected "terrorist" and "arsonist" in police eyes.

But the wall of silence from the Welsh people shows where their sympathies lie. Thirty holiday homes have been burnt and

still the police have no lead. Even while their round-up was underway, more holiday homes went up in flames.

Campaigns to oppose the police harassment are already picking up steam in Cardiff, Newport and Pontypool. A public meeting is planned this week in Cardiff by the Welsh Campaign for Political and Civil Liberties; a letter of protest is being signed by prominent trade unionists and politicians; a detailed report on Special Branch and police practices will be published within two weeks; support resolutions are going to union branches.

Every day, Newport and Pontypool campaigners are picketing the police station where Gerry is being held.

Wales' wall of silence is about to become a wall of protest and condemnation. □



Rhyd and other villages in north and west Wales are sites of vacation houses.

Why Some Welsh Nationalists Are Turning Toward Socialism

Interview with Plaid Cymru Leaders

By Gerry Foley

The severe setbacks suffered by the Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties in last year's devolution referendum* and British general election touched off deep-going political debate in both parties.

This discussion has taken its clearest form in the Welsh party, Plaid Cymru. In and around Plaid over the last year, a current has emerged calling itself revolutionary socialist. One of the party's two members of Parliament, Dafydd Elis Thomas, has identified himself with this tendency.

At the beginning of 1980, some of the socialists in the Plaid set up the Welsh Socialist Republican Clubs to serve as a focus for activists who are for an independent socialist Wales. This current takes its inspiration from Marxism and revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles, especially the one in Ireland. It calls for orienting to the Welsh industrial working class.

The clubs were not set up as an organizational rival to Plaid, and it is not yet clear how they will develop. They are one product of a broad radicalization inside the party. A considerable section of the leading activists hold similar views, believing that Plaid Cymru has to move toward becoming a more militant action-oriented party, and play a role in mobilizing Welsh working people to fight the effects of the economic crisis.

*Devolution is the term used in general for moving away from the centralization of government in London. In this case, it means the transfer of some functions from the London Parliament to elected assemblies in Scotland and Wales.

I was in Wales in late January and February and talked to a spectrum of Plaid Cymru leaders in the various regions of the country. They all reflected the pressures that are radicalizing the movement.

On January 28, the Welsh Trades Union Congress (TUC) organized a Welsh national day of protest in Cardiff, called in solidarity with the striking steel workers. Ten thousand union activists and youth marched with slogans warning that workers would not accept another economic disaster like the great depression of the 1930s. The Plaid Cymru leaders participated in this demonstration, including Gwynfor Evans, its retiring president.

Evans has been the main leader of the party for decades. He represents its tradition better than any other single figure, including its conservative side. He told me that he was convinced that Wales was threatened with economic catastrophe—with being turned into an industrial desert—and that the Welsh trade unions had taken the leadership of the fight for national survival.

On the heels of Plaid Cymru's electoral setbacks in 1979, the economic crisis in Wales began deepening rapidly. The Welsh economy is heavily dependent on a few basic industries—mainly steel foundries and coal mines. The British Steel Corporation has announced closures of major plants, and the coal industry has experienced drastic cutbacks.

Thus, the impotence of the party's electoralist orientation was shown at the same time that Welsh nationalists were becoming convinced that the nation was entering a struggle for survival. This gives a special

intensity to the debate in the Welsh nationalist movement.

It has also spurred some elements to desperate action. Early this year, a wave of arson started against the "holiday homes" bought by middle-class English people in the Welsh-speaking rural areas. The economic decline threatens to turn those areas that have maintained the culture and continuity of the Welsh nation into English suburbs.

Out of about 12,000 houses in the district represented by Dafydd Elis Thomas, more than 2,000 have already been bought up by well-to-do English, who are generally hostile to and contemptuous of everything Welsh. At the same time, this influx drives the price of land and houses beyond the reach of the Welsh, who are then forced to emigrate to the decaying English cities.

1979 Electoral Defeats

Despite the national electoral defeats in 1979, the hardcore support for Plaid remains quite large for a formation that seeks such a drastic change as the breakup of the British state. It got 8.1 percent of the vote in Wales.

What the 1979 votes did clearly mean, however, was disaster for the party's traditional electoralist strategy. This produced the crisis of perspectives that has led to the present debate.

For most of its history, Plaid has been a small group doing propaganda work through the medium of elections. Before the mid-1960s, it was not a factor in electoral politics.

Then, in 1966 Plaid Cymru made a breakthrough, which widened in the mid-

1970s. In the 1974 general election, the highwater mark so far, Plaid Cymru won 10.9 percent of the Welsh vote and three seats in Parliament, out of the thirty-six for Wales.

The party's objective of winning the majority of the parliamentary seats in Wales no longer seemed unattainable. Plaid was founded under the impact of the Irish revolution and war of independence. It patterned itself on the Irish independence party, the Sinn Féin, of 1918, promising, in effect, a unilateral declaration of independence once it won a majority of the seats. That is, that the nationalist MPs would meet as a Welsh parliament, just as the victorious Sinn Féin candidates met in Dublin in 1918 to form the rebel government, the first Dáil (Irish parliament).

Plaid Cymru softened this call for independence by saying that what it wanted was "Commonwealth status," that is, that it would respect the British crown. Some saw this as a tactical way of presenting a call for full independence. Others saw it as meaning that home rule would not involve a decisive break from the British state.

As soon as Plaid started getting a big enough vote to play the electoral game, it got caught up in the spirit of the thing and began making still vaguer what it wanted in hopes of gathering a bigger vote.

The membership of Plaid Cymru is about 10,000. Although it has some experience in broader movements and in mobilizing people it has done relatively little in the way of educational work and provided little impetus to deepgoing cultural ferment or mass action. In this respect, it has been quite unlike the Irish movement, which was its initial inspiration.

On the electoral level, the Plaid began by picking up mainly the old Liberal Party vote, but it started to make some inroads in the Labour Party bastions in the coal mining valleys. It directed its appeals more and more to Labour supporters. The Labour vote is significantly higher in Wales than in England. In almost all the cases when Labour has come to power, the margin of victory has come from the "Celtic Fringe"—Wales and Scotland.

Devolution

So, the Labour Party began making concessions to the rising nationalist sentiment in Wales. These concessions were essentially cultural recognition of the Welsh language and greater use of Welsh in education and broadcasting.

The devolution proposal was the culmination of these concessions. It was designed primarily to head off the defection of Labour voters in Scotland. It offered elected assemblies for both Scotland and Wales. In the former, the assembly would have some limited local government powers, subject to the veto of the London Parliament. In the case of Wales, the assembly was to have no decisive powers at all.

Plaid saw devolution as a first step to real self-government, however. That is, once the Welsh assembly was legally established, it could assume more powers on the basis of its authority over the Welsh people.

This perspective would only have been realistic, however, if the vote and the establishment of the assembly came on the crest of a real mobilization. The circumstances of the poll were the exact opposite. The electoralism of the nationalists promoted demobilization.

In addition, Plaid Cymru has been based historically in the Welsh-speaking areas. The London government's concessions were to Welsh speakers. Plaid's defense of the Welsh language had not been effectively put into the context of a movement that would benefit all the people of Wales, including the English-speaking areas.

Only about 20 percent of Welsh voters cast their ballots for devolution in the March 1979 referendum. In the predominantly Welsh-speaking counties, this went as high as 30.6 percent. In the heavily anglicized south, it went down to about 12.6 percent.

In the following May parliamentary election, Plaid's vote dropped by about a fourth, apparently mainly as a result of demoralization. An increased English population in the Welsh-speaking areas was undoubtedly also a factor.

Plaid Cymru has been able to attract some revolutionary-minded young people. It also has a core of dedicated and experienced campaigners, and a certain democratic and antibureaucratic tradition.

The political discussion going on now is taking place quite openly. For example, the Plaid Cymru newspaper, *Welsh Nation*, has called for a debate over the political alternatives represented by the likely candidates for the new president of the party, who is to be elected in the convention scheduled for October 1980.

Alternatives

I was able to talk to two of those named as possible candidates—Dafydd Elis Thomas and Dafydd Iwan. (The latter told me that he was not thinking of running this time.) These two represent fairly well the alternatives in the party.

Both Thomas and Iwan gave similar explanations for the defeat in the referendum. The Labour Party did not really campaign for its own devolution proposal. Only Plaid Cymru actually worked for it, and it was put in the contradictory position of pushing a plan that in fact denied home rule. What the proposal called for was so vague that almost any claim could be made for or against.

The conclusion that both drew was similar. The party had to become less electoral and more activist, to be able to participate in and lead struggles. Iwan said:

"We have been shaken out of the dreamland we had gotten into. We suddenly

realized that a few Welsh nationalist MPs in London don't count for much. Our strength, as Gwynfor Evans has said, depends on the strength of the movement. We're back there now. The emphasis has moved from the parliamentary party back to the people of Wales."

Thomas said that Plaid Cymru had to become the kind of party that could give real support to the steelworkers who were on strike at the time, fighting to defend their jobs and a key part of the Welsh economy.

That meant that the party had to be able to organize community support for such actions. It had to improve its organization in the industrial areas. And it had to build an organization within the unions that could strengthen them.

"We have gotten involved in some actions," he noted, "for example in the fight against the Rosedale [Factory] closure in the Rhymny valley. But we were better organized there than we are in Llanwern or Port Talbot [the steel centers]."

Thomas carried his rejection of electoralism to the point of wondering about the usefulness of being in Parliament at all: "I find it very difficult to think of what one could do in Parliament to establish credentials as an activist movement."

"What about raising the question of the Irish political prisoners," I suggested. "No one is raising that issue on the floor of Parliament."

"Yes," Thomas said, "that is something that Plaid Cymru should be able to do. We should not be afraid of the inevitable misrepresentation of our position in the English press."

Politics of the Language Question

Where the difference between Thomas and Iwan came out was over the question of "culturalism." Actually what is involved is the difference between an attempt to develop a revolutionary perspective and reliance on a gradualist one. The question was posed as one of "culturalism" versus "materialism" because of some peculiarities in Welsh history.

Thomas said that the referendum campaign had been waged by an elite, mainly the "culturalist" elite of Plaid Cymru, and so the workers had gotten the impression that a Welsh government would benefit mainly bureaucrats, professionals, and Welsh speakers: "The opponents of devolution said it meant privileges for Welsh speakers."

The fight for the Welsh language could be a key part in the struggle for a socialist Wales, however, if it were put in a proper context, Thomas said.

"I think that there is a way in which language policy could be a vehicle for explaining what kind of Wales we are trying to create—a Wales independent of the British state, one independent of capitalism, and therefore one in which Welsh

would not be threatened, as it clearly is now.

"It is the capitalist market forces, commercialism, and the commercial culture linked with it, as well as the British state, that are undermining Welsh."

It was apparent, however, that Thomas is only beginning to think this question out. Iwan illustrated the sort of approach Thomas is reacting against.

I asked Iwan if he thought Welsh could survive and regain lost ground without a fundamental change in the economic system. He said:

"It has been shown to be possible to bring about language change in industry on a small scale. Now this must be carried into larger units. At least part of the answer lies in getting people in various disciplines educated through Welsh, and see that they carry this on with them to their place of work."

I asked: "So, you see the answer in educating an elite in Welsh that will then extend the use of the language?"

"Well, yes," Iwan answered, "an elite in the sense of key figures who can dictate the use of a language. What we have found is that once you show that the Welsh language is considered important by the people who make decisions, then you find that other people follow suit."

Iwan's perspective was based entirely in the increased prestige of Welsh that resulted from the rise of Plaid Cymru and the Welsh language protest movement from which he came, as well as the growth of some modern Welsh cultural apparatus and small business that followed. He became known as a singer of Welsh protest songs. He is now an executive in the largest Welsh-language record company. He pointed to the success of his business as an example of the possibilities for expanding Welsh culture under capitalism:

"We are convinced, and we have managed to convince the bank of the possibilities for expansion of the market for Welsh-language records."

He did see a dark cloud in the horizon, however: "The one thing that could really knock the ground out from under us is a big growth in unemployment so that people would not have the money to buy these things."

Thomas said: "It would be fair to say that the predominant ideology in Plaid Cymru has been that of the Welsh-speaking middle class. There is a deep culturalism in this class, which denies the validity of the materialist analysis, both of history and of the economy. Most of the representatives of this class are either employed in the public sector, or they are ministers of religion, or they're engaged in small business."

He also attributed Plaid Cymru's traditional pacifism to this class base:

"This is something inherited from Nonconformism [the development of evangelical religions independent of the English

state church]. On the one hand, it contains a healthy opposition to imperialist military spending and so on. But it is also a mask for quietism, a mask for acceptance of the status quo and for using only the tools of liberal bourgeois democracy to achieve change."

But Thomas seems to neglect that fact that Welsh "culturalism" is a product of specific features of Welsh history, not just a reflection of the place of the Plaid Cymru "elite" in economic life.

Wales is a very small country, directly adjacent to England. It has benefitted more from the economic development of British capitalism than Ireland. On the other hand, the Welsh people were weaker relative to the British state than the Irish.

The economic development that took place in Wales also provided a certain basis for a culturally distinct petty bourgeoisie. This was not the case in Ireland, where rising petty-bourgeois layers were shattered one after another.

As a result, the response to national oppression in Wales took a different form, much less clearly antagonistic to the British state.

The mass movement that created the modern Welsh nation was the Nonconformist religious revival. Characteristically, this began as an English movement but took on a distinct nature in Wales. It became a movement against the English state church, and by extension a struggle against the social dominance of the English-speaking gentry who were closely associated with the Church of England.

A "cultural" nationalist movement arose on the basis of Nonconformism, focused on the demand for the disestablishment of the English church in Wales. But it did not achieve any political independence. It stayed within the framework of the British Liberal Party. One of its leaders, Lloyd George, became the prime minister who presided over the British state in World War I and in its attempt to crush the Irish rebellion.

It was in reaction against the failure of that generation of "cultural nationalists" the Plaid Cymru was formed. One of its founders, Louis Valentine, organized mass meetings in Wales against the British repression in Ireland. So, if Plaid Cymru takes up this issue now, it will only be returning to its roots.

The geography of Wales also played a role in the development of "culturalism." It is a mountainous country in which historically every valley has had a sense of isolation from the world. The Nonconformist religious movement created little "spiritual republics," in the valleys, where the leaders of the Welsh people could have the illusion that they could have a certain independence, as long as they left "worldly matters to the English bosses and the British state. Historic Welsh nationalism reflects this outlook.

Even the Welsh national anthem, "Hen

Wlad fy Nhadau," which is considered ferociously chauvinist by defenders of British unity, strikes a note of resignation:

"Though the foeman treads our land beneath his feet, the language of Cambria knows no retreat . . . long may the old language survive."

But the mountains can no longer protect Wales. And even the modest boast in the Welsh national anthem no longer corresponds to reality. A hundred years ago, Welsh was the language of almost the entire Welsh people. Now it is the language of about 20 percent, and even that community is on the brink of unviability.

And so "culturalism" has gone into a deep crisis, and with it all forms of gradualism and reformism, although there is still a certain "ideological lag." This crisis probably explains why I found a consensus in Plaid that a fundamentally different approach is needed now.

Impact of Irish Movement

This is also why Plaid Cymru is being deeply affected by the revolutionary nationalism of the Irish republicans and their turn toward socialism.

"Whether or not Welsh nationalists agree with the tactics of the Irish republicans, at least they fight, isn't that what it is?" I asked Thomas.

"Yes," he said.

The problem is to find an effective strategy for fighting and for uniting the majority in struggle.

Working out a revolutionary alternative, however, is not easy, and the discussion is only beginning in Plaid Cymru. Ultraleftism is as much a blind alley as reformism. And a one-sided rejection of nationalism in the name of a turn to Marxism can actually lead to the right, as it did in the case of the Official Republican movement in Ireland.

Iwan favors the cooperation of all fighters for Wales, including those who consider themselves revolutionary socialists. While Thomas thinks that the industrial workers must play the leading role, he recognizes the need to provide a political perspective for the rural ones, as well.

Thomas himself represents a largely rural Welsh-speaking constituency. He told me that his constituency committee was probably the first in Britain to have a long and intense discussion on the relationship of Marxism to national struggles.

This debate is just beginning in Plaid Cymru. And Marxists throughout Britain, as well as Welsh nationalists, should be able to learn from it. □

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STOP NUCLEAR POWER!

25,000 in U.S. March Against Nuclear Power

By Nancy Cole

[The following article is abridged from one that appeared in the May 9 issue of the *Militant*, a U.S. socialist weekly.]

* * *

WASHINGTON—More than 25,000 joined the April 26 March on Washington for a Non-Nuclear World. Coming only a day after news of Carter's military provocation in Iran, the demonstration also registered a protest by many of those present against this act of war.

The procession led off with a contingent of hundreds from the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area, site of the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster that began more than a year ago. "We almost lost Pennsylvania," declared their banner.

"No one died at Three Mile Island, they tell us," Jane Lee, a Harrisburg area dairy farmer, told the rally. "No one died, but hear this: On the east side of TMI, where the prevailing winds blow into Lancaster County, we had thirteen hyperthyroid cases, eight crib deaths, and nine stillbirths, and we're still counting!"

Not far behind the Harrisburg marchers came a group of coal miners from Pennsylvania's United Mine Workers (UMWA) Districts 2 and 5, chanting, "Nuclear power, hell no!—why not union coal!" They were joined by more than forty protesters from United Steelworkers (USWA) Local 1010 in East Chicago, Indiana.

Also near the beginning of the march was a contingent organized by the Washington, D.C. and Maryland chapters of the Coalition Against Registration and the Draft. They chanted, "Stop the war before it starts—U.S. hands off Iran!"

Barry Commoner, environmentalist author and presidential candidate of the Citizens Party, a newly formed organization of middle-class reformers, told the rally, "I want to remind you that when Mr. Carter went to Iran three years ago and proclaimed the shah the 'greatest friend of democracy,' he sold him eight nuclear power plants.

"And I want to remind you that the first act of the new regime that overthrew the shah was to stop those nuclear power plants.

"We have friends in Iran, and the Iranian people have friends here. We are all for peace; we are all against nuclear power."

The U.S. got into the "mess" in Iran, Commoner continued, because it put the despotic shah into power and gave him arms to "suppress his own people."

Commoner proposed forcing Carter to publish all documents about the U.S. role in Iran. "The day after the truth comes out, the hostages will come home!"

Antinuclear coalitions across the country were represented at the march ranging from Clemson, South Carolina, to as far away as Colorado and California.

The crowd was a young one, with a big representation of high school students—many participating in their first protest demonstration.

The organized contingent of coal miners—about thirty from United Mine Workers District 2 and thirty-eight from District 5, both in Pennsylvania—represented a big step forward for the antinuclear movement. The UMWA has long been on record against nuclear power. The active participation of the union and its members in the

fight against nuclear power can bring the movement added strength and authority.

Nearly one-fourth of District 2's 12,000 miners are laid off while Carter is pushing nuclear power, one of the miners explained in a soap-box-type speech to the early arrivers. "There is a conspiracy in this country against the unions," said the miner, who told me this was his first demonstration of any kind.

Mike Olszanski, from USWA Local 1010's environment committee, brought the rally greetings from Local 1010's 19,000 members and from USWA District 31 Director James Balanoff and "the 130,000 steelworkers in the Chicago and Gary area, who also say, 'No nukes.' I think we all know how important the labor movement can be in this struggle." he said. □

Rally Protests Uranium Mining in Australia

By Brian Jones

[The following is reprinted from the April 23 issue of the Australian socialist newsweekly, *Direct Action*.]

* * *

In Sydney on April 19, at least 5,000 people turned out for the Harrisburg Day anti-nuclear march and rally.

The mobilisation focussed on the partial melt-down which occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear power station, near Harrisburg in the US, just over 12 months ago.

Most of the organising work for the march and rally had been carried out by the Harrisburg Day Committee.

Among those taking part on April 19 were contingents from environmental groups, the women's liberation movement, political parties, and trade unions.

At least 30 Labor Party branch banners were carried by ALP members. Organised trade union participation included contingents from the Australian Railways Union and the Gasfitters and Plumbers Union.

At the rally which followed the march, the crowd was addressed by representatives of the Labor Party, the Aboriginal community, and the trade unions.

Jan Burnswood, ALP candidate for the seat of Lowe, discussed the Harrisburg accident and the problems now being encountered in trying to cool down and

repair the damaged reactor.

She reaffirmed the Labor Party's opposition to uranium mining and export, and to the construction of nuclear facilities in Australia.

Cliff Dolan, secretary of the Electrical Trades Union and heir apparent to the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions] presidency, told the rally that despite some divisions in the union movement on the question of uranium mining, most Australian unions supported the ACTU's policy of opposition to uranium mining and export.

Billy Craigie, a worker with the Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, emphasised that while uranium mining was disastrous for all of society, it was the Aboriginal people who were bearing the brunt of mining operations in Australia.

His condemnation of the disastrous impact of white society on the Aboriginal people received strong support from the crowd. □

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