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Nicaragua on War Footing as U.S.-Backed Attacks Mount

Nicaraguan troops on alert against rightists near Honduran border.

In Israel, Occupied Territories

Palestinians Fight Zionist Occupation, Discrimination

Capitalist Offensive in Belgium Leads to Class Confrontation

British Ready to Fight for Oil Fleet Threatens Argentina



British Defense Minister Nott on aircraft carrier as it prepared to sail.

Nicaragua mobilizes for war as terrorist attacks intensify

By Michael Baumann
and Jane Harris

MANAGUA — Nicaragua is at war. There is no doubt about it.

The combination of near daily armed attacks, both along the border and in remote rural areas, the \$19 million CIA project to destabilize Nicaragua, and the intensified U.S. military encirclement in neighboring Honduras, Costa Rica, and the Caribbean add up to a situation of undeclared war.

Decisive steps have been taken to defend the revolution. They include mobilization of reserves and militia, organization of civil defense squads, enactment of a special defense tax, and cancellation of the traditional week of Easter vacation.

"The state of emergency remains in effect; we cannot let our guard down," Sergio Ramírez, member of the revolutionary junta, told some 250 trade-union leaders and administrators of state-owned industries at a special meeting held here April 1 to explain the suspension of the Easter vacation.

As the holiday drew nearer, it became obvious that there could be no business as usual.

Nicaraguans look to the Easter holiday the way workers in the United States and Europe look to the Christmas holidays — as one of the biggest events of the year. But patriotic Nicaraguans, Ramírez pointed out, cannot be blind as to what is happening on the Honduran border. Escalating military attacks forced the government to suspend the holidays.

U.S. intervention 'welcome'?

A few hours before Ramírez spoke, Col. Gustavo Alvarez of the Honduran armed forces had just told the press that his government would "welcome U.S. intervention in Central America." He accused Nicaragua of being the main military problem in the region.

This announcement came less than 24 hours after Honduran officials announced they would discuss granting the United States facilities for an air base on Amapala Island, located in the Gulf of Fonseca, just 12 kilometers from the Nicaraguan coast, and less than 200 kilometers northwest of Managua.

Ramírez explained that for the past three days the Honduran army had been carrying out military maneuvers under the code name "Alerta Roja" (Red Alert), transporting military supplies in U.S.-registered Hercules aircraft.

He pointed out that imperialism was using the Honduran army to provoke a confrontation that could then be used as a pretext for increased intervention. He said that 5,000 former members of ex-dictator Somoza's National Guard and other counterrevolutionaries

are training on Honduran territory, and that the counterrevolutionary bands have stepped up their activities inside Nicaragua itself, supplied with modern weapons through Honduras.

Confrontation on Honduran border

Ramírez reminded the union leaders of the long list of attacks on the Nicaraguan revolution that Commander Daniel Ortega enumerated at the United Nations March 25.

Among these are a series of confrontations along the Honduran border and in remote rural areas. Just in the period from March 10 to March 26, the FSLN daily *Barricada* reported 12 such attacks.

In Río Blanco, a small town 140 kilometers northeast of Managua, terrorists chanting "Communists get out" attacked the Ministry of Construction training school on March 21, burning it to the ground. Two people were killed in the assault, including a five-year-old child.

A band of terrorists crossed the border from Honduras March 24 and attacked the Somoines border post, wounding two Sandinista soldiers.

Three attacks occurred March 25. Terrorists attacked the El Espino border post and warehouse, setting them both ablaze. A similar attack on the El Zacatón border post a few kilometers away was repelled by Sandinista troops.

And in eastern Nicaragua, in the southern part of the Zelaya province, the army confronted a band that had been operating in the interior for some time, capturing 14 and killing two.

Counterrevolutionary forces

At first made up primarily of former members of Somoza's National Guard, the terrorist bands have been greatly reinforced in the past year. In addition to Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries, new recruits from among Cuban counterrevolutionary exiles in Miami are openly being trained in camps in Florida. Others, according to a recent report by Mike Wallace of CBS-TV, have been recruited from ex-Green Berets with combat experience in Vietnam.

And still others have been assigned from the armed forces of various Latin American dictatorships.

All of them are being trained, equipped, and supplied by the U.S. government, which now admits to having some 100 military advisors in Honduras.

U.S. military buildup

Further beefing up its forces in the area, the Pentagon announced on March 30 that massive

naval maneuvers would soon be held in the Caribbean. These follow two other large-scale maneuvers held in March.

An operation code-named "Readex 82" is scheduled to begin April 6 and will continue for six weeks. It will include 39 vessels, among them the aircraft carriers *Forrestal* and *Independence*, and 200 warplanes.

"Ocean Venture 82" maneuvers are scheduled to begin at the end of April and continue until mid-May. They will feature a practice invasion to take place in Puerto Rico, complete with B-52 bombers and two battalions of troops.

In addition, the U.S. spy ship *Caron* is permanently stationed off the Nicaraguan coast in the Gulf of Fonseca.

The week of the U.S.-staged elections in El Salvador, the *Caron's* sophisticated electronic equipment was placed directly at the aid of the Salvadoran junta. According to the March 30 *Barricada*, the *Caron* has begun jamming broadcasts from Radio Venceremos, the voice of the Salvadoran freedom fighters.

This new form of direct U.S. intervention not only hampered the Salvadoran revolutionaries in communicating with their supporters around the world, but it also served notice on Nicaragua that whenever the U.S. deems necessary, the *Caron* can shift from eavesdropping on Nicaraguan military communications to jamming them as well.

How Sandinistas are fighting back

Nicaraguans are moving on all fronts to minimize the danger imposed by these attacks. While the Sandinista People's Army and militia are still fully mobilized and ready to go into action whenever and wherever they are needed, the big push here in the past several weeks has been in organizing civil defense.

Town by town, factory by factory, school by school, block by block, steps are being taken to ensure the safety of the Nicaraguan people. Medical, fire, and evacuation brigades are being formed. First-aid courses are being organized.

Cartoon-illustrated pullouts in *Barricada* educate readers on civil defense, both politically and practically. Political discussions are nonstop.

In Jinotega, for example, more than 100 members of the Sandinista Youth and the Nicaraguan Women's Association, all of whom are also members of their local Sandinista Defense Committees, went door-to-door talking to families about the state of emergency.

At his meeting with trade-union leaders and administrators, Sergio Ramírez reiterated a point that the Sandinistas are constantly driving home: one important way to defend the country is to raise production.

"We cannot have our soldiers going to the border to fight," he explained, "without guaranteeing them basic food supplies." He pointed out that raising production was important not only for Nicaragua's army and for internal consumption, but also for two other vital reasons. Foodstuffs must be stockpiled in case

production is stopped by war, and sales of export crops are critical to provide the government the hard currency it needs in order to import items that cannot be produced inside Nicaragua.

To further strengthen the defense effort there has been an increase in taxes on incomes, rent, and property. These measures were taken to prevent needed defense expenditures from increasing inflation.

A "patriotic tax" has been levied on cigarettes, rum, beer, and soda.

At the same time, the prices of all basic commodities remain frozen, and the four basic items in the Nicaraguan diet — corn, rice, beans, and sorghum — remain heavily subsidized by the government. In this way, the poorest layers of the population are spared the cost of U.S. aggression.

International solidarity

One shortage Nicaragua is not suffering from is international solidarity. This has been displayed in recent demonstrations worldwide, including in Honduras, where 45 organizations called a demonstration April 2 against the proposed U.S. bases and against Honduran intervention in Nicaragua.

In addition, two anti-intervention conferences were held at the end of March. The World Front for Solidarity with the Salvadoran People, held in Mexico City, included representatives from 84 countries (see article on page 292). The other, the Continental Meeting of Women for National Independence and Peace, was held here in Managua with delegates from 67 countries.

Two things the U.S. government did not count on, Ramírez noted in his speech to the union leaders, were the tremendous support that Nicaragua would get at the United Nations, and the sizeable gains that the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) is currently making in El Salvador. However, he said that while Nicaragua was winning on the diplomatic front, the United States would not stop its military attacks and destabilization moves.

Vacations can wait

Although news of the suspended holidays produced some long faces, they were the exception to the rule. The overwhelming majority of the population accepted the measure positively, taking into account the gravity of the situation.

"The Holy Week holidays were not suspended because we are atheists, but simply to strengthen the national state of emergency," Ramírez explained.

While the church hierarchy has remained silent despite prior consultation and government requests for support for the measure, several religious leaders who support the revolution have spoken out loud and clear in agreement with the revolutionary government's move.

The measure "will be used in a manipulative way by some sectors, especially outside the country, where they will spread disinformation

about Nicaragua," Father Antonio Castro Granados told *Barricada*. "I say to them: put your feet solidly on the ground! We are living in a situation of great threats. This is the time to defend production and the country, because one way of being Christian is to defend what we have won."

And Héctor Zúñiga, a worker in charge of the militia at the Rolter Shoe Factory here told *Intercontinental Press*: "I suppose there will be a few people against it. But the revolution costs whatever it costs. There are 50,000 heroes and martyrs who have paid for it with their blood and we are not about to stop now!" □

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Solidarity with El Salvador

Permanent international organization set up

By Nelson González

MEXICO CITY — An estimated crowd of 2,500 people filled the Variedades Theater here March 26 for the opening rally of the International Conference in Solidarity With the Salvadoran People.

The conference represented a qualitative step forward in the organization of worldwide solidarity with the Salvadoran revolution, and in the struggle against imperialist intervention.

More than 200 organizations, including trade unions, political parties, and antiwar committees responded to the call put out by the Mexican Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador (CMSPS).

Among the participating organizations were more than 80 solidarity and antiwar committees involved in promoting solidarity with the Salvadoran people and opposing imperialist intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. Such groups were there from Venezuela, the United States, France, Ecuador, Canada, West Germany, East Germany, Switzerland, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Spain, the Netherlands, Peru, Belize, Colombia, Britain, Australia, Hungary, Chile, Argentina, and Haiti, among other places.

There was broad representation from the different political currents within the workers movement. Communist Party representatives came from Spain, France, and the Soviet Union, as well as many other countries. Among the social-democratic representatives was one from the French Socialist Party.

Also represented were the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Honduran Socialist Party, and various member parties and sympathizing sections of the Fourth International, among them the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party, (PRT) and the U.S. Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance.

On the trade-union level, there were representatives of Spain's General Workers Union (UGT), Panama's National Telecommunications Union, many independent unions in Mexico, and others. Representatives from the World Federation of Trade Unions were also on hand.

The Mexican delegation at the conference was the largest, followed by the U.S. delegation. Special delegations and representatives were on hand from Vietnam, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

Deep commitment

The conference was marked by a deep commitment to defend the people of El Salvador and to organize opposition to the U.S. war drive in Central America and the Caribbean. This commitment was evident in the tremendous applause and sustained ovations that were

given to the representative of the Revolutionary Democratic Front of El Salvador (FDR) and to the organizers of the conference when they addressed the opening rally.

The theater rocked with applause when Gilberto López y Rivas, coordinator of the CMSPS, told the crowd that "if the strategists of counterrevolutionary war dare to invade El Salvador, they will be met with resolute and fierce resistance worldwide, including right inside the United States."

The audience again cheered its approval when López y Rivas alluded to previous movements against imperialist intervention in Latin America. "We feel as though we are all Salvadorans," he said, "just as yesterday we felt that we were Cubans, Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, and Dominicans."

Speaking for the FDR, Arnolde Bernal stressed the importance that the Salvadoran rebels attached to the conference. "We are here," he said, "precisely to organize the kind of anti-interventionist actions that will block any attempts to drown the struggle of our people in blood. . . . We think that the actions taking place tomorrow [March 27] in the United States, Canada, and Europe are already the first measures, the first actions of a World Front in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador that should be constituted out of this gathering."

Greetings were sent to the rally by Irish liberation fighter Bernadette Devlin McAliskey,

the Vietnamese Committee in Solidarity With the Peoples, and the Soviet trade-union movement. A taped greeting from the Salvadoran liberation fighters' radio station, Radio Venceremos, was played to the conference as well.

Unanimous agreement.

After the public rally on March 26, the next two days were filled with rich discussions among the more than 500 participants in the conference.

A political resolution was adopted unanimously by the delegates. It affirmed the right of the Salvadoran people to self-determination, blasted the U.S.-staged elections as a fraud, and asserted that the Salvadoran people have forged their own genuine, representative leadership in the course of their struggle. That leadership is the Revolutionary Democratic Front—Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FDR-FMLN).

The resolution denounced the U.S. efforts to blame Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union for the conflict in El Salvador, and it declared the conference's unconditional support to the "revolutionary processes of Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada, and especially . . . total solidarity with the heroic Guatemalan people."

The resolution also declared its support for the Mexican-French declaration urging negotiations on El Salvador, and for other attempts backed by the FDR to arrive at a peaceful solution to the conflict there.

The action proposal, which was also passed unanimously, adopted May 1 as a day of worldwide solidarity and antiwar actions. May 21 was also set aside for solidarity actions, and others were urged for the month of April. Campaigns to get out the truth about the struggle in El Salvador and to raise money for the rebel forces were also proposed.



Presiding committee at Mexico City conference.

Lisa Hickler/Young Socialist

On the final day of the gathering a news conference was held to announce the formation of the World Front in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador and to introduce the elected leadership of the organization.

Bill Zimmerman, a veteran of the U.S. movement against the war in Vietnam, a member of the Screen Actors Guild, and president of the Medical Aid for El Salvador group founded by actor Ed Asner, was elected president of the World Front. Seventeen other members were elected to a permanent bureau

which will serve as the group's leadership body.

Among those elected to the permanent bureau were Silvia Reyes from the Nicaraguan Committee in Solidarity With the Peoples; Monsignor Sergio Méndez Arceo, the Bishop of Cuernavaca in Mexico; Dr. Ahmad Zobeh from the Palestine Liberation Organization; Jorge Gallardo from the Cuban Institute for Friendship With the Peoples; and Jesús Escandel of the World Federation of Trade Unions. □

Argentina

British fleet threatens attack

Imperialists seek to retain control of oil fields

By David Frankel

Several thousand Argentine troops took possession of the Malvinas Islands (called the Falkland Islands by the British) April 2, in a move that enraged the British ruling class.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher denounced the Argentine move as "an act of unprovoked aggression," and the British government announced that "a substantial number of Royal Navy ships" were heading for the islands, which are 8,000 miles from Britain and 250 miles from Argentina.

"Some Royal Navy ships already in the South Atlantic were reportedly being refueled and resupplied for a move toward the islands," Drew Middleton reported in the April 3 *New York Times*.

In addition, "The nuclear-powered submarine Superb was also said to be on the way. Some reports said Royal Air Force transport planes loaded with troops had taken off from Lyneham Air Base. . . ."

"Meanwhile, a battle group was forming around the aircraft carrier *Invincible* in British waters. . . ."

Reagan warns of 'aggression'

Backing up the British demand for the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Malvinas, the U.S. State Department issued a statement saying: "We have told the Government of Argentina that we deplore the use of force to resolve this dispute. We call on Argentina to immediately cease hostilities and to withdraw its military forces from the Falkland Islands."

President Reagan, in a personal phone call to Argentine President Leopoldo Galtieri, warned that an Argentine move to take over the Malvinas would be seen in the United States as an "act of Argentine aggression."

Britain's foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, told reporters in London that "the U.S. government has been extremely helpful."

U.S. policymakers were particularly upset by the Argentine move, since it comes in the midst of the intensifying confrontation be-

tween imperialism and the social revolutions in Central America. Washington has been pressing the Argentine regime to play a bigger role in the counterrevolutionary effort there. A confrontation between Argentina and Britain can only get in the way of this perspective.

Dictatorship vs. democracy?

Not surprisingly, supporters of British imperialism are pointing to the fact that Argentina is ruled by a military dictatorship. "Storming onto the virtually defenseless Falklands gives the ruling generals and admirals in Buenos Aires a chance to distract attention from domestic failures and rally patriotic pride," the editors of the *New York Times* noted April 3.

These staunch supporters of the murderous junta in El Salvador expressed the pious fear that "with a clash likely, a new crackdown on domestic dissent [in Argentina] becomes easier to justify."

It is certainly true that the Argentine military hopes that the dispute over the Malvinas will strengthen its position at home. The country is in the midst of a deep economic crisis, and on March 30 the biggest protests since the armed forces seized power in 1976 took place. Ac-

ording to Argentine papers, there were some 2,000 arrests around the country, and six people were wounded when police opened fire on demonstrators in Mendoza.

But the character of the current regime in Argentina is not what is at issue in the dispute over the Malvinas. Another government could come to power in Argentina next month, but the issue of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, which is 150 years old, would not go away.

What is involved is a confrontation between an imperialist power and one of the countries that it has oppressed for more than a century. In fact, the Argentine economy was dominated by Britain right up through World War II. Today, the British are determined to maintain their grip on the Malvinas Islands because offshore oil fields in the area are potentially as rich as the North Sea find.

Stop British threats!

One has only to glance at a map to see the basis for the Argentine claim to the Malvinas. In fact, the original settlers on the Malvinas came from Argentina, but in 1832-33 the British Empire took over the islands and forced the Argentine settlers to leave. They were replaced with British settlers.

Argentina has been negotiating for the return of the Malvinas for decades. The issue was taken up at a conference in Havana in 1940, and at the United Nations in 1958. In 1971 an agreement was signed for the gradual integration of the islands into Argentina, but the negotiations broke down in 1973. The latest talks have been going on since 1978.

As Galtieri explained in a nationwide broadcast following the occupation of the islands by Argentine forces, it was necessary "to put an end to the interminable succession of British evasions and delays designed to perpetuate their domination over the islands and their zone of influence."

The British imperialists have hidden behind the desire of the 1,800 settlers on the Malvinas to retain their link with Britain. Nobody is challenging the right of the English-speaking settlers to remain on the islands. But just as in the case of Northern Ireland, British colonists do not have the right to settle on the land of another country and then to claim that land for Britain.

The Malvinas Islands belong to Argentina. The workers movement around the world should demand that the British imperialists stop their military threats immediately, and withdraw their forces from the region. □



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Arabs protest throughout Palestine

General strike against discrimination and occupation

By M. Shajor

TEL AVIV — For the first time since the establishment of the state of Israel, the oppressed Arab population throughout Palestine took part in a general strike March 30.

This came just a few days after an unprecedented demonstration of 40,000 to 50,000 people, most of them Jewish, in Tel Aviv March 27 to protest the Israeli government's attacks on the Arab population.

During the March 30 general strike, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, those inside Israel, and the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights united in a common action against the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, against the discrimination that the Arab population inside Israel is subjected to, against the annexation of the Golan Heights, and for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

This is something new in the politics of Israel. Increasingly, the struggles of the oppressed Arabs in these three sectors — the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Israel itself — are becoming one. And their struggle is having a deep effect on Jewish workers inside Israel, particularly as these workers are hit by the impact of the capitalist economic crisis.

The approximately 600,000 Arabs inside Israel, while formally Israeli citizens, are oppressed by the Zionist state. Much of their land was taken away from them, and they face discrimination in all spheres of life.

Although the initial resistance of the Palestinians within Israel was crushed in the early 1950s, it reemerged in a massive way in 1976 in response to stepped-up expropriations of Arab land. Since then, March 30 has been marked as the Day of the Land, in commemoration of the six Palestinians who were killed by Israeli troops on March 30, 1976.

Now this traditional day of resistance has merged with the struggles of the Arab populations in the occupied territories. Thus March 30 was not only the Day of the Land, but also the Day of Palestine.

Workers strike despite threats

While strikes, demonstrations, and street confrontations continued in the occupied territories, Arab workers in Israel downed their tools as well. This was despite threats from the bosses that they would be fired if they did not come to work.

At the same time, workers from the occupied territories who work in Israel also did not go to their jobs. This was felt especially in the construction sites, the small plants, and the textile industry, which rely heavily on labor

from the occupied territories.

There were demonstrations everywhere, mobilizing most of the people from the Arab villages in Israel.

Nazareth, the only Arab city inside Israel, was shut down. Workers did not go to their jobs. The shops were closed. Except for buses, nothing moved.

The Communist Party (Rakah) controls the municipal government in Nazareth. The government tried to use this to claim that the strike inside Israel was aimed at serving the narrow interests of Rakah.

The government put considerable pressure on the local municipalities not to join the general strike, using a carrot-and-stick approach. The authorities said they would block funds to municipalities that struck, and promised to provide money to those that did not.

The Labor Party, which ruled Israel from 1948 to 1977, joined the Begin government in calling on Arabs not to strike. Some of the local municipal councils ruled by the Labor Party followed this call, claiming that what is going on in the occupied territories is not the business of the so-called Israeli Arabs.

Palestinian flags raised

But the answer they got from the Palestinian masses on the Day of the Land was unequivocal. All the Arab villages joined the general strike.

On the night of March 29, some 7,000 people demonstrated in Um-el-Fahm. They carried banners demanding the right to establish an independent Palestinian state, against the occupation, and against the annexation of the Golan Heights.

On March 30, four main mass meetings were organized inside Israel by the Committee for the Defense of the Land. These took place in Sakhnin, in Western Galilee; in Kfar Cana, near Nazareth; in Taiyba, in the so-called Triangle near Tel Aviv; and in the Negev Desert in the south. Jews and Arabs spoke out for the right to establish a Palestinian state and against Begin's war policies.

One of the Labor Party's Arab members of the Knesset (parliament), Hamed Halailah, participated in the mass meeting in Sakhnin. At the same rally, slogans were raised declaring, "We are all fedayeen." Two Palestinian flags — which are outlawed in Israel — were unfurled. No one took them down.

In contrast to the police restraint in Sakhnin, the police did intervene in some villages, making arrests, and taking away leaflets. At the entrance to the village of Taiyba they conducted humiliating body searches of everyone who came.

The latest upsurge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been under way for nearly two weeks before the March 30 protest.

These territories were first occupied by Israel in 1967, as a result of the Zionist state's aggressive war against the Arab world that year. Many of the 1.25 million Palestinians living in those territories were refugees or descendants of refugees who were forced out of Israel in 1948. There have been frequent struggles in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip against the occupiers.

The Israeli government has helped establish Jewish settlements in the occupied territories on land taken away from the Palestinians. It has helped arm these settlers to terrorize the population.

In late 1981, the government set up a so-called civilian administration headed by Menachem Milson in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its aim is to bolster Israeli control of the territories, leading to their eventual annexation by Israel.

As part of this process, the Israeli authorities are attempting to find collaborators who will go along with their occupation policies. The government has set up so-called Village Leagues, led by Mustapha Duda in the Hebron area, which support its policies. It has established armed gangs that guard the heads of the Village Leagues and terrorize the population.

But the civilian administration has a problem. These quislings represent only a very small minority. The overwhelming majority of the Palestinians identify with their legitimate representatives, who were elected to the municipal councils in the 1976 elections. These mayors are opposed to the so-called autonomy plan that is part of the Camp David agreement and voice support for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

So while setting up the Village Leagues, the authorities have at the same time been moving against these mayors.

On March 11, the government outlawed the Committee of National Guidance, a broad united front to which many of the mayors belonged.

One week later, the municipal council of Al Bira was dismissed. The justification was that the mayor of Al Bira, Ibrahim Tawil, would not meet with Menachem Milson in his office, as an expression of opposition to the civilian administration. The mayors of Nablus and Ramallah, Bassam al-Shaka and Karim Khalaf, were later ousted as well.

The dismissal of the Al Bira municipal council provoked massive protests. A general strike was declared in the West Bank and Gaza

Strip. The cities became the focus of continual demonstrations.

The Israeli army reacted brutally. Soldiers shot into the crowds, and seven Palestinians were killed during the first week. The population had stones in their hands, and the troops American-made M-16 rifles.

Curfews were imposed on some of the refugee camps and villages. Several villages in the Hebron Mountains were blockaded, with nobody allowed in or out. Thousands were arrested. Hundreds were wounded.

But despite the repression, the people continued to go out into the streets to fight against the army.

Defense Minister Ariel Sharon has declared that the real battle for control of Israel is being waged, and that he will eliminate the PLO from the area. He claimed that the ousted mayors — whom he said had been elected “undemocratically” — are disciples of the PLO and carry out its line. He maintained that events in the West Bank prove that the PLO is losing its base.

But the upsurge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has shown just the opposite. The PLO is not losing its massive support. Nor has the Israeli government been able to undermine the PLO's position internationally.

The PLO responded immediately to the crackdown in the occupied territories, calling for a general mobilization and continued opposition to the Israeli occupation, and for support to the March 30 general strike.

In mass meetings in Beirut and other places in Lebanon, PLO head Yassir Arafat called on the entire Arab world to join in achieving the expulsion of Israel from the occupied territories.

The Day of the Land, when the whole West Bank and Gaza Strip were on strike and the Palestinians in Israel joined the struggle, showed that the position of the PLO has, in fact, been strengthened.

Today the government is in a dilemma, because it has played its last card. With its brutal repression and its ouster of the mayors, it has no alternative leaders in the West Bank. It faces a population that knows that the continuation of the occupation means more oppression, more poverty, more exploitation, less education, fewer social services, and, finally, the danger of losing their land.

Ferment in the Golan Heights

The Golan Heights has also been marked by strikes and demonstrations against the policies of the occupation authorities.

The area was originally seized from Syria during the 1967 war. Most of its 150,000 Arab inhabitants were expelled by the Zionists, and only some 13,000 Druse — a religious group derived from Islam — were allowed to stay.

In December 1981, the Golan Heights was formally annexed by Israel. This has provoked a big struggle there, including a two-month-long general strike.

There is no leadership in the Golan Heights that is ready to accept Israel's annexation.

For two months, the authorities have maintained a military blockade around the Golan, preventing anyone from entering or leaving, including journalists. The government is ruling by emergency decree that gives the army total power, and deprives the population of any rights. Electricity and telephones are cut off. People cannot go out to tend their herds or work their land. Anyone who wants to do so has to first accept an Israeli identity card.

But no one will accept the identity cards. The Druse regard themselves as Syrians. They have family members in Syria and their children study in Syria. They say that they would rather die from hunger than submit to the army.

Druse demonstrate in solidarity

The regime's policy in the Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza Strip has stirred up wide opposition inside Israel.

This opposition was spurred by the Israeli government's use of barbaric methods — but also, more than anything else, because these methods have failed.

The events in the Golan Heights have led to divisions within the Israeli ruling class. Although it agrees that the Golan Heights should not go back to Syria, it is divided on the way the government carried out this policy.

The League of Human Rights, the journalists who were barred from the Golan Heights, and many public figures all criticized the government.

Moreover, a Committee in Solidarity with the People of Golan Heights was established at the initiative of the Communist Party. This committee was formed as a result of pressures in the Arab regions inside Israel, where Rakah is strong. A Rakah member of the Knesset visited the Golan Heights.

Within the Druse population inside Israel, the activities of Rakah had an impact. They helped spur the Druse to enter the arena.

For the first time in the history of Israel, the Druse population inside Israel confronted the government in support of their brothers and sisters in the Golan Heights.

The Israeli Druse have been the one section of the Arab population that until now has been seen as supporting the Zionist state. They have been known for their service in the armed forces. But things are beginning to change here too.

A mass meeting was held in the Druse village of Daliat el-Karmiel, in which 4,000 people participated. Some of the speakers, who were known as supporters of Israel, called on the government to end its blockade of the villages in the Golan Heights.

On March 28, more than 10,000 Druse attended a commemoration meeting in Meby Shueib for Sultan Sakha el-Atrash, a prominent Druse who died in Syria. This commemoration turned into a demonstration in support of the Druse in the Golan. They chanted, “Golan back to its owners, not to Begin and his dogs!”

The mayor of Mas'ada in the Golan Heights, Mukhsein Abu Saleh, who is one of

the few collaborators with Israel in the Golan, tried to speak, but the demonstrators did not let him.

Mass opposition inside Israel

Within Jewish public opinion in Israel, there is growing opposition to what is happening in the occupied territories.

This resulted in the mass demonstration of 40,000 to 50,000 Jews and Arabs in Tel Aviv on March 27.

The participation of Jews and Arabs in a joint demonstration of this size is unprecedented in Israel. It was also extremely militant. Demonstrators chanted or carried signs with the slogans, “Murderers out of the West Bank,” “No to the occupation,” “The Golan Heights is Syrian,” and “Begin, Sharon, get out of Hebron.” Some participants sold stickers and buttons with the colors of the Palestinian flag.

The demonstration also had a very broad sponsorship, including 26 Labor Party members of the Knesset and other public figures.

For about five months, the only voice heard in Israel against the government's policy in the West Bank was the Committee in Solidarity With Bir Zeit University. The committee voiced a widespread feeling among Israelis, and in particular among the working class, that the government's policies in the West Bank were heading into a dead end.

The blowing up of Arab houses, the dispersal of demonstrations with tear gas, and the closure of the university were widely opposed within Israel. And during the last week, the scenes on television of settlers shooting into crowds without provocation and taking the law into their own hands caused outrage. Although it is known that two Arab youths were murdered by these settlers in cold blood, the killers were not arrested. One person was questioned by the police and later released.

Most of the workers in Israel serve in the occupied territories at some point while in the military reserves. So they know that this is a civilian population fighting for its rights. They know the Arab workers from their own jobs and understand that what is going on in the occupied territories is in response to the direct provocations of Sharon, Milson, and the settlers.

Role of Labor Party

In face of opposition in Israel and Sharon's failure in the West Bank, the Labor Party saw an opportunity to hit the government. It was clear that if the Labor Party did not move, the masses in the streets would be left to the leadership of the Committee in Solidarity With Bir Zeit University. That is why the Peace Now movement, which identifies with the Labor Party, called the March 27 demonstration.

It is obvious that the Labor Party is trying to head off the radical dynamic that the Bir Zeit Committee opened up, a dynamic that collides with plans of the Labor Party and Peace Now movement, who are motivated not by solidar-

ity with the Palestinians, but by the narrow aim of bringing the Labor Party back to power.

The March 27 demonstration had an enormous impact on public opinion. And it brought an immediate reaction from Begin. He launched a sharp attack on the Labor Party, stating that the two slogans, "The Golan is Syrian" and "Down with the occupation," were a betrayal of Israel. He charged that the Labor Party was educating an entire generation of antipatriots.

It is clear that the March 27 demonstration has given an enormous impetus to the struggle of the Palestinians, and heavily influenced their decision to hold the general strike on the Day of the Land.

This dynamic goes against the will of the Labor Party, which is interested in a continuation of the occupation of the West Bank and the Golan Heights. That is why the Labor Party has been carrying out a campaign in the press, going after those who raised the two slogans that Begin attacked — that is, the Committee in Solidarity With Bir Zeit University.

It is obvious that solidarity with the Palestinians and the strategy of the Labor Party did not go together. It is also obvious that the only way to prevent war is by ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and by returning the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty.

These demands are in the interests of the Israeli working class, which bears the main cost of the government's occupation policies. □

Iran

War gains alarm Washington

New Year offensive routs three Iraqi divisions

By Fred Murphy

Iran's New Year began with an unprecedented military victory against the Iraqi occupation forces that have held thousands of square miles of Iranian territory since September 1980.

"Operation Undeniable Victory" was a combined offensive involving more than 100,000 Iranian troops, including 30,000 Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) and 30,000 members of the volunteer militia known as the Baseej.

Pincer attacks were launched from the north and east against Iraqi positions west of the city of Dezful before dawn on March 22. In nine days of fighting, three Iraqi divisions were totally routed. Some 860 square miles of Iranian territory — including a major agricultural area and a key oil field — were liberated. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers were taken prisoner, and hundreds of Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles were destroyed or captured.

By April 2, Iraqi forces in the Shush-Dezful area had been pushed back to within two and a half miles of the border between the two countries. Further south, near Bostan (recaptured last November), Iranian forces had reportedly driven all the way to the border itself.

The Iraqi occupation forces have thus been effectively cut in two; they continue to hold positions around the town of Qasr-e-Shirin to the north and in the oil fields west of Ahwaz to the south.

Hussein admits 'reorganization'

Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein acknowledged the retreat of his forces in a broadcast to troops on March 30. "We at the general command have decided to reorganize your defensive positions toward the rear," Hussein said. But the ranks of the Iraqi army are well aware of what was behind this "reorganization." Hussein even had to plead with them "not to feel

bitter" over the retreat.

In fact, "the offensive's greatest achievement," Jonathan Randal of the *Washington Post* reported in a March 31 dispatch from Tehran, "is that it appears to have broken Iraqi Army morale."

"The Iraqi prisoners shown on television here don't even look tired or haggard," Randal quoted a military specialist as saying. "They didn't fight, they surrendered en masse."

Some of the war prisoners were non-Iraqis. A March 30 Associated Press dispatch from Dezful cited the cases of Lebanese, Egyptian, and Sudanese prisoners who "claimed they had been forced to don Iraqi uniforms and go to the front." Aly Endris Ahmed, a Sudanese citizen, "said he arrived in Iraq three months ago to look for work. He said Iraqi authorities told him shortly after his arrival that he was being 'drafted' and sent to 'observe' Iraqi military maneuvers.

"The next thing I knew I was in the front of

the war. I had 15 days of training and they put me in artillery," Ahmed said."

The fact that Saddam Hussein has been reduced to dragooning immigrant workers into his armed forces indicates the scope of the political disaster the Iraqi ruler now faces. Hussein's original aim in invading Iran 18 months ago was to strike a blow against the Iranian revolution, because he feared its impact within Iraq. Now Hussein must confront rising discontent at home owing to the military defeats and the hardships caused by the war.

Iranian victories inspire masses

Iran's victories, on the other hand, have inspired not only the workers and peasants of Iran itself but also the masses throughout the Middle East. Claude Van Engeland pointed out in the April 2 *Christian Science Monitor* how this "frightens the ruling families on the south shore of the [Persian] Gulf: every victory of the Iranian troops has tremendous impact on their people, especially on the important Shiite minorities. Travelers coming back from the Gulf area report that the prestige of Ayatollah Khomeini is increasing every day and that one of the biggest mistakes of the local governments has been to depict the Iranian mullahs as crazy fellows whose regime would capsize within a few months."

The alarm of the proimperialist monarchies in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states is shared in Washington. The March 31 *Wall Street Journal* quotes a State Department official as follows:

"If Iraq collapses and you have an expansionist, aggressive Iran on the rampage, this puts a tremendous burden on us. We would have to protect our friends, such as Saudi Arabia, and a direct Iran-U.S. face-off would do more to expand Soviet influence in Iran than anything else I can think of. The days of the comfortable equilibrium in the Iraq-Iran war may be over."

There was never any talk in Washington about "an expansionist, aggressive Iraq on the rampage" when Hussein invaded Iran.

In fact, the Iranian government has stated that its military aims involve only the expulsion of the Iraqi invaders from Iranian soil. Aggression, said President Ali Khomeini on March 24, is "not in keeping with the dignity of the Islamic Republic."

What the imperialists and their local clients do have every reason to fear, however, is the example of the Iranian revolution and the strengthening of all anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East as a result of Iran's latest war victories. □

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Government orders socialist deported

Héctor Marroquín will continue fight for political asylum

By José G. Pérez

[The following article appeared in the April 9 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*.]

* * *

After more than two years of silence, the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals has turned down Héctor Marroquín's request for political asylum in the United States, ordering him to leave the country "voluntarily" within thirty days.

Marroquín, a 28-year-old native of Mexico, is a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and of the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialist Alliance. He will appeal the ruling denying him asylum.

The immigration board ruling constitutes yet another escalation of the Reagan administration's war against the political rights of working people in the United States. It comes on the heels of the introduction in Congress — with administration backing — of new anti-immigrant legislation and the relaunching of factory raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Political activists have been a special target of Reagan's anti-immigrant vendetta. The INS has stubbornly refused to grant asylum to Haitians and Salvadorans fleeing brutal dictatorships in their homelands.

In addition, two other members of the U.S. socialist movement, Mojgan Hariri-Vijeh and Hamid Reza Sodeifi, have also been faced with U.S. government attempts to deport them in the past year. Both are Iranian students.

In its March 23 decision on the Marroquín case, the Board of Immigration Appeals tries to camouflage the political basis of its order to deport him. It states that Marroquín's "particular political ideology" has nothing to do with the denial of asylum, but rather that he "has failed to establish a well-founded fear of persecution" if he were to return to Mexico.

The entire history of the Marroquín case refutes this claim.

'Terrorist' frame-up

Marroquín was a student and political activist at the University of Nuevo León in Monterrey, the largest city in northern Mexico. In January 1974 Marroquín and three other students were publicly branded terrorists by the cops, who claimed the four were leaders of a guerrilla group responsible for the death of a university librarian.

Although innocent, Marroquín immediately went into hiding. A lawyer advised him that people accused of such crimes often did not get a chance to prove their innocence in court: the

cops either murdered them, claiming they were killed in gun battles, or simply "disappeared" them.

In April 1974 Marroquín entered the United States. Shortly thereafter he read in the newspapers of new police fabrications against him — involvement in shoot-outs with cops and armed robbery. He felt he could not speak out against these frame-ups because he was living in the United States under an assumed identity.

In 1977 INS cops caught up with Marroquín, dumping him in jail for three months for illegally entering the country.

While a prisoner, Marroquín found out for the first time that he could apply for political asylum in the United States. The initial application was turned down by an INS district director because Marroquín was wanted in Mexico for "serious nonpolitical crimes."

Massive campaign to win asylum

Marroquín's supporters waged a massive, nationwide campaign demanding that the U.S. government grant him political asylum. This demand won the support of a broad array of public figures and organizations, including union officials, members of congress, writers, artists, and political activists. Support was especially strong among Chicanos and other Latinos.

At Marroquín's April 1979 deportation hearing, the INS prosecutor was unable to challenge the evidence showing this was a politically motivated frame-up. Instead, the prosecutor tried to make the hearing a McCarthyite witch-hunt against Marroquín for his socialist ideas. Prosecutor Daniel Kahn told reporters, "He [Marroquín] has admitted from his own mouth he is a Marxist. The United States does not grant asylum to communists."

The INS judge agreed with the INS prosecutor, ignoring the evidence that Marroquín would be persecuted in Mexico and suggesting he seek asylum in "Castro's Cuba" instead. Racism was also a big factor in the decision. Judge James Smith told reporters Marroquín was an "average wetback."

Ruling full of contradictions

Embarrassed by some of these statements, the INS appeals board claims its decision has nothing to do with Marroquín's ideas, only the supposed lack of evidence that he would be persecuted in Mexico. But the board falls into countless contradictions.

For example, a part of the ruling argues that Marroquín should go back to Mexico to face the charges, saying he would get a fair trial because "the judicial system of Mexico is gener-

ally regarded as among the most advanced and enlightened of all countries in Central and South America."

But in another place, arguing that Marroquín is not being persecuted at all, the board says that this is proved by the fact that members of Marroquín's family living in Mexico have not been hounded by the cops. The board admits that in Mexico there have been "numerous, even routine, instances where the immediate families of accused political dissidents or terrorists are subjected to police harassment, surveillance, ransacking of their homes, and even arrest, beatings, and torture."

One of the most cynical parts of the ruling concerns the fate of the three other students branded as terrorists together with Marroquín in 1974. The board claims that "as of April 1979, there were no longer any CER members still in custody" and therefore Marroquín has no reason to fear repression if he returns to Mexico. (The CER is the alleged guerrilla group Marroquín was supposedly a leader of.)

The board ignores what actually happened to the three students accused with Marroquín. Two were killed by police during alleged gunfights. The third, Jesús Piedra Ibarra, was kidnapped by police in April 1975 and his whereabouts remain unknown to this day.

U.S. complicity with persecution

One aspect of the Marroquín case not mentioned by the board at all is the overwhelming evidence of U.S. government complicity with the persecution of political dissidents in Mexico.

A few days after the appeals board ruling, the *New York Times* reported that Miguel Nassar Haro, until January of this year the head of Mexico's Directorate of Federal Security, was being investigated by the U.S. attorney in San Diego for his role in a stolen car ring.

The *Times* reported that the U.S. Justice Department intervened from Washington to block an indictment of Nassar Haro because he is the CIA's "most important source in Mexico and Central America." The security agency run by Nassar Haro regularly passed on information to the CIA, including on the activity of Salvadoran and Guatemalan activists living in Mexico.

Nassar Haro's name comes up repeatedly in the documents and testimony submitted by Marroquín to substantiate his plea for asylum. He is repeatedly identified as a torturer and as head of the White Brigades, an extraofficial arm of the Mexican cops responsible for numerous still unresolved "disappearances" of political activists.

The Héctor Marroquín Defense Committee

(HMDC) will continue to fight U.S. government attempts to deport him. It will redouble its efforts to raise the funds necessary to appeal the latest ruling, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.

The committee is urging that telegrams protesting the ruling and demanding Marroquín be

given asylum be sent to Alan Nelson, Director, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C. 20536. Copies should be sent to the Héctor Marroquín Defense Committee, c/o Political Rights Defense Fund, P.O. Box 649 Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003. □

nesses.

In a March 24 article datelined from Damascus, *New York Times* reporter Henry Tanner notes that today, "The nature of the armed opposition to President Assad is not so clear as the generally used name of the organization, Moslem Brotherhood implies. . . .

"A Damascus businessman sympathetic to the insurgents called them the Radical Party rather than the Brotherhood and said that most of the leaders were educated, modern men of middle age, many with university degrees, whose prime motives were political and not religious and who certainly did not intend to impose a Khomeini-type Islamic government on Syria. . . .

"The organization reportedly is seeking alliances with secular anti-Assad groups, including rightist factions of the Baath Party.

"Much of the organization's financial and logistic support is believed to come from Iraq."

According to a report in the March 27 issue of *The Economist*, the Iraqi regime has declared "its support for the alliance of Syrian opposition factions, led by the Moslem Brotherhood, that was formally established in Paris on March 19th."

Militias formed

The picture of the Muslim Brotherhood as a rightist opposition within the context of a political polarization in Syrian society also jibes with some of the other details in Tanner's report.

Thus, after referring to the 1979 attack in which the Muslim Brotherhood killed 42 cadets by tossing a bomb into a classroom of the military academy in Aleppo, Tanner says: "In the search for the insurgents, large parts of the population, the merchant class and professional people, suffered reprisals. Tens of thousands of supporters of the Government were formed into militias of students, of workers and of peasants and were armed and trained for police work. In Hama, significantly, the militias fought beside the security forces."

Assad has demonstrated quite convincingly that there is widespread support for his regime's anti-imperialist stand against Israel and the Camp David accords. "A week ago," Tanner reports, "after a speech marking the rise to power of the Baath Party, President Assad stunned onlookers by plunging into the crowd, then walking with the demonstrators several miles through the center of Damascus, often letting them carry him on their shoulders. . . .

"Demonstrations involving millions of people, according to the Government, were also held in Aleppo and other cities and shown for many hours on national television."

It is worth noting that in Egypt, anti-imperialist opponents of the Camp David accords and of the regime are often lumped together under the name of the Muslim Brotherhood and described as rightists. But in the case of Syria, the description appears to be accurate. □

Syria

Rightist rebellion in Hama

Why Washington wants to see Assad go

By David Frankel

A three-week battle between Syrian troops and rebel forces organized by the Muslim Brotherhood took place in February in the city of Hama. The fighting, which began February 2, left much of Syria's fourth-largest city in ruins.

The Syrian government initially denied reports of the fighting in Hama, but later admitted that there had been a rebellion there. On March 7, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad accused the U.S. and Iraqi governments of providing arms to the Muslim Brotherhood. Cases of Iraqi arms were displayed on Syrian television.

There is no question about the hostility of the imperialist powers toward the Syrian regime. "The whistling of bullets through the backstreets of Hama, Syria, last week had an almost musical quality for some U.S. foreign policy makers," Yahya Sadowski commented in the February 21 issue of the *Miami Herald*.

"The Assad clan — Time for them to go" was the title of the editorial on Syria in the February 20 issue of *The Economist*, one of the more prominent mouthpieces of British big-business.

A stab in the back

Relations between Washington and Damascus had begun to warm up after the October 1973 Mideast war, when former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger mediated a disengagement agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights. In 1976, Washington backed the intervention of the Syrian army in Lebanon — an intervention that prevented the Muslim-leftist-Palestinian coalition in the civil war there from defeating the rightist forces and consolidating its hold on the country.

But Washington repaid Assad for his help in Lebanon by knifing him in the back. The separate deal between Israel and Egypt codified in the U.S.-engineered Camp David accords left the Zionist regime in control of the Syrian Golan Heights, and left Syria to face Israeli military threats on its own.

Assad's refusal to capitulate to imperialist pressures and join in the Camp David framework ended the diplomatic convergence be-



tween his regime and Washington. Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization, along with the governments in South Yemen and Libya, have taken the lead in opposing the imperialist attempt to impose the Camp David deal on the Arab world.

Not surprisingly, Assad's anti-imperialist stance has also led to a political polarization inside Syria. That is where the upsurge in armed activity by the Muslim Brotherhood fits in.

Baathists vs. Muslim Brotherhood

Assad's Arab Baath Party came to power in Syria through a military coup in 1963. Like the Iraqi Baathists and the Nasserists in Egypt, it was an Arab nationalist formation that sought to break the stranglehold of the old landowning and merchant classes on society.

The Baathist regime used socialist rhetoric and had to rely heavily on state activity in the economic sphere because of the absence of any strong industrial capitalist class. Nonetheless, efforts to foster modernization and industrial development remained within the framework of capitalism.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood came to prominence in Syria as the political instrument of the landowning and merchant classes opposed to the Baathists. It campaigned for the defense of private property, and in 1964 the Brotherhood organized a revolt in Hama to protest the imposition of land reform and the nationalization of private busi-

Health care for the masses

The experience of a U.S. doctor

[The following is an interview with Dr. Tom Schlenker, a U.S. physician who worked as a volunteer in Nicaragua for three months in late 1981. The interview was obtained for *Intercontinental Press* by Robert Dees in December 1981.]

* * *

Question. Why did you go to Nicaragua?

Answer. There are some people in the medical community who have been going to places like refugee camps in Thailand or India, and doing decent work, but if they see 100 patients, that's exactly how many people they will affect, and it's a very temporary effect that they have.

But in a country like Nicaragua that's had a revolution, you're not working alone, you're working with thousands of people who are trying to change the way life is. That's basically why I wanted to go, to practice this skill that I've acquired. I knew that it wouldn't just be a liberal, missionary-type effort, that it would be tied to something that has practical potential for changing the conditions of society.

Q. Where were you, and what were you doing?

A. Mostly in the coffee-growing regions, which are in the north and in the mountains. I hooked up with a project that's being undertaken by the Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), which is headed by Jaime Wheelock.

Over the past year they have been establishing daycare centers at some of the larger points of production in the countryside, like coffee and sugar plantations — and other places where large numbers of workers congregate during the picking season.

At least in coffee, most of the pickers are women, and most of these women have children. In the days before the revolution, they would either just lock the children in the shacks that they live in or bring them to the fields and let them play around, unsupervised. Oftentimes the children wouldn't eat during the day. They would play with pigs and other farm animals, and what happened, happened.

So the daycare centers are a way to take a new generation of people and start teaching them basics. They get two decent meals a day, they get their clothes washed, they learn how to brush their teeth, how to use a toilet, how to wash themselves.

The union leaders have a direct say in the running of the farms, and in fact they were always the ones that requested that we start a daycare center at their *finca* (large farm).

I would visit them and evaluate the chil-

dren's health, hygiene, nutrition, things like that. So what I was doing for about two months was traveling around from center to center, in very remote areas of the country, using a jeep. It often required lots of four-wheel drive to get to these places, and a lot of them were so remote that they had no electricity or telephone. The roads were of the most primitive kind — they more or less disappeared during the rainy season.

The plantations themselves had all been confiscated from large landowners since the revolution. One of the very first things the new government did was establish daycare centers, health outposts, and try to improve the nutrition of the workers.

The basic diet everywhere in the countryside in Nicaragua is rice, beans, tortillas, and coffee — three meals a day, every day. That's what people eat. The amazing thing is that it used to be worse. Before the revolution they didn't eat rice. I was told that by a number of campesinos, who were very aware of the fact that they were eating better, even though by U.S. standards it was horrible.

But INRA brings in food each week for the children in the daycare centers — vegetables, fruit, meat, and eggs.

In a number of daycare centers the directors,

who are always women from the community, have started thinking about gardens, and raising chickens, and things like that. That's like a revolution in itself. It's just something that never occurred to people before. They never had the resources to do it in the past, the money for seeds or tools, and they didn't have land that they could grow stuff on.

It's not only a question of changing the objective conditions. It's a question of changing people's consciousness, too, so they realize that they can do that. Now, food is being brought in for the children at great expense. It's almost a luxury, really, to bring in food for the children when there are so many other necessities.

Q. An expense to whom?

A. To the state. It costs money to buy that stuff and transport it. Gasoline is very expensive. It's usually a good three- or four-hour drive from the city to any of these outlying plantations.

Q. The families of these children are not charged for this?

A. No, it's all free. All education is free in

Disabled show support for revolution

MANAGUA — More than 50 young people with disabilities — many of them in wheelchairs — demonstrated in the streets here March 23 to show their determination to defend Nicaragua against imperialist aggression. March 23 is the "International Day of the Disabled Person."

"We want peace, but not at the cost of liberty," they chanted as they approached the tomb of Carlos Fonseca, a national hero murdered in 1976 by ex-dictator Somoza's National Guard.

The Organization of Disabled Revolutionaries called the demonstration. The group's 200 blind or physically disabled members are integrated into the popular militias.

Felipe Paz, the organization's director of international relations, explained that its members feel that "it is their duty to participate to whatever degree they can," in helping to build the new Nicaragua.

Centers for people with physical disabili-

ties were set up soon after the revolution and have been crucial to this process of integration. The Sandinista youth group has begun to work closely with the Organization of Disabled Revolutionaries.

The spirit at this action, which closed with a medley of songs by the group's cultural brigade, demonstrated the success the revolutionary government is having in mobilizing the people of Nicaragua to fight to defend themselves.

"Let the Yankee wake up early, the revolution never sleeps," was one of the favorite chants of the demonstrators.

* * *

For further information on the Organization of Disabled Revolutionaries, write Apartado 3750, Managua, Nicaragua. It is a private, non-profit organization. One of its tasks is the collection of much-needed medical supplies such as wheelchair parts.

— Beverly Bernardo



Matilde Zimmermann/IP

Militia member distributing antimalaria medicine during November 1981 campaign. Eradication of malaria had never been attempted before.

Nicaragua now, and this is just one aspect of it.

Q. Could you describe the health-care system in Nicaragua before the revolution and how it has changed since then?

A. I'm not really an expert on this, but one of the things I do know is that before the revolution it was a pay-as-you-go system. If you had the money, there was very good care available, but the vast majority of people were not covered by any kind of medical care and had no access to it. Certainly in the countryside there was almost nothing.

Since the revolution medical care is free or very cheap, and it's designed to take care of everyone. All the people are covered. There's a tremendous shortage of doctors down there right now. Part of the reason is that a good number of doctors have left the country, just like in Cuba after the revolution. But probably more important is that the population they serve has multiplied, simply because before the revolution they ignored most of the people. All of a sudden they have a great deal more people to take care of.

Curative medicine in general is not going to make much of a dent in their health situation. They seem to be concentrating more on preventive medicine, which is definitely what's required for Nicaragua.

While I was down there, I became aware of a number of achievements in preventive medicine that were really impressive. Just in the past year they've started putting iodine in the salt, which prevents hypothyroidism — goiters. It would be very obvious to everyone who has any interest in maintaining health, but Ni-

caragua under Somoza never bothered to do it because they just weren't concerned. There were large areas of Nicaragua where hypothyroid goiter was endemic, and you saw all these people walking around with huge lumps on their necks just because of lack of iodine.

They've also begun to vaccinate the children against polio, measles, tetanus, and other things, for the first time ever. While I was down there in November they carried out a massive campaign to wipe out malaria in the whole country. They treated the entire population with chloroquin and primaquin pills for three days. In theory this would cure any active case of malaria that happened to be around, and it would make people immune from getting malaria again for about three weeks. This meant that there would be no malaria in the entire country for three weeks.

The way malaria is passed between people is by mosquitoes, that's the only way. Three weeks is also the life cycle of the mosquito. So all the infected mosquitoes would die during that time. The mosquitoes that were around after that would not be able to transmit malaria because there wouldn't be any human beings with the disease.

So medically, it was a very revolutionary thing to attempt. In practice, it is something that would be impossible in any country that was not mobilized in a very revolutionary way, because obviously you don't have enough doctors and nurses to go around and give these pills to everybody. They had to use over 80,000 volunteers, called *brigadistas* — high school students, workers, farmers, mothers, anybody.

Eighty thousand people volunteered to take three days of their time and to take responsibility for say, a city block, or a village, or some area of population, and make sure that each person in that area took their pills each day. And it was a difficult job, because first of all, the pills taste terrible. They're very bitter, and they can make you kind of sick, especially if you take them on an empty stomach.

There was also a intensive campaign by counterrevolutionary groups to convince people that the pills would kill them, or make them sterile, or that it was all a communist plot.

Add that to the fact that most people live in very primitive conditions, have no education, have a very primitive understanding of health, and don't really understand why you should take pills if you're not sick. So it was a tremendous undertaking to even attempt this.

It's that kind of concentration on preventive medicine that's going to make a big difference in the life and health of the country.

Polio is another example of this. It has been drastically reduced. As you might know, polio is a seasonal disease. At one time, in the United States, there used to be an epidemic of polio every fall. There was no way to stop it. And if it started in a community, it would just spread.

This year in Nicaragua, they had no fall epidemic of polio, which is probably due to their vaccination campaign, and which is a tremendous step forward.

Q. What role do the pre-Sandinista doctors play in Nicaragua today?

A. There were about 1,500 doctors in Nicaragua before the revolution. Since the revolution 300 to 400 have left. They've had an influx of more than 200 foreign doctors who have taken up some of the slack. Probably the greatest number are from Cuba and Mexico, but there are also doctors from every country in Europe, from Latin America, and even from the United States. I met a number of Nicaraguan doctors who are dedicated Sandinistas, and who have given up very lucrative private practices to join the revolutionary process and to do whatever is necessary in terms of the current health-care plans.

Q. There have been reports in the media about Cuban troops, guerrillas, etc. in Nicaragua. What role are the Cubans actually playing?

A. I never saw any Cuban troops, in Managua or the countryside, but I met a lot of Cuban teachers. In fact, practically every remote village that we visited had one or two Cuban teachers. I saw again and again that these Cuban teachers were willing to go to places that Nicaraguan teachers wouldn't go. The villages are so remote, so isolated, and so primitive. It's a very hard life, and the only people that would do it were the Cubans.

All of these Cubans are educated people with experiences as teachers in Cuba. They

had left a fairly comfortable life and signed on for a two-year hitch in Nicaragua, completely voluntarily, where they would be stuck in a place where sometimes there was no electricity, no telephone, horrible roads. The chance of getting somewhere to see a movie might occur once every six months. The food is very primitive, there is no social life, there are bugs and rats and open sewers and undrinkable water. Some areas are quite dangerous, in the sense that there are still counterrevolutionary gangs operating in the area, attacking villages. Three Cuban teachers were killed in the time I was there, from September to December.

The Cuban teachers are among the most dedicated and self-sacrificing internationalists in Nicaragua today. Contrary to what one reads in the U.S. press, they are not blowing up bridges in El Salvador. They are teaching children how to read and write and do their numbers.

Q. How have the Reagan administration's recent war threats been received in Nicaragua?

A. They're ready to be attacked any day. They consider that to be a real possibility. The people are armed. Besides the army, there's a very large popular militia: factory workers, farm workers, teachers, all volunteers, who practice a couple of times a week after they come home from work at night, so it's quite a sacrifice. But a lot of them were active in the revolution, so they have this experience already. I met 16- and 17-year-olds who knew how to shoot automatic rifles and machine guns and a number of other pretty advanced weapons.

So they really expect to be attacked one way or another, and there's no question that they'll fight, and they'll fight back very hard. I think even the conservative portion of society, even though it disagrees with a lot of the actions of the government, would not tolerate a direct intervention by the United States, and would fight against it.

Really, what the United States is doing with these almost daily threats by Reagan and Haig is solidifying people around the Sandinistas, and making people even more secure in their determination to maintain their revolution no matter what the cost. They sent high school students, volunteers, out to patrol the northern border with Honduras during their Christmas vacation — boys and girls both.

Q. What can we in the United States do to help the Nicaraguan revolution?

A. Be active in the solidarity movement. I think the biggest problem in this country is that people are not aware of what's really going on in Central America.

Today, Nicaragua is a more democratic society than any country in Central America. Unlike its neighbors, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, which are strongly supported by the United States, it's the only place where people are not abducted in the middle of the

night and found dead and mutilated the next morning.

It's the only place where torture is not used, against anyone. It's the only place where the death penalty doesn't even exist. It's one of the few places where people are not afraid to be out on the streets at night, and don't cringe every time a soldier or policeman walks by. So the terror which is a 24-hour-a-day reality in El Salvador and Guatemala is past history in Nicaragua, and will never be restored.

My entire experience down there showed me how profound and complex a revolution is. In most countries of the world, most people are really not actively involved in the workings of their society. They just wake up in the mornings, go to work, come home, spend time with

their family, and don't take responsibility for the way their society works.

But when you have a revolution, the revolution won't succeed unless a really large proportion of people decide that, "Hey, life as usual just can't go on any more. We have to change the entire way we live, ourselves."

Unless that happens, the revolution is not going to occur, and unless that continues after the battles are fought, and unless that's extended to even more people, the revolution won't be a success. That's the point Nicaragua's at now. It's necessary for them to mobilize popular campaigns to accomplish practically anything they want to do, like the malaria campaign. And they are carrying out these popular mobilizations. □

Peru

Police behind new death squad

PRT leader Hugo Blanco a target

Threats against the life of Peruvian Trotskyist leader Hugo Blanco have been issued by a death squad calling itself the Comando de Derecha Blanca (White Rightist Command).

This outfit had never been heard of in Peru until the Lima daily *La República* received an anonymous telephone call on March 16. "Good afternoon," the caller said. "This is the White Rightist Command. We are going to take measures against Sendero Luminoso. Our first victim will be Hugo Blanco."

"Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Pathway) is the name of an armed grouping of Maoist origins that has been accused of carrying out bombings and attacks on government installations in the south-central province of Ayacucho.

On March 3, in an operation widely believed to be the work of Sendero Luminoso, about 100 persons armed with dynamite and automatic weapons raided a federal prison in Ayacucho and freed some 300 prisoners. Ninety of the latter had been accused of terrorist actions.

In retaliation for the March 3 attack, police raided a hospital in nearby Huamanga where four alleged members of Sendero Luminoso were in custody recovering from wounds. The cops beat and tried to strangle one prisoner. The three others were forcibly removed from the hospital and then shot to death in the street by the police.

Further repression throughout the region followed. President Fernando Belaúnde Terry's cabinet declared a state of emergency in Ayacucho province and sent in 200 additional police. The cops conducted house-to-house searches, even pulling individuals from their beds in making arrests.

Dozens of persons were detained in Ayacucho. The repression was extended to the neigh-

boring province of Junín, where 63 persons were arrested in the week following the March 3 prison raid.

The cops' reign of terror in Ayacucho and Junín, and especially the police murder of the three prisoners at the Huamanga hospital, have evoked widespread protests in Peru. As a deputy in the Peruvian parliament from the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Hugo Blanco has been among those speaking out against these violations of human rights by the Belaúnde regime.

Thus it is not surprising that Blanco has become a target of threats. In a March 17 statement, the PRT pointed out that "it became public knowledge months ago that preparatory steps were being taken for the launching of a right-wing terrorist organization. It also became known that functionaries of the government party [Belaúnde's People's Action Party (AP)] and officials of the intelligence services would have the decisive role in this organization.

"Nothing has been done to investigate these charges. Because of this and earlier refusals by the government to take action against right-wing terrorist activities, we have every right to assume that they act with the government's approval."

The PRT notes that Blanco has been the target of such attacks in the past, including a September 1978 kidnapping attempt by the so-called Peruvian Anticommunist Alliance (AAP).

The PRT has asked that telegrams or messages be sent to the Peruvian government holding it responsible for any harm done to Hugo Blanco. These may be sent to Peruvian embassies or to Fernando Belaúnde Terry, Presidente de la República, Palacio Presidencial, Lima, Peru. □

Capitalist offensive leads to confrontation

Massive protests by workers against Martens government

By Will Reissner

Since early February, Belgium has been in the midst of the largest class confrontations there in two decades. In response to a government austerity program that slashes social spending, guts employment in major industries, and attacks the real wages and living standards of the working class, Belgian workers have taken to the streets in militant demonstrations, have waged a series of regional general strikes, and have blocked railroad tracks throughout the country.

The government's austerity policies are being carried out against the backdrop of an unemployment rate of more than 13 percent — the highest in the European Economic Community. The country saw a 1.5 percent drop in the gross domestic product in 1981, and a decline of 5 percent in real wages is expected in 1982.

Decree powers

The right-wing government headed by Prime Minister Wilfried Martens is determined to push forward its austerity program despite the workers' protests and despite the fact that his government rests on a paper-thin six-seat majority in parliament.

Earlier in the year the cabinet was given special decree powers by parliament. With these powers it can carry out its economic pro-

gram without having to submit the measures to a parliamentary vote.

Among the measures already decreed are a freeze in the cost-of-living index, which had been one of the historic gains won in previous workers' struggles, an increase in social security taxes, and a cut in family allotments and unemployment benefits.

Other decrees have imposed a tax surcharge for single wage-earners and families without children, higher prices for gasoline, mail, and telephone service, and a 5 percent increase in automobile insurance premiums.

In addition, the government is demanding sharp wage cuts as a condition for maintaining subsidies to ailing industries.

This package was capped off by an 8.5 percent devaluation of the Belgian franc, which will increase the prices of all imported goods.

Meanwhile, the Martens government has decreed substantial cuts in corporate taxes.

Jobs slashed

Because of budget cuts, some 6,000 jobs will be eliminated in education, 4,000 on the railroads, and thousands more at the state-owned SABENA airlines.

The steel industry is a special target for cuts. Belgium, which is the largest per capita steel producer and exporter in Western Europe, produced more than 12 million tons of steel in 1974. But in the past 10 years, more than 20,000 jobs have been eliminated in the industry. There are now plans to cut the jobs of an additional 10,000 steelworkers.

Under a European Community plan for stabilizing the steel industry throughout Western Europe, Belgium's steel production is to be cut to 5.9 million tons — less than half the 1974 figure!

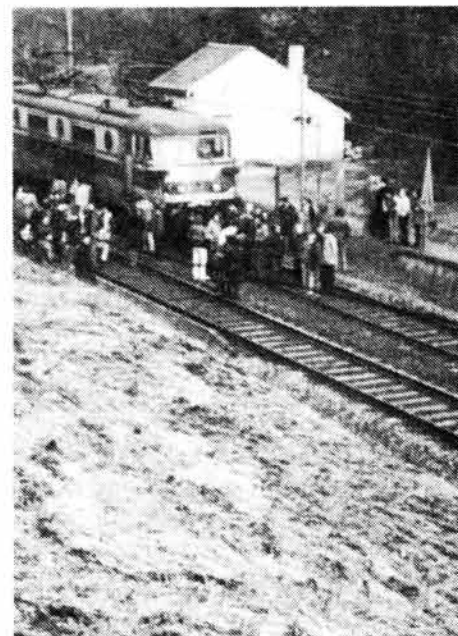
Pierre de Vos of the Paris daily *Le Monde* described the impact of the Martens plan by saying: "Never since the war has Belgium been hit so hard."

Workers fight back

On February 8 a general strike against the government's policies totally shut down Wallonia, the French-speaking southern part of Belgium, as well as some cities in the Flemish-speaking north.

On March 11, SABENA workers demonstrating against government plans to cut their wages by as much as 15 percent and eliminate thousands of jobs were attacked by police using fire hoses and tear gas.

On March 16, 15,000 steelworkers demonstrated in Brussels, demanding an end to plans



Workers near Liège block train.

La Gauche

to gut their industry. They were attacked by 2,000 police. Another 7,000 police were held in reserve around the city. For three hours, about 5,000 of the demonstrators fought back against the police attack.

The steelworkers had already been on strike for three weeks against the Martens plan. Also on March 16, the port of Antwerp was shut for 24 hours.

On March 22 a regional general strike began in the Mons area, at the urging of striking teachers who were protesting cuts in the education budget.

Many actions were planned for the last week of March. A national railway strike was scheduled for March 25 to protest the projected cuts in rail service. A general strike was called for March 26 by the social-democratic Belgian General Federation of Workers (FGTB). A national demonstration in Brussels was called for March 27 by the Confederation of Christian Unions (CSC), and a March 31 national teachers strike and a demonstration in Brussels was planned by the teachers union.

Unions divided

Despite the working-class protests and the government's slim majority in parliament, Martens has been emboldened to drive through his program by the fact that the two major trade-union federations — the FGTB and CSC, which together have 2.5 million

Workers demonstrate in Luxembourg

Between 30,000 and 40,000 people demonstrated on March 27 in the streets of Luxembourg's capital to protest government austerity policies. Luxembourg, nestled between France, Belgium and West Germany, has a population of about 365,000 people.

For the first time in Luxembourg's history all the trade-union organizations joined together to call the protest, which was the largest since the 1930s. The unions have also called a one-day general strike for April 5, the first in 60 years.

Luxembourg, whose economy is based on the steel industry, has been hard hit by the international capitalist recession. Its economic problems were further aggravated by the 8.5 percent devaluation of the Belgian franc, to which the Luxembourg franc is automatically linked in a currency union.

— W.R.

members — have not joined together on a national level to fight his policies.

The division in the union movement corresponds to the regional and linguistic division in Belgium. Wallonia, the French-speaking area of the south, has been the traditional center of the coal, steel, and textile industries. It is an area with long traditions of working-class struggle.

At the same time, the major industries in Wallonia have been hit hardest by the international capitalist recession, and would be especially hard hit by the plans to dismantle major portions of the steel industry.

For example, in the Liège basin, a center of steel-making, unemployment has been more than 20 percent for the past two years. Further cuts threaten to plunge Wallonia into permanent depression.

At the March 16 steelworkers demonstration in Brussels, one worker from Wallonia explained the importance of the struggle: "We are fighting for our children. For us it is finished. But are they going to have to sell flowers in the streets to survive?"

Flanders not as hard-hit

In Wallonia, the FGTB is the dominant union federation, and the Socialist Party, which is not in the national cabinet, controls the regional council.

Flanders, the Flemish-speaking area, industrialized much later than Wallonia, but now has a more modern and diversified industrial base. As a result, it has been hit less hard by the recession.

The Confederation of Christian Unions is the major union organization in Flanders, although the FGTB also has a base in several cities in the area. The CSC is aligned with the Social Christian Party (PSC), which is in the Martens cabinet.

Its main base is in hard-hit Wallonia, because the Socialist party is not in the government, the FGTB has taken the lead in the fightback against the Martens program. The CSC leadership has been unwilling to directly confront the government for fear of causing problems for the Social Christian Party.

In a number of local areas, however, the CSC has joined with the FGTB to carry out a common struggle. If the two federations could be united in action on a national basis, the Martens government would have a difficult time remaining in office.

Witch-hunt

Martens has reacted to the upsurge in labor struggles by claiming the workers are being manipulated by revolutionary groups. There have reportedly been cabinet discussions about outlawing the Revolutionary Workers League (LRT), which is the Belgian section of the Fourth International, and the Belgian Party of Labor (PTB).

For several weeks the reactionary Catholic newspaper *La Libre Belgique* waged a campaign accusing "a handful of Trotskyists" of

being behind the agitation in the Liège area.

The day after the March 16 steelworkers demonstration, a police communiqué accused the LRT and a group called All Power to the Workers (AMADA) of being responsible for the fighting with the police. This charge was picked up by the Flemish newspaper *Standaard* and the CSC newspaper *Het Volk*.

In its March 18 issue, *Standaard* wrote that "it was stated at police headquarters that the agitators belong to the PTB, the LRT, and the March 22 anarchist movement."

The LRT answered the charges in the March 26 edition of its French-language weekly *La Gauche*.

"Our position in this regard," *La Gauche* wrote, "is clear: the LRT is a party that fights for the interests of the working class and for the establishment of a self-managed socialism based on democratically elected councils, political pluralism, free and independent unions,

and a system of civil liberties.

"The LRT functions openly," *La Gauche* continued. "We publish two weeklies — *La Gauche* and [the Flemish-language] *Rood* — to inform the workers and make our positions known. We have offices in all the important cities."

Pointing out that LRT members are well-known participants in the trade-union, women's, and youth movements, the newspaper noted that the organization follows Karl Marx's view that the emancipation of the workers is the job of the workers themselves. For that reason, the LRT opposes "terrorism, violence, provocations, 'infiltration,' and conspiracies."

The LRT is calling on all sections of the workers movement to fight the threatened banning of the LRT and other left-wing groups, on the basis of the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. □

LRT's program for general strike

The March 26 issue of *La Gauche* contains a centerfold wall poster explaining the LRT's program for the general strike that is building in Belgium. The poster notes that "a big question is on everyone's lips: a general strike to accomplish what?" The LRT presents a four-part program for the general strike.

Point one is to throw out the present right-wing government. The LRT notes that the workers movement is correctly focusing on overturning the Martens regime. But the question, according to the LRT, is "what should replace it?"

The Socialist Party has already been compromised by its participation in previous austerity cabinets, and the Social Christian Party is in the present cabinet. What is needed, the LRT argues, is "a workers government based on the colossal strength of the 2.5 million union members in the FGTB and CSC."

It calls for a government of the Socialist Party and the Christian workers movement that commits itself to carrying out the demands of the union movement, with the unions mobilized to insure that this happens.

Point two in the LRT's program for the general strike is to make the rich and the bosses pay the costs of the economic crisis. It calls for full maintenance of the cost-of-living index. It opposes reductions in unemployment compensation and higher social security taxes.

The LRT argues that an immediate 36-hour work week for all, without any cuts in wages will provide work for the unemployed. It also calls for a national health service under workers control and national-

ization of the pharmaceutical and medical industries.

Noting that the bosses and the government "will say that these legitimate demands, which concern the daily life of the workers, are now unrealistic," and that "there is no longer any money" to pay for these programs, the LRT proposes:

"To fight the tax fraud (200 billion francs per year) and the flight of capital (1,000 billion francs in 10 years), we demand an ending to banking secrecy, a survey of fortunes, and taxes on the largest fortunes."

"The roots" of the problem, the program continues, "are the banks and holding companies. They are the invisible hands that really run this country, that impose their policies in the government."

To break the hold of the big banks and holding companies over the Belgian economy, point three of the LRT program calls for "the expropriation of the banks, holding companies, and all key sectors of the economy, without compensation and without payment, and under workers control."

To carry out the general strike to a successful conclusion, point four of the LRT's program states, "every worker knows very well that we need the unity in action of all the workers in the FGTB and CSC" in Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels. "Only through the unity of the FGTB and CSC throughout the country can the general strike be successful."

The tasks of each worker and each union member, the LRT argues, "is to forge this trade-union unity. Differences between union organizations must be put aside in the name of the defense of the interests of the whole working class."

War budget threatens to sink economy

Billions for Pentagon leading to even deeper crisis

By William Gottlieb

[The following article appeared in the April 2 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*.]

* * *

President Reagan plans to spend over \$1.5 trillion over the next five years on arms.

Will such a military buildup end the present recession or stave off another one? The answer is no. One of the most pervasive myths spread by the ruling class is that military spending is an answer to depression. This myth is used to try to make militarism palatable to working people.

The origin of this myth is the experience of the 1930s and 1940s. Since mass unemployment did not end until the outbreak of World War II, the idea was born that only war spending ended the depression.

What really happened?

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, was the result of one of capitalism's periodic crises of "overproduction."

That is, more commodities had been produced than people could afford to buy at prices profitable to the capitalists. But there were not more goods produced than people needed. The capitalists answered the profit squeeze produced by the 1929 overproduction crisis the way they always react to such crises. They slashed production. They laid off workers by the millions and closed down older, less efficient plants. The crisis was worldwide, affecting all capitalist countries.

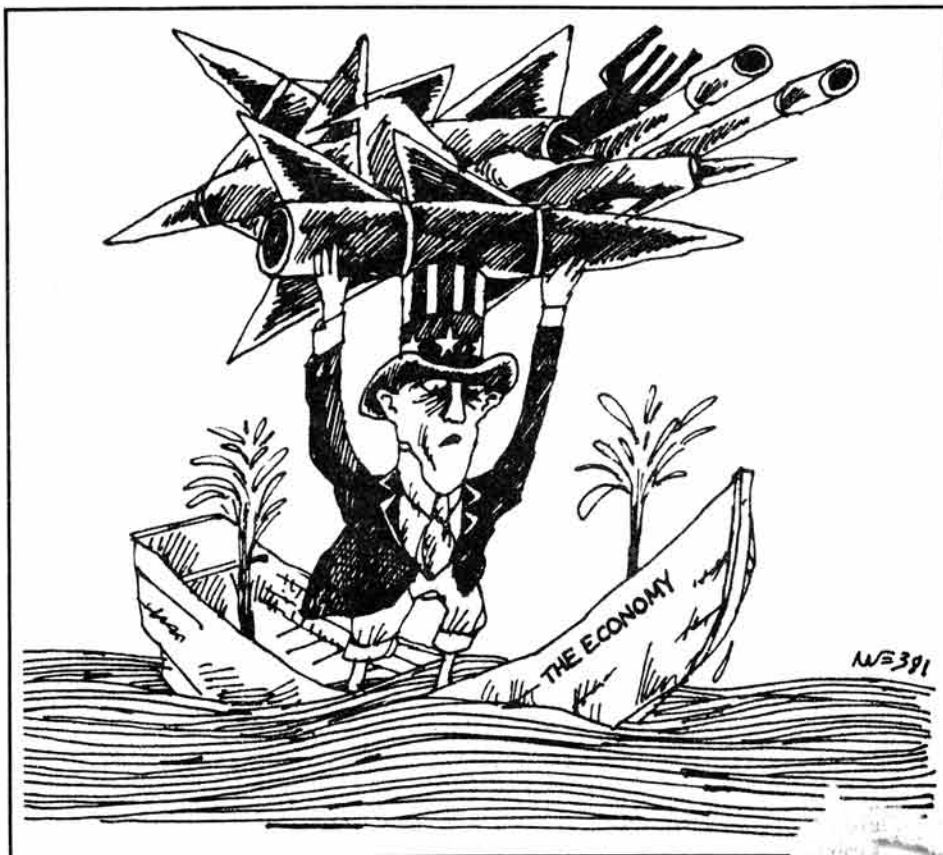
It was also the most severe and the longest such crisis in the history of capitalism. Never before had unemployment soared so high and industrial production and world trade slumped so low.

Basis of postwar prosperity

It was during that depression that the foundation was laid for the postwar prosperity.

Because so few commodities were being produced, the stockpiles were sold off or destroyed. This along with the closing down of inefficient factories eliminated the excess production capacity that was making investment unprofitable. Equally important, construction of new plants and even the modernization of existing plants had been reduced to almost nothing. The process whereby existing plants are gradually made relatively inefficient through the construction of new plants with more advanced technology was essentially brought to a halt.

At the same time unprecedented unemployment was used to slash wages. In some countries — like Germany, Italy, and Spain —



where the workers had suffered major defeats, fascist or military dictatorships were used by the capitalist ruling class to smash workers organizations.

Thus, by the end of the 1930s many of the basic preconditions for a new upswing existed. But there was one obstacle. In the period following World War I, and especially during the depression itself, massive barriers to trade had grown up as each imperialist country tried to shift the main burden of the crisis onto the backs of its competitors. As a result, the world economy was torn apart by blocs competing for access to markets and raw materials. War was the only way that a new equilibrium among nation states could be established that would decide the market shares, raw materials, and above all profits that various groups of capitalists would receive during the upswing that followed the Great Depression.

The war economy

Massive unemployment disappeared in the United States with the onset of a full-scale war

economy. However, the war economy had its own evils. All available resources were poured into war production. For example, production of automobiles was halted entirely as auto plants were shifted to the production of military vehicles. Production of new machines and construction of new factories were also severely restricted as resources were diverted to military-related production. The results were inflation, shortages, rationing, black marketeering, war profiteering, and stiff government wage controls.

The war economy should not be confused with the normal "boom" phase of business cycles. During the boom phase, factories, machinery, and other means for producing goods are expanded. Likewise consumption by working people tends to rise as production of consumer goods increases.

But in a full-scale war economy the means of production are used up without being fully replaced. The production of consumer necessities is more and more restricted. A war economy is an economy that is in the process of destroying itself.

For this reason a total war economy cannot be maintained indefinitely. If the war does not end within a certain period of time, the war economy collapses.

Postwar boom and militarism

The post-World War II boom was based on both the results of the Great Depression, which restructured capital, in order to make it more profitable, and the war, which established a new political equilibrium among imperialist nation states, based on U.S. hegemony. For fifteen years of depression and war there had been almost no expansion of machinery and factories. Instead of producing new wealth, the world was living off its reserves of accumulated wealth. In Europe and Japan, wartime bombing further destroyed these reserves. Conditions were thus favorable for a massive economic upswing, especially in Japan and Western Europe.

But at the same time, imperialist domination was threatened by socialist revolution and colonial revolution. So the capitalist rulers had to maintain military spending at a high level for political reasons. This meant that the production of arms emerged as an important branch of industry. Unlike the full-scale war economy of World War II, however, the entire economy was not subordinated to it. If it had been, the economy would not have experienced expansion. It would have been destroyed.

The emergence of the arms business as an important branch of industry led to the illusion, however, that arms provided an insatiable "replacement market" necessary to stave off a new depression.

It is true that some capitalist corporations did depend on government contracts for their business and profits. And sudden bursts of military spending, financed by government borrowing, led to brief spurts of accelerated economic growth.

However, the U.S. government must pay its increased borrowing for arms spending through increased taxation. Increased taxes, whether levied on working people (as the capitalists always try to do) or on business, end up reducing purchasing power. Thus in the long run the military market can develop only at the expense of other markets.

Without the tremendous burden of military spending, the U.S. economy's growth after World War II would have been considerably faster. The role of the U.S. government as world cop for imperialism is one of the reasons U.S. industry has lagged more and more behind its capitalist competitors, who spend less on arms.

End of the boom

Symptoms of the approaching end of the postwar economic upswing began to appear during the Vietnam War. As competition for world markets increased, pressure on profit margins mounted. The growing risk of major bankruptcies began to disturb credit and money markets. Interest rates, which had been low during the postwar prosperity, began to

rise as capitalist investors moved to protect themselves against the growing risk of defaults and currency devaluations.

Fearing the political consequences of a major depression, the United States and other capitalist governments increased the rate of growth of the paper money supply. Newly printed bills were used to plug holes in the chain of payments.

The result was massive and increasing inflation. Whenever the printing of money was slowed down, the economy fell into recession. When the printing of paper money was accelerated, the rate of inflation soon skyrocketed.

Military buildup and depression

This alteration between rapid increases in the printing of paper money and decreasing paper money supplies led to soaring inflation and a series of recessions during the 1970s. The phenomena of slow growth, frequent recessions, and rising unemployment combined with high inflation was dubbed "stagflation" by the capitalist pundits.

However, stagflation means that there is no decisive liquidation of overproduction. It is therefore no real solution for the capitalists. Each new turn of the business cycle sends inflation and interest to higher levels than those of the preceding cycle.

The Reagan administration is trying to break out of the dead-end cycle of stagflation. It has launched a major attack on social spending and awarded unprecedented tax giveaways to the rich and the corporations. However, these measures cannot revive the capitalist economy as long as increasing amounts of unsold commodities press down on world markets.

Reagan's only real answer to stagflation is to persist in maintaining a relatively slow growth in the amount of paper money. The result has been the continuation of high interest rates despite recession. Workers and working farmers find it especially difficult to borrow. Unemployment has soared in the auto, home construction, and farm equipment industries. Bankruptcies among small businesses, held to

a relatively low level during the inflationary 1970s, have now soared to the highest level since the 1930s. Even larger capitalist enterprises, like the savings bank network, have found themselves in serious difficulties. The recession grows progressively worse.

Threat of global crisis

In order to finance the huge arms buildup under conditions of economic stagnation, the Reagan administration will have to borrow at a rate of \$100 billion or more per year for the next several fiscal years at least. Since the government has state power it can get all the credit it wants. After the government, the biggest and richest corporations, like U.S. Steel, have the best crack at getting credit.

But when there is a credit shortage that leaves little credit for anybody else. This implies a severe contradiction in the demand for all commodities other than arms. While during the postwar boom the market for arms only grew at the expense of other markets, the growth of arms now threatens to trigger the collapse of other markets.

The danger that Reagan's spending spree for arms could set off a global depression has leading European financial figures worried. They are urging Reagan to modify his budget. They want a somewhat slower arms buildup along with continuing cuts in social spending.

Within the United States itself similar fears have been expressed by top business groups, capitalist politicians, and economists.

A related danger is that the Reagan government, if faced with the imminent threat of full-scale depression, may suddenly accelerate the printing of paper money and set off a new round of disastrous inflation. This would raise the danger of a hyperinflationary collapse, where the currency is good for wallpaper but little else. At best, of course, a new round of inflation could only postpone a depression.

In either case the huge U.S. military spending, though not the cause of the looming economic depression, threatens to accelerate its outbreak and increase its impact. □

Nicaragua sets pensions for miners

By Michael Baumann

MANAGUA — If you asked a miner in Nicaragua what the revolution has meant to him personally, two things you would be told are that his wages have been doubled and strict safety rules have been established.

In mid-March another step was taken. A new law was passed that for the first time guarantees miners and their widows the right to a pension.

A total of 17.2 million córdobas (10 córdobas = US\$1.00) has been set aside to pay the first 998 pensions. Eventually all miners over 55 years of age or with 15 years of service in the mines will be covered.

One problem — who qualifies?

Most of the mines are or were owned by U.S. corporations. And before the revolution they kept no records of their employees, precisely to avoid contributing to their pensions or medical care.

But in revolutionary Nicaragua, where the government defends the workers against the corporations, a solution was quickly found.

A commission of the oldest miners was established to certify the length of service of the younger ones.

And to make sure no one is missed, a commission made up of one representative from each of the country's mines was established to search out older miners, no longer working, who may not yet have heard about the pension. □

Sam Gordon – a revolutionary leader

Joined Trotskyist movement in Germany in 1929

By Frank Lovell

[The following article appeared in the April 2 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*. It has been slightly abridged.]

* * *

Sam Gordon, a founder and leading member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International for many years, died of cancer in London on March 12. He would have been 72 on May 5, the birthdate of Karl Marx — a coincidence that always pleased Sam.

Sam was born in Poland in 1910. When he was two years old the family moved to Vienna, Austria, where they lived until Sam was 10. He remained fluent in German for the rest of his life, even though he was brought to the United States at an early age. He also quickly learned English as if it were his native tongue. He lived here until 1952, when he moved to Britain with his British-born wife Mildred, an activist in the British Labour Party.

Sam's political education began in the United States at an early age. He became interested in Marxism and considered himself a communist while a student at the College of the City of New York (CCNY, then known as "City College") in 1927-28.

While still a student he heard James P. Cannon, a founding member of the Communist Party and later of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, speak on internationalism and communism. Cannon argued against the pernicious Stalinist theory of subordinating the world revolution to building "socialism in one country." That talk and the speaker made a lasting impression and changed the life of the young student.

In 1929 some of the City College students took a close look at the revolutionary process then unfolding in Germany, the struggle for power between the working-class movement and the fascist efforts to crush it.

Through his Young Communist League (YCL) associates Sam was able to make a pier-head jump on a freighter and worked his way to Hamburg, Germany, where he jumped ship. From Hamburg he went to Berlin. There he found a job, did "a lot of reading and studying," and participated in demonstrations. In Berlin he joined the Trotskyist Left Opposition at age 19, and began writing to the *Militant*.

Served on 'Militant' staff

On his return to the United States in 1930 he joined the Communist League of America and established a close political and personal relationship with Cannon, the national secretary of the CLA. Sam became a member of the *Militant* staff, working both as a printer and a writ-



Joseph Hansen/Militant

Gordon (right) in 1949 photo with SWP leaders Rose Karsner and James P. Cannon.

er. He also served as acting editor for several months when he was only 21. It was a big responsibility for a young man, but he had the help and encouragement of Cannon. His memoir about the early years of the CLA is one of the best chapters in the book, *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him* (Pathfinder Press, 1976).

In 1932 he was co-opted onto the national committee of the CLA, and in 1934 he was elected to that committee, on which he served for almost 20 years. During that time he functioned as branch organizer in several cities — including Boston, Cleveland, and New York — and as a member of the political committee.

From the early days in the CLA he took a special interest in trade union work. He helped the garment fraction in its struggle to develop a rank-and-file program of action. The goal was to appeal to communist workers trapped in the ultraleft Stalinist "red trade unions," and at the same time avoid the class-collaborationist pitfalls of the social-democratic officialdom of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) needle-trades unions. The CLA's union strategy was to work within the mainstream of the labor movement to transform the old AFL unions into class-struggle organizations.

The Stalinists abandoned their dual-union policy of building "revolutionary" unions outside of the AFL in 1935. Sam then became involved in a continuing and eventually successful struggle to oust the corrupt, class-collaborationist, Stalinist leadership in the Painters union in New York. He edited a rank-and-file paper in the union and worked closely with a broad opposition caucus.

I first met Sam in New York in 1938, when his time was mostly taken up with the fight in the Painters union. But he also was interested

in the work of our members in the maritime industry. His younger brother Lou was a sailor, and at the time I had been sailing for a couple of years. The three of us often reviewed the problems confronting our maritime members. Later on, during World War II, Sam shipped out and became a member of the union too. We were then members of the Seafarers International Union, AFL, and he was an effective organizer and speaker for us. He effectively explained our antiwar politics and the dangers facing the union movement at that time.

Work in the maritime industry

His experience in the unemployed movements of the early 1930s and his training in the Trotskyist movement had prepared him for this. His talents were quickly recognized, and for a time he edited the union's official publication, *Seafarer Log*. This soon led to sharp differences between him and the top officialdom of the union, so he was glad to get away from the union office and back aboard ship. In the meantime, he had established his authority and reliability as a representative of the needs of the rank-and-file seamen. This in turn helped our members in the union to recruit some more sailors to our party.

During World War II, Sam, along with Joseph Hansen and other politically experienced party members, helped guide our work in maritime. As a seaman Sam was one of the first to establish or reestablish contact between the Socialist Workers Party (SWP, a descendant of the CLA, founded in 1938) and sections of the Fourth International in other parts of the world.

With the outbreak of World War II the center of the Fourth International was transferred from Europe to the United States. When the International Executive Committee (IEC) was reconstituted in this country in September 1939, Sam was elected its administrative secretary. He served in this capacity when the International held an emergency world conference in New York in May 1940. He was elected to the IEC at that conference, and was part of a delegation that visited Leon Trotsky the following month to discuss wartime perspectives. The stenographic text of these discussions is printed in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (Pathfinder Press).

The enactment of reactionary legislation by the U.S. Congress (the Voorhis Act) compelled the SWP to disaffiliate from the Fourth International at the end of 1940. But our party remained in political solidarity with the International, and Gordon, like other SWP leaders, continued to work in collaboration with it. In 1946 Sam was a fraternal delegate of the SWP

to an international conference in Paris, which decided to move the center back to Europe.

Sam had expected to continue his close collaboration with the international center when he moved to Britain in 1952. But he fell victim to the political reaction of the 1950s in the United States and his U.S. passport was revoked. He was also hounded by the British authorities.

In 1957 he managed to return and reestablish his status as a naturalized citizen. Finally, in 1960 he regained a proper U.S. passport as a result of his service in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II. But by this time he had adjusted to life in Britain. He was the father of a young son, David. Mildred, because of her political activity in Britain, was barred by the McCarran Act from entering the United States even if the family at that time had wished to move.

During his 30 years in Britain, Sam in the first period supported and helped implement the policy of Trotskyist entry into the British Labour Party, and worked closely with the British section of the Fourth International, then headed by Gerry Healy.

In 1953 the international Trotskyist movement split. One of the several issues involved was Stalinism, including whether the bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe could reform themselves. The U.S. and British sections defended the orthodox Trotskyist position that these reactionary regimes were incapable of self-reform, that a political revolution is necessary to win control of government by the working class in these deformed workers states. Sam continued his close collaboration with the British Trotskyists, hoping for a reunification of the international movement.

There was a convergence of views in the international on Eastern Europe following the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Reunification occurred in 1963 as a result of agreement on the class character of the Cuban workers state, and recognition that the revolutionary regime in Cuba was different than those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

By this time, however, Healy and his followers in Britain had left the Labour Party and embarked on a thoroughly sectarian course. They refused to participate in the reunified Fourth International, expressing disagreement on Cuba.

Welcomed reunification

Sam, for his part, welcomed the reunification of the International and helped in every way he could to rebuild the British Trotskyist movement. He recognized that the revolutionary party could not go around the reformist-led Labour Party, but should fight to transform it into an instrument of revolutionary struggle.

For most of his life in Britain, Sam worked as a proofreader on the London *Times* and was a member of the Typographical Union, as he had been in the United States.

Sam retired from the London *Times* in 1975 at age 65. Despite his ill health and advancing

years, he continued his political and intellectual activity. During these remaining years he met frequently with political activists and helped them find their way through the intricacies of British politics. He returned to the university, received his undergraduate degree at North London Polytechnic, and began graduate work at the London School of Economics.

His thirst for knowledge and political activity was insatiable, and while at North London Polytechnic he became prominently involved as an adviser and leader of left-wing undergraduates.

Throughout his entire life Sam Gordon was a worker-intellectual. He was constantly occupied with translations from German to English of serious political and economic works of interest to students of Marxism. He completed his translation of Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital*, undertaken for Monthly Review Press, before his illness interfered.

Never lost his youthful ideals

In 1976 Sam was in the United States on one of his few visits, and spoke at the convention of the Young Socialist Alliance in Milwaukee that year. All his life he related to young people and never lost his youthful ideals. His brief talk to the YSA delegates was greeted by a standing ovation, something he had not ex-

pected. He later remarked that the whole experience was for him a new inspiration.

Back in London he frequently met with old friends and continued his activity in Labour Party politics. He retained his insight into the radical political movement both in Britain and the United States.

At the end of 1980, after the election of Reagan, when Tony Benn, the leader of the left wing in the British Labour Party, advised American workers to redouble efforts to transform the Democratic Party, Sam wrote letters to the *Militant* staff warning against any such course. He said, "As to Benn's advice in America to start as a faction of the Democrats, that can safely be ignored. That was [Michael] Harrington [head of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee] talking through him. There never was any such thing here."

A meeting of radicals, former political associates, family, and friends of Sam Gordon was held at Golders Green in London on March 19. Among the listed speakers were Alan Harris, a leader of the International Marxist Group (British affiliate of the Fourth International), and C.L.R. James, a former member of the Trotskyist movement and longtime political activist, and author of many books on history and the Black struggle, including *The Black Jacobins*. □

British Trotskyists announce fusion

[The following statement appeared in the March 25 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the newspaper reflecting the views of the International Marxist Group (IMG), the British section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The International Marxist Group (British section of the Fourth International) has fused with the League for Socialist Action. The fusion was agreed by the LSA Steering Committee in December 1981 and by the IMG at its Central Committee of February 20-21.

The fusion has a political importance although it will not result in a significantly larger organisation. It takes place on the basis of an agreement commonly to build the Fourth International in Britain and to fight for its programme — the programme of revolutionary Marxism.

The fusion also represents the healing of a seven year old split. The origins of the League for Socialist Action lay in a number of members leaving the International Marxist Group in 1975.

In the last period there has been agreement between the two groups on the importance of building an organisation with a practically internationalist outlook, of rooting such an organisation in the industrial unions and of the centrality of the Labour Party for revolutionary politics today. Both organisations are committed to the building of an independent revolutionary youth organisation. These positions

were reaffirmed at the recent conferences of both organisations.

The fusion of the two organisations will result in a strengthening of the process of building the British section of the Fourth International and will also act as a greater pole of attraction for wider and larger forces that are moving towards revolutionary Marxism.

In particular in the last two years there has been a recomposition of forces calling themselves Trotskyist both in Britain and internationally. Internationally a split from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International led to the formation of the "International Committee." This formation has now split into its original component parts. In Britain the Workers Socialist League and the International Communist League have fused under the name of the Workers Socialist League. They have no meaningful international affiliations.

The choice for all those groups calling themselves Trotskyist and who are committed to building the Fourth International is clear; join the forces of the United Secretariat or exist as a national formation — that is not as a Trotskyist organisation at all.

The fusion between the LSA and the IMG is a step towards a strong united organisation which in the years ahead can intervene in the workers radicalisation and link up nationally and internationally with all those forces moving towards revolutionary Marxist positions. □

Imperialist escalation in Central America

[The following declaration was adopted by majority vote of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at its March 12, 1982, meeting.]

* * *

1. The imperialist intervention in Central America has reached a new stage. The United States is directly involved in the counterrevolutionary struggle in El Salvador, in the military harassment of Nicaragua, and in the threats of all kinds against Cuba and the liberation movements in the Caribbean.

This is the Reagan government's answer to the progress being made in the struggle for national and social liberation in the region as a whole.

Economically the dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala are totally bankrupt. It becomes increasingly clear that only through terrorism, massacres, and torture can they impose their rule over the workers and peasants living in desperate poverty and oppression.

The March 7 elections in Guatemala and the March 28 elections in El Salvador are farces. More than ever, these elections are marked by manipulation and fraud, and are incapable of providing any democratic legitimacy whatsoever to these regimes.

By contrast, the revolutionary organizations have demonstrated their authority and have increased their ability to carry out actions. In El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) has not only fought off the junta's large-scale military operations, but it has also struck increasingly precise and effective blows against the dictatorship's forces.

In Guatemala, the four main politico-military organizations have come together to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG). This creates favorable conditions for stepped-up political and military activity.

The revolution in Central America is becoming increasingly internationalized.

That is why the representatives of the Reagan administration are carrying out an active campaign to prepare U.S. public opinion for an increasingly massive military commitment, up to and including a direct intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

Explaining the difference between Vietnam and Central America, U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig stated: "This is a profound challenge to the security of our hemisphere. . . . We are talking about vulnerability of . . . the Central American complex. . . . We are, in effect, at the very core of United States hemispheric interests" (*New York Times*, February 8, 1982). Haig had earlier pledged "whatever is necessary" to prevent the Salvadoran junta from being overthrown.

There is not a minute to lose! All the working-class and democratic organizations must mobilize to stop imperialism's criminal undertaking in Central America.

Junta's failure in El Salvador

2. The March 28 elections in El Salvador have already been shown to be a sinister farce and a failure. How can anyone believe in the democratic validity of these elections, which are limited to 60 days of official campaigning under the constraints of the martial law and state of siege that are in effect, and without the participation of any significant opposition force?

The ruling military-Christian Democratic junta has publicly rejected all proposals by the FMLN and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) for a dialogue.

In a December 17 letter to the secretary of the Organization of American States (OAS), five parties participating in the elections themselves had to recognize the illegitimate character of the vote: "By dropping the provisional draft electoral law approved by the political parties and by imposing the Christian Democrats' proposals, the Salvadoran government has completely lost the confidence of the political institutions of the Republic."

In an attempt to justify his new plans for economic and military intervention, on January 28, Ronald Reagan had the gall to tell the Congress that El Salvador had fulfilled the five conditions required by the 1981 international development and security agreement to continue to receive aid.

In a February 1 statement, the FMLN and the FDR had no difficulty refuting these claims point by point.

In his speech, Ronald Reagan went so far as to state that the restoration of civil liberties was well underway! The former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White, was quick to contradict his president:

"Unfortunately for the people of El Salvador," said White, "and for the reputation of President Reagan, the exact opposite is true" (*Miami Herald*, Feb. 7, 1982).

Reagan is a bald-faced liar, and his lies are complacently spread by the bourgeois press of the entire world.

According to religious sources in El Salvador, 12,501 murders of civilians were recorded in 1981, compared to 9,239 in 1980 and 1,030 in 1979 (before the formation of the junta)! The basic freedoms of expression, association, and movement remain suspended due to the state of siege.

Decree No. 507, in effect since Dec. 3, 1980, allows the authorities to hold a prisoner secretly for 16 days and to suspend his right

to a legal defense for 195 days. Decree No. 544 of Jan. 5, 1981, deprives workers of their trade-union rights by prohibiting collective bargaining.

As recently as December 1981 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution denouncing "the persistence of a situation in which the government paramilitary organizations and other groups continue to act with total contempt for the lives, security, and peace of the civilian population."

How can Ronald Reagan have the indecency to announce progress in this sphere at the very time when more than 1,000 peasants in Morazán province were murdered in December during operations by the elite Atlacatl Brigade; when the army murdered 472 people while destroying the village of Mozote; when more than 400 civilians were killed in February in reprisals in the Usulután region, which had been occupied for more than a week in late January by the FMLN; when most of the officers and soldiers purged after the October 1979 coup d'état for being too compromised have been reinstated?

Progress in carrying out reforms?

There were supposed to be three phases in the Fundamental Agrarian Reform Law in El Salvador. The first dealt with lands over 500 hectares and began in March 1980. The second was to involve estates of between 150 and 500 hectares, meaning the coffee-producing sector that is decisive in the Salvadoran economy.

In March 1981 the president of the junta, José Napoleón Duarte, announced that this second phase was suspended indefinitely. On the other hand, the government's Restitution Commission decided to return 45 expropriated estates to their previous owners.

In a report in late 1981, the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS), which has pushed the program of reforms in the countryside, stated that more than 25,000 families had been illegally chased off their land and that a new wave of land-grabbing is under way:

"What began in March 1980 with great promise and was still promising up to the end of 1980 now threatens to become a bureaucratic nightmare of pillage and murder. . . ."

Despite foreign aid, in 1980 El Salvador's gross domestic product fell 13 percent, industrial production fell 16 percent, and agricultural production 6.6 percent. Private investment shrank nearly 15 percent in 1979 and more than 38 percent in 1980.

In late 1980 the official unemployment rate was 23 percent of the active population, and underemployment stood at 38.9 percent. Of the \$8 billion of capital that has left Central America for the United States in the past five

years, between \$2 billion and \$3 billion came from El Salvador, according to the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL).

Given this situation, it is not surprising that Mexican President José López Portillo publicly acknowledged that the elections organized in El Salvador are not valid. "It is difficult to imagine what elections could take place while the guerrilla war and confrontations continue. We think that before any elections, there must be what I call a constituent agreement guaranteeing the authenticity of the electoral process" (*Le Monde*, Feb. 27, 1982).

This statement is a de facto condemnation of American policy and its results.

FMLN's growing strength

3. While the political and economic bankruptcy of the Salvadoran junta becomes more obvious every day, the FMLN has stepped up its military pressure over the last six months. On February 2, the junta's Defense Minister Gen. José Guillermo García stated that the elections may not be the solution. And on February 15, President José Napoleón Duarte admitted: "We are losing the fight with the guerrillas in the countryside."

After the partial failure of the insurrectional offensive of January 1981, the FMLN went into a period of reorganization and consolidation. Since the summer of 1981 it has relaunched a large-scale campaign including sabotage of the electrical network and the means of communication, and occupations of strategic cities. In mid-October, it successfully destroyed the Golden Bridge connecting the eastern and western parts of the country.

Despite the peasant massacres, the army's December operation in Morazán did not break the spirit of the revolutionary organizations. In late January the FMLN occupied the city of Usulután for nearly one week. It also occupied Tonacatepeque, a suburb only 10 kilometers away from the capital. It increased its pressure on the strategic axes, the Pan-American highway and the east coast highway.

The armed struggle is moving back into the urban centers, but now with solid rear areas. In the areas controlled by the FMLN, which cover a quarter of the country, there are permanent guerrilla "war colleges." The ability to capture weapons from the enemy has grown considerably. The communications network and radio facilities have been perfected. Two days after the end of junta military operations aimed at silencing Radio Venceremos, the broadcasts began again, and in the north Radio Farabundo Martí has come on the air.

The successful attack on the Ilopango air base in late January, resulting in the destruction of a major segment of the dictatorship's air force, illustrates the FMLN's growing audacity and the official army's disintegration. Following the attack, an inquiry was convened to investigate the accomplices that the attackers must have had within the army.

In contrast to the junta's decomposition, the divisions in the bourgeoisie, and the signs of

demoralization within the army, the FMLN-FDR is steadily increasing its authority and shows it is poised to take power.

Growing internationalization of struggle

4. This evolution in the relationship of forces in El Salvador has an impact on the regional context.

- In Guatemala the revolutionary forces, now working together inside the URNG, are active in 18 of the country's 22 departments. Extending the progress toward unity that has been made on the military level, in late February it was announced in Mexico that a Committee of Patriotic Unity (CUP) has been established. The Committee states that its views coincide with those of the URNG, which includes the four guerrilla organizations, and that revolutionary war is the only road open to the Guatemalan people.

The economic situation continues to get worse. The capital flight is accelerating. Only 18 percent of the active population has a stable job.

According to the International Federation for the Rights of Man, 26 years of military dictatorship have caused more than 50,000 deaths. The group estimates that there have been an average of between 30 and 60 murders per day in recent months, with about 5,000 for 1981. In July and August of 1981 alone, more than 3,000 peasants sought refuge in Mexico. The response of the chief of staff is to propose that the regular army alone be increased from 20,000 to 50,000 men.

The dictatorship views the entire population as suspected subversives, as active or potential combatants. This allows it to present the murders of civilians as "losses inflicted on the guerrillas."

The March 7 electoral farce increases the regime's discredit. No sooner had Gen. Angel Aníbal Guevara proclaimed himself the winner than the three competing candidates denounced the enormity of the fraud, contested the results, and called a national protest action.

The regime rules only through terror. In Guatemala and in El Salvador, as was the case in Nicaragua, the national bourgeoisies are too weak and stunted to sustain economic development and save even a semblance of democracy.

The sole safeguards for the imperialist order are force and reliance on the local military cliques.

- In Nicaragua, the revolution faces growing threats from imperialism outside the country and the pressures of the bourgeoisie inside. International organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as the United States, are trying to place the revolution under economic siege by suspending their credits to it.

On the diplomatic level, imperialism is orchestrating a broad campaign to isolate and discredit revolutionary Nicaragua. Its latest slander is the orchestrated campaign over supposed persecution of Miskitu Indians.

The U.S. representative to the United Na-

tions, the ultrareactionary Jeane Kirkpatrick, even charged that more than "250,000 Miskitus were interned in concentration camps," although there are at most 100,000 Miskitus.

This campaign serves as a pretext for intensifying the military harassment and border raids against the Nicaraguan revolution from Honduras. In Nicaragua itself, plots and attacks are increasing. In recent weeks, several dozen members of the Sandinista militia have been killed in skirmishes.

These attacks against the Nicaraguan revolution are taken up inside the country by the bourgeoisie. It is estimated that in 1981 private investment fell more than 50 percent, despite the loans received. The foreign-debt service in that year absorbed 28 percent of all export income. The training of an army of 40,000 soldiers and the costs of a militia of 200,000 men and women to stand up to the violent aggressors also weighs heavily on an economy that was already bled by the destruction in the civil war and the flight of capital.

Despite these attacks and these difficulties, the Nicaraguan people and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) have not given up and have never renounced their solidarity with the Salvadoran revolution.

Imperialism, seeing the relentless process of internationalization of the class struggle, sponsored the establishment on January 19 of a three-member coordinating committee of Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica, called, ingenuously, the Central American Democratic Confederation (CDCA)! The United States portrayed this community as "a first step toward collective security activities." The members, along with Colombia and Venezuela, are committed to coming to each other's aid in the event of aggression. Since one of the preconditions for membership in the CDCA is support for the electoral process taking place in El Salvador, this means Nicaragua is excluded.

The establishment of this community is another link in imperialism's counterrevolutionary apparatus in Central America. It furnishes a new "legal" channel for a future intervention in El Salvador, and at the same time tightens the encirclement of revolutionary Nicaragua. It is part of a series of moves aimed at isolating and crushing Nicaragua, such as the formation of the "Northern Triangle," whose objective is to coordinate the armies of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

'The Managua Appeal' and Cuba's response

5. In an attempt to respond to this evolution in the situation, Mexican President José López Portillo launched his "Managua Appeal" on February 21. It was an overall peace plan aimed at resolving — through "separate" but "convergent" channels — three kinds of conflicts: those involving Nicaragua, those involving El Salvador, and relations between the United States and Cuba.

Concerning Nicaragua, José López Portillo proposes a reduction in Nicaraguan military

forces in exchange for a U.S. renunciation of military threats and the disarming of the reactionary groups operating out of Honduras.

In regard to El Salvador, he offered his mediation to find a compromise between "elections without negotiations and negotiations without elections," without being more specific.

Finally he encouraged the continuation of contacts between the United States and Cuba within the framework opened by the meeting between Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Alexander Haig that took place in November in Mexico, a meeting that was supposed to have remained secret.

For the Mexican bourgeoisie, the search for a negotiated outcome — however difficult and uncertain it might be — is motivated by its desire to protect its own economic interests by trying to reestablish stability in the Gulf of Mexico and prevent the danger of a political crisis that a massive American intervention in Central America would provoke even in Mexico itself.

Whatever its aims and intentions, the objective result of the "Managua Appeal," made on the eve of Ronald Reagan's speech on Central America and the Caribbean (and with knowledge of its content since José López Portillo stated that the two speeches were exchanged before being delivered), is to make a direct U.S. military intervention more difficult by condemning it in advance as "a huge historical error that would cause a wide upheaval throughout the hemisphere and would rekindle deep-rooted anti-U.S. feelings among the finest people of Latin America."

It was in this respect that Fidel Castro warmly saluted the "Managua Appeal," without retreating an inch under imperialism's threats and without renouncing his commitment of solidarity to the Central American revolutions.

In a February 22 letter to José López Portillo, Castro wrote:

The tone of [the U.S.] threats grows more harsh from day to day and the campaign of lies and slanders against our country reaches unprecedented heights. Its foremost officials persist in refusing to rule out a military attack as one of the options that — illegally and without the least respect for international law — they claim to have available to "punish" Cuba and destroy it if possible because of its unshakeable determination to be independent.

Thus it is the legitimate, sacred, and inalienable right of self-defense that has led the Cuban people to organize themselves on a mass basis to undergo military training. For that reason, Cuban arms will never pose a threat to the sister nations of Latin America and the Caribbean; but rather they symbolize a resolve expressed by José Martí in his time: by securing Cuba's independence, to prevent the United States from extending itself throughout the region and to stop it from pouncing with renewed force on our American territory. We are in fact a solid unbreachable barrier against this expansionism, which has cost the peoples of this hemisphere so much pain and which has cost the heroic Mexican nation such a high price in blood, humiliation, and substantial portions of territory.

If the government of the United States — the source of all the problems that affect Latin America and the Caribbean today — pledges not to attack its

neighbors and halts its constant threats, if it stops putting its arms and financial resources at the service of genocidal regimes, if it stops its subversive activities — all of which have absolutely no legitimacy — Cuba is willing to cooperate in the noble efforts you outlined in Managua to establish in the region a climate of peace, mutual respect, and necessary change to which we also aspire.

But while the first effect of José López Portillo's proposals is to stay imperialism's hand in terms of a direct military intervention, the proposals do not represent disinterested support to the revolution in Central America. On the contrary, their aim is to prevent a generalized flare-up in the region by opening the possibility of a negotiated solution in the not-too-distant future.

This function is all the more apparent because the Mexican president — instead of recognizing the URNG and welcoming the Guatemalan refugees as political refugees — plans to establish a special armed force for the defense of its southern border and its oil fields. When a journalist asked why Mexico never took the same position on Guatemala as on Nicaragua or El Salvador, José López Portillo responded laconically: "They are different situations" (*Le Monde*, Feb. 27, 1982).

It is totally legitimate for the FMLN to take advantage of the contradictions of the enemy by proposing to negotiate without renouncing its political and military independence.

But José López Portillo's proposals for negotiations have a different thrust. By seeking a total solution for the whole region, they try to lay down the terms for a total contract and set the price for avoiding U.S. military intervention: a halt to the revolutionary process in Central America.

By trying to stabilize the present situation in Nicaragua, the proposals are an encouragement to the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie within the perspective of an overall solution for the region.

By banking on the impossibility of an immediate military solution in El Salvador, given the relationship of forces, they seek to provoke divisions and differences within the resistance movement on the question of negotiations.

After the elections in El Salvador, the proposals could offer American imperialism a way to avoid sinking any deeper. From the beginning, the "Managua Appeal" had the support of the European Social Democracy. In early March, the British foreign office (Britain was one of the few European countries to support the American policy until that time) modified its position, emphasizing the differences within the FDR and the possibility of finding responsible people to negotiate with inside it. Finally, the direct discussions held between American and Mexican officials lead in the same direction.

José López Portillo and the Second International have drawn the lessons of Nicaragua. They will do everything they can to avoid a military victory by the FMLN and the Guatemalan guerrillas.

6. On February 24, three days after the "Managua Appeal," Ronald Reagan made

public his development and military aid plan for Central America and the Caribbean.

José López Portillo then had to conclude that the chances for success of his own peace proposals "are lower, in that President Reagan was very hard on Cuba and Nicaragua. The chances for détente are diminished" (*Le Monde*, Feb. 27, 1982).

Ronald Reagan's plan, described by the press as a "mini-Marshall Plan," is in fact a new military escalation, introduced by a speech with the tone of an anti-Communist crusade against "the tightening grip of the totalitarian left in Grenada and Nicaragua, and the expansion of Soviet-backed, Cuban-managed support for violent revolution in Central America. . . . If we do not act promptly and decisively in defense of freedom, new Cubas will arise from the ruins of today's conflicts."

The plan basically consists of \$350 million in supplementary aid (bringing the total aid to the region for the current year to \$823 million), tax incentives for imperialist corporations investing in these countries, and technical aid to the private sector. Presented with a humanitarian gloss to ameliorate the American Congress's resistance and the public's hostility to a growing involvement in Central America, this aid is very selective.

El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Jamaica are the main recipients, and Nicaragua is excluded. In countries that are already characterized by corruption and the most flagrant inequality, the effects will be slow and limited under the best of circumstances. Under the worst, and most probable, circumstances they will fuel speculation, as was the case with the aid received by Nicaragua under Somoza after the earthquake, without stimulating investment.

Ronald Reagan's so-called aid is limited to making the Caribbean a better base for investment by American monopolies, and to proposing that these countries adopt economic policy identical to the one that the United States has led to higher unemployment and austerity.

It is too late for economic band-aids. Improving the situation for U.S. imperialism requires the crushing of the revolution.

In fact, therefore, the Reagan plan is a cover for a new military effort. Of the \$350 million authorized, \$60 million is explicitly reserved for military aid. This must be added to the \$26 million in military aid already in the regular budget and the \$55 million authorized on February 1 to rapidly replace the aircraft destroyed by the Salvadoran guerrillas three days earlier in their operation against the Ilopango air base. The speed with which this was bestowed, compared to the slowness of the interminable wheeling and dealing involved in granting credits to Nicaragua (which were revoked) speaks for itself.

They are part of an unprecedented U.S. military budget — reaching the colossal total of \$216 billion — that was presented in early February, at a time when that country has 10 million unemployed, and at a time when Ronald Reagan decreed a cut in social spending of

\$41 billion in the coming three years.

This military aid is already creating the preconditions for the presence of many instructors and advisers, who are the first step in direct intervention.

It is combined with intensive military aid from Israel and the now publicly acknowledged presence of Argentine military personnel, especially in El Salvador and in Honduras. When he went to Buenos Aires, Ronald Reagan's envoy Thomas Enders, who was once responsible for the U.S. bombing of Cambodia, clearly stated that Argentina would have "an active participation in any action undertaken in Central America."

When Reagan stated at a February 18 press conference that the United States has "no plans to send American combat troops into action any place in the world," he was again lying. To the extent it is possible, the United States will try to get others to do the fighting for it. It will offer them the material and financial means. Throughout February the U.S. press has been revealing that along with the direct military aid there have been "special" appropriations to the CIA, such as the \$19 million to encourage the formation of a broad political opposition and paramilitary groups in Nicaragua.

But in the final analysis the United States will never give up its option to directly intervene.

The debate is not over the need to intervene, but over the forms. One possible form is to support a regional war against Nicaragua waged by Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador with the combined help of Argentines, Chileans, and U.S. money and technical aid. Another possibility is to provoke a civil war in Nicaragua itself. Finally, there is the possibility of a direct intervention by the U.S. Marines, or of combining all these variants in different proportions.

The United States is already in fact involved in the counterrevolutionary war in Central America: through arms deliveries, through the presence of military advisers, through the organization of the current NATO naval maneuvers, through opening training camps for the Salvadoran army's shock troops. This aggression is aimed at crushing the revolution in Central America, and beyond that, threatening the peoples of Cuba and Grenada.

7. In Central America the possibility of winning power and setting up new workers states is now on the agenda in several countries.

Throughout the world a vast movement can take shape against the threats of imperialist intervention.

Active solidarity with the revolution in Central America is still limited. It must be expanded and broadened, rising to the challenge of the real stakes involved, renewing the internationalist tradition seen in the defense of the Vietnamese revolution.

The mobilization against the war in the United States itself is central to creating obstacles to imperialist intervention. Public opinion, still feeling the effects of the defeat suf-

fered in Vietnam, remains hostile to a direct military involvement, despite the calls for a crusade by Ronald Reagan, Alexander Haig, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and the like. According to recent polls, more than half the population rejects the idea that the United States has a mission to stop communism in Latin America, if that would mean supporting governments that deny the most elementary human rights; more than 80 percent of the population is hostile to a military intervention in El Salvador. This opposition was also expressed through trade-union demonstrations against the austerity budget.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops came out against sending arms to El Salvador. Public opinion was shocked to see broadcasts showing armed American advisers at the side of Salvadoran government troops.

In Europe and in Latin America new large-scale mobilizations are on the agenda. Two million trade unionists and youth mobilized in Europe last fall against militarization, nuclear missiles, and the war threats. A war is in fact already taking place in Central America. U.S. imperialism is already intervening there. That intervention can take new qualitative steps from one day to the next.

Vietnamese declaration of solidarity with El Salvador

[The following statement was released by the Vietnam Committee for the Defense of World Peace on the occasion of the March 27 demonstrations against U.S. intervention in El Salvador.]

* * *

On the occasion of the Day of Solidarity with the people of El Salvador, we send our warmest greetings to the progressive American people and peace fighters.

The Reagan administration is carrying out a policy of open intervention in El Salvador, running counter to the interests of the American people and disregarding strong protests from all over the world. The administration is attempting to maintain the dictatorial, genocidal regime of Duarte-Gutiérrez, and to prevent the Salvadoran people from deciding their own destiny.

Likewise, the Reagan administration has stepped up hostile activities against Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, seriously threatening the independence, sovereignty, security, and peace of the countries in the region.

The Vietnamese people energetically denounce these criminal acts of the White House. We resolutely demand that the Reagan administration put an immediate end to its policy of war and aggression against the Salvadoran people; that it respect their right to self-determination, and seriously respond to the constructive goodwill proposals of Nicaragua, Cuba, and Mexico, with a view to easing tension in El Salvador and Latin America by peaceful means.

Mobilizing against war begins with mobilizing against the imperialist intervention in Central America. Big demonstrations are projected for March 27 in the United States and March 28 in Mexico and several European countries.

In the month of May an anti-imperialist and "anti-interventionist" caravan will travel through twelve European countries, with representatives of the FSLN, FMLN-FDR, and URNG. Big demonstrations will take place at that time. New demonstrations are being planned for the United States on June 12.

Also in June, "Reagan-the-plague" will visit Europe to attend the summit of the Atlantic alliance. He will be in Paris June 5, in Britain June 7, and Germany on June 9. This visit must be the occasion for new and powerful demonstrations against imperialism's crimes in Central America and against the deployment of its death machines in Europe.

The sections of the Fourth International will throw all their energies into these struggles:

- Against imperialist intervention in Central America;
- In defense of the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenada revolutions;
- For the victory of the FMLN in El Salvador and the URNG in Guatemala.

We are strongly convinced that the progressive American people will help drive back the Reagan administration's war policy. We know the American people played an important part in stopping the U.S. war of aggression against the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea.

Hands off El Salvador!

Peace and national independence will win! □

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New facade for dictatorship

Ríos Montt—chosen by God or by Washington?

By Fred Murphy

With the ouster of Gen. Romeo Lucas García from the Guatemalan presidency in a March 23 coup by junior officers, policymakers in Washington are hoping that the way may be cleared for the resumption of U.S. military aid to the dictatorship there. The armed forces are engaged in a brutal war against recently unified guerrillas who control large sections of the countryside in northwestern Guatemala.

"U.S. analysts had been aware for several months of the rising dissatisfaction among the junior officers," *Time* magazine reported April 5. "Bearing the brunt of the fighting against the guerrillas, the lieutenants, captains and majors had become increasingly bitter over the corruption of the Lucas García regime, and wanted to clean up the country's human rights image in order to obtain U.S. military aid."

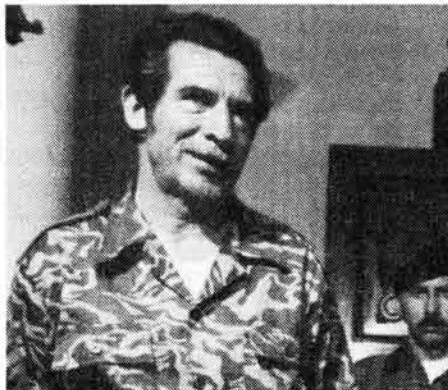
Lucas's record of brutality and terrorism, which targeted not only workers and peasants but even capitalist politicians, had been so widely exposed that the Reagan administration found it politically inadvisable to openly provide his government with aid. An Amnesty International report in February 1981, for example, documented a program of "routine assassinations, secret detentions, and summary executions" carried out "under the direct supervision of President Lucas García."

In recent months the victims of this terror apparatus were averaging 40 a day. They included trade-union leaders, student and peasant activists, teachers and intellectuals, priests and missionaries, and social-democratic and Christian Democratic political figures.

Far worse has been the suffering of entire communities of Indian peasants in the zones where the guerrillas enjoy mass support. Scorched-earth campaigns by the army have regularly meant the slaughter of hundreds of Indian men, women, and children. Among the recent massacres were the machete slaying of 54 peasants in Macalabaj, El Quiché province, on February 15, and the decapitation of 200 near Santa Cruz del Quiché on March 7.

While the number of death-squad slayings dropped considerably after the March 23 coup, halting the killing was not really the aim of the coup plotters. Rather, they wanted to improve the army's chances of getting U.S. aid, so as to more effectively put down the growing popular insurgency.

Washington had hoped the Guatemalan regime's image would be enhanced by the elections held on March 7. But the vote fraud that assured victory to Lucas's handpicked successor, Gen. Aníbal Guevara, was so blatant that his opponents — all right-wingers — took to the streets on March 9 to protest. They were



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met by police firing live ammunition and tear gas.

That was the beginning of the end for Lucas. Massacring Indian peasants is one thing, but it was going too far to send the cops to attack right-wing politicians in downtown Guatemala City.

"We are in danger here of having a situation like in Nicaragua under Somoza where not only the left was alienated from the government but the right too," a coffee planter who demonstrated March 9 told Loren Jenkins of the *Washington Post*. "The danger is the left will take advantage of the situation and we will end up losers twice over."

The Lucas regime was becoming an international pariah. Its reputation for corruption and brutality was making it more and more difficult to secure military and economic aid. Capital flight was mounting, and foreign-exchange reserves had hit bottom. "It is this state of affairs," the *Washington Post* reported March 16, "more than concern for the human rights violations, that has suddenly frayed the traditional alliance between the Army and Guatemala's oligarchy."

The coup was carried out by a group of junior officers with close ties to one of the main parties of the oligarchy, the extreme-rightist National Liberation Movement (MLN). Some of these officers were sons of MLN politicians beaten in the streets on March 9.

According to most accounts, the original plans of the plotters called for a temporary military junta and the scheduling of new elections within 60 days, which the MLN expected to win. In hope of projecting the proper image, the young officers called on Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt to head their junta.

Ríos Montt had run for president in 1974 with Christian Democratic support. He was deprived of victory through massive vote fraud on behalf of an MLN-backed general. Later,

Ríos Montt became a leader of a fundamentalist Protestant congregation in Guatemala City.

Upon being called to the National Palace while the coup was under way, Ríos Montt consulted his fellow church leaders. Together, they concluded he was being chosen by God to lead Guatemala.

Ríos Montt quickly elbowed aside the junior officers and their MLN advisers. He set up a three-man junta including himself and two other senior commanders. Then he went on television to deliver an emotional speech in which he made no mention of elections but instead declared, "I have confidence in my God, my Master, and my King, that He will guide me, because only He can grant or take away power."

According to a March 24 dispatch to the *New York Times*, U.S. diplomats in Guatemala "seemed greatly disturbed by the course the coup had taken, particularly by General Ríos Montt's assumption of power."

In the first ten days following the coup, the prospects for Ríos Montt's regime remained unclear. There were reports of a behind-the-scenes power struggle among the MLN, the Christian Democrats, and their various supporters inside the military hierarchy. The U.S. embassy undoubtedly was playing a role in all this.

Concrete measures by the new regime were limited to the arrest of some of the most hated officials of the Lucas regime and a purge of the National Police to give it a "new public image." The latter move was no doubt prompted by an incident that occurred the day of the coup. An angry crowd, including young soldiers, sacked the residence of Lucas's interior minister, Donaldo Álvarez Ruiz, who was generally believed to be the central figure behind the death squads.

Ríos Montt's new foreign minister told the Mexico City daily *Excelsior* March 25 that Guatemala would seek to participate in Reagan's plan for economic aid to Caribbean basin countries and would put high priority on improving relations with Mexico. He ruled out relations with Cuba, accusing that country and Nicaragua of "interventionist efforts" in Central America.

The Reagan administration's chief concerns about Guatemala were summed up by a State Department official quoted in the March 25 *Wall Street Journal*. "No one should have any illusions the coup will cause the guerrillas to fade away," he said. "The question is whether this government can find a better way to execute the war without increasingly alienating bigger chunks of the populace."

For their part, the rebels termed the coup only "a change in the facade" of the regime.

"Our position is clear," said Joaquín Ventura, a representative of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG), in an interview published March 27 in Mexico City. "We reaffirm the decision of the people to continue the fight for the fundamental rights of every human being — the right to life, to work, to health, to dignity and to education." □