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Washington Tries to Provoke War Between Nicaragua and Honduras



U.S. adviser instructs Honduran paratroopers at airbase near border with Nicaragua. Washington's war in Central America is entering a new stage.

**Grenada Warns of
Invasion Threat**

West Bank
**Israeli Settlers
Terrorize Palestinians**

Washington's new escalation of the war in Central America

By Mary-Alice Waters

President Ronald Reagan went on television March 23 to propose another massive escalation of U.S. military spending. Central to his justification of this arms buildup was the allegation that Soviet military power is now directly challenging what he termed "our vital interests" in Central America and the Caribbean.

To buttress his presentation, Reagan provided visual aids. These included a seemingly ominous aerial photograph of the construction site of Grenada's new airport — which any tourist to that Caribbean island can visit, camera in hand.

A similar "intelligence" photograph revealed three helicopters at the Managua, Nicaragua, airport. They were donated by the Soviet Union to aid Nicaragua's literacy campaign. One was used to transport the pope during his recent visit.

Were the implications for working people throughout the Americas not so grave, the transparent fraud of the "threat" documented by Reagan would be laughable.

But the U.S. rulers are dead serious.

After months of careful preparation, a new escalation of U.S. military aggression against the workers and farmers of Central America and the Caribbean is now in progress.

Revolution and counterrevolution

Four years ago the people of Nicaragua and Grenada threw out bloody, U.S.-backed dictatorships and established governments that defend the interests of the workers and farmers, not the landlords and capitalists or their Washington allies. Since then, as *Intercontinental Press* has repeatedly explained, U.S. imperialism has followed a consistent counter-revolutionary policy, using the full array of weapons in its arsenal — political, economic,

and military.

It has tried to prevent the extension of the revolutionary tide to El Salvador and Guatemala. It has sought to undermine and prepare for the eventual overthrow of the Nicaraguan and Grenadian governments. It has attempted to intimidate the people of Cuba into abandoning their uncompromising support for their brothers and sisters throughout the region fighting to determine their own destiny free from Yankee domination.

From the beginning, this has been the bipartisan policy of the entire U.S. ruling class. Reagan has continued and deepened the course initially charted by the Carter administration. If the U.S. government is today relying more heavily on the use of military force, it is only because Washington's political offensive has failed to isolate "the enemy," while its economic weapons have failed to corrupt or intimidate the vanguard forces leading the toiling masses.

Reagan portrays the struggle as one of "U.S. interests" combating "Soviet expansion" and "Cuban influence." But the attempt to portray the conflict as one between contending "big powers" is false.

The conflict is between classes.

It is the working class and its allies who are moving forward in Central America and the Caribbean today, struggling to take control of their own countries and create a new society meeting the needs of the overwhelming majority, not a tiny handful of the rich.

The socialist revolution is advancing in our hemisphere.

That is why Washington must increasingly resort to military power. It is attempting to halt, and eventually turn back, the march of history.

Two major obstacles

Although today's sharpening military confrontation is inevitable, its pace and its outcome are not. Since 1979 Washington's freedom of action has been limited by two major obstacles.

One is the uncompromising commitment of the Cuban people to defend Nicaragua and Grenada against imperialist aggression, despite the consequences for Cuba.

The second is the political price the U.S. rulers would have to pay for any direct, large-scale military intervention in the region. Throughout Latin America a move by U.S. forces would be met by an upsurge of anti-imperialist action that would dwarf the outraged response one year ago to Britain's war on Argentina. The survival of Washington's junior partners in a good many countries would be seriously threatened.

In the United States itself, the growing organized opposition to Washington's military intervention in Central America, especially the deepgoing opposition within the working class, is a powerful deterrent. The U.S. ruling class, too, remembers what happened in the United States during the Vietnam War.

These factors, combined with the determination, courage, and leadership capacities of the revolutionary forces in Central America and the Caribbean, have so far limited the ability of the U.S. government to utilize its full military power for an all-out assault.

The U.S. rulers tirelessly work to throw off these political constraints by campaigning about an alleged "Soviet threat," about Moscow's so-called Cuban proxy, about the "terrorists" trying to shoot their way into power in El Salvador, about the "new tyrants" in Managua who are no better than Somoza, about the supposedly sinister implications of an airport to encourage tourist trade to the island of Grenada.

The U.S. propaganda offensive began within days of the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution in the summer of 1979. Washington suddenly "discovered" an alleged Soviet combat brigade in Cuba.

This barrage reached a crescendo in fall 1981 when the Reagan administration charged that some 500 to 600 Cuban troops had infiltrated El Salvador — thus explaining the advances by the anti-imperialist forces there.

The U.S. ruling class at that time was seriously weighing the risks and benefits of direct military action, including against Cuba. But a full-scale military mobilization in Cuba, combined with a powerful international political offensive to expose U.S. intentions, convinced Washington that the risks were too high.

In spring 1982, military operations against Nicaragua and the Salvadoran liberation forces were again in advanced stages of preparation when Britain went to war against Argentina.

Malvinas War

The Argentine military junta, along with the Honduran regime, had been scheduled to play a central role in training, organizing, and leading the Somozaist National Guard forces invading Nicaragua today. When the Malvinas War broke out, Washington backed the British aggression. An explosion of sentiment against U.S. imperialism rocked Latin America. Cuba and Nicaragua were the most vigorous defenders of Argentina's anticolonial battle.

The net result was that Washington's war plans for Central America had to be revised. Political alliances had to be reorganized, and ideological justifications for aggression against Cuba and Nicaragua had to be reformulated.

The working people of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada gained another breathing space. They won more time to build new housing, open medical centers, create new jobs, expand the literacy campaign, build roads, consolidate the trade unions and other mass organizations,

Our new dating system

With this issue of *Intercontinental Press* we are moving forward the cover date by one week. Although this issue of *IP* appears two weeks after our March 28 issue, it is dated April 18 instead of April 11.

The reason for the change is a shift in our production and mailing schedule. Under the new schedule, *IP* over the past few issues has been mailed out only a few days prior to the cover date. The new cover date will more accurately reflect the biweekly character of *IP*. The closing date of each issue will continue to appear in the table of contents.

and improve their defenses.

One of the charges Reagan made in his March 23 television address was that Cuba has taken advantage of the respite to significantly strengthen its defensive capacities. "The level of Soviet arms exports to Cuba," Reagan asserted, "can only be compared to the levels reached during the Cuban missile crisis 20 years ago."

This, too, was presented as if it were a previously undisclosed and sinister fact, gleaned from U.S. intelligence operations.

But the Cubans have been broadcasting and explaining this to the world for the last three years, ever since they launched the Territorial Troop Militia on May 1, 1980, in response to Washington's intensified threats.

As Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro explained to a mass meeting in Havana last December, "preparations for defense are made not only to fight off an attack but also to prevent such an attack." Fidel added that "preserving peace will always be a victory. However, peace in the face of a treacherous enemy like imperialism is preserved when the enemy knows that any attack will cost him dearly."

Time is running out for imperialism

But today the danger of a qualitatively new escalation of Washington's war in Central America and the Caribbean is once again mounting.

Time is running out for imperialism in Nicaragua. The U.S. rulers are concerned that it may already be too late to overthrow the Sandinista people in arms. As the pope's recent tour once again demonstrated, the revolution's roots among Nicaragua's toiling people are deep.

His refusal to say a prayer for the youth murdered by counterrevolutionary bands was seen as a provocation and an affront to the dignity of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans who see no contradiction between their religion and their revolution. Contrary to the hopes of imperialism, the pope's action helped clarify for many the reactionary role of the church hierarchy. It strengthened mass support for the revolution and its leadership.

Repeated statements by U.S. officials also make clear that there is increasing alarm in Washington over the advances in El Salvador by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). Despite the millions of dollars of U.S. military aid and the frantic attempts to shore up both the army and its civilian facade, the regime is clearly cracking. The U.S. rulers do not believe the FMLN can be defeated without the intervention of non-Salvadoran military forces.

But how can that be engineered? How can it be politically justified both internationally and before a U.S. working class that is deeply suspicious and hostile to the Vietnamization of Central America?

The U.S. rulers need a broader war.

That is exactly the danger Nicaragua's Sandinista leaders point to: the invasion of Nicaragua by thousands of former Somoza Na-

tional Guardsmen, armed to the teeth by Washington, may be used to provoke a war between Honduras and Nicaragua.

Already, in recent days, Honduran army units have, for the first time, crossed the border into Nicaragua. If a pretext for broadening the war is desired, the possibilities are numerous.

A regionalization of the war in Central America, which would include military actions in the Caribbean as well, would open the door for a qualitative escalation of U.S. military operations. It would pose the danger of a direct clash with Cuba and even the Soviet Union.

The tactical course the U.S. government will pursue is not predetermined. In fact, it is not yet decided. It will be determined, above all, by the political response to its probes and trial balloons.

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That is why the timely response by Nicaragua, including the international forum at the United Nations that exposed and isolated the U.S. government (see page 189) was so important.

That is why the decision of the Grenadian government to broadcast its concern over an imminent attack (see page 190) will make it more difficult for the Reagan administration to implement such plans.

And that is why a broad and powerful response by those inside the United States and around the world who oppose U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean is decisive. Our vital interests lie in solidarity with our brothers and sisters there. We have a central role to play in staying the hand of the U.S. aggressors. □

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U.S. backs Honduran attacks

New phase in CIA-led war against Sandinistas

By David Frankel

Urged on by Washington, the Honduran army is now taking a direct hand in armed attacks on Nicaragua. These attacks have been coordinated with an invasion of Nicaragua by some 2,000 U.S.-backed counter-revolutionaries. They are another step in Washington's course of escalating aggression in Central America — a course that threatens to end in a new Vietnam.

One Honduran involved in planning the attacks against Nicaragua talked to the *New York Times* after becoming convinced the operation was leading to a war between the two countries. According to a report in the April 3 *Times*, the Honduran declared that "the pretension is over" that Washington is only aiming to harass the Sandinista government. The "real objective," he said, "is to overthrow" it.

At least seven separate attacks against Nicaragua were carried out by Honduran military units during the week of March 20–27. Most serious of all was a March 24 incident in which a Honduran unit crossed the international frontier and attacked a patrol of the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), wounding one soldier.

As a protest by the Sandinista government noted, such attacks represent "a new phase" in the U.S.-orchestrated campaign against Nicaragua. Washington, the protest explained, wants "to provoke open conflict between Honduras and Nicaragua, which would serve as a pretext for United States military intervention in Central America."

Washington Post correspondent Edward Cody described how far the war along Nicaragua's northern border has escalated in an April 3 article. "The extent of military presence in the Nueva Segovia region contrasts sharply with what I saw on a previous visit here in December," Cody reported.

"Few patrols were visible then. Now jeeps, lumbering East German IFA trucks loaded with troops and foot patrols can be seen moving constantly up and down the dirt roads.

"A drive through the region showed that the Sandinista Army also is preparing to defend against a possible larger scale attack from Honduras. Antiaircraft batteries can be seen poking out of the shaved-off tops of hills near Jalapa and Ciudad Sandino."

While U.S. officials from Reagan on down have tried to palm off the fighting in Nicaragua as an "internal problem," the result of what they claim is massive domestic opposition to the Sandinista government, this lie has been repeatedly exposed by U.S. journalists.

New York Times reporter Stephen Kinzer, for example, visited a counterrevolutionary camp near Matasano, Honduras, about eight

miles north of the Nicaraguan border, on March 27.

U.S.-made weapons

"The encampment," according to Kinzer, "consisted of more than a dozen large tents, near an earthen hut packed to the rafters with unopened crates labeled as United States-made armaments. According to English markings on the crates, their contents included fragmentation grenades and mortar shells."

Just a few days previously the Honduran government had issued another official statement claiming, "It is absolutely false that anti-Sandinist guerrillas have bases in Honduras or have used our territory to launch attacks against the regime of the neighboring country."

CIA involvement in arming, financing, training, and helping to organize the counter-revolutionary army in Honduras is an open secret. *Newsweek* magazine headlined the CIA's involvement in the war against Nicaragua last November, and its account was confirmed at the time by U.S. officials interviewed by the *New York Times*.

Further information on the counterrevolutionary operation, organized under the name of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), was provided in front-page reports in the April 3 *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, and in the April 4 issue of *Time* magazine.

According to *New York Times* reporters Raymond Bonner and Philip Taubman, about 55 U.S. soldiers began training the rightist forces in late 1981. These U.S. military personnel were not part of the team of advisers working with the Honduran army.

"Nearly all the weapons and equipment being used by the anti-Sandinist forces have been supplied by the United States," Bonner and Taubman reported.

In addition to training and weapons, Washington supplies intelligence information "based in part on information collected by planes manned by United States Air Force personnel that make regular reconnaissance flights along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border."

The account in the *Times* was confirmed by *Washington Post* reporter Christopher Dickey, who accompanied a unit of FDN forces on operations inside Nicaragua. Because of the weapons supplied by the Pentagon, Dickey reported, the FDN forces "depend for much of their effectiveness on a level of firepower that the leftist guerrillas of El Salvador, for instance, generally do not approach."

In fact, the counterrevolutionary army in northern Nicaragua is frequently better equipped than the Sandinista militia units that it

meets. And, Dickey says, "With the United States behind them — 'the most powerful country in the world,' as some like to describe it — many of the rebels feel they cannot lose."

Although the counterrevolutionary forces in Vietnam, Cuba, and many other countries have had similar illusions, there is no question about the seriousness of the situation. As Sandinista Commander Carlos Nuñez put it, "We are not deluding ourselves. This is not going to be over tomorrow."

Three-tier command structure

Both the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine report that the counterrevolutionary forces are directed from three different command centers.

The first of the three staffs, says *Time*, is composed of former officers from Somoza's National Guard. "The second staff group is made up of members of the Honduran military, plus [FDN head Col. Enrique] Bermúdez and a military representative from Argentina. . . . According to the F.D.N., a key member of the second staff is a man known as Carlos, who is the CIA station chief in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa.

"The third general staff is, by the F.D.N. accounts, an all-American body. It is composed of CIA experts and representatives of the U.S. Army's Southern Command, based in Panama."

In overall charge, according to virtually all the published reports, is John Negroponete, the U.S. ambassador in Tegucigalpa.

Although the CIA-organized operation in Honduras has been going on for the past three years, things are now reaching a qualitatively new stage.

- The direct involvement of the Honduran army and its buildup along the Nicaraguan border are unprecedented.

- The invasion by the FDN, their biggest move yet, already involves more troops than took part in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, which was launched by Washington in 1961 in hopes of overthrowing the new revolutionary government there.

- Along with the attacks from the north, Nicaragua is now facing attacks from Costa Rica in the south. Numerous camps of armed counterrevolutionaries have been uncovered along the Costa Rican border in recent months. And Edén Pastora, a former Sandinista leader who deserted to the side of the counterrevolution, announced that his organization would begin an armed campaign in Nicaragua by mid-April.

- Taking the stepped-up fighting as a signal, the capitalists and their supporters inside Nicaragua have initiated a wave of economic sabotage. Shortages of cooking oil, laundry soap, eggs, and milk — all of which had been readily available at government-controlled prices — have now begun to appear as a result of hoarding and speculation. Lengthy gas lines have also begun to appear.

The counterrevolutionary forces hope to spread panic and demoralization in Nicaragua

by their economic sabotage and by their inflated claims of military success, while at the same time making propaganda for their reactionary cause internationally.

'Remember the Bay of Pigs'

"We should remember that when the Bay of Pigs invasion occurred in Cuba," Commander Daniel Ortega pointed out at a March 26 news conference in Managua, "the thousands of wire stories that went out . . . claimed the Cuban revolution had been defeated."

Empty boasts by the Somozaists, who claimed to have taken towns and even whole provinces in the fighting along the border, were punctured when reporters actually turned up at the scene of some of these imaginary triumphs. The fact is that the counter-revolutionaries failed to take a single town.

Furthermore, the Sandinista government has vowed to continue with the tasks of production while repelling the armed attacks on Nicaragua.

'Little public support'

While the counterrevolutionary bands and their supporters in the CIA and the Honduran army can count on the enthusiastic cooperation of those capitalists remaining in Nicaragua, the attitude of the workers and farmers is another matter. "Rebel bands appear to have attracted little public support," Alan Riding admitted in the March 26 *New York Times*.

"Youthful enthusiasm for the Sandinista revolution appears to a visitor to remain high," Edward Cody noted in the *Washington Post* March 28.

CIA advisers have done their best to improve the image of the counterrevolutionary forces in the FDN, but with little success. The leader of the FDN unit that *Post* reporter Dickey traveled with was a former sergeant in what was known as the "Rattlesnake" battalion of ex-dictator Anastasio Somoza's hated National Guard. Another of Dickey's traveling companions bragged about the murder of a Cuban teacher who had been working to bring literacy to peasants in the area.

As *Washington Post* reporter Don Oberdorfer points out April 3, CIA agents on the scene "found that the only organized and trained groups capable of serious armed opposition were those that had backed Somoza and had been driven out by the Sandinistas."

Referring to the program of the FDN, Larry Boyd reported in the March 22 *Christian Science Monitor* that "it calls for a rollback of the agrarian reform in Nicaragua including the return of properties confiscated from Somoza . . . and release of National Guardsmen jailed by the Sandinistas. It also condemns the literacy campaign as a Marxist-Leninist plot.

"Since agrarian reform, the jailing of former guardsmen, and the literacy campaign are the most popular Sandinista programs, the FDN may have a hard time gaining a wide following."

But these are the forces that have been hailed by Jeane Kirkpatrick — Reagan's am-

bassador to the United Nations — as "freedom fighters."

Kirkpatrick was reportedly dismayed by the lack of support for Washington during the debate over Nicaragua at the UN Security Council. The editors of the *New York Times* warned

U.S. isolated in UN debate

Kirkpatrick complains of 'discouraging' response

By Ernest Harsch

Faced with a sharp escalation of attacks by U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary forces, the Nicaraguan government convened a special session of the United Nations Security Council to expose Washington's latest aggression. Nicaragua is currently a member of the Security Council.

During the course of the debates, which began on March 23, Nicaragua's deputy foreign minister, Víctor Tinoco Fonseca, detailed Washington's support for the Honduran-based terrorist bands.

"The United States government, which nurtured and nursed [the Somoza] dictatorship and which benefitted from the way in which it sold its country down the river for the sake of its own economic enrichment, is today behind the new acts of aggression and behind the suffering that the Nicaraguan people are once more undergoing. These Somoza groups only exist in that they are financed and directed by United States institutions, which turn them into a tool for their own policy in the region."

Where danger lies

"In the opinion of the Nicaraguan Government of National Reconstruction, the danger does not reside in these counterrevolutionary forces themselves, as by and large they have remained in the mountain areas of Nicaragua, very close to the Honduran border; on the contrary, the danger, which is very serious, resides in the fact that these actions of the Somozaist forces in the center and the north of the country may represent secondary or diversionary actions designed to facilitate the delivery of a more strategic blow to the Nicaraguan revolution in other more sensitive areas — economically, politically, and militarily speaking — such as the Pacific area of Nicaragua near the Honduran border."

Pointing to the massing of Honduran troops in the border areas where the Somozaist forces are most active, Tinoco stressed the danger of a direct conflict with Honduran forces.

Tinoco concluded his initial presentation by calling on Washington "to cease its aggressive stance toward our country, to cease its attempts to defeat the revolutionary government and destroy the Sandinista people's revolution, to cease its threatening military maneuvers, to cease the 'secret' but widely recognized war the Reagan administration is waging against our country, and to cease to create pain and suffering for our people."

March 30 that Reagan's course might "isolate the United States throughout the hemisphere."

Nevertheless, events in Central America show clearly that Reagan is pushing ahead with his war against the workers and farmers of the region. □

The representatives of a number of other countries that face U.S. aggression came to Nicaragua's defense during the Security Council debates.

Raúl Roa Kouri of Cuba noted the similarities between the current attacks on Nicaragua and the preliminaries to the U.S.-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. "The organizer, financier, supplier, and abetter was, then as now, the imperialist government of the United States, its Pentagon and its Central Intelligence Agency," Roa Kouri said.

Caldwell Taylor of Grenada condemned the U.S. attacks against Nicaragua and pointed to the similar U.S. threats against his country, where a revolution also took place in 1979.

The Soviet and Vietnamese delegates likewise denounced Washington's support for the counterrevolutionaries and placed the current attacks against Nicaragua in the context of U.S. imperialism's long history of aggression around the world.

U.S. response

Despite repeated and direct questioning from other participants in the debate, U.S. representative Jeane Kirkpatrick pointedly refused to deny that the counterrevolutionaries had received training in the United States and that the CIA was supplying their forces based in Honduras.

Instead, she launched an arrogant and hypocritical litany of accusations against Nicaragua. Kirkpatrick falsely accused the Sandinistas of establishing "a harsh new military dictatorship" and of violating all sorts of democratic rights within Nicaragua.

Claiming the counterrevolutionary attacks within Nicaragua were merely a result of domestic opposition to the Sandinistas, Kirkpatrick openly identified with the rightist terror bands, calling them "democrats" who are "thirsty for freedom."

To further justify the attacks against Nicaragua, Kirkpatrick also repeated Washington's totally unproved accusations of the presence of thousands of Cuban troops in Nicaragua and Nicaragua's alleged hostilities toward neighboring countries.

In a sharp rebuttal of Kirkpatrick's charges, Ali Treiki of Libya drew attention to Washington's history of aggression, assassination, and destabilization against other countries. "The American administration should be the last to speak of human rights," he said, "for it violates

them everywhere, including in the United States itself."

Spanish, French comments

Several imperialist governments took their distance from the Reagan administration. The representative from Spain said that the attacks in Nicaragua "are clearly aimed at destabilizing the government of that country" and that they "constitute a dangerous factor of instability" in the region. The French representative reiterated his government's support for a Mexican and Venezuelan diplomatic initiative launched last year for negotiations between Nicaragua and Honduras.

Kirkpatrick was clearly stunned by the sup-

port Nicaragua received during the debates. The response of numerous delegates was "discouraging," she said, specifically criticizing those from Mexico, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, China, Panama, and Pakistan.

The only backing that Washington received came from the Honduran and Salvadoran dictatorships and from the imperialist governments in Germany and Britain.

In calling the special Security Council session, Nicaragua submitted no formal resolution for a vote. Instead, it sought to use the council as a forum to alert the world about the new attacks against it and to try to rally political opposition to Washington's aggression. It succeeded in doing both. □

Grenada

Government warns of invasion

Reagan uses 'fabrications, distortions, and lies'

By Steve Wattenmaker

UNITED NATIONS — Washington is organizing an "imminent" military attack against the island of Grenada that "could come in a matter of days," Grenada's foreign minister charged here March 28.

"Based on a careful analysis of the evidence, we are convinced that the Reagan administration is planning an aggression — directly or indirectly — against Grenada," Unison Whiteman told a packed news conference. "The situation is grave and we are extremely concerned."

Grenada, a small Caribbean island with a Black English-speaking population of 110,000, has been on Washington's enemies' list since 1979. That year a popular revolution in Grenada overthrew U.S.-backed dictator Eric Gairy. Since the revolution, the island's economy has expanded, unemployment has plunged, and the government has made big improvements in health care, education, roads, and other public services.

"But today we face the danger of foreign military invasion," Whiteman said, "and all that we have struggled to build is in danger of destruction."

Mercenaries in Miami

He cited as evidence "an upsurge in the activities of mercenaries and counter-revolutionaries" being trained in Miami for an attack against Grenada. Right-wing Cuban and Nicaraguan exiles are assisting in their training. In addition, meetings to discuss a plan of operations against Grenada are currently being held "in a certain country close to Grenada."

However, the most "ominous signs" come from the Reagan administration itself, according to Whiteman. In speeches March 10 and March 23, Reagan accused Grenada, along with Cuba and Nicaragua, of posing a threat to U.S. national security.

Those speeches, Whiteman said, signaled a "heightening of preparations" for an attack. White House officials have "been using all kinds of fabrications, distortions, lies, and deceptions about Grenada" to prepare the ground politically for an attack.

"They are hoping in such a way to create a climate of hysteria such that public opinion would accept an aggression against Grenada. The present propaganda campaign against Grenada is classic in that it uses methods that were used by the CIA before military aggressions in Guatemala in 1954 and Chile in 1973," he explained.

In Reagan's March 10 speech, Whiteman noted, the president "attacked Nicaragua in the same vein, and it is significant that within days a full-scale invasion of Nicaragua was in progress." The imperialist theme, Whiteman said, is that "Grenada is a threat to the United States. Imagine that. If our tiny country is a threat to the United States it's not difficult to imagine what the United States plans to do to remove the threat."

From "day one," Whiteman charged, "the Reagan administration has been trying to overthrow the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada."

Economic destabilization

The White House tried economic destabilization by putting pressure on the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Economic Community, and the Caribbean Development Bank to deny loans to Grenada. Those efforts failed, Whiteman said, and Grenada's economy is growing.

"They have also tried political destabilization; they have tried to isolate us within the [Caribbean] community. That too has failed."

In August 1981 Washington rehearsed a plan of military intervention in Grenada through naval maneuvers that they code named

"Amber." But Reagan was forced to back down, Whiteman explained, because "the world screamed in support of poor little Grenada and our militia in Grenada began to prepare to defend our country." Right now, large-scale U.S.-British-Dutch naval maneuvers are again under way in the Caribbean.

On February 27, 1983, the *Washington Post* exposed a "comprehensive" CIA plot to destabilize and overthrow the government of Grenada.

Throughout this entire period, Whiteman reported, the Reagan administration refused numerous requests from Grenada's Prime Minister Maurice Bishop to open a dialogue, exchange ambassadors, and move toward normalizing relations between the two countries.

Rather, "we see signs that the U.S. continues to threaten and attack us even from the highest levels, even from President Reagan himself."

Whiteman condemned Reagan for using the "trick" of displaying spy satellite photographs in his March 23 television address to create the impression that the airport under construction in Grenada is a secret military facility. Such U.S. spy technology was hardly necessary, Whiteman pointed out, because "thousands of people visit the airport every week and hundreds visit every day because it is an open place."

The airport is not a threat to anybody, Whiteman stated. "It's for the advancement of tourism and the building of our economy."

Cuban aid to airport

The foreign minister also explained that Grenada makes no secret of Cuban aid in constructing the airport. It is also well known, he said, that the U.S. government refused to help. At the same time, however, U.S. companies have been involved in the project.

"For example, Layne Dredging of Florida was involved in the excavation work and dredging. There are British and Finnish firms involved in the project; many countries are helping."

And in Grenada, "our people are selling bonds worldwide and buying bonds to realize a project that has been a dream of ours for decades."

"One might ask: Why does a government that controls hundreds of airports in its own country and around the world try to deny a small country [the right] to build its first and only international airport? Is it that they wish to keep us in backwardness and dependence?" Whiteman asked.

There could be only one reason the White House is making such provocative, untrue claims:

"I would like to remind you of the Gulf of Tonkin incident which was provoked to justify the bombing of North Vietnam in the 1960s. It seems that the United States is building up hysteria to justify some kind of mercenary invasion of our country." □

FMLN defeats 'gringo battalion'

Reagan rejects talks, pushes intervention

By Ernest Harsch

In one of the largest battles in El Salvador this year, guerrilla forces of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) inflicted a major defeat on the U.S.-trained Ramón Beloso Battalion — the "gringo battalion," as the rebel Radio Venceremos called it.

On March 30, FMLN fighters attacked government forces in San Isidro, a town 100 kilometers north of San Salvador. Seventeen paramilitary troops were killed in the fighting, and the rebels occupied the town.

Units of the Ramón Beloso Battalion were then sent from nearby Osicala to try to retake San Isidro. They failed. According to Radio Venceremos, at least 67 government troops were killed and 46 wounded.

The rebel radio called the battle "a great victory we have won over the dictatorship's best troops, trained in the United States."

Just a few days earlier, in an interview in the March 28 Mexico City daily *Uno más Uno*, FMLN leader Roberto Roca pointed to one of the key factors in the rebels' military gains. "The imperialist training, as technically sophisticated as it may be," he said, "cannot give the puppet army an essential element that is contributing to our victory: the fighting morale that is increasing among us day by day because of the justice of our struggle."

While the battle at San Isidro was one of the most spectacular displays of the FMLN's strength, it was not an isolated event. Since October, the liberation forces have been on a major offensive in various parts of the country. Enjoying widespread popular support, they have been able to expand their political and military influence significantly.

During the first three months of this year, the guerrillas inflicted 1,000 casualties among the dictatorship's forces, took 450 government troops prisoner, and captured 900 guns and 35 artillery pieces.

Lacking any real base of popular support, the dictatorship has continued to rely on military force and terror to rule the country. On March 23, the Human Rights Commission in San Salvador charged that another 32 persons had disappeared over the previous 15 days, including workers, professors, peasants, and students. It said that government security forces were implicated in at least a majority of the cases.

Behind this terror stands Washington. Commenting on the March 20 assassination of Human Rights Commission President Marianella García Villas, a commission communiqué declared that "the bullets that murder peace-loving people come from the arsenals of President Ronald Reagan."

The White House is seeking to increase military aid to the Salvadoran dictatorship to \$136 million — five times what has already been allocated for 1983. The number of U.S. military personnel that Washington acknowledges are in El Salvador has risen from 37 to 52. In addition, the March 20 *New York Times* reported, "There are many more covert intelligence operatives and technicians in the region than military advisers. . . . An exact total for intelligence personnel in El Salvador was not available, but officials estimated that the number exceeded 150."

But as Washington drives deeper into El Salvador to try to shore up the rickety dictatorship, it is facing increasing political opposition at home.

Congressman Michael Barnes, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, said in early March that he had been receiving mail from around the country. "Literally thousands of letters," he reported, "say they don't want to send any assistance [to El Salvador], and maybe five say send it."

The call of the FMLN and the Revolutionary



U.S. adviser and Salvadoran soldier. Pentagon's pupils are not doing too well.

Democratic Front (FDR) for the opening of unconditional negotiations among all Salvadoran forces has also won broad support internationally, including within the United States.

The White House has categorically rejected the idea of such talks. Instead, it has attempted to deflect the impact of the FMLN-FDR diplomatic drive by proposing region-wide negotiations involving all the governments in Central America. Such talks would serve as a forum for Washington's propaganda campaign against Nicaragua and Cuba, which it has accused of interfering in El Salvador's affairs by supplying arms to the FMLN.

According to a report in the March 14 *Washington Post*, a broadcast over Radio Venceremos two days earlier defiantly reaffirmed the rebels' political ties with Cuba and Nicaragua.

"We are and will continue being friends of the people and governments of Cuba and Nicaragua, and it does not shame us," the broadcast said. "Completely to the contrary, we are proud to maintain relations with those people — bastions of the anti-imperialist struggle. The Reagan administration is not one to tell the FMLN who ought to be its friends and who its enemies."

Washington's accusations against Cuba and Nicaragua and its call for regional negotiations are an effort to provide some political cover for U.S. imperialism's growing intervention in the region. Part of this also involves attempting to provoke a war between Nicaragua and Honduras that could serve as a pretext for sending in U.S. combat troops.

The Reagan administration's backing for new elections in El Salvador is likewise an attempt to justify its increasing intervention, by giving the dictatorship a democratic face.

It also was a bid to try to sow divisions within the FMLN and FDR. According to a report in the March 15 *Washington Post*, "One purpose of the elections, stated privately by State Department officials, is to attempt to woo the moderate elements in the leftist political opposition away from their Marxist-Leninist allies."

This attempt has failed. Representatives of the various organizations within the FMLN and FDR have rejected participating in the electoral farce, since it would be impossible for their supporters to campaign freely while the regime's troops and death squads continue to have a free hand. "We would be slaughtered like sheep," one rebel spokesperson commented.

A broadcast over Radio Venceremos, quoting the official position of the FMLN-FDR, said that the elections would only "seek to cover up the genocide" and that their outcome "has already been arranged in Washington."

The FMLN-FDR proposed instead, as a solution to the war, "the total conquest of the four historic demands of the Salvadoran people: a new economic and social order, a new agrarian reform, a broadly based government, and the recovery of our sovereignty."

"That is what we have armed ourselves for, and that is what we are fighting for." □

Israeli settlers impose reign of terror

Seek to drive out Palestinian population

By M. Shajor

TEL AVIV — The people of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are being subjected today to growing threats of mass deportation, massacres in refugee camps, and other criminal acts of terror that are part of the Israeli drive to annex the occupied territories seized in 1967.

In February and March, the West Bank was the scene of a grave escalation in acts of terror committed by the Israeli settlers from the ultrarightist Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) and the army that backs them up.

These acts of terror were accompanied by a flood of declarations in the media from Israeli figures who speak openly of "blood revenge" against the Palestinians.

On February 22, a Gush Emunim rally led by the ultra-Zionist Rabbi Moshe Levinger took place in the heart of Dahariya village, near Hebron, under army protection. Levinger's followers came to threaten Palestinians after an Israeli was killed by a stone thrown in that area.

"There will be no forgiveness for spilt blood," Levinger declared, "except through the blood of he who spilled it." He added, "the answer to bloodshed and to the purity of the land is punishment."

The residents of Dahariya, who had been kept inside their homes under a curfew for 70 days, watched this rally from their rooftops.

Four days later, on the Muslim sabbath, a bomb exploded at the entrance to El-Kazazin mosque in Hebron a few minutes before prayers were scheduled to end. By mere chance, only two bystanders were injured.

The acting mayor of Hebron, Mustafa Natshe, stated that when the identity of those who planted the bombs that maimed two Palestinian mayors two years ago is learned, the identity of those who planted the bomb at the mosque will also be known. Natshe also recalled the bomb that exploded in the Hebron marketplace two years ago and the two hand grenades that exploded in El Hussein schoolyard several months ago.

Purim celebration

On February 27, colonists from Kiryat Arba, a Gush Emunim settlement above Hebron, celebrated the Jewish Purim holiday by shooting at Arab houses and shouting over loudspeakers that the West Bank is "the land of Israel" and Arabs are not wanted. One bullet wounded a four-year-old girl sleeping in her bed.

The following day, settlers shot at an Arab vehicle near Hebron and kidnapped a boy playing with snowballs — the brother of the 4-

year-old girl who was wounded. A group of settlers also entered a refugee camp and beat women thought to be the mothers of boys who threw stones at them. Four women were hospitalized.

On March 3, settlers entered the Yatta village school, shot in the air, kidnapped two pupils, and then handed them over to the police. During the night they tried to enter the Dheishe refugee camp near Bethlehem. The intruders shouted "We'll repeat what we did in Sabra and Shatila," referring to the refugee camps in Lebanon where massacres of Palestinians took place.

Due to previous rumors that settlers had spread about a planned massacre, many of the refugees in the Dheishe camp fled their homes in panic. This time, however, the army prevented the terrorists from entering.

On March 5, a hand grenade exploded on the doorstep of an elementary school in Hebron. Luckily no one was injured.

Settlers on Dome of the Rock

These methods are openly encouraged by the Jewish Defense League's fascist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane, who has a small group in Israel called Kach. Kahane's followers call for the expulsion of all Palestinians from the occupied territories and boast of using weapons against them.

Forty-five followers of Kahane, most of them soldiers, were arrested March 10 as they prepared to seize the Al Aqsa mosque and the Mosque of Omar (the Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites for Muslims the world over.

The group, most of whom were residents of Kiryat Arba, planned to establish a Zionist settlement on the site.

But Kahane is not alone. His crimes are backed by Gush Emunim settlers and are abetted by the military and the government. It was learned, for example, that the plan to build a settlement on the Dome of the Rock was known to various Gush Emunim leaders and to leaders of rightist parties. A few members of parliament reacted by saying that it is a shame that Jews cannot pray on the site of their ancient temple — a site that is the same as that of the Al Aqsa mosque and the Mosque of Omar.

It was also discovered that Uri Brown, a spokesman for the settlements, supported Kahane's plan to establish a Zionist colony at the site of the Muslim shrines in Jerusalem. These same ultrarightist forces were also responsible for the hand grenade attack on a Peace Now demonstration February 10 that killed 1 demonstrator and injured 10. Government officials expressed shock and outrage at

that incident, but they continue to encourage the reign of terror against the Palestinians.

'Tear off their balls'

One of the first acts of newly appointed Minister of Defense Moshe Arens was to visit Hebron on March 9, where he met with Levinger. The two strolled through the Hebron casbah, and Levinger showed Arens the houses that Jews have already colonized in the city. These houses are all fortified, with sandbags up to the windows and Israeli soldiers on the roofs.

Arens declared that Jewish settlements in the Arab cities must be expanded. He is widely believed to be behind the suggestion that large number of Jews go to Nablus May 14, Israeli independence day, to assert Israel's domination of the area. The idea is to invite Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the ceremony.

High Israeli officials openly talk about deporting the Palestinians. One such official is the outgoing army chief of staff, Rafael Eytan, who was found to be indirectly responsible for the massacre in Sabra and Shatila by the commission of inquiry set up by the government. According to an article by Amir Oren in the March 11 issue of the daily *Ha'aretz*, Eytan "is interested not in achievements in the West Bank but in deportations."

Ariel Sharon, until recently Israel's defense minister, advised the occupation troops in the West Bank that the way to deal with Palestinians was to "tear off their balls."

In a trial of seven Israeli soldiers held in January and February, the Israeli army's systematic harassment, indiscriminate punishment, and brutality against the Palestinians in the West Bank was shown to have approval at the highest levels. Charges against the seven had been brought by three reserve officers.

Just following orders

In the course of the trial, a terrible picture of physical and psychological mass punishment of Palestinians was revealed. It was learned, for example, that the Israeli army has secret temporary camps where people were taken and children were beaten by soldiers, sometimes for "the fun of it."

The occupation troops also forced Palestinians worshipping in a mosque to crawl on their hands and knees, to beat each other, and to sing the Israeli national anthem. The water tanks of Palestinian homes were shot up. People were forced to bark like dogs.

But during the trial, the seven soldiers presented as their defense the fact that the measures they took conformed to the orders and guidelines laid down by their superiors. Gen-



Palestinians demonstrate in front of Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in April 1982, after Zionist settler killed two people there. Israeli fascists recently came up with new plan to take over Muslim holy site and establish a colony there.

eral Eytan and Maj. Gen. Uri Orr, who commands the West Bank, were called as witnesses.

Eytan acknowledged that the Israeli army's policy in the West Bank was to harass troublesome Palestinians. He testified: "I ordered punishment of parents of law-breakers. There is a decree in the territories that if a child is not punishable, his parents must be punished. Detain and release them, detain and release them."

Eytan added that the "civil administration should use sanctions against troublesome places," such as withholding licenses, imposing curfews, and making it difficult for residents to cross the bridges into Jordan.

At the end of the trial, the highest-ranking officer was absolved of the charges against him and received a letter from General Orr saying he would continue to support the officer and would see that he is not removed from his command. Two low-ranking soldiers were found guilty of minor infractions.

Paramilitary army

Gush Emunim settlements are built around the core of a private army that cooperates closely with the official army. The Israeli army arms the settlers' vigilante groups and trains them, but takes no responsibility for them. Many of the settlers have private arms stocks in their homes and 36 Kiryat Arba settlers are officially incorporated into the army.

Every settler is armed by the army, including Rabbi Kahane's gangsters. Yet none of the crimes committed against the Palestinians are solved by the police. No one was arrested after the several-hour-long shooting spree on Purim in Hebron. Although the identity of those who planted the bombs that maimed the West Bank mayors two years ago is known to at least two Israeli journalists and was published, no arrests were made.

Nor has the identity of those who planted the hand grenade at the elementary school been discovered.

Rafik Halabi, the Israeli television news correspondent in the occupied territories, said: "What the Kiryat Arba settlers are doing is a carefully planned struggle to liquidate the city of Hebron. For the first time since 1948, the Israeli government has a plan to do in an Arab city, not to play with it, but to liquidate it. Or, as they say, to deport it."

Aharon Domb, the deputy head of the Kiryat Arba municipality, boasts that what has already taken place in the West Bank is child's play in comparison to what will come.

Beside the plan to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip, there is a line of thought among Israeli officials that focuses on expelling the Palestinians from the occupied territories. Such ideas are being seriously discussed in closed sessions of high officials.

Minister of Agriculture Mikhail Dekel was quoted in the February 24 issue of *Davar* as saying that "it is necessary to strive to deport the Arabs from the area." The same Dekel is planning to settle 100,000 Jews in the West Bank in the next two years so that "no government will be able to return it to the Arabs."

Massive land seizures are being carried out today, and with the open backing and participation of the opposition Labor Party and the Labor Party-run Histadrut, which owns many of the biggest economic concerns in Israel.

Israel is today waging a war in the West Bank that complements the one in Lebanon. This war lays bare the real purpose of the invasion of Lebanon.

The war in Lebanon was waged not to secure "peace for the Galilee" as Israeli officials claimed, but rather to eliminate the leadership of the Palestinian people — the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) — in order to create the conditions for mass deportation of

the Palestinians from Lebanon and the occupied territories. That is how Begin hoped to usher in what he claimed would be 40 years of peace.

This was the precise purpose of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, for which Israel is fully responsible and which were planned as an inseparable part of the war. Now that the fighting in Lebanon has stopped, Israel is sharpening its attack on the occupied territories and is preparing for a war against Syria. □

Save the ANC 6!

Six South African freedom fighters are now facing the gallows.

All six are members of the African National Congress (ANC), the foremost South African liberation movement. They are Anthony Bobby Tsotobe, Johannes Shabangu, David Moise, Thelle Simon Mogoerane, Jerry Semano Mosololi, and Marcus Thabo Motaung. All are in their 20s.

Tsotobe, Shabangu, and Moise were convicted on charges of "high treason" for various guerrilla actions and sentenced to death in August 1981. They were convicted on the basis of statements extracted under torture. Their appeals were turned down in November 1982.

The other three were convicted on similar charges in August 1982, also on the basis of forced statements.

The only legal recourse the six have left is to plead for presidential clemency. Whether that succeeds or not depends on international protests.

According to a former political prisoner, the morale of the six is high, and each night they lead other prisoners in chanting freedom slogans.

Protests hit dictatorship

'Work, bread, justice, liberty!'

By Ernest Harsch

Chanting "Pinochet, murderer!" and "Work, bread, justice, and liberty!" hundreds of protesters demonstrated throughout a 20-block area of Santiago March 24. The same day, similar street demonstrations took place in the coastal city of Valparaiso and in Concepción, a major mining and industrial center to the south.

The protests, reportedly organized by the outlawed Communist Party Youth, were called through leaflets distributed in the capital and other cities condemning the Pinochet dictatorship's economic policies.

Although most of the demonstrators in Santiago were youths, office workers and passersby joined in the chanting and jeered the police. The police attacked them with water cannon and gunfire. Street clashes followed.

In a dispatch from Santiago in the March 26 *New York Times*, correspondent Edward Schumacher reported, "Hundreds of youths later blocked rush-hour traffic on the Alameda, a central boulevard, tearing down street signs, starting bonfires and pelting policemen with stones in a brief skirmish."

Hundreds arrested

At the same time as the demonstration, a memorial mass was being held in a nearby church to commemorate Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated by rightists in El Salvador three years ago. Some of the demonstrators sought refuge in the church during the police crackdown. After the mass, two priests and two seminarians were arrested.

In Santiago alone, nearly 250 people were arrested for participating in the demonstration, most of them youths.

Nearly a week later, on March 30, the police detained 34 others, whom the regime claimed had "long histories of participation in activities that are subversive and contrary to public order." They were sent to a detention camp in Pesadires de Pisagua, 2,000 kilometers north of the capital.

The March 24 demonstrations were but the most recent in a series of increasingly bold expressions of opposition to the military dictatorship. More than nine years after the U.S.-organized coup that overthrew the regime of Salvador Allende and that brought the slaughter of tens of thousands of working-class activists, the mass movement in Chile is beginning to recover.

Anger over economic crisis

To a great extent, the new rise in public opposition has been spurred by Chile's rapidly

worsening economic situation.

After nearly a decade of economic policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and U.S. financial "experts," the Chilean economy has been thrown into a devastating depression. During 1982, the gross national product fell by 14 percent. Bankruptcies have reached record levels. Unemployment has climbed to nearly 30 percent, and real wages have fallen by 16 percent. The peso has lost nearly half its value.

Farmers, who are burdened with an agricultural debt of \$1.6 billion, have held meetings and demonstrations in the south. Farmers' actions have been organized to halt the auctioning of farms repossessed by banks.

This discontent over economic questions has even touched sectors that have been staunch supporters of the regime in the past. In October, 10 agricultural, fishing, lumbering, and business associations met in Valdivia to demand a government bailout equal to that given to the banks. Subsequent meetings raised demands for the nationalization of the banks and for a 10-year debt moratorium.

The Truckers Association, which had played an important role in destabilizing the Allende regime and preparing the way for Pinochet's September 1973 military coup, threatened to call a nationwide debt repayment freeze if 300 truckers who were in jail for failing to repay bank loans were not released.

Various right-wing and conservative parties that previously supported Pinochet are now taking their distance from him, some going so far as to explore possible political blocs with the Socialist Party and other forces on the left.

Working class reorganizes

Of more significance to the future of the country, however, has been the response among working people to the economic crisis and to the suppression of democratic rights.

Faced with the sharp rise in unemployment, which in some parts of Chile is as high as 50 percent, communal kitchens and unemployed unions have been formed in many working-class neighborhoods, especially around Santiago. They help organize the unemployed, provide them with assistance, and maintain close ties between jobless workers and the trade unions.

In some areas, the emergence of these unemployed unions has helped initiate broader united fronts of working-class and community organizations, such as the United People's Bloc (BPU) in northern Santiago.

Although the Chilean trade union movement remains split into different national federations

and coordinating bodies, rank-and-file activists have taken important steps toward building trade-union unity on the local and regional levels.

In Maipú, outside Santiago, the Federation of Workers' Unions of Maipú (FESIMA) arose in 1978 following a series of strikes in the area, the first since the 1973 coup. Since then it has grown in strength and influence, setting up strike funds, medical services, union offices, legal aid funds, and job training programs. FESIMA took the initiative to establish the first unemployed union.

In an article in the December 7 Mexico City daily *Uno más Uno*, Swedish journalist Lars Palmgren reported, "For some time now, this experience in Maipú has been applied in other industrial zones in Santiago, such as Vickuna Mackena, Santa Rosa, La Panamericana, the Central Station zone, etc."

Under such conditions of renewed working-class combativity and organization, revolutionary socialists in Chile have been able to play a more active role and to distribute their press more widely than at any other time since the 1973 coup.

'Sitting on a volcano'

"With this unemployment, we're sitting on a volcano," one Christian Democratic Party leader told a reporter.

Although much of the discontent in Chile has been fueled by the economic crisis, it has also focused on the dictatorship's continual violations of democratic and trade-union rights.

In late September 1982, students at the Catholic University in Santiago launched a series of marches and rallies to protest soaring fees, restrictions on their rights, and the abduction, beating, and rape of a female student by a gang of progovernment thugs. Other student demonstrations took place at the University of Chile in Santiago and the Catholic University in Valparaiso.

In early October, crowds rallied outside the Santiago Cathedral to shout antigovernment slogans. A week later, several thousand people staged a "hunger march" through the center of Santiago and were dispersed by police with dogs.

On December 3, Manuel Bastos, an outspoken labor leader, was expelled from the country for leading a protest rally the night before.

In mid-December, thousands of workers, students, and shantytown dwellers surged through Santiago to demand that all exiles be allowed to return to Chile and that full democratic rights be restored. Police attacks led to street clashes, and between 100 and 200 people were arrested.

Another expression of opposition to the dictatorship has been the growing popularity of *peñas*, folk song festivals that often have political overtones. At one in early December, wild applause erupted when a young woman sang, "My people are beginning to wake up, beginning to walk." □

Debate in British Labour Party heats up

Ken Livingstone denounces 'systematic discrimination'

[On February 26, Ken Livingstone, the Labour Party leader of the Greater London Council, arrived in Belfast, Northern Ireland, for a two-day visit at the invitation of Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison. Livingstone was accompanied by Greater London Council member Steve Bundred and a member of London's Islington Borough Council, Cathy Bundred, both members of the Labour Party.

[During their time in Northern Ireland, the London Labour Party leaders visited Belfast's Catholic ghettos, held private discussions with Sinn Fein leaders, and addressed a public meeting of several hundred people.

[The visit provoked a storm of outrage from the British press, which accused Livingstone of making common cause with the Irish Republican Army. "Red Ken in Shock Trip to IRA" screamed the *News of the World*. "Red Ken is Greeted by IRA Pals," said the *Sunday People*. "Fury as Red Ken Sees IRA," exclaimed the *Sunday Mirror*.

[A particularly shameful response came from Labour Party leader Michael Foot. Instead of defending Livingstone from the torrent of abuse by the same forces that want to see the Labour Party buried, Foot attacked his trip. Foot declared that Sinn Fein, the political organization that represents much of Belfast's Catholic community, "is a terrorist organization, which supports terrorism." But Foot's treachery will not stop the debate over Ireland that is going on inside the Labour Party and the union movement.

[Livingstone had invited three Sinn Fein elected members of the Northern Ireland Assembly — Gerry Adams, Danny Morrison, and Martin McGuinness — to visit London last December. But that visit was prevented by a December 8 British government order banning the three from entering England. The exclusion order pointed up the hypocrisy of the British government's claim that Northern Ireland is an integral part of Britain.

[Upon Livingstone's return to London, he was interviewed by Phil Hears and Carol Turner. The interview, major excerpts of which are published below, is reprinted from the first issue of *Socialist Action*, dated March 18.]

* * *

Question. The main line of attack of the right-wing press and the media was that you didn't consult both sides. Why did you restrict your visit to the Republican community?

Answer. Every political grouping except Sinn Fein and the IRA can come to London

and put their case. I've heard the views of [Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists, the Official Unionists, the Alliance Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party [SDLP — a reformist party based on the Catholic population] at inordinate length in the press and on television.

That kind of coverage is just not afforded to Sinn Fein. You need to go there just to resolve some of your own ignorance and misconceptions.

What we want to do is to get Labour councillors, members of Parliament, Labour candidates and trade unionists to go over and meet Sinn Fein for themselves. We're hoping that we'll get that ban on Sinn Fein lifted, so we can hold an open conference here at the Greater London Council at which all five parties can put their view.

Q. What were your impressions of the nationalist areas?

A. The scale of poverty and unemployment is worse than anywhere else in Britain. Added to that is the systematic discrimination against the Catholics practised for centuries, particularly during the period when the [Northern Ireland] parliament was run by the Unionists.

Many of the utopian groups on the British left make bland calls for uniting everyone behind some generally specious campaign. But no one can avoid the fact that if you are a Catholic you are two-and-a-half times more likely

to be unemployed than if you're a Protestant.

Although unemployment overall is 20 percent, within the male Catholic population it is over 50 percent. And on some of the [housing] estates in West Belfast 60 to 70 percent is not uncommon.

So there is systematic discrimination and poverty. Nothing can prepare you for just how bad it all is.

The effect of the war has been that the area has been adapted to meet the needs of the military. Almost all the play areas and the lawns have been churned up by tanks and armoured cars travelling over them.

Each of the estates stands as if it's in the middle of a battleground. The British army have not, as we are told, stationed themselves between the two communities, but within the Catholic areas.

Their forts have been built generally next to schools or playgrounds or hospitals: Their observation posts are perched on top of blocks of flats occupied by Catholics. You can't walk down the Falls Road for more than a few minutes without passing soldiers armed and ready to fire.

I came out of the house we were staying in one night and collided with one of the troops walking backwards.

It's an amazing situation — you just walk out of your door and you step into a gun. The nature of the patrolling is intimidatory — they move through the estates like cowboys from a

New labor paper appears in Britain

[*Socialist Challenge*, the weekly newspaper previously put out by supporters of the Fourth International in Britain, recently ceased publication. On March 18 a new paper, *Socialist Action*, began publication in Britain. The following front-page statement by *Socialist Action* editor Alan Freeman appeared in the first issue.]

* * *

Socialist Action is a new weekly labour movement paper.

The first objective of the new paper will be to support all those fighting against the government with the aim of defeating Thatcher and electing a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

The fight to stop the missiles and to commit a future Labour government to unilat-

eral disarmament is vital.

Therefore we will support and help to build a socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

We will put forward a definite editorial viewpoint, but our columns will be open to all those who agree with our immediate objectives.

Our editorial aim will be to act as a voice for the interests of working people worldwide — from Poland to Central America — inside the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Our top priority will be to explain why the British labour movement should support the cause of Irish self-determination and freedom.

In the year of Karl Marx's death we will aim to show the living relevance of revolutionary Marxism for socialists today.

film shoot-out.

This constant intimidation has mobilised the entire Catholic population against the presence of the troops there.

Anyone who says that there is support for the troops in the Catholic community is wrong. The only area of debate is whether they should be withdrawn immediately or phased out over a period of time.

Q. Is opposition to the troops translated into active support for Sinn Fein?

A. There can be no doubt that Sinn Fein has won the allegiance of the Catholic working class in Belfast. Sinn Fein will be the largest voice of the Catholic community in Belfast after the general election.

During our visit there was no doubting the enthusiasm as we walked around the streets. And it wasn't just for us. It was for the leaders of Sinn Fein — Danny Morrison and Gerry Adams.

The people we talked to were quite clear that what broke the hold of the SDLP in that area was their position on the hunger strike and Bobby Sands.

I think the SDLP is probably finished as the major electoral voice of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. But it wasn't just that the SDLP took a mistaken position on the hunger strike.

People have seen the SDLP around for almost a decade and [SDLP leader] Gerry Fitt for a decade before that — and nothing has happened except it's got worse.

On top of that you've had the emergence of a younger, dynamic leadership within Sinn Fein with a much clearer conception of socialist policies. That must be much more attractive to ordinary working-class Catholics.

Sinn Fein are doing what I think is correct — not issuing ideologically pure tracts, but going into the estates and the areas of bad housing; taking up the issues around the poverty; campaigning on behalf of the local people and drawing the political lesson from it.

That's the most valuable way of building support for socialist policies; taking up issues which face people on a day on day basis and drawing the political lessons, so that you agitate and educate at the same time.

Q. How can we break the political logjam on Ireland in British politics?

A. Our problem here is that there is a two-to-one majority among the British people for getting out of Ireland. The logjam is in the political establishment.

This is the result of Unionists' work to ensure their own veto [over a British withdrawal].

The Labour Party is moving very rapidly. The insertion of the word "early" into the proposal for talks in the [Labour Party] draft manifesto document reflects the pressure building up on the parliamentary party for a general withdrawal.

We may be nearer than people accept to get-

ting the Labour Party committed to a withdrawal from Ireland.

On most of the issues we face, the pressure is built up in the constituencies, then the unions, and then it is forced on the parliamentary leadership. This is one area where the major problem is the unions.

We may find that we can persuade the parliamentary leadership before we can persuade the TUC [Trades Union Congress]. This may reflect the fact that most of the trade unionists in Northern Ireland are Protestants in British trade unions. Catholics tend to be either unemployed or in Southern Ireland unions.

When the Labour Party talks about talking to the trade unions, they should also be talking to the Southern unions.

The pressure on the parliamentary leaders is a consequence of the prospect of a Labour government presiding over another five years of war and bloodshed.

United States

A great day for the Irish

St. Patrick's Day parade reveals deep polarization

By Will Reissner

[The following article appeared in the April 1 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*.]

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NEW YORK — More than 100,000 marchers paraded up Fifth Avenue on March 17 in one of the most controversial St. Patrick's Day parades in the more than 200-year history of the event here. Hundreds of thousands of spectators lined the route.

The large turnout — despite dismal weather and two commuter rail strikes — was a repudiation of the well-publicized attempts by the Irish government, the Reagan administration, prominent Irish-American Democrats, and the Catholic church hierarchy to sabotage the event.

Their refusal to participate in the St. Patrick's Day parade was sparked by the landslide election of Irish Republican Army supporter Michael Flannery as grand marshal by the event's organizing committee.

Last November, the 81-year-old Flannery and four other Irish-Americans were acquitted in federal court on charges of supplying weapons to the Irish Republican Army (IRA). During the trial the defendants had made clear their support for the Irish freedom struggle.

Senators Daniel Moynihan and Edward Kennedy and former New York Gov. Hugh Carey announced they would not take part in the parade because of Flannery's support for the IRA. The Pentagon withdrew military bands and the New York archdiocese pulled out parochial school bands.

In addition, Cardinal Terence Cooke refused to give the traditional greeting to the grand

Q. Surely the record of the Labour leaders shouldn't convince us that they're thinking of an early withdrawal from Ireland?

A. They're talking about accelerating the process of consultation around the issue of British withdrawal. What seems likely in the manifesto is a statement that no grouping in the North can have a veto over the withdrawal process. That's the key.

There's a degree of war weariness — of exhaustion and a gradual realisation that we're not going to see a military solution. There's overwhelming public support for a British withdrawal, admittedly on the basis of a "get the troops home" position.

So I'm much more optimistic than I think a lot of other people are, because I do think there's a growing sense of despair among Labour MPs, and not just them, plus realisation that we've got to get out. □

marshal from the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral along the parade route.

Despite Cardinal Cooke's publicized opposition to Flannery's election as grand marshal, Flannery received a standing ovation from the 2,500 people in the congregation at St. Patrick's Cathedral when he arrived for mass before the parade.

All along the route Flannery was greeted with cheers and applause. "Walk proud, Michael!" shouted Miriam McManus, visiting New York from Northern Ireland, as Flannery passed the empty front steps of the cathedral. "Up the rebels!" added Jim McDonnell, a member of a bagpipe band.

When Cardinal Cooke finally appeared on the steps more than half an hour after Flannery had passed, he was roundly booed by marchers. Trying to make the best of the jeers, Cooke told the press, "I frankly expected more" of them.

The controversy surrounding this year's parade reflects a polarization among Irish-Americans as the freedom struggle against British rule in Northern Ireland intensifies.

The 1981 death of Bobby Sands and nine other hunger strikers in British jails in Northern Ireland and the growing strength of the freedom struggle there has made it impossible for politicians like Moynihan, Carey, and Kennedy to hide their tacit support for continued British rule behind empty words about eventual Irish reunification.

Although Reagan, Carey, Moynihan, Kennedy, and Cooke attack the Irish Republican Army as terrorists, large numbers of Irish-Americans as well as Blacks and other workers increasingly identify with the Irish freedom

fighters, as shown by the support for Flannery along the parade route.

When asked about Senator Moynihan's refusal to march, Flannery stated, "I owe him a debt of gratitude. His absence has added greatly to the parade today."

The growing polarization was evident even within the march itself. On the one hand New York's Mayor Edward Koch, who describes the IRA as "vile and despicable," and thousands of uniformed cops were welcomed as part of the parade.

At the same time, for two hours this reporter stood in one spot watching contingent after contingent of marchers pass a spectator who was holding up a sign that read "God bless Michael Flannery — Moynihan & Kennedy aren't fit to tie his shoes!" As each group of marchers spotted the sign, faces broke into smiles, people began applauding, and fists shot into the air.

Irish Northern Aid, a group founded by Flannery that raises money for the families of political prisoners in Northern Ireland, was a special target of attack by the media and politicians in the period leading up to the march.

Despite these attacks, the Irish Northern Aid contingent was far larger than in previous years. Last year its contingent filled two blocks. This year it swelled to six solid blocks of marchers, many wearing T-shirts reading "IRA — Irish Freedom Fighters."

A contingent of several hundred uniformed firefighters marched behind banners stating: "England Get Out of Ireland" and "Bobby Sands and Comrades Live On."

Thus the campaign against the "politicization" of the parade and what was described as its "pro-IRA" character, seriously backfired.

At the end of the march Flannery told reporters that the success of the parade showed that "the British have no place in Ireland. I hope that I got my point across."

This year's march marked a break from the traditional rigidly nonpolitical celebration.

The organizers, however, attempted to limit its political scope. They adhered to the traditional policy of banning all signs and banners except those that say "England Get Out of Ireland" or bear pictures of the dead hunger strikers.

Members of the New York H-Block/Armagh Committee tried to carry signs blasting the British army's use of plastic bullets to kill children in Northern Ireland. But they were not allowed into the parade until they surrendered their placards. Signs referring to current trials of supporters of Irish freedom were also taken away.

As a result, there were more banners and placards among the spectators than among marchers. "Ireland, England's Vietnam"; "Up the IRA"; and "Britain Out of Ireland, U.S. Out of El Salvador" were among the many signs along the sidelines.

Marchers who managed to bring such signs into the parade report that they were applauded along the whole route. □

Indochina

Three countries hold summit

Vietnam to withdraw more troops from Kampuchea

By Will Reissner

At a February 22-23 summit conference of Laos, Kampuchea, and Vietnam — held in the Laotian capital, Vientiane — the three Indochinese countries endorsed a further withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in 1983.

Vietnamese troops entered that country in late December 1978 to help Kampuchean forces overthrow the murderous Pol Pot regime. They have remained to protect the Kampuchean people from a return by Pol Pot's forces, who are concentrated in bases along the border with Thailand, where they are armed and supplied by China and right-wing regimes in the region.

In 1982, there was a partial withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, reflecting the growing strength of the Kampuchean government headed by Heng Samrin, which was set up in January 1979.

The Vientiane summit also confirmed that "all volunteers from the Vietnamese army would be withdrawn from Kampuchea" once the threat from reactionary forces backed by China and use of Thai territory to attack Kampuchea ends.

In an interview with the Vietnam News Agency, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach stated that "the annual withdrawal of Vietnamese volunteers demonstrates the increasing strength of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the weakening of the Pol Pot gang and other Khmer reactionaries."

Vietnam's ambassador to the United Nations, Hoang Bich Son, told *Intercontinental Press* on March 4 that although the Western press had been filled with speculation about a possible winter Vietnamese offensive in Kampuchea, no such offensive was necessary. Citing Foreign Minister Thach, Son pointed out "you don't need a big net to catch small fish."

Son scoffed at recent reports of a raging battle between Vietnamese troops and Kampuchean rightist guerrillas at the Nong Chan guerrilla base on the Thai border. These reports, he said, were grossly exaggerated by the rightists in order to make themselves look stronger and more important than they really are. In fact, Son asserted, "this was a minor battle of little military significance."

He added that "the armed forces of Kampuchea now have adequate strength to cope with the Pol Potists and other reactionaries." Vietnamese troops remain in the country only to deter a full-scale invasion of Kampuchea by forces based in Thailand.

Although Washington portrays Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea as an occupation army, four retired U.S. diplomats who visited Kampuchea in February came back with a different



impression.

According to the March 3 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, one member of the group stated that Kampuchean "seemed extremely afraid of any change which might allow Pol Pot to return." As a result, they favor the presence of Vietnamese troops in their country.

The former diplomats felt that any Vietnamese withdrawal would have to take place over a long period of time. "To avoid panic here," one of the delegation stated, "the Vietnamese would have to withdraw, over, say a five-year period."

The group, which included Emory Swank, U.S. ambassador to Kampuchea from 1970 to 1973 (when the country was still known as Cambodia), noted that the Vietnamese troops "were behaving extremely well." In fact, Vietnamese soldiers are often seen in markets or on the roads "alone and unarmed."

The summit meeting also expressed a hope for improved relations with China. "The mutual assistance between the Chinese people and the three Indochinese peoples in their revolutionary cause is a historical reality which cannot be denied," said a statement issued by the summit.

The statement added that "the present abnormal situation in the relations between the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam with the People's Republic of China is not caused by the three countries of Indochina."

The Indochinese countries, the statement notes, "will spare no efforts to restore normal relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of co-existence in peace, for the interest of their countries and of the Chinese people." □

Real situation of the Soviet economy

Continuing growth amid capitalist crisis

By William Gottlieb

[The following article appeared in the April 1 issue of the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*.]

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The boss press is waging a campaign to convince working people in this country that the Soviet economy is crisis-ridden. The situation in agriculture, according to pro-big-business "experts," is especially disastrous. This, we are told, is why the Soviet Union depends on massive grain imports.

Some journalists even say conditions in agriculture were better under tsarist rule. The Russian empire was a major exporter of grain, wasn't it? Writing in the November 5, 1982, *New York Times*, Max Frankel, for example, bemoaned the loss of "the Czar's once fertile land."

Soviet industry is also pictured as crisis-ridden. Production and labor productivity are allegedly stagnant, even declining. Some "experts" go so far as to claim that the Soviet economy is teetering on the brink of collapse. They gloat that the "failure" of the Soviet economy shows, once and for all, that it is impossible to run a modern, complex economy without capitalists.

Several months ago this view of the Soviet economy took some hard knocks from an unlikely source, the CIA.

Actually this isn't as unlikely as it seems. A key function of the CIA is to keep the U.S. ruling class informed about the Soviet Union and other workers states.

CIA report

In his introduction to the CIA report, released in December 1982, Senator William Proxmire pointed out, "Analysts in the West have typically focused on Soviet economic problems. The attention to the negative aspects of the Soviet economic system and to the failures of performance is appropriate and necessary."

"The danger in such an approach is that, by overlooking the positive side, we see an incomplete picture, which leads us to form incorrect conclusions. The Soviet Union is our principal potential adversary. All the more reason to have accurate, balanced assessments of the state of its economy. One of the worst things we can do is to underestimate the economic strength of our principal adversary."

The report concludes that "an accurate, balanced assessment" shows the Soviet economy will continue to experience "positive growth for the foreseeable future."

This, by the way, sharply contrasts with the

contraction experienced by the U.S. economy every few years due to the normal operation of the capitalist business cycle.

The CIA report further states that "an economic collapse in the USSR is not considered even a remote possibility."

Soviet economy's growth

The CIA admits that over the last 30 years the Soviet economy has grown rapidly. Washington's spy agency estimates the Soviet gross national product (GNP) grew at an average annual rate of 4.6 percent. The official figure for the U.S. economy during the same period averaged 3.4 percent.

According to the report, "the value of Soviet capital assets expressed in constant prices increased almost 11-fold between 1950 and 1980 and about 4.4-fold from 1960-1980." The fact that economic expansion continued at this level, "long after the USSR had recovered from wartime devastation," is considered "phenomenal" by the CIA.

In some branches of industry, Soviet production leads the world. For example, in 1977 the United States produced 113.7 million metric tons of steel. The Soviet Union produced 146.7 million metric tons. In 1978, 572.5 million metric tons of crude petroleum were produced in the USSR; U.S. production was 425 million metric tons.

The Soviet Union produced 127.1 million metric tons of cement in 1977, compared to the 72.6 million metric tons produced in the United States.

The USSR also led the United States in the production of cotton yarn that year, producing 1.6 million metric tons compared with 1.1 million metric tons produced in the United States.

The continued expansion of Soviet industry has led to the virtual disappearance of unemployment. This stands in vivid contrast to massive unemployment that workers in all capitalist countries suffer today. In most of these countries joblessness is at the highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The prolonged slump on the world capitalist market has also hurt the Soviet economy by cutting into its sales to the capitalist world. But unemployment has not reappeared there. Instead, the Soviet economy continues to experience a growing labor shortage amid the current recession and longer-run stagnation of world capitalism.

Soviet agriculture a failure?

Perhaps no other aspect of the Soviet economy has been more distorted in the capitalist press than Soviet agriculture.

In tsarist times Russia was a major exporter

of grain, since only a thin layer of Russian landowners, government bureaucrats, and capitalists were able to buy much food. The majority of the people in the tsar's empire were peasants and ate what they grew themselves. Workers' wages were so low they could afford only a scanty diet. Since most people had little ability to pay for bread at home, Russian landlords and grain merchants turned to the world market to find buyers.

In years of bad harvests, millions of Russian toilers were victims of famines. Many simply starved to death. Not for nothing was the demand for bread so prominent in the 1917 Russian revolution.

During the early years of Soviet industrialization, which began in earnest in the late 1920s, agriculture was largely neglected. The Stalin government poured disproportionate resources into heavy industry at the expense of agricultural development. Resistance by farmers to forced collectivization in the early 1930s hobbled agricultural production further. Finally, the invasion of the Soviet Union by German imperialism led to a terrible destruction of lives and wealth. In the 1930s and 1940s hunger and famine stalked large areas of the Soviet Union.

The aftermath of these negative factors weighed heavily on Soviet agricultural progress in the post-World War II period. Actually, it's only been in the last two or three decades that the policies of planned development that have marked Soviet industry were systematically extended to agriculture. Just as in industry, the methods of economic planning have brought impressive results.

Compared to the years between 1961 and 1965, the average annual production of grain in the Soviet Union was 67 percent higher in 1976-1978. During the same period, production of raw cotton rose by 71 percent, sugar beets by 61 percent, vegetables by 49 percent, meat by 57 percent, milk by 44 percent, and eggs by 111 percent.

Biggest wheat producer in the world

The U.S. capitalist press virtually never mentions that the Soviet Union actually produces more wheat than the United States. In fact, it is the biggest wheat producer in the world. In 1979, a poor harvest year in the Soviet Union, 90.1 million metric tons of wheat were produced in that country. This compares to the 58.3 million metric tons in the United States the same year. Overall, Soviet agricultural production is about 80 percent of the U.S. level.

The high level of grain production in the USSR explains how the Kremlin has been able

to keep down the price of bread for decades, despite the great increase of paper rubles in circulation. According to the *Kansas City Times*, bread prices have not increased since 1955. The price of bread is about 10 cents per loaf, far less than in the United States. In addition to these very low bread prices, milk, meat, and other basic foods are also cheap, according to the *Kansas City Times*.

No less a source than the CIA report admits, "Despite the large scale expansion in agricultural imports, the Soviet Union remains basically self-sufficient with respect to food."

Why then does the Soviet Union import so much grain?

The reason is the big increase in the living standards in the Soviet Union. "The good life for the Soviet populace," the CIA report declares, "in the form of a rising standard of living, has been of importance to Moscow too for almost 30 years."

Desired goods in the Soviet Union do not go unsold because people lack money to buy them. That problem largely disappeared when the capitalists were tossed out. Imported grain is not needed for bread. The Soviet people have enough of that. It is used as feed for stock.

As the standard of living rises, the Soviet people are shifting toward a diet richer in protein, rather than heavily weighted toward bread and potatoes. Increasingly the Soviet diet consists of meat, poultry, and eggs.

In tsarist times bad harvests, which still plague Soviet agriculture, would mean famine. Today it means lines at stores and less beef.

Productivity

The weakness of agriculture in the USSR compared to the United States is not so much

in the level of food production as it is in productivity. While the productivity of labor has been advancing, the Soviet Union still uses considerably more labor in agriculture than the United States to produce a comparable amount of food. In an economy that has a serious labor shortage, this is a big problem.

Part of this productivity lag flows from natural conditions. The Soviet Union is located much farther north than the United States. It thus contains less arable land. For example, only around 33 percent of the total agricultural land is south of the 48th parallel. (This runs near the U.S.-Canadian border). This means that growing conditions are more difficult and seasons are shorter. Another problem is that rainfall tends to vary a lot from year to year. As much as 70 to 80 percent of Soviet farm land is prone to drought.

Where climate conditions are comparable to those of the United States, Soviet yields for many crops are also comparable. In 1975-79, for example, Soviet grain yields per harvested acre were 84 percent of the yields obtained in five U.S. farm states and the prairie provinces of Canada. When land that lies fallow is included, the Soviet yields were 114 percent of the North American. Cotton yields in the Soviet Union are superior to those of the American Southwest.

To be sure, this is not the picture for all crops. Hay yields are still far inferior to those in the United States, even where climate conditions are similar. In addition, storage, roads, and other elements of the infrastructure are inadequate. While the planned economy has made immense progress in agriculture in just a few decades, large pockets of age-old backwardness remain.

One of the most persistent myths in the capi-

talist press is that of the relative weight of private plots in Soviet agriculture.

Soviet farmers (and other Soviet citizens) are allowed to cultivate small plots of land privately. They can either consume the products or sell them on the open market.

This is not new. It has been official Soviet policy since the 1930s. This reflects the reality that, notwithstanding Stalin's forced collectivization, the transition from private to socialized farming (that is, farming by collective and state farms) is a gradual process that extends over many years. The existence of private plots shows this process is not completed in the Soviet Union, even today.

Myth of private plots

The U.S. press, however, continues to create the impression that the weight of private plots is growing. Allegedly, the Kremlin's attachment to "Marxist dogma" prevents it from solving agricultural problems the only way they can be solved — by returning to private enterprise and abandoning the collective and state farms.

For example, it is frequently reported that the bulk of potatoes are still grown privately, not collectively. What is not mentioned is that, unlike most other agricultural products, the level of potato production has increased very little over the last 20 years.

In 1976-78 potato production was only 4 percent higher than it was in 1961-65. That is not surprising. Potatoes play a less and less important role in the diet. Production of potatoes remains largely private because potato production is still a backward branch of Soviet agriculture.

In reality the role of private plots has been declining. In 1960 the average Soviet farmer obtained 42.9 percent of his income from culti-



Soviet wheat harvest. Despite claims of agricultural disaster in capitalist media, Soviet Union is world's largest wheat producer.

vating his private plot. By 1976 income from private plots had dropped to only 26.3 percent.

In fact, the private plots are withering away faster than the Moscow government would like. Soviet farmers increasingly demand to be treated like Soviet workers. They want the same social security, educational, and cultural opportunities and the same hours of work. Less and less do they resemble the peasants of old, working from dawn to dusk on their tiny private farms.

Nonetheless, the private sector fills needs that the collective and state farms are not yet able to meet. Potatoes, fruit, and other products are still produced privately. That is why the Kremlin periodically embarks on a campaign of encouraging Soviet citizens to cultivate small plots of land.

Military pressures

There is no general crisis in the Soviet economy, if by that is meant a decline in production or widespread hunger. This does not mean, however, that the Soviet economy faces no serious problems or even a partial crisis (that is, falling production in certain branches of industry or agriculture).

The most important difficulties are those it has little or no control over.

To begin with, the Soviet Union is faced with huge military expenditures needed to defend itself from imperialist aggression. Unlike the United States, it has no large surplus of unused productive capacity and labor power (that is, massive unemployment). So labor and materials that could otherwise be used to produce consumer goods or expand the means of production are employed in building up its armed forces.

This is a necessity that has been imposed on the Soviet workers state since the revolution of 1917. The Soviet Union has twice been invaded by imperialist powers — during the 1918–21 civil war, by troops from 14 countries; and during World War II, by Germany.

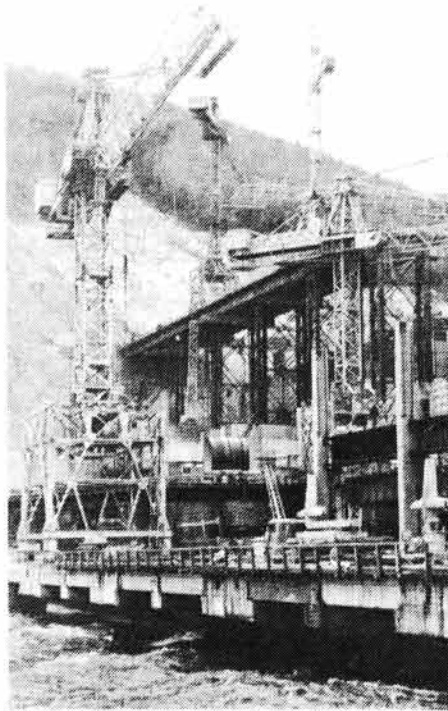
The need to defend itself against the gigantic nuclear arsenal of imperialism has been a drag on the Soviet Union's economic development. This, in fact, is one aim of the massive U.S. nuclear arms buildup.

Shortage of labor

Another problem, one that has been getting worse, is the labor shortage. Capitalism does not face this problem. U.S. workers only wish that this difficulty existed here.

Under the capitalist mode of production, massive unemployment is the rule, not the exception. Millions are idled and many factories are closed or used only partially. The degree of unemployment and underutilization of capacity varies with the ups and downs of the business cycle. But unemployment and excess productive capacity rarely disappear, even during the short-lived peak of a boom. There is always a reservoir of unemployed workers, what Marx characterized as the "industrial reserve army."

Except for periods of all-out military mobili-



Soviet hydroelectric plant being built.

zation, such as during World War II, a huge gap exists between the physical capacity to produce and the amount of production that is profitable for the capitalists to carry out. Resources are never fully mobilized for either economic growth or for meeting human needs. This is irrational from the standpoint of the producing majority, but not from the standpoint of a system based on private ownership of the means of production. The capitalists decide how many workers and how much plant capacity to put into motion on the basis of how much profit they expect to make.

As a result, the growth pattern of the capitalist economy is jerky and slow compared to that of the Soviet economy.

In the Soviet economy, production is for use, not for profit. Instead of capitalist firms competing against one another for profit, production in the USSR is carried out according to an overall state plan. Therefore, as long as a product meets some need, it can always be sold.

The Soviet economy is limited primarily by its physical capacity to produce. That is, by the supply of labor power, means of consumption, raw materials, machines, factories, transport, and other means of production on one side, and by human needs on the other. Crises of overproduction — where needed products pile up in warehouses because they cannot be sold at a profit, and production is thus brought to a standstill — do not occur in the Soviet economic system.

Real economic problems

To a much greater extent than the capitalist economies, the Soviet economy, therefore, tends to run up against bottlenecks of supply of

materials, transport, and labor shortage. It's as though the economy were operating under the strain of boom conditions all the time.

For many years this tendency did not manifest itself in its full force. Industry was still so little developed, starting from a low base at the time of the revolution, that it could not absorb all those seeking industrial employment.

But this is no longer true. The continued growth in demand for labor power now increasingly outstrips supply. This is the primary reason that the rate of growth of the Soviet economy has slowed down in recent years.

The world capitalist crisis also creates big problems for the Soviet economy. The Soviet Union sells commodities on the world market in exchange for dollars (and other capitalist currencies). With these dollars it purchases goods used to raise living standards or to increase economic growth. For example, the Soviet Union may sell oil on the world market; with the proceeds, it buys advanced technology from major capitalist countries. The drop in the demand for oil makes this more difficult today.

Credit crunches work in the same direction. It becomes more difficult and increasingly expensive for the Soviet Union to borrow money in order to import goods.

These problems of the Soviet economy are further worsened by the stepped-up economic warfare waged by the Reagan administration. Reagan has attempted to block the export of new technology to the Soviet Union and to strangle the USSR's access to credit. This slows Soviet imports and thus Soviet economic growth. It also hurts U.S. workers and farmers, since reduced exports to the Soviet Union means more unemployment for workers and fewer markets for farmers.

Parasitic bureaucracy

The above difficulties flow from natural conditions and from factors unavoidable during the transition to socialism in a world economy still predominantly capitalist.

But there are other problems, as well. Since the rise of Stalin in the mid-1920s, the Soviet government has been governed by a parasitic bureaucratic layer that consumes a considerable amount of resources in the form of lavish material privileges — much better food, homes, access to special stores, large cars, and so on. The resources diverted to maintain these privileged consumption levels could otherwise be used to improve the condition of the workers and farmers, or expand the economy.

Furthermore, the bureaucratic caste has usurped political power and maintains its grip with totalitarian methods. This is how it protects its privileged social position.

The lack of democracy for workers and farmers means that the country's economic plans lack the necessary amount of involvement and feedback from the producers themselves. As a result, the plans are frequently arbitrary and fail to take proper account of available resources or social needs. The inevitable disproportions and bottlenecks are greatly

magnified. Speculation, black marketeering, and corruption thrive in this atmosphere. All this disorganizes planning.

Moreover, the lack of democratic worker participation in administering their state is a drag on morale, initiative, and other factors vital to raising labor productivity. Improvement of the productivity of labor is the material foundation that enables the workers state to achieve lasting progress.

In his own way, Yuri Andropov, Brezhnev's successor as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, has been forced to acknowledge the results of some of these factors. Andropov and other Kremlin leaders have made widely publicized attacks on corruption and launched a drive to increase labor discipline. Soviet workers are being urged to report instances of corruption to the party.

Despite the publicity these pronouncements have received, they do not amount to a real attack on gross privilege and inequality. Like Brezhnev before him, Andropov's social and political base is the parasitic bureaucracy. This sharply limits the extent of the housecleaning that Andropov or any other section of the Soviet leadership will carry out.

In fact, much of the brunt of the Andropov campaign is falling on Soviet workers. In reality, however, it is the entire system of bureaucratic privilege that undermines class consciousness, and thus labor discipline, in the Soviet Union.

The answer to these problems is the removal of this bureaucratic layer and its replacement by a government based on the involvement of the Soviet workers and farmers themselves in all aspects and at all levels of social and economic planning. To a much greater degree than was the case under Lenin and the early Soviet government, conditions today are ripe — in fact, they cry out — for this.

Literacy

In the first years of the revolution, the vast mass of the Soviet people could neither read nor write. Most were peasants rather than wage workers.

Today this situation has been transformed. Most of the population are workers. The collective farmers are gradually losing their peasant character and acquiring the same outlook as industrial workers and state-farm workers.

According to the CIA's report on the Soviet economy, "Literacy is by now almost universal in the USSR" and the "educational level of the population has been rising rapidly. Twenty-three percent of those over 16 in 1979 have completed at least a secondary education (10th grade in the Soviet Union) compared with only 14 percent in 1970."

The greatest advances have been among the peoples of Central Asia. Under the tsars, these people lived under conditions of extreme oppression and backwardness. Illiteracy was almost universal.

According to the CIA report, "A particular effort is being made" by the Soviet government "to expand the education of the indigen-

ous nationality groups in the Central Asian republics. The USSR wants to upgrade the skills of the relatively large pool of labor available there and possibly encourage out-migration by assigning these better educated young people to labor-short areas."

A dynamic, progressive society

The Soviet workers state is a dynamic and progressive society. Its economy has made and continues to make tremendous progress, in spite of obstacles thrown up by the parasitic bureaucratic caste.

Why then does the capitalist press lie about an alleged economic crisis there?

An immediate reason is the deep recession in the capitalist world. This prolonged economic slump is leading workers to question capitalism. Are such crises really necessary?

Not being able to deny that crises of overproduction are inevitable under capitalism, the ruling class claims that even worse would be in

store for workers and farmers in the United States if they overthrew capitalism. Without employers guided by the profit motive, they claim, the workers would never be able to run the economy. The "failure" of the Soviet economy proves the point.

The only problem with this capitalist propaganda is that the Soviet economy is *not* a failure. The bosses, therefore, have to present a one-sided "analysis" of the problems of the Soviet economy in order to make it *seem* a failure. They are afraid that working people would draw some obvious lessons if we knew the facts.

Not only that capitalists are unnecessary for production, but that they are an actual and growing hindrance. It is the capitalists, as a class, who are responsible for the crises of overproduction that throw millions out of work. We could do much better without them.

That is the lesson of the successes of the Soviet economy. □

Delegation of Dominican left visits Nicaragua and Cuba

By Michael Baumann

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — A delegation made up of leaders of 11 different left organizations in the Dominican Republic visited here in mid-March in a demonstration of united solidarity with the Sandinista revolution.

In face of a deepening economic crisis and escalating imperialist intervention in the region, the Dominican groups have found increasing areas of political agreement.

All support the revolutionary governments in Nicaragua, Cuba, and Grenada as well as the coalitions of revolutionary forces fighting for freedom in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The delegation, hosted by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, had the opportunity to meet with leaders of the FSLN as well as to visit numerous mass organizations in different parts of the country. Several of their meetings were featured on Sandinista TV news.

After a week in Nicaragua, the group flew on to Cuba, where another week of meetings and discussions was scheduled.

The delegation was made up of the member organizations of two electoral blocs formed to confront the capitalist parties in the May 1982 Dominican national elections — the Socialist Unity, led by the Communist Party; and the United Left.

The visit to Nicaragua took place in the context of growing common experience in mass activity as well as wide-ranging discussion over points of agreement and disagreement in program, strategy, and tactics.

All of the organizations represented in the delegation are part of this process of discussion. They include the Dominican Communist Party (PCD), Socialist Workers Organization (OST), Patriotic Anti-Imperialist Union (UPA), Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT),

Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), Militants of the United Left (MIU), and Dominican Workers Party (PTD).

Narciso Isa Conde, general secretary of the Communist Party, spoke for the delegation at a news conference at the close of the visit to Nicaragua.

Two years ago, even a year ago, he said, "this would have seemed an impossible mission." No one would have believed the various organizations of the Dominican left could act together on anything.

But we have come to Nicaragua "as an expression of the solidarity of our organizations for the struggles being waged by the people of Central America, as an expression of our firm determination to defeat U.S. efforts to intervene in our area."

We are seeking further unity "to help strengthen workers' concrete struggles" in the Dominican Republic. And "we want to act jointly in support of and in solidarity with the peoples in struggle in our region — particularly in defense of the Sandinista revolution, in support of the revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala, in defense of the revolution in Grenada, and in opposition to the U.S. policy of blockade and aggression against Cuba."

"The depth of the region's economic and social crisis," Isa Conde said, "is an expression of a structural crisis in the entire region, an expression of a potentially revolutionary situation in our Latin America, especially in Central America and the Caribbean."

He also noted the example of unity set "by the Sandinista revolution, the *compañeros* in El Salvador, the *compañeros* in Guatemala — which we have studied with much attention." □

Imperialist banks squeeze colonial world

Debt burden grows, while export earnings plummet

By George Carriazo

[The following article by a member of Cuba's Center for Research on the World Economy is reprinted from the February 13, 1983, issue of *Granma Weekly Review*.]

* * *

Due to the dependency of the underdeveloped countries on the economy of the developed capitalist countries and the world economy as a whole, the monetary¹ and financial² problems of those countries are closely linked to the current situation of the capitalist economy.

What was the situation of the world capitalist economy during 1982?

The state of the world economy during 1982 has been called difficult and grave by both the governments of capitalist countries and the international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, among others.³

World capitalist crisis

One of the most significant features of the world capitalist economy is inflation, a problem which is a long way from being solved in spite of the severe restrictive measures adopted in the principal capitalist countries such as the United States and Great Britain. With the goal of reducing inflation, the developed capitalist countries are carrying out tight money and credit policies which push interest rates up and further reduce economic activity.

These two effects — higher interest rates and a reduction of demand due to a drop in economic activity — have been especially strong in the underdeveloped countries, which undoubtedly bear a large share of the burden resulting from these policies. The rest of the burden is shouldered by workers in the developed capitalist countries, who are hit with unemployment and a decline in their standard of living.

Unemployment is increasing rapidly, with 8 percent in 1982 as opposed to 5 percent in 1979 on the average in the developed capitalist countries. The problem of unemployment is so acute that it is now considered a more important political issue than inflation. World trade

1. Monetary problems are those related to means of payment per se; that is, their exchange rate, rate of issue, monetary reserves and the different means of payment. — *Granma*

2. This means the flow of capital in and out of the country, the capital debt, interest payments and others. — *Granma*

3. 1982 yearly report of the International Monetary fund, Chapter 1. — *Granma*

dropped by about 1 percent in 1982.

In 1982 most countries registered negative or near-negative economic growth.

Impact on underdeveloped countries

The drop in economic activity, a manifestation of the crisis in the developed capitalist countries, has had unfavorable effects on the economies of the underdeveloped nations as well as the developed countries. It has cut down on demand and slashed the prices of basic commodities, thus reducing the export earnings of many underdeveloped countries, whose loss of purchasing power, in turn, further cuts down on world trade.

These negative effects have damaged the international payments position of many underdeveloped countries, which are faced with serious imbalances in their current accounts (buying and selling of goods and services plus profits and interest payments). The deterioration of the current accounts is closely linked to a growing foreign debt and obligations resulting from debt service payments, especially if we keep in mind the high interest rates which currently prevail.

Taken as a whole, the production growth rate of underdeveloped countries has declined from 6.5 percent in 1978 to barely 2.5 percent in 1981, and 1982 figures will surely show a further decline. These rates are barely enough to keep pace with the increase in population, resulting in a drop in per capita production.

The trade and international payments picture is also unfavorable for the underdeveloped oil-exporting countries. Their current accounts surplus plummeted from \$116 billion in 1980 to \$69 billion in 1981 and is not expected to have been more than \$25 billion for 1982. This means a further drop in demand from this group of countries in world trade.

The long-standing deficit of non-oil-producing underdeveloped countries has increased from \$39.2 billion in 1978 to \$99.1 billion in 1981 and for 1982 is expected to have reached \$100 billion.

The grim current accounts situation of the non-oil-producing underdeveloped countries is basically due to factors such as a) the developed capitalist countries' drop in economic activity and subsequent drop in demand; b) the consequent drop in the prices of basic commodities; c) the big jump in interest rates since 1979; d) higher prices for manufactured goods; and e) the impact of tougher debt payment conditions (shorter durations of loans, bigger service charges, etc.).

Higher debts

All this has led to higher debts with some new features. In addition to the speedy rate of

growth, current debts are largely private (i.e., most of the money is owed to private international banks), have tougher payment conditions, and are distributed unequally.

In 1982 Latin America alone accounted for 46 percent of the total Third World debt, with 80 percent of that debt concentrated in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela.

By late 1981 the total debt of the underdeveloped countries was \$540 billion, of which \$327 billion were from private sources. By late 1982 the total debt is expected to have been \$640 billion, as opposed to \$100 billion in 1973.⁴

From 1973 on, international private banks, which essentially have the character of transnational institutions, have increased the amount of loans granted by 20 percent a year. These banks have acquired an increasing and even dominant role in the financing of balance of payments deficits of the underdeveloped countries and the flow of loans to those countries. They are taking the place and fulfilling the functions of official institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

This growing activity by private institutions, which demonstrates that official institutions are incapable of meeting the needs of underdeveloped countries, has also made financing more expensive and has further hardened payment conditions.

Greater balance of payments deficits resulting from the world economic crisis and limited ability to secure financing for those deficits have led to an increased foreign debt, of which a bigger share is owed to transnational banks. For example, the medium- and long-term debts of non-oil-producing underdeveloped countries in the three-year period ending in late 1981 increased by 60 percent, which means about \$440 billion.

To this we must add short-term trade debts of \$100 billion; the number of these kinds of loans has increased rapidly during the last few years and the periods in which these loans fall due have been reduced. About three-fifths of that money is owed to transnational banks.

Debt service payments for these countries equaled an average of 23 percent of their export earnings in 1982, as opposed to 17 percent in 1978. More than half of that increase is due to higher interest rate payments. In 1982 such payments were \$3 billion greater than in 1981, which is 1 percent of the total export earnings of those countries.⁵

4. *Mainichi Daily News*, September 12, 1982. — *Granma*

5. IMF Survey, September 20, 1982. — *Granma*

As prices for exports continued to decline and those for imports continued to increase, there was yet another decline in the terms of trade for non-oil-producing underdeveloped countries in 1982, for the fifth straight year. The total decline since 1978 stands at 12 percent.

The underdeveloped countries are caught on the horns of a dilemma, since they face growing debt service charges, a drop in foreign demand for their goods and a sharp deterioration in the terms of trade.

The underdeveloped countries must also confront other problems linked to the current crisis. In real terms, concessionary aid from the developed capitalist countries has not increased during the last 10 years. Official development aid has averaged not more than 0.35 percent of the gross national product of the developed capitalist countries, representing only half the goal proposed by the United Nations and accepted by those countries a decade ago.

Furthermore, the Reagan administration, as part of its foreign policy, has violated foreign "aid" commitments. As a result of lower U.S. contributions and a similar stand by other developed countries, the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, the only institution which grants concessionary loans, reduced its operations during 1982 by more than \$1.5 billion.

Other monetary problems faced by the underdeveloped countries have to do with the higher exchange rate (appreciation) of the U.S. dollar.

U.S. interest rates

High interest rates in the United States, encouraged by the tight money policy of the current administration, have strengthened the dollar vis-à-vis other currencies. In the period from October 1980 to August 1981, the value of the dollar increased by an average of 22 percent.

For countries whose currencies are weakened against the dollar (all the underdeveloped countries), the situation becomes even more serious. Imports become more expensive, including fuel, and the terms of trade worsen.

The enormous debt, together with tougher payment conditions and the unfavorable effects of the crisis on the underdeveloped countries, have forced those countries to renegotiate their foreign debt and establish new periods and conditions for payment. During 1981, \$10.8 billion in debts were renegotiated, while in 1982, 21 countries from the Third World renegotiated \$40 billion in debt payments. In 1982 alone, this same group of countries had to pay \$244 billion on the part of the debt which fell due that year.⁶

During the annual joint meeting of the IMF and the World Bank held in Toronto, Canada, last September, contradictions between the developed and underdeveloped capitalist coun-

tries came to the surface.

The underdeveloped countries — by way of their representatives in the IMF known as the Group of 24 — stressed the need to formulate a world recovery program to encourage non-



Debt to imperialist banks is crushing Third World countries. Above, Chase Manhattan headquarters in New York City.

inflationary economic growth. Such a program would require concerted effort among the developed capitalist countries to remove trade barriers, reduce military spending and redistribute that money for official development aid.

IMF-imposed austerity policies

The underdeveloped countries were critical of the strings attached to IMF loans, by which countries seeking loans are forced to adopt restrictive economic measures. Such a policy ignores the true structural nature of the problems faced by those countries now and their dependency on external factors beyond their control.

They also demanded an increase of their voting power in the IMF to 45 percent of the total and a doubling of IMF quotas. The purpose of this is to make it easier for underdeveloped countries to have access to IMF funds, in keeping with their urgent financial needs in the '80s. Furthermore, they denounced U.S. pressure and blackmail with IDA funds and the demands that underdeveloped countries "tighten their belts even further."

The United States has opposed the proposals of the underdeveloped countries in the IMF. As an alternative it has suggested that a special fund be created for cases such as those of Mexico and Argentina and a quota increase of not more than 25 percent.

This stand is in keeping with the tough pol-

icy of the Reagan administration, which wants the Third World to bear the brunt of the crisis. Such a fund could only be used in emergencies with the prior approval of the United States.

However, the IMF (or rather, the United States) must decide on a quota increase by April of this year, given the pressure of both the underdeveloped countries and even some developed capitalist nations which favor such an increase.⁷

Everybody knows that an increase in IMF quotas won't do away with the huge deficits of underdeveloped countries nor the growing debts of many nations, but capitalist financial circles feel that this measure could increase the confidence in international private banks so they can keep pumping money into the system.

Danger to international finance

This is the crux of the problem. Given the danger of a breakdown in the international financial system due to the huge debt of the underdeveloped world and the fact that those countries are in dire financial straits, the banks might stop lending money. This would choke off international trade and the world capitalist economy.

There is a pressing need for concerted action by all interested governments to prevent an even greater disaster. A recent editorial in a U.S. newspaper noted that people say war is too important an issue to be left to the generals. In that vein, it asks, should bankers be left with the responsibility of assuring the financial stability of the world? □

7. The IMF decided February 11, after the closing news date of this issue of *Granma*, to expand its lendable resources 47.4 percent, to \$98.5 billion, from \$66 billion. The vast bulk of these loans will go not for economic and social development projects in the oppressed nations, but to pay off debts from previous loans from imperialist banks! — *IP*

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6. *Newsweek*, September 20, 1982. — *Granma*

Economy gains amid world crisis

Speech by Jaime Wheelock

[By mobilizing 15,000 volunteers, Nicaragua successfully harvested a record 70,000-ton coffee crop in December and January. Unfavorable weather and repeated attacks by counterrevolutionary bands failed to disrupt this important economic victory.

[Commander Jaime Wheelock, Nicaragua's minister of agrarian reform, spoke to 11,000 of the volunteers in the city of Matagalpa February 5 at a rally to celebrate the completion of the harvest.

[In the portions of Wheelock's speech published below, he describes the advances in Nicaraguan agriculture accomplished in the face of hostility from Washington and a world capitalist crisis that has devastated Latin America's economy.

The translation, taken from the text published in the February 10 *Barricada*, is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

It's true that we have our problems. This can be seen. But it is not we who are in crisis. It's imperialism that's in crisis. It's the way they've organized the exploitation and their lives that puts them in crisis. And, enmeshed in this crisis, they want to violently detain the advance of other peoples. They want to resolve their profound political contradictions, and their now even more profound economic contradictions, not only at the cost of our people's blood, but also through the ruination of the poor in their own countries.

Unemployment in [the seven major capitalist] countries has gone from 21 million in 1980 to 32 million today who cannot find any work whatsoever. And how do those governments want to resolve their economic problems? They have assembled a monstrous apparatus of organized plunder, so as to drain our countries' flow of wealth to benefit their economies in crisis.

The multinational corporations are ripping off billions of dollars through unequal trade arrangements. For example, they buy coffee cheaply from us and sell us equipment, machinery, and inputs at high prices — robbing us of much of our income. They raise interest rates to such an extent that while they were lending to us at 6 percent, now they lend to us at 20 percent and sometimes as high as 30 or 35 percent.

Latin America registered a trade deficit of \$13 billion in 1973. That figure rose to \$35 billion in 1981. The region's overall debt rose from \$34 billion to \$268 billion in 1981. It jumped to \$350 billion in 1982.

Brazil owes \$87 billion. Just to pay the interest it will have to use all its exports and it will still come out 26 percent behind. Mexico

owes \$80 billion. Using all its exports for payment, it will be left owing 24 percent. Argentina owes \$43 billion and must pay back \$18 billion next year — which it cannot do even if it were to use all its exports.

Where are the imperialists taking us? To economic ruin, to a debacle, to economic destruction. This is the contradiction that today's world suffers from, a contradiction that will be difficult to resolve because there are factors weighing down on our economies that will not be resolved easily.

To give you an example, if we could sell today's coffee harvest at 1979 prices, we would get \$280 million. However, selling the harvest at today's prices we are barely going to get \$150 million; that is to say, only about half the price.

In Nicaragua, we're not doing so bad, but there are other countries that are. Costa Rica's gross domestic product is going to drop 5.6%; El Salvador's, 10%; Guatemala's, 2.5%; and Nicaragua's, between 2.5% and 3%. But if we hadn't had flood damage and the drought, it's likely that Nicaragua's economy, for the second time since the triumph of the revolution, would have been the only economy in Latin America to have grown.

Our exports, *compañeros*, have not been declining. Coffee production rose from 50,000 tons in 1979 to 70,000 tons today. In 1981 our meat exports totaled \$21 million; this year, \$31 million. Sugar climbed from 245,000 tons

to 265,000 tons in 1982. In spite of the floods, we will have more cotton in Nicaragua. So the basic exports of the Nicaraguan economy — coffee, sugar, meat, and cotton — have grown this year. But their prices are much lower.

If the imperialists were to pay us the 1979 prices, Nicaragua would be exporting \$740 million. But how much will we actually export this year? We won't reach \$500 million — we'll export about \$460 million.

Who took the difference of almost \$300 million? Ask Reagan's government and his political economy.

We should also note that in basic foodstuffs — compared to what there was under Somoza — we've grown 10 percent more corn, 45 percent more beans, 89 percent more sorghum, and 100 percent more rice. In other words we're growing in a sustained manner in a way that responds to our needs.

There are some interesting indicators of this.

- In 1977, the best year of the Somoza regime, 384,000 gallons of cooking oil was produced. We produced 756,000 gallons in 1982.

- Under Somoza, 35,000 dozen eggs were produced daily; today we produce 88,000 dozen eggs daily.

- Fish production was 300,000 pounds a year then; today it is 2.5 million pounds.

- Before the revolution, 14 million pounds of pork were produced; now we produce 22 million pounds.

- Twelve million pounds of chicken were produced then; now we are producing 23 million pounds.

Is this a crisis? Is this decline? No, it's sustained growth based fundamentally on the strength of the revolution and the fact that the revolution has a formidable base among the labor of the workers, peasants, and humble people led by their vanguard, the Sandinista National Liberation Front. □



Jane Harris/IP

More than 11,000 volunteer coffee pickers turned out to hear Wheelock's speech.

General strike sweeps country

Workers challenge military government

By Steve Wattenmaker

Argentina's 10 million-strong working class brought the country to a standstill March 28, demanding wage hikes and sweeping economic and political reform.

Workers closed down factories, public transportation, businesses, airports, and government offices for 24 hours. Banks and restaurants locked their doors. Taxi drivers deserted the streets. Two of the capital's daily newspapers failed to appear. Radio technicians blacked out broadcasts for five minutes each hour in solidarity with the walkout.

Interior Minister Gen. Llamil Reston admitted that 96 percent of Argentina's industrial workers joined the strike, which was illegal. They did so in defiance of threats that those who took part could be fired or jailed.

Two days later some 10,000 workers marched through Buenos Aires under a banner demanding "Peace, Bread, and Work." (The demand for peace refers to an end to military repression.)

'People have shed their fear'

"People have shed their fear," declared Jorge Lujan, a leader of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). "We have demonstrated once again that as much as the government appeals to us to avoid these actions, we will not vacillate in pressing our demands."

The action marked the second time in four months that the Argentine labor movement had called a general strike to protest the deepening economic crisis facing the working class. Nine million workers paralyzed the country last December 6 in the first general strike since the armed forces seized power in 1976.

Ten days after the December walkout 100,000 people gathered for an antigovernment rally in Buenos Aires. One protester was killed and dozens injured when troops attacked the protest.

The March 28 general strike was called jointly by the two factions of the CGT. Together they represent the majority of Argentina's working class. Both wings had been pressing the government for wage increases and other reforms to arrest the drastic decline in the living standard of Argentine workers.

Unemployment, just 2 percent two years ago, has been as high as 15 percent in recent months. The plight of the jobless is made more desperate by the lack of any system of unemployment insurance. The average wage for those who find work is below \$6.00 a day. The inflation rate for just the first two months of this year was 31 percent. Inflation for all of 1983 is projected at more than 400 percent.

Argentina's peso — on a relative par with the U.S. dollar in 1978 — is now exchanged at

a rate of 67,000 per dollar. The country's national debt of \$38.7 billion is the third highest among semicolonial countries.

Staggering under the debt, Argentina's military rulers floated a \$2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund at the end of January. In return, the IMF demanded that the generals slash social services, hold down wage increases, and implement other austerity measures.

'A national plebiscite'

After the strike was announced the government tried to dampen its impact by declaring a 12 percent wage hike. The CGT, demanding at least 17 percent, rejected the government move as inadequate.

Saúl Ubaldini, secretary general of one wing of the CGT, described the strike as "a national plebiscite that shows the people's disagreement with the economic and social policies we are having to put up with."

On top of the explosive discontent over the economic crisis, Argentina's workers continue to push for an end to the hated military dictatorship itself. A major factor in undermining the dictatorship has been the deepening of anti-imperialist sentiment as a result of British aggression against Argentina and Washington's support for that aggression.

The military rulers had hoped that they would strengthen their hand by the reoccupation of the Malvinas Islands in April 1982, an assertion of Argentine national rights that was

extremely popular among the working masses. But pride turned into outrage as the dictatorship proved incapable of waging an effective struggle for the Malvinas, and as soldiers returned home with descriptions of the incompetence and corruption of their commanders.

A period of disorientation among the workers following the defeat in the Malvinas proved short-lived. Strikes and protests built in intensity as 1982 came to an end. By December the slogan on everyone's lips during the mass rally was: "Se va a acabar, se va a acabar, la dictadura militar!" (The military dictatorship is going to end!)

'Disappeared' return to haunt regime

Just as troublesome to the government is a powerful movement demanding that the dictatorship account for the "disappeared."

As many as 30,000 persons are thought to be missing as a result of kidnappings and murders carried out by military death squads.

Anger over the "disappeared" reached a boiling point late in 1982 when relatives of the missing discovered some 1,500 unmarked graves in Buenos Aires and in the interior. Court action to force the authorities to identify the remains has dragged on unsuccessfully for months.

To head off potentially revolutionary demands for an end to military rule, President Reynaldo Bignone announced February 28 that voting for a civilian government would take place October 30 this year. Shortly after the Malvinas defeat in June 1982, the junta had promised a return to civilian rule.

Whether the generals will in the end actually let a civilian government take power is another question — and one that is likely to be settled in further tests of strength between the military government and a mobilized and combative Argentine workers movement. □



Buenos Aires workers demonstrate in December 1982 to protest economic crisis and military rule.

FSLN leader discusses road to socialism

Speech by Víctor Tirado to Sandinista Workers Federation

[The following speech by Commander Víctor Tirado, Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) director of labor affairs, was given in Managua February 26 before 300 delegates to the National Constituent Assembly of the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST).

[The translation, subheads, and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

We come to this National Constituent Assembly of the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) in a period of difficult and complex conditions in the international arena.

We come here at a time of an unrestrained arms race, directed by reactionary groups in the United States government. They are providing arms and creating conflicts in many parts of the planet. The Nicaraguan working class has the duty to struggle to prevent a nuclear war. Total and general disarmament is the banner of the world working class, as is the struggle for the destruction of all nuclear arms.

We come here at a time when the 100th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx is being commemorated. Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution, and the CST in particular, will pay homage to the genius of proletarian revolution.

Today, February 26, we are also commemorating the fall in combat of the Apostle of Sandinista Unity, Commander Camilo Ortega,¹ and are initiating a new course of military instruction for the Sandinista People's Militias, ready for the defense of the revolution.²

The CST, the Nicaraguan working class, takes all the traditions and experiences of the revolutionary movement of our country and people as its own.

Working *compañeros*:

1. Camilo Ortega led the FSLN column that attacked the National Guard garrison in Granada, Nicaragua, on February 2, 1978. He was killed in battle on February 26, 1978, during the insurrection in Monimbó. Ortega was the younger brother of FSLN commanders Humberto Ortega, now minister of defense, and Daniel Ortega, coordinator of the Junta of National Reconstruction.

2. Nicaragua's army and reserve battalions are backed up by a massive civilian militia. Two periods of militia training are held each year, in February and August. Each Sunday during the training period, new volunteers receive basic military and weapons training. Those who have been through previous courses receive advanced training or serve as instructors.

According to the Ministry of Defense, militia units participated in combat more than 70 times in 1982.

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — A two-day national convention of the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) was held here February 26–27. It was the CST's first national gathering since it was founded on July 26, 1979, only seven days after the victory of the insurrection that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship.

Today the CST has grown to 85,000 members organized into 500 union locals. This represents more than four-fifths of Nicaragua's organized industrial workers.

Because of the speed with which the CST grew, it did not have time to step back and formulate its aims and goals, and organize an election of its leadership. This was the task of the two-day convention, attended by 300 delegates.

The delegates were elected on the basis of several months' discussion in the locals around a statement of principles, a statement of tasks, and organizational rules.

The assembly set priorities for the

CST:

- Defending workers' living standards, both in wages and in maintenance of subsidies on basic food items, water and electricity, transportation, and housing.

- Boosting productivity and production to develop the economy.

- Increasing participation by workers in economic decision-making.

- Organizing massive participation in adult literacy and education programs.

- Spurring participation in defense of the revolution through enlistment of CST members in the militias.

Although 75 percent of industry in Nicaragua remains in private hands, a major theme of the conference was how to organize and educate the working class to lead the transition to socialism. That topic was a theme of the speech to the delegates by Commander Víctor Tirado, director of labor affairs of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

The National Directorate of the FSLN is very grateful and pleased to address the organized workers of the new Nicaragua's productive centers, gathered for the National Constituent Assembly of the CST.

The CST represents the distillation of the great and difficult battles fought by the workers movement for its demands throughout this century, as well as the struggles of the Nicaraguan people against foreign intervention,

All over the world, the working class was born in struggle . . .

against imperialist domination in our country, and against oligarchies and dictatorship.

All over the world the working class was born in struggle. Nicaragua was no exception. At the beginning of this century, when the Nicaraguan working class was barely beginning to emerge, the newspaper *Obrerismo Organizado* began to circulate. It published the first anti-imperialist manifestos of the urban workers associations calling for the abolition of antipopular and antinational laws and decrees issued by the Yankee invaders. Workers from the banana companies, lumber mills, and mines carried out powerful actions against intervention.

But, as everyone knows, the most important

and decisive combat came from the Army for the Defense of National Sovereignty, with Sandino³ at its head, an army made up of poor peasants and rural and urban workers.

The epic struggle of the General of Free Men raised the anti-imperialist consciousness of the working masses and strengthened the class and popular character of the struggle. Proof of this is that the father of the democratic, people's, anti-imperialist revolution put forward the need to establish a government of workers and farmers, such as the one that now exists in Nicaragua.

Later, during the Somozaist regime, the working class never stopped struggling in spite of the harshness of the repression.

Since its foundation, the FSLN has worked tirelessly to organize and lead the working-class forces of Nicaragua. Its presence was felt in the land takeovers of Tonalá, Ranchería, and Sirama, and in the great strikes of teachers, hospital workers, and construction

3. Augusto César Sandino (born 1893, died February 23, 1934) led the military opposition to the intervention by U.S. Marines in Nicaragua in 1927. Sandino's Army for the Defense of National Sovereignty fought a guerrilla struggle in the mountains of northern Nicaragua until the U.S. Marines were withdrawn in 1933. He was murdered by the U.S.-backed National Guard led by Anastasio Somoza García, founder of the dynasty of dictators that was overthrown on July 19, 1979. Sandino is often referred to as the "General of Free Men."

workers, as the FSLN sought to give these strikes a revolutionary content.⁴

In the severest conditions of repression and clandestinity, the committees established to fight for trade-union rights and a union movement of working people played an outstanding role in the organization of the working class, in the development of revolutionary consciousness among the workers, in changing the traditional methods of struggle, and in the very preparation of the insurrection that culminated in the triumph of 1979. Those three organizations [see footnote 4] are the result of earlier union struggles, and those who led those struggles now lead the CST.

Thus, the roots of the CST go way back. Its

A government at the service of workers and farmers has been formed . . .

formation is the consequence, the outcome of a series of economic, political, social, and military struggles.

All major demands of the workers were put into the labor code in the 1940s but were not satisfied until after July 19 [1979 — the day the revolution was victorious]. It was necessary to make a revolution to be able to apply basic precepts that already reigned in capitalist countries not ruled by tyrannical governments.

During the three and a half years of the Sandinista revolution, the situation of the workers has changed radically. From the political point of view, they have moved ahead because the new government is fundamentally at their service — at your service — and at the service of the peasants.

Socially and economically, your situation has improved in spite of the difficult conditions in which the economy must develop — the aggressions at the border, the constant threats of invasion that force us to invest economic and human resources in defense, to the detriment of reconstruction of the country. All this puts us in the situation of not being able to show all the advantages that this revolution could give to its people if we could dedicate ourselves entirely to the economic and social rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua.

Although on a small scale, wages have increased. Here, we are speaking of the wage that is paid directly — the economic wage, let us say. However, what we know as the social wage has grown considerably, through in-

4. During the economic slump of the early 1970s, hard-fought struggles took place in both the countryside and cities. In the northern provinces, peasants tried to regain land that had been taken over by National Guard officials. In the cities, strikes against the dictatorship provided the training ground that produced the cadres who are now leading ANDEN (the teachers union), FETSALUD (the health workers union), and SCAAS (the construction workers union), the three organizations Tirado refers to below.

creased and improved educational, health, and social security services; subsidies on basic foodstuffs and transportation; and enactment — in the very near future — of the Law on Housing.⁵

At the present moment, the working class has great responsibilities to face and serious problems to confront. In our judgment there are two basic tasks before the working class and its union organizations at the present time: raising production and productivity; and military defense of the country.

Neither is less important than the other. The two have the same weight at the present time. Both go hand in hand and share the same tremendous importance. There cannot be defense without production nor production without defense.

In the field of production we have overcome, fortunately, in large part — not totally — labor indiscipline and disorder, the unnecessary confrontations — at times bordering on anarchy — with government representatives, administrators, technicians, and professionals.

Labor discipline has been strengthened but we still cannot sing out “Victory” — we still cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to strive to get all workers to come to work on time, to make maximum use of the workday, to increase production with the required quality, to raise productivity, conserve raw materials, fuel, electricity, water, and to give adequate maintenance to the equipment and machinery.

At the same time, we have to encourage the innovators movement in order for production not to stop.⁶ This work is the CST’s and the CST must create a strategy for it. We must

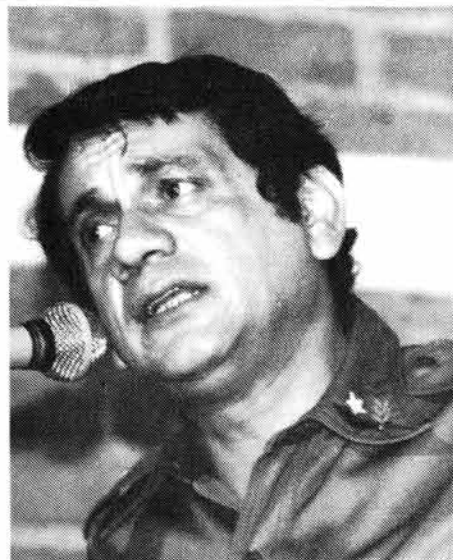
There cannot be defense without production nor production without defense . . .

avoid company and factory closings, and offer solutions to problems resulting from lack of resources or hard currency.

We are convinced that improvement in the situation of workers must be the task of the workers themselves in the new Nicaragua, where a government at the service of workers

5. The draft of a sweeping new law on housing, currently under discussion in the Council of State and the country’s mass organizations, declares that housing is a human right, not a commodity. The law will eventually do away with landlords by converting all rent into a form of mortgage payment. Twenty years of such payments is considered more than adequate compensation for the value of a house.

6. To reduce stoppages of production caused by lack of hard currency to import spare parts and raw materials, an intensive campaign is under way to manufacture needed parts and adapt production processes to the use of domestically available materials. Initiated in mid-1982, the campaign has saved several million dollars in foreign exchange.



Arnold Weissberg/IP

VÍCTOR TIRADO

and farmers has been formed. This means that the economic, political, and social demands that you formulate are demands made to your government, or really to yourselves. Therefore, the standard of living is now going to depend on your own disciplined work, on the degree to which you improve production and productivity.

If you raise production, there will be more schools, more health centers and hospitals, more and better transportation, more homes, more jobs, and better salaries.

Compañeros, there is no other way to resolve the problems of backwardness and poverty that we still have not overcome, that are going to take several years to overcome, and for which enormous sacrifices on your part will be required. And these sacrifices will be greater if the invasion the Yankee government threatens us with becomes a reality and if the financial blockade in the international multilateral organizations and private credit institutions continues as it has up till now.

From this also comes the necessity of joining the defense effort: the necessity of enlisting in the militias, in the reserve battalions.

I don’t believe I need to argue this point. You know what is happening on the northern border.

You know the historic and irresponsible threats made against Nicaragua by President Reagan, who says he will not permit revolutions to triumph and be consolidated in Central America, who reiterates that in the region there is no room for the Sandinista Revolution because, according to him, this space was reserved — it seems — for genocide, traitors, and oligarchies.

On the other hand, the sensible governments of Latin America and Europe are pushing for a nonexclusionary negotiated solution to the conflicts, without U.S. predominance.

It seems that the hour is drawing near in which it must be decided how to resolve the

crisis of Central America. In a matter of weeks or months it seems that we will be faced with this. And we must be prepared to confront whatever eventuality: a military solution or a political solution.

And here the workers will play an enormous role. They must — no matter what — guarantee production and defense of the country. And this is not just a phrase provoked by en-

Socialism requires titanic efforts because we are not beginning from a society of abundance . . .

thusiasm. It is a task that can and must be accomplished.

The Nicaraguan working class has demonstrated that it has the vigor, the energy, the intelligence, and the courage necessary to conquer adversity.

In this assembly you are going to examine various documents — the declaration of principles, the tasks of the CST, and your statutes. These materials were already analyzed by the ranks during assemblies that took place in all the work centers of the country. More than 50,000 workers participated in the discussions, an indication of the level democracy has reached in the CST. Everyone who wished to express himself has done so freely.

We have to make some adjustments in these documents. We have to make it clear what the CST is, what its structure will be, and we have to outline a flexible plan of action. We have to reformulate the tasks of the unions more specifically. But this we will see take place in the commissions and plenary assemblies, with greater thoroughness.

Finally, I want to direct my remarks to a subject that has been present in workers' dis-

Socialism is going to be constructed in a backward country, without large-scale industry . . .

cussions and on the minds of many *compañeros*. This is the question of socialism.

The Nicaraguan working class — we believe its big majority — sees socialism as the radical long-term solution (and some see it as the short-term solution) to its problems. Ideas about what socialism will be or should be in Nicaragua are still diffuse, not very clear, and it is natural that it be that way.

At the right moment we will embark on the road to socialism, but before traveling this path it is essential, necessary, indispensable to have a very clear idea of the steps that we are going to take.

It is necessary to take into account that socialism is going to be constructed in a backward country, without large-scale industry,

and in a country whose economy basically revolves around agriculture and the processing of agricultural products. In a country that has few trained cadres to organize, administer, and direct industrial, agricultural, and service enterprises. That has a cultural backwardness that has been overcome, but not completely, and that is struggling to provide all workers at least a fourth-grade education. A country that has a very small accumulation of capital, and for that reason only a distant perspective for the creation of large-scale industry.

In a nutshell, socialism will not be constructed starting from great abundance, as would be ideal, but rather from the little that we have.

These are objective facts that we should not lose sight of, otherwise we might think it is enough to proclaim socialism and then by magic the problems will be resolved.

The socialism that we are going to create in these conditions requires from the working class and the peasants great sacrifices, labor discipline, an increase in their cultural and technical level, and above all a lot of work, as well as unselfish international aid.

Socialism — in the particular condition of Nicaragua — demands a lot of work. In a first stage it does not mean shortening the workday, but rather maintaining and perhaps increasing it.

Socialism requires titanic efforts because — let us repeat — we are not beginning from a so-

ciety of abundance.

If we had the level of development of the United States, of Japan, of Germany, or of France, things would be different. It would also be different if our level of development was on a par with Mexico, Brazil, or Argentina.

We do not say this out of desire to create discouragement, but rather to show the complexity, the magnitude of the task we will be embarking on at the time we decide to take the socialist road, to make clear that it is a venture more difficult and intricate than the struggle to

Improvement in the situation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves . . .

overthrow Somozaism, or the fight against the bands that are attacking us on the northern border, or than any other of the efforts or tasks we have embarked on up to this point.

It's very gratifying that the Nicaraguan working class has come to look to socialism in its search for radical and concrete solutions. We salute your stance and say to you: Onward! We will push on in that direction, but without creating illusions, and with a very clear idea of what we want and what we can really achieve. □

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Revolutionists hail PNC meeting

'The battle of Beirut was an acid test'

[The following is excerpted from an editorial statement on the 16th session of the Palestine National Council appearing in the April issue of *Derech Hanitzotz* (Spark), the monthly newspaper of the Israeli Revolutionary Communist League — Turn.]

* * *

The resolutions of the 16th Palestine National Council deserve the full attention of all those living in the Middle East, and especially the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The resolutions were proof of the deepgoing discussion, unprecedented in its breadth, in which all the tendencies and forces among the Palestinian people took part.

In spite of the heavy pressures exerted on the PNC and the attempts of external elements to deepen the divisions and to split the PLO, the PNC was successful in safeguarding its unity. Above all what made this unity possible was the defense and strict observance of that principle upon which the Palestinian revolution was established — the principle of the independence of Palestinian decision-making.

In the summer of 1982 the PLO withstood an Israeli attempt to annihilate the Palestinian problem once and for all. Begin and Sharon hoped that after the war there would be no more PNC or PLO. But the historic failure to defeat the PLO in Beirut only pushed them to sharpen the war drive in order to reach their fascist goal.

With the full backing of American imperialism, they organized the Sabra and Shatila massacres and are preventing any revival of Palestinian life in Lebanon up to this very day, while preparing for the next stage of the war.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip they are launching a murderous campaign of land theft, oppression, and acts of terror against the local population. In spite of the talk about peace, the Israeli war to eliminate the Palestinian people and against the Arab world is continuing full steam ahead.

A deep appreciation was expressed [by the PNC] toward the Jewish forces that opposed the Israeli war in Lebanon. The PLO sees these forces as partners not only for negotiations, but for a dialogue, for building a common life and future.

The PNC affirmed the continuation of its attempts to achieve cooperation and discussion with democratic forces in Israel. The warm welcome at the congress for Israeli reporter Amnon Kapelyuk was a sign of that.

The Algiers congress was above all a reaffirmation of the strategy that has guided the Palestinian revolution from its very first days in 1965. The heroic steadfastness of the Palestinians in besieged Beirut for 88 days deepened

the unity of the whole Palestinian people and their confidence in the PLO's leadership.

The democratic and anti-imperialist program that was forged through years of struggle and that formed the basis of the policy of the PLO was also reconfirmed in Algiers. Based on this program, the Palestinian people were able to withstand imperialism and Zionism and win international recognition.

Moreover, this program has an enormous significance for the Jewish working class and the democratic forces in Israel in their fight to put an end to the endless wars and undemocratic character of Zionist policies and practices.

The challenge that the democratic and progressive forces in Israel are facing in the aftermath of the Palestine National Council is a difficult one.

The Palestinian people, who have sacrificed tens of thousands of their very best sons and daughters as victims in the Lebanon War and in Beirut, decided unequivocally that they will continue their struggle for independence, democracy, and peace until victory.

It is the duty of those inside Israel who are ready to face reality without prejudice to draw their conclusions from the events of the last year as well.

One cannot evade the fact that Zionism proved in Beirut that its whole military and economic might is being mobilized in order to liquidate the Palestinian people as a national entity and that for this aim all means are justified.

The battle of Beirut was an acid test in which Zionism on the one hand, and the PLO on the other hand, were tested. The role of the peace forces in Israel is to know how to distinguish between these two camps. One leads to



PLO sees Israeli antiwar forces as partners in democratic and anti-imperialist struggle.

hell, the other to peace and democracy.

The key question for a consistent antiwar movement should be its identification with the struggle of the PLO and its central political demand to establish an independent Palestinian state. Just as there is no peace without the Palestinians, there is no recognition of the Palestinians without recognition of the PLO and support for the establishment of an independent state under its leadership.

All those who are ready to draw the conclusions and to march toward peace will find the outstretched hands of the Palestinians, who proved in Beirut and in Algiers to be faithful allies in building a democratic and truly peaceful society. □

'Solidarity with the PLO'

[The following message was sent to the February meeting of the Palestine National Council by the Israeli Revolutionary Communist League — Matzpen.]

* * *

Dear Brothers and Comrades,

On the occasion of the convention of the Palestine National Council, we send the delegates of the Palestinian Arab people fraternal greetings from the anti-Zionist Jewish and Arab forces inside the state of Israel.

We are confident that this council will once again express the spirit of unity that distinguished the Palestinian Arab people in the

most difficult moments of the battle for Beirut.

We wish to reiterate our commitment to continue the struggle inside the Zionist state, in cooperation with all forces that fight for peace and freedom.

We wish to reaffirm our commitment to the struggle for the achievement of the full rights of the Palestinian Arab people and the establishment of a free society in Palestine in which Jews and Arabs can live in peace, brotherhood, and equality.

As the vanguard of the anti-Zionist struggle inside Israel itself, we shall make every effort to strengthen the solidarity with the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people. Revolution until victory. □

Defeat of SPD a blow to workers

Bourgeois parties win majority in parliamentary elections

[The following article was published in the March 28 issue of *Inprecor*, a French-language fortnightly published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The article was based on a statement by the International Marxist Group (GIM), German section of the Fourth International, published in the March 10 issue of its newspaper *Was Tun*.

[The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Thirteen years in which the Social Democratic Party (SPD) exerted majority control over the West German federal government came to an end in October 1982. In mid-September the governing alliance between Helmut Schmidt's Social Democrats and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) had broken up. A new coalition government made up of the FDP and the main bourgeois formation, the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU) was formed in October 1982 under the leadership of Helmut Kohl.

The change in alliances took place over the question of economic policy, and specifically over differences concerning austerity proposals put forward by the FDP minister of the economy in the Schmidt government, Count Otto von Lamsdorff. This fact indicates what the real stakes were in the parliamentary elections held March 6.

As a result of the Social Democratic policy regarding the economic crisis, the position of workers has deteriorated considerably in recent years. In 1980 the number of bankruptcies and unemployed workers skyrocketed. By January of 1983 there were 2.5 million people out of work, that is, 10.2 percent of the economically active population.

Since 1980 real wages of workers have steadily fallen. The 1981 and 1982 budgets already reflected a partial abandonment of the social protection measures so dear to the Social Democratic theory of "social capitalism."

But in this realm the political program of the formations that make up the new government (FDP, CDU-CSU) is unequivocal. The minister of labor in Helmut Kohl's cabinet, who had previously decided to slow the rise in social benefit payments, recently justified his proposal for a six-month pause in wage increases by stating: "What has been demanded of beneficiaries of social payments must be demanded of everyone."

The fact that the CDU-CSU-FDP alliance won an absolute majority of the votes in the March 6 parliamentary elections is therefore a

clear defeat for the workers. In fact, the CDU-CSU by itself came close to getting an absolute majority, taking 48.8 percent, a gain of 4.3 percent compared to the legislative elections of 1980.

The FDP was able to go over the 5 percent needed to get members in parliament under the proportional representation system, although its vote dropped from 10.6 percent in 1980 to 6.9 percent this time.

Finally, the "Greens," the ecological current, assured their entry into parliament by taking 5.6 percent of the vote and attaining big tallies in some urban centers.

The SPD vote declined 4.7 percent between the 1980 and 1983 elections, and it is estimated that nearly 2 million of its voters cast their ballots this time for the bourgeois formations.

Austerity strengthened

The SPD's defeat is therefore very significant for the workers. First it strengthens the austerity campaign being waged by the CDU-CSU and its FDP allies. In addition, it strengthens the whole imperialist camp, in particular fostering the all-out militarization policy of U.S. imperialism.

The best proof of this is that immediately after the results of the March 6 West German elections, President Ronald Reagan made a very aggressive speech against the Soviet Union and the Central American revolutions.

It is true that in 1979 the SPD supported the proposal by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to install U.S. nuclear missiles on German soil, and has never changed that position. But the SPD has shown in practice that it is susceptible to the strong pressure of the peace movement, which has carried out imposing demonstrations in recent years.

By contrast, the alliance now governing West Germany has never hidden its support for Reagan's notorious "zero option."* At a time when Reagan is stepping up his military pres-

*Washington's "zero option" proposal is an attempt to undercut opposition in Western Europe to the placement of 572 new U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles in West Germany, Italy, Britain, the Netherlands, and Belgium. From their bases in Western Europe, these missiles could hit Soviet targets in as little as six minutes.

The Reagan administration has offered to forego deployment of these new missiles, if the Soviet Union agrees to dismantle all its existing intermediate range ballistic missiles. The "zero option" plan would, however, leave already existing French and British missiles targeted on the Soviet Union in place. — IP

ures in Central America and is boosting the arms race, he finds in Germany a particularly understanding partner, installed by a solid legislative majority.

That is why the declaration of the International Marxist Group (GIM), the German section of the Fourth International, noted in the March 10 issue of its newspaper *Was Tun*, "that an iron triangle can now be forged between the Reagan, Thatcher, and Kohl-Strauss governments. The common program of all these regimes is austerity, mass unemployment, stepped-up armament, and military pressures on the Soviet Union."

This victory by the right therefore marks "a real turning point in Bonn. A period of 13 years of successive Social Democratic governments, to which must be added a little more than three years of previous governments in which the Social Democrats participated, has now come to a close. The bourgeois coalition government that came in in October 1982 will now have a free hand for a period of four years," the GIM statement noted.

No capitalist stability

The bourgeois electoral victory does not mean, however, a return to an era of capitalist stability like the one that marked the 1950s. Today, "the big majority for the bourgeois bloc in Bonn cannot be compared with the seemingly similar electoral strength it had in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time the bourgeois parties represented the boom. The growth of the economy was bringing everyone a higher living standard, shorter working hours, and longer vacations. . . ."

"The 1980s are a quite different period. They are bringing a decline in the standard of living, growing mass unemployment, work speedups, and social cuts. Wage earners have already felt the effects of this. They know that the Christian Democratic and liberal politicians were for a tough proemployer policy in the crisis and for cuts at the expense of the masses. This fact shows that a turning point has been reached and is a clear indication of the defeat sustained by the workers."

The March 6 elections also marked the complete bankruptcy of the "social capitalism" policy of the Social Democrats. The famous "German model" has therefore been dealt a significant blow. The election proposals made by Social Democratic candidate Hans Jochen Vogel for a "pact of national solidarity" against unemployment got no response.

Willy Brandt, the leader of the SPD, acknowledged with some chagrin that "the voters believe that Chancellor Kohl is the most



Kohl (left) with rightist leader Franz Josef Strauss.

capable of lowering the unemployment that hits 2.5 million West Germans."

Concern over unemployment

While an opinion poll taken at the time of the 1980 parliamentary elections had indicated that 58 percent of the voters considered unemployment the main problem, a similar inquiry in February 1983 showed that unemployment was the main concern of 88 percent of those polled. A majority also opposed the stationing of nuclear missiles on West German soil.

But the result of the March 6 election shows that the immediate concern over mounting unemployment had the most impact on how people voted.

In this regard, the GIM statement noted:

"Geissler, the chief ideologist of the Christian Democrats, claimed: 'We won with the support of the workers' . . . In fact, the Christian Democrats scored their biggest gains in former SPD strongholds. In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the SPD had an absolute majority, the CDU is now the strongest party. It is estimated that two million former SPD voters have crossed over to the Christian Democrats, whereas the SPD won hardly anyone from them.

"On election night, [SPD representative] Glotz said: 'The Christian Democrats won with their talk about an economic upswing.' That was one of the few true things the SPD said that evening. But it was only a half truth.

"The main issue in this election was, in fact, the mass unemployment and not the missiles. The 19 million who voted for the Christian Democrats, including the majority of wage earners, wanted to vote for an economic upturn.

"The Christian Democrats had said that an upturn was possible only under a Kohl government. This demagoguery was backed up with threats of an investment strike and letters from the bosses to their personnel calling on them to vote for the Christian Democrats because there

would be massive layoffs if they did not win.

"This campaign, however, could succeed only because the SPD offered no alternative. It also promised 'sacrifice' for the wage earners and a 'not so drastic' austerity.

"With this policy, the SPD undermined its positions precisely where it should have buttressed them. It lost specifically on the issue where it traditionally had the advantage over the Christian Democrats. . . .

"Shortly before the elections, the polls indicated that 57 percent had more confidence in the Christian Democrats' ability to cut unemployment.

"If everyone was saying that an austerity policy was necessary, then it would be better to do it 'right' in order to prepare the way for an upturn. If capitalism was the only possible system, then better vote for the party that has the confidence of the capitalists and not for those whom the bosses threaten with a continued investment strike."

Gains for 'Greens'

The most notable result of this election was that the ecologists, the "Greens," who got 2.2 million votes (5.6 percent of the total), will have 27 members of parliament.

The Greens took an impressive number of votes from among the SPD's electorate. They obtained more than 10 percent of the total in four areas, two of which were in urban voting districts in Hamburg and Bremen. They got between 4 and 5 percent of the vote in the industrial Ruhr region.

On the evening of the election, Green leader Petra Kelly stated: "We will seek extraparlimentary action. The only bright spot in this vote is that for the first time in the history of West Germany, with the exception of the immediate postwar period, a group to the left of the SPD will be represented in parliament, a group that clearly says that it will use its positions to promote mass mobilizations, especially against the stationing of the missiles."

Nonetheless, the Green vote was lower than

expected, because the leadership of this current refused to try to build an enlarged left bloc, or to openly support a SPD government against the right.

More fundamentally, noted the GIM statement: "The decisive weakness of the Greens is exactly the same as the SPD, the question of unemployment. The Greens either said nothing about this or did not go beyond abstractions. . . .

"The election result is a rude awakening, moreover, for a section of the left that concentrated entirely on the question of whether the Greens could pass the 5 percent mark. This goal was reached. But the decisive thing is that there was no majority for an SPD government."

'Constructive opposition'?

The GIM blasted declarations by the leaders of the SPD, who said that the voters had delivered their verdict and it would have to be respected. The GIM statement maintained:

"The voters were not able to decide on the main questions in their daily lives and concerns. The turn in Bonn must not be respected . . . it must be fought. What is needed is not 'constructive opposition' as Vogel says, but hard and consistent resistance to Kohl and the capitalists in the factories, the offices, the streets, and in front of NATO bases.

"Sixty-five percent of the population is against the U.S. missiles. Over half the population is for a neutral West Germany. The overwhelming majority of the population sees the fight against unemployment as the main issue.

"But this government will do nothing against unemployment. The stock market zoomed up, of course, on March 7. But to the extent that new investments are made, they will mainly rationalize jobs away.

"Within a year there will be 3 million unemployed. In six months, new U.S. missiles will be brought in. The majority of the population does not want that. This government was elected only because there was no socialist alternative . . . and because the Greens offered only a partial program."

In conclusion, the GIM declaration stated:

"March 6 was a defeat for the workers movement and the left. . . . We cannot underestimate the effects of this on the social relationship of forces. The bourgeois bloc is determined to inflict severe defeats on the workers movement and the peace movement. The stationing of the missiles at the end of the year and the labor contract negotiations, involving the demand for a 35-hour work week, may be the key battles. But it would be wrong to concentrate only on these three 'big' questions.

"The offensives of the right always look for weak points. So, the first targets could be the foreign workers and the right to abortion.

"All these battles are ahead of us. They were not decided by March 6. Social Democrats, Greens, and socialists must fight together against the missiles, unemployment, and the social budget cuts." □

The lessons of the municipal elections

Socialist and Communist parties get warning at polls

[Municipal elections were held in France in two rounds on March 6 and March 13. In the first round, the capitalist parties received 51.5 percent of the vote while the Socialist Party-Communist Party coalition that controls the National Assembly received 46.5 percent.

[In contrast to the general rule in previous elections, where the forces that do best in the first round usually increase their margin of victory in the second, on March 13 the candidates of the Socialist and Communist parties received more votes than their bourgeois opponents.

[Despite what the French press described as the "somersault" in the vote total between the two rounds, the main workers parties suffered a net loss of 30 large cities compared to the number they had governed prior to the elections.

[In the first round, there were two slates running to the left of the Socialist and Communist parties. Workers Struggle (LO) and the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) ran a joint slate nationally. The Internationalist Communist Party (PCI) of Pierre Lambert, which had been invited to join that slate, ran its own candidates. As a result of a new proportional representation system, two members of the LCR and four members of the PCI were elected to municipal councils.

[The final campaign rally of the LCR-LO campaign, held March 4 in Paris, drew 5,000 people, making it the largest rally held by any of the working-class slates in the Paris area.

[The following statement on the elections by the political bureau of the LCR, which is the French section of the Fourth International, appeared in the March 18 issue of *Rouge*, the LCR's weekly newspaper. The translation and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

1. The Socialist Party and Communist Party pay the price for their policies

Two years after May 10 [the election of Socialist Party candidate François Mitterrand as president of France], the left has lost control of 31 cities of more than 30,000 inhabitants in the municipal elections. In the first round of the voting, the left reaped the bitter fruits of its policies. It was punished by abstentions that were concentrated in the working-class and low-income neighborhoods. This is the fundamental explanation for its setback.

It is true that the right saw a gain in its vote totals. But the second round of the elections showed the limits of that gain: those who abstained in the first round were mobilized to bar the road to the right, which was crowing

about its victory. The relationship of forces that emerged from May 1981 has not fundamentally changed.

We must draw three lessons:

1. For months the right wing mobilized toward the March elections. It hoped they would be decisive for its regaining power. The results it achieved are the fruit not simply of a well-run election campaign, but of a mobilization of its social base.

Since May 10, 1981, the right has carried out many campaigns to influence public opinion. It rode the mobilizations of the National Federation of Syndicates of Agricultural Landholders, of small businessmen, of defenders of private schools, and of doctors. The National Federation of French Employers (CNPF) brought together 10,000 bosses in Paris.

The right had an even easier time building up this relationship of forces because there was no response to its demonstrations. The SP and CP, and the trade-union leaders, preferred to grit their teeth.

This is the logical outcome of their policy of compromise and concessions.

The results were not long in coming. Whereas the gains of the right in the cantonal elections were due solely to the "electoral subsidence" of the left, in these municipal elections the right gained in real votes.

First of all, the right massively mobilized its traditional voters. Then too, it won back a segment of the "middle layers" who had left it in 1981. Finally, it ate into, although only slightly, a low-income electorate that was susceptible to anti-immigrant and law-and-order themes.

What we saw was a limited move to the right, but one that indicates social polarization and tension deep within French society.

2. In the first round, the SP and the CP suffered a high abstention rate among workers and low-income voters. This caused them to lose a number of mayoral posts, and forced them into rather unfavorable second-round contests for several others.

What is significant is that this electoral decline is not new. The same symptoms were seen in the cantonal elections, the partial legislative elections, and the December elections for the arbitration commissions. A not insignificant segment of those who had made the 1981 victory possible were thereby showing their disagreement with policies that ignored their aspirations in order to make more concessions to the bosses and then to directly take the road of austerity.

Despite these and many other warnings, the SP and the CP chose to help the right by push-

ing a policy that could only sow discontent and disorientation among those who had brought them to power.

3. In this context, the dynamic of the second round and the mobilization of the "left-wing abstainers" has a very specific significance. This was not some kind of "somersault" by lost sheep who finally came over to support the government's policies at the call of the leaders of the SP and CP.

It was, simply, the mobilization of working-class and low-income voters who had punished the government in the first round in their own fashion, but who did not want to hear any more talk about a victory of the right wing, and who in this way reaffirmed the choice they made on May 10, 1981: yes to change, no to the government of the bankers and bosses!

All the hasty commentators of the right and of a certain school of the left began to explain that the May 10 results were only a passing incident along the road and that things had returned to normal. The results of the second round, however, proved that, overall, a certain relationship of forces was maintained.

2. Relationship of forces maintained

The elections present a deformed picture of the relationship of forces between classes. The results in the municipal elections show by themselves that the country did not "swing to the right."

After the first round, certain commentators tried to cover over the real scope of working-class abstentions in explaining the setback to the left. After the second round, these same commentators acknowledged the scope of the abstentions. They now argued, however, that the poor transfer of votes to CP candidates in the second round was explained by the "fear" of the middle layers.¹ But the figures show that although the left suffered a partial setback, its previous electoral gains are far from being dissipated.

The desires expressed May 10 remain, as shown by the mobilization of "abstentionists" [in the second round] on March 13.

But things also have to be judged on the level of the relationship of social forces. The election of Mitterrand was not, it is true, preceded by united mass mobilizations and followed by a general strike, as was the case [with the victory of the Popular Front government] in 1936.

1. In many cases, when CP candidates were the only left-wing survivors from the first round, their vote totals in the second round were considerably lower than the combined total polled by the CP and SP candidates in the first round.

The reason for this must be looked for in the frenetic policy of dividing the working class that the SP and the CP were embroiled in before the fall of [former President] Giscard, and in the discouragement caused by the attitude of resignation that the reformist leaders maintained toward the attacks in the Barre [austerity] plan.

However, while Mitterrand's victory did not lead to a social explosion, it did open a new cycle of struggles. In the 12 months after Mitterrand took office in June 1981, the number of local conflicts increased more than 50 percent compared to the same period in 1980; and the number of days lost on strikes doubled. The eruption of fights for the 39-hour workweek (February–March 1982) reached the highest levels of the post-1974 period.

May and June 1982 opened a new phase marked by a certain stabilization at a level near that of the post-1977 period. But it was also marked by struggles at Citroen and Talbot.

The strikes by automobile production workers and by miners in Carmaux right in the midst of the municipal election period show the full importance of this combativity.

This is all the more remarkable since the workers very quickly found themselves confronting a big political problem. The very people they had elected, the SP-CP majority, not only made compromises with the CNPF [the employers federation], but also began to practice austerity policies and to seek to turn back basic social gains.

The national leaders of the unions were giving direct support to this policy and were blocking any movement toward national mobilization. What followed was confusion and outbreaks of anger, but often without any real means of developing mobilization. The reactions of the Lorraine steelworkers, to whom the SP and CP had made so many promises before coming to power, are exemplary in this regard.

However, the relationship of forces that emerged from May 10 played a role in the struggles, despite the SP and CP policies. It is enough to recall how it was possible to push through the right of women to abortion. It is enough to recall how sending in the CRS riot police did not prevent the Carmaux miners from winning an initial victory; how automobile production workers made gains; how, finally, during the conflicts around the 39-hour week, the bosses rapidly gave in and Mitterrand had to intervene.

The government must take its electoral base into account, and the bosses must take into account the relationship of forces that emerged from May 10. It is a bone stuck in the throat of the employers' federation. They cannot inflict a major defeat on the working class, as their Italian counterparts did at Fiat.

The existence of an SP-CP majority in parliament, despite its policies, is a point in favor of the workers struggles. The bourgeoisie's desire to turn that situation around, fully confirmed by the municipal elections, can only



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exacerbate working-class combativity.

3. Far left: significant results

In 33 cities, the "Voice of the Workers Against Austerity" slate received more than 3 percent of the vote. In 14 cities the slate got more than 4 percent, and in seven it polled more than 5 percent. The slate was made up of members of Workers Struggle (LO) and the LCR.

Two people on the slate were elected; one in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in the working class suburbs of Rouen; and the other in Cenon, in the working-class suburbs of Bordeaux.

Adding up the votes of the far left — LO-LCR, and PCI — you get an average of nearly 5 percent of the votes cast.

The media were silent on these results, which often provided the margin of victory for the left in the second round. It is true that they represent an ebb from the high point of the 1977 municipal elections. But we must remember that during the 1981 presidential campaign, Arlette Laguiller [the candidate of Workers Struggle] got 2.5 percent; and in the legislative elections that followed, the totals of the LCR and LO taken together were around 1.2 percent.

For small formations — and all the more so for revolutionary organizations — elections quite significantly distort the real relationship of forces. Nonetheless, the discontent felt by many voters was not reflected in a larger vote for the far left than it usually receives. This is a sign of the level of political consciousness of the workers, especially sectors critical of the SP and CP.

For many months there have been growing signs of discontent regarding the government's policies. It is not only — as we have seen —

the abstentions, but struggles, positions expressed by significant sectors of the union movement, petitions and recommendations to the parliamentary deputies of the majority.

On the other hand, these mobilizations have not done much to develop a credible political alternative to the left of the SP and CP. Because the mobilizations are often partial in scope and do not move in the direction of bringing all the workers together, they do not pose the central political questions on a mass basis. This is seen in the weakness of the differentiations within the traditional parties and the difficulties of the trade-union oppositions.

Therefore, there is a gap between the mobilizations and the criticisms of the SP and CP on the one hand, and the political expression of this existing combativity and radicalization.

Far-left activists have often played a significant role in the struggles that have developed. But this does not mean that a political alternative to the traditional leaderships is beginning to exist on a mass level.

For months our activity has shown us that there is a large working-class current that is not only in the front ranks of the struggles, but also is looking for a political alternative. We also saw that important sectors of the working class do not passively accept the government's policies. Our election campaign, the success of our meetings, the hearing we got for our explanations, and the many discussions with numerous working-class militants confirmed our opinion on this.

Of course in the elections, this criticism of the CP and SP was mainly expressed negatively — through abstention. The task of the hour for revolutionaries is to build, in struggles and through discussion, this political alternative — along with many workers who did not vote in the first round, as well as with many of those who cast a "useful" vote despite their criticisms.

The election campaign that we ran will be a basic building block because, while energetically combating the right, we posed the burning questions of the day to thousands of working-class militants.

4. On the right, nothing settled

The right wing made gains in the election. It will use these in one way or another to contest the legitimacy of the working-class majority of May 10. By capturing many mayoral posts, it will have more institutional leverage for waging its political battles and for pushing ahead its social mobilizations.

The Assembly for the Republic (RPR) made important gains within the right. This is not just because of the prestige that [RPR leader Jacques] Chirac gained in his victory in the Paris mayoral race. Although the RPR has not become a "mass" bourgeois party like the Italian or German Christian Democrats, it was able to take a big step toward the reconstruction of a bourgeois strike-force.

After the first round of the municipal elections, the right had hoped for more. It wanted to have the unquestioned ability to challenge

the legitimacy of the May 10, 1981, vote. Its soothing speeches in the period between the two rounds should not make us forget its desire for revenge. Its perspective is to overturn the present majority. Its problem is how to do that.

From this vantage point, the final result of the municipal elections was not clear-cut enough to permit the right to overcome its problems. For the moment, the right is playing a waiting game. But, fundamentally, it finds itself in a contradictory situation.

Basing itself on the thrust of these social mobilizations and the gains made during these elections, the right can play the game of confrontation through, among other things, the battle for early legislative elections. But, for the bourgeoisie there is an obvious danger: it runs the risk of provoking a response from the working class, which has just shown again that despite the policy of the SP and CP the relationship of forces revealed and strengthened by May 10 remains in force.

The other tactic would be to wait for the Mitterrand regime to slowly decay and for the bourgeoisie to be able to rebuild an alternative leadership. The problems with this are clear. It runs the risk of frittering away the gains of the right-wing social mobilization. It runs the risk of leaving initiative in the hands of the president of the Republic, which has the constitutional power to decide when to call parliamentary elections.

In the face of a social and political crisis, Mitterrand could very well opt for early legislative elections that, mixed with a layer of proportional representation in those elections, would allow him to try to put together a "new majority" to the detriment of, among others, a number of leaders of the present opposition.

The municipal elections did not fundamentally change the situation for the right. Chirac is classified as a "hardliner," but he was also able to moderate his tone. Raymond Barre let it be known that he has time and is holding himself in reserve: one must, however, be wary of waters that seem to be still. In fact, each of these "chiefs" swing between the temptation to "speed up the elections" and the perspective of the next presidential election. Giscard's "flip-flops" prove it.

But objective realities exist. To win, the right played the game of "radicalization." It chose not only to support mobilizations in the streets, but to unite a large segment of its voters around openly reactionary themes: against immigration, for law-and-order.

Driven from the institutions of the Fifth Republic that it no longer directly controls, and not being able to make its weight felt in parliament, the right is undergoing a process of radicalization that is hard to control. Seeing the gains made in the elections, many bosses will be less willing than before to back off. The Poujadist² impulses of certain layers will be hard to contain.

2. This refers to Pierre Poujade, who led a right-wing movement of small shopkeepers and artisans that achieved prominence in the mid-1950s.

Beyond the tactical plans of one or another figure, what is also taking place is a mobilization of the social forces on the right. Fundamentally, the right's policies will be brought to bear on that terrain. Either the right resigns itself to the "erosion" of the Mitterrand regime, waiting quietly until it falls like a rotten fruit, or, faced with working-class mobilizations and responses, it plays the card of social counter-mobilization. These are different tactics for a single objective: break the SP-CP majority that arose out of May 10.

5. The alternative

On the evening of the second round, the leaders of the SP and CP proclaimed that it was necessary to draw all the lessons from the "warning" that a segment of working-class voters had given in the first round. But before saying more about it, all waited for Mitterrand to speak.

Mitterrand himself closed himself off in the Elysée Palace, to prove that he is the supreme arbiter and that he has adapted well to the institutions of the Fifth Republic, which he used to denounce as "a permanent coup d'état."

This situation in itself already constitutes a whole program: through it the former first secretary of the Socialist Party [Mitterrand] shows the path he wants to follow. He wants to free himself from the "constraints" of the vote on May 10, from the "warning" given by the workers during these municipal elections, and even from the SP-CP majority in the Assembly, which might prove too sensitive to these pressures.

His plans: make "French industry" competitive, confront international competition, and therefore prepare a second austerity plan for the working class. In the longer term, Mitterrand wants to prepare "an opening toward the center" in an attempt to extricate himself from an SP-CP majority that is still too much influenced by the scent of May 10 and the hopes that the workers placed in that victory.

His problems: how to begin to put this policy into place, while taking into account the "somersault" of the second round which, with the working-class abstentions, clearly showed what direction the workers who brought him to power wanted to go. He may therefore have to dress up his plans in rhetoric that is a bit further to the left than he had planned. But the essence remains.

The leaders of the CP and some SP leaders claim they are fighting against this "opening to the right." They call instead for "continuity." But this is a hard argument to win. This "continuity" is only a succession of compromises and capitulations to the bosses and the right, a watering down of the hopes of May 10, a policy that allows the right, less than two years after a stinging defeat, to move to the offensive.

The only alternative to this desire to "open to the right" and mount new attacks against the gains of the workers, is not continuity, but a change in policies. It is possible to counter the mobilization of the right, first by basing one-

self on the working-class mobilization. The desire for change is not lacking. Nor is the desire to defend the workers' gains, which are being cut to shreds. The past working-class reactions show that the workers are more than ready to go into struggle to safeguard these past gains, which are under attack.

But the policy of the SP and the CP, transmitted by the trade-union leaders, leads to confusion and disarray or breeds a wait-and-see attitude among certain workers. The refusal of these organizations to mobilize around the strikes by immigrant production workers in the automobile industry can only deepen the divisions within the workers' ranks, divisions the right and the bosses play on in a period of crisis.

The wherewithal for this policy exists if there is a break with the profit economy, if nationalizations are carried out to respond to social needs instead of to push an "industrial policy" that obeys the criteria of capitalist profitability.

The workers have to impose this change in policy by mobilizing in unity. But to succeed in this, they must also build a party that will really serve them, that will defend their interests to the end.

A revolutionary alternative to the leadership of the SP and CP must be built. This is the message that we wanted to get out in our joint campaign with Workers Struggle. But this need is realized far beyond the framework of organized revolutionary militants. There are thousands in the SP, the CP, and the unions looking for the road to another policy. We must struggle together with them and discuss with them how to build a force that tomorrow will make it possible for the workers to triumph.

A race is taking place. The right and the bosses are preparing even more aggressive offensives, taking advantage of the CP and SP policies. But a fundamental element of the situation has not changed: the desire for change shown May 10 is still present. By thinking that a simple electoral advance allows them to turn it back, the right and the bosses run the risk of burning their fingers. □

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Regime steps up repression

To impose banks' austerity plan

By Will Reissner

The government of Sri Lanka, an island republic known until 1972 as Ceylon, has unleashed a wave of repression in recent months in an attempt to stifle protests against the deteriorating economic situation.

When the current United National Party government came to power in 1977, it pledged to secure rapid economic growth by opening the country to foreign capitalist investment and to imports and by ending state price subsidies for food and other necessities.

These policies made Sri Lanka's president, J.R. Jayewardene, the darling of the international bankers.

The policy of opening the country to imports has filled the shops with expensive, foreign-made consumer goods, to the delight of the wealthy. But more than half of Sri Lanka's families have incomes of less than \$15 per month. For them, the greater availability of stereos and scotch did not compensate for the cuts in government price subsidies on rice and transportation.

The flood of imports, however, boosted Sri Lanka's foreign debt to \$1.5 billion. The country's foreign currency reserves have dropped sharply and are expected to be exhausted this year.

Today, despite Jayewardene's promises, the economic situation in Sri Lanka is grim. In May 1982 a subcommittee of the World Bank reported on the problems of Sri Lanka to a Tokyo meeting of aid donors. Inflation, the World Bank report noted, was actually 32 percent in 1981 rather than the 17 percent the government reported.

The World Bank proposed a new devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee to make imports more expensive and exports cheaper. The Jayewardene government has already sharply devalued the rupee twice since coming to power.

The report also proposed a halt to all new building projects and further reductions in government price subsidies.

Among the latest targets are the education and free health systems built up under previous governments. These systems, noted the October 20, 1982, *Washington Post*, "had made Sri Lanka the envy of the Third World with a nearly 90 percent literacy rate and a life expectancy of 68 years."

Jayewardene tried in 1981 to introduce fees for education, but was forced to back down by the ensuing protests.

In order to cripple opposition to the World Bank-inspired austerity program, the Jayewardene government has been stripping away democratic institutions.

Recognizing that the economic situation is

likely to be even worse in several years, the government pushed through a constitutional amendment advancing the 1984 presidential election to October 1982. In that election, Jayewardene received 53 percent of the vote.

On the heels of that victory, in December 1982 the government extended the term of the sitting parliament, which was to have expired in August, for six more years.

A referendum on this extension was held under severe constraints. Although all campaigning was illegal, posters urging the electorate to vote "yes" were seen everywhere. Anyone putting up a poster urging a "no" vote, however, was subject to arrest.

On December 22, the referendum passed with 55 percent of the vote. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a number of leaders of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the main opposition group, were arrested, paralyzing that party's activities.

The government also closed down the Com-

munist Party's daily newspaper *Attha* and shut CP offices.

A large number of human rights activists, clergy, students, teachers, and trade unionists have also been hit by the repression.

A special target has been the 2.5 million Tamil-speaking minority. Two young Tamil activists — Kuttimani and Jegan — were sentenced to death in August 1982 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They were charged with murdering a policeman in March 1979.

Under the PTA, Kuttimani and Jegan were held in a remote army camp prior to their trial and were not permitted to see lawyers, relatives, or friends. While in custody they were subjected to torture and were denied trial by jury.

During their trial, the judge ruled that under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, confessions extracted by the police and army were admissible, even if torture had been used.

Scores of other Tamil youth are also being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Sri Lankan supporters of human rights are calling for protests against the planned execution of Kuttimani and Jegan to be sent to President J.R. Jayewardene, President's House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka. Send copies to Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners in Sri Lanka, 9 Grays Inn Bldg., Roseberry Ave., London EC 1, Britain. □

Colombia: army role in death squads

Active duty officers of Colombia's army participate in the rightist death squad Death to Kidnappers (MAS), admitted a report by Attorney General Carlos Jiménez Gómez in February. The report was issued after a two-month investigation ordered by Colombia's president, Belisario Betancur.

The 10,000-word report confirmed charges by political and labor organizations that the armed forces were actively involved in the MAS death squads.

MAS first came to public attention in December 1981. Since then it has been responsible for the murder of 94 people and the disappearance of 200 more, according to statistics compiled by Colombia's Standing Committee on Human Rights.

The targets of the death squads have been alleged supporters of guerrilla movements, leaders of labor and student organizations, and people with reputations as supporters of progressive causes.

Colombia's guerrilla organizations had demanded the unmasking of MAS as a prerequisite to their acceptance of a general amnesty decreed by the government last November.

Less than 72 hours after the attorney general's report was made public, Colombia's defense minister and the head of the armed forces denied any armed forces participation in MAS. They cited the fact that the report had not singled out any individuals as being involved in the death squads.

In response, the attorney general issued a

second report naming 60 individual members of the armed forces as participants in MAS, along with police officers and secret agents.

The attorney general's office also announced that the officers have been indicted and will be tried before civil rather than military courts.

This move angered the army high command, which demanded in late February that every member of the armed forces contribute one day's pay to a defense fund for the accused death-squad members. □

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Ríos Montt's first year in power

A regime of hunger, war, and massacres

By Will Reissner

On the first anniversary of the March 23, 1982, coup that brought him to power in Guatemala, Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt announced he was lifting the state of siege that he imposed in July.

Ríos Montt also promised that power would eventually be turned over to an elected civilian government, although no date for elections was announced.

But these were merely public relations moves designed to improve the government's blood-stained image. Similar promises have been offered in the past.

When Ríos Montt staged his coup, he promised "we are going to bring our compatriots a regime of peace and democracy, in which the rights of man are respected." He vowed to end Guatemala's "international isolation."

Ten months later, Ríos Montt claimed that peace had finally come to Guatemala, and that his armed forces had broken the back of insurgent guerrilla groups.

President Reagan announced the resumption of direct U.S. military aid to Guatemala in January, claiming that repression had declined since Ríos Montt took power.

Systematic and brutal repression

But Allan Nairn, a U.S. journalist who spent considerable time in Guatemala in 1982, presents a very different picture of the situation there. In an article in the April 11, 1983, issue of the liberal *New Republic* magazine, Nairn reports that repression in the countryside has reached unprecedented levels.

Ríos Montt's predecessor, Gen. Romeo Lucas García, concentrated much of his repression in the cities. "In the urban areas," Nairn writes, "Lucas undertook a campaign of assassinations that destroyed a powerful popular movement of trade unionists, professionals, clergy, slum dwellers, and moderate politicians; he recklessly continued these highly visible killings long after their political objective had been accomplished."

When Ríos Montt took power, Nairn says, he "curtailed the politically disastrous urban assassinations." But in the countryside the repression became more systematic and brutal. Ríos Montt instituted "province-by-province sweeps by massed troops to clear the tiny mountain villages and to resettle much of the population in army-controlled towns."

In village after village terror-stricken peasants fled into the mountains to try to save themselves from army massacres. Guatemala's Conference of Catholic Bishops noted in a May 27 pastoral letter: "Not even the lives of old people, pregnant women, or innocent children were respected. Never in our his-

tory has it come to such grave extremes."

Nairn conducted interviews with "several dozen soldiers and officers in the field, as well as with refugees and government officials." Based on the gruesome stories they recount, Nairn became convinced "that Ríos Montt's strategy was based on organized killing, torture, and bombing of unarmed civilians."

According to the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, 6,000 people were killed in the first months after Ríos Montt took power. The commission adds that more than 100,000 peasants have fled to Mexico to escape the murders and atrocities committed by the army.

Since December, the pace of rural massacres has slackened. Reagan pointed to this as a sign of human rights progress. But Nairn argues that "the number of massacres fell because the army had completed the first stage of a major operation designed to depopulate the rural villages that are the guerrillas' logistical and political base."

Guerrilla units intact

"Far from crushing the guerrillas," Nairn maintains, "the counterinsurgency drive has left their corps of armed combatants essentially intact, while sowing bitterness among the peasant survivors."

Rural sweeps and massacres have apparently caused some disruption of guerrilla activities carried out by the four organizations that make up the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG). But in an interview with U.S. reporter Roger Burbach published in the Mexico City daily *Uno más Uno* Commander Benedicto of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), one of the groups in the URNG, stated:

"Naturally in any war there are successes and failures, and our war is no exception. But despite the massive deployment of the genocidal army's troops on all the guerrilla fronts, the blows to the revolutionary organizations themselves have not been significant."

Benedicto added, however, that the "attempt to exterminate all those who sympathize or are suspected of sympathizing with the revolutionary organizations" has had a substantial impact on the guerrilla forces because "for us the civilian population, although not directly participating with us, is our principal strength."

Despite this, the EGP reports that on January 15 its fighters simultaneously occupied 23 towns in Huehuetenango Province.

The guerrilla struggle in Guatemala is a response to the desperate poverty and injustice inflicted on the Guatemalan workers and peasants by a succession of repressive military regimes that followed the CIA-organized over-

throw of the elected government of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954.

The conditions the Guatemalan people face were described by Fernando Moreno in the February 27 New York daily *El Diario-La Prensa*. Moreno points out that of every 100 children born, 20 die before the age of four. More than 80 percent of all children suffer from malnutrition.

Illiteracy is rampant. Only 37 percent of the adult population can read and write.

Two percent of the population owns 80 percent of the arable land, and the richest 5 percent of the population receives 59 percent of Guatemala's national income.

In addition to the bitter poverty, more than half the country's inhabitants are doubly oppressed because they speak Indian languages instead of Spanish, Guatemala's official language.

This state of affairs can only be maintained through brutal repression.

The Guatemalan government's war against its own people has been backed and aided by the U.S. government, and by the Israeli regime.

In a television program broadcast in Guatemala on January 28, Gen. Héctor López, head of the army general staff, said that "Israel is our principal supplier of arms and is Guatemala's number one friend."

When pressure on Washington forced the Carter administration to end arms shipments to Guatemala in 1977, the Israeli government jumped in to take up the slack. It has supplied Galil assault rifles, Uzi submachine guns, Arava airplanes, and other war matériel.

Israeli advisers also instruct Guatemalan police officers in surveillance techniques. Tel Aviv newspapers reported that Israeli military officers helped Ríos Montt carry out his coup.

Special tribunals

On March 3, the eve of Pope John Paul II's visit to Guatemala, the government executed six people by firing squad. The six, accused of being "subversives," had been tried by special military tribunals. Five more young people were executed March 21.

The special tribunals were created in July, when Ríos Montt imposed the state of siege. And despite the lifting of the state of siege, Ríos Montt announced that the special military tribunals will continue to operate.

More than 200 prisoners accused of subversion or collaboration with the guerrillas are awaiting trial before these special tribunals. Everything about the tribunals is secret: the identity of witnesses, the prosecutor, the time and place they meet, the evidence, and the transcripts of trials. Verdicts and sentences are reported anonymously, and there is no possibility of appeal.

Only the executions are carried out in public.

Ríos Montt, defending the tribunals, asserted that they are "a social, legal, and moral necessity because we don't want any more death squads." □