

# **INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS**

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U.S. Marine in West Beirut.

## **U.S. Forces Wage War Against Lebanese Liberation Fighters**

**Immigrant Workers Build  
New Unions in France**

**Growing Protests Hit  
Chilean Military Rule**

**Air Attacks on Nicaragua Mark  
New Escalation of CIA Campaign**

# New Salvadoran rebel actions a blow to 'pacification' drive

By Steve Wattenmaker

As part of their struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship, rebel forces of the Faribundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) stepped up their military activity in early September, including a major attack on the army garrison in El Salvador's third largest city. The September 4 attack on government fortifications in San Miguel, a city of 150,000, was the biggest rebel action since the FMLN briefly occupied the city of Berlín last February.

The FMLN's military actions occurred against a backdrop of new moves by Washington to deepen U.S. intervention in Central America. The Reagan administration demonstrated its resolve to pursue war policies in the region by dispatching Pentagon chief Caspar Weinberger to tour El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama early in September.

Shortly after Weinberger returned to Washington, the White House confirmed that 11 more U.S. military advisers would be sent to El Salvador and that Guatemalan soldiers would be trained at U.S. bases in Honduras. Thousands of U.S. troops are already in Honduras for "war games" scheduled to last until February 1984. And a U.S. naval task force is cruising off Nicaragua's coasts.

The administration matched these new war moves with a corresponding escalation in its bellicose rhetoric. Fred Iklé, the third-ranking official in the Pentagon, called for outright military victory in Central America during a major policy speech September 12.

"Let me make this clear to you," Iklé told the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs. "We do not seek a military defeat for our friends. We do not seek a military stalemate. We seek victory for the forces of democracy," he said, referring to the Salvadoran butchers.

Iklé also urged continuation of U.S. aid to the counterrevolutionaries attacking Nicaragua. Any other action, he said, "would turn Nicaragua into a sanctuary from which the nations of Central America could be safely attacked, but in which U.S.-supported forces could not operate."

A strong and unthreatened Nicaragua, in turn, could force Washington to permanently station troops in neighboring countries, "as in Korea or West Germany," Iklé said.

## FMLN mounts offensive

Only hours before Weinberger's plane landed in San Salvador on September 4, some 700 FMLN troops began fighting their way toward the heart of San Miguel in eastern El Salvador. The rebels' primary objective was the barracks of the Salvadoran army's Third Infan-

try brigade, housing some 2,000 government soldiers.

As part of the attack, FMLN gunners opened fire on the military compound with 81 millimeter and 120 millimeter mortars. The withering barrage reportedly destroyed a large part of the garrison. Guerrilla commander Joaquín Villalobos said on the rebels' Radio Venceremos that the artillery attack had been the largest ever mounted by FMLN forces.

During the 12-hour attack on San Miguel, FMLN units also ambushed two columns of relief forces from nearby La Unión, blew up three key bridges in the city, and destroyed a large coffee mill and two downtown office buildings.

The attack, which the FMLN characterized as "a total success," left more than 300 government soldiers dead or wounded, according to Radio Venceremos. Guerrilla casualties were put at 10 to 13 by Salvadoran military officials.

Accompanying the attack on San Miguel, FMLN forces carried out a series of other military actions:

- Rebel sappers toppled electricity pylons, blacking out San Miguel, Usulután, La Unión, and Morazán provinces. In late August, the guerrillas knocked out power in parts of the capital and the western provinces of San Salvador, Chaletenango, Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, Santa Ana, and La Libertad.

- Radio Venceremos announced September 3 that the guerrillas had retaken five towns in Morazán province. Two Salvadoran army officers were killed and 17 government soldiers were wounded in the attacks.

- Rebels bombed the Pacayal microwave communications station, nine miles west of San Miguel, cutting telephone service to the eastern part of the country.

## 'Pacification' applauded

For several months Washington has been citing the relative lull in FMLN military actions as part of its propaganda that the U.S.-backed Salvadoran regime is winning the country's civil war. The White House especially took pains to applaud the Salvadoran army's sweep of San Vicente and Usulután provinces. This operation, which began in June, is styled after the "pacification" program used by Washington in Vietnam.

Administration officials repeatedly claimed that the U.S.-directed operation had virtually cleared the rebel forces out of San Vicente province. Shortly before Weinberger helicoptered into the heavily guarded provincial capital of San Vicente during his tour, top Pentagon officials told the September 3 *Washington Post* that the pacification effort had "turned the tables" on the guerrillas.

"In about the last two months, things have been going along very well," said a senior U.S. official. "Government forces are on the offensive and also they have been conducting some very good operations. They've turned the tables" on the guerrillas, "and now the insurgents are on the defensive."

## 'Like a boa constrictor'

Even before the FMLN attack on San Miguel put an end to any speculation that the rebels were on the defensive, Rubén Zamora, a spokesman for the FMLN and Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), gave a more accurate assessment of the pacification effort.

Zamora told the August 27 *New York Times* that the U.S.-sponsored plan is doomed to failure:

"In the first place," he said, "the plan is predicated on forcing the guerrillas out of the area, and this has not succeeded. Besides that, the cost of the San Vicente plan, counting both military and civilian expenses, is over \$30 million, and neither the government of El Salvador nor the United States can afford it."

Other rebel leaders explained that the FMLN had pulled back from military activity to absorb an unprecedented influx of recruits and arms gathered in the preceding eight months of guerrilla successes.

"The guerrilla movement is in this stage like a boa constrictor that has swallowed a calf," said an FDR official. "It is digesting."

"We fight when we want to fight, where we want to fight, not when the enemy wishes we would fight," a rebel commander in northern Morazán province told the August 8 *Miami Herald*.

"They're saying we're beaten — that's absurd, after all the months in which we've dealt them such blows," he said.

## Rebels push for dialogue

Hand in hand with its new military campaign, the FMLN-FDR has continued to press its demand for an open dialogue with Washington and San Salvador.

The rebels' call for negotiations without preconditions as a way to end the fighting has gained tremendous popularity since they proposed it in 1982. Washington's flat rejection of any talks with the guerrillas increasingly isolated it and the Salvadoran regime at home and abroad.

Within El Salvador the proposal for a dialogue has been embraced by the Committee of Trade Union Unity (CUS), a grouping of unions representing half a million Salvadoran workers. Other support for the proposal has come from the Catholic church hierarchy, the Christian Democratic Youth, and even some sections of the junior officer corps of the army.

Internationally, the governments of France, Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, Cuba, Nicaragua, and other countries have come out in favor of the FMLN-FDR proposal.

With the appointment of special Central American envoy Richard Stone earlier this year, the Reagan administration began ma-

neuvering to put itself in a more defensible posture as far as negotiations were concerned. Stone had a preliminary meeting with FMLN-FDR representatives at the beginning of August. On August 29 a delegation from the Salvadoran government's "peace commission" met rebel leaders in Bogotá, Colombia.

The fact that the meetings took place was a measure of the enormous pressure the FMLN-FDR has brought to bear on Washington. However, Stone and the Salvadoran government representatives made it clear they were only going through the motions. From the outset they insisted that any discussions be limited to Washington's proposal that the guerrillas lay down their arms and participate in elections that the Salvadoran regime has recently put off until sometime in 1984.

After the Bogotá meeting, the FMLN-FDR representatives reaffirmed that they would never unilaterally disarm or participate in phony elections like those held last year. The rebels have said repeatedly that elections held under the guns of the dictatorship's army would be a farce.

While the FMLN-FDR is nevertheless doing everything it can to push for the talks to resume, the Reagan administration appeared to be doing everything it could to derail any further discussions.

On Sept. 16 the U.S. State Department refused to permit Zamora to enter the United States to meet with members of Congress and to address two forums on Central America. Zamora described the action as "very contradictory to the administration's claims that it is prepared to have a dialogue with us. They permit Mr. Stone to talk to me but refuse to allow the public and the rest of the United States government — the Congress — to hear our voice."

Washington is not interested in any serious negotiations, Iklé told his Baltimore audience September 12:

"We can no more negotiate an acceptable political solution with these people than the social democrats in revolutionary Russia could have talked Lenin into giving up totalitarian Bolshevism."

Another sign of Washington's true position on negotiations was an article in the current issue of *Foreign Policy* magazine by Néstor Sánchez, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Latin America.

Sánchez argued that the FMLN-FDR has only used its proposal for a dialogue as a public relations ploy and "as a guise for seizing power." He said the rebels' declared aim of negotiating a power-sharing agreement is a ruse: "A glance at history shows that once their foot is in the door, Communists inevitably consolidate power rather than apportion it."

Francisco Quiñónez, head of the Salvadoran government peace commission, used the rebel attack on San Miguel as an excuse to call a halt to any further talks. Quiñónez said in a September 7 interview with Associated Press that he saw "no reason" to continue the dialogue because the rebels had acted in "bad faith" by

mounting the attack.

Washington's efforts to abort the negotiations it never wanted in the first place come as no surprise to the FMLN-FDR.

"The objective signs we see in the area tell us that the United States government does not favor dialogue and a political solution in El Salvador," Zamora said in his interview with the *New York Times*. "They are still pursuing

military victory. But policies do change, as the United States changed its policy in Vietnam after sending half a million soldiers there."

Military victory for the Salvadoran government is impossible, he said, because "guerrilla movements can only be wiped out by regimes that have the support of their people."

"The Salvadoran regime lacks this key to victory." □

## —IN THIS ISSUE—

Closing news date: September 20, 1983

FEATURES	540	U.S. anti-Soviet campaign unraveling — by Steve Wattenmaker
	541	The Libyan airliner affair — by Paul Siegel
LEBANON	532	U.S. navy, marines go into combat — by Fred Murphy
NICARAGUA	534	Air attacks: new escalation of CIA war — by Michael Baumann
CHILE	536	Anti-Pinochet protests mount — by Fred Murphy
PERU	537	Hugo Blanco suspended from parliament
IRELAND	543	Activists framed up — by Will Reissner
CANADA	544	Labor protests sweep British Columbia — by Will Reissner
GREECE	546	Workers, farmers take to streets — by Argyris Haras and Natasha Terlexis
UPPER VOLTA	548	French-backed regime overthrown — by Ernest Harsch
FRANCE	550	Immigrant workers build new unions — Interview with Renault shop steward
IRAN	554	Where the revolution stands today — Interview with Iranian socialist
SRI LANKA	558	Regime fans anti-Tamil pogroms — by Upali Cooray
SOUTH AFRICA	560	Broad resistance front formed — by Ernest Harsch
SELECTIONS FROM THE LEFT	538	The Korean airliner incident
DOCUMENTS	542	Speech by Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams
NEWS ANALYSIS	530	New Salvadoran rebel actions a blow to 'pacification' drive — by Steve Wattenmaker

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# U.S. navy, marines go into combat

## Reagan escalates war to save Phalangist regime

By Fred Murphy

President Reagan has sharply escalated U.S. military intervention in Lebanon's civil war on the side of the proimperialist regime of President Amin Gemayel.

U.S. warships off the Lebanese coast poured dozens of shells into rebel positions southeast of Beirut on September 19. The bombardment was aimed at shoring up Lebanese army units fighting for control of the strategic town of Suk al-Gharb on the heights overlooking the capital.

Earlier shelling by the U.S. Navy took place on September 8 and 17. The latter targeted what a marine spokesman said were artillery positions "deep inside Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon." Washington claimed this attack was in "self-defense" because U.S. military advisers attached to the Lebanese Defense Ministry had been endangered when the ministry building came under artillery fire from the rebel forces.

On September 12, 2,000 U.S. marines arrived off the Lebanese coast, joining 1,200 already stationed at Beirut international airport and 600 more on amphibious ships offshore.

The marines have fired their own artillery at the rebels as well, and have also engaged in gun battles in the streets of the Beirut suburbs adjacent to the airport.

As of September 20, four marines had been killed in combat and more than two dozen wounded.

### Imperialist buildup

Reagan's moves came as part of a broader escalation by Washington and its imperialist allies of their intervention in Lebanon, which began one year ago with the dispatch of the "peacekeeping force." From the outset, the aim has been to consolidate the rule of the Gemayel regime, which was installed at the point of Israeli bayonets in September 1982.

The U.S. battleship *New Jersey* is steaming from the Caribbean to join the aircraft carrier *Eisenhower* and 11 other U.S. warships. Ninety U.S. combat aircraft are attached to this fleet.

The total number of U.S. military personnel in Lebanon or just offshore — including sailors, aviators, and marines — stands at 14,000. This is the largest U.S. armed intervention in the Middle East since a comparable number of marines were landed in Lebanon in 1958.

The U.S. buildup has been augmented by Washington's imperialist allies, the governments of France, Italy, and Britain.

Paris has dispatched the aircraft carrier *Foch* and has launched Super-*Etendard* jet fighters

into the skies above Beirut. Casualties among the 2,000-strong French contingent in Beirut now total 15 dead and 42 wounded.

Rome has sent a destroyer to back up its 2,050 troops. London has dispatched to the Mediterranean all three of the British navy's aircraft carriers, including the *Hermes*, which last saw action in the Malvinas War against Argentina. British jets have also carried out flights over Lebanon from bases on Cyprus. Ninety British troops are stationed in Beirut.

The U.S. and European imperialists have had to intervene directly in Lebanon owing to the weakening of the Israeli state's capacity to defend their interests in the region.

The current "peacekeeping" force was first dispatched in the wake of the Sept. 16-18, 1982, massacre of Palestinians at the Shatila and Sabra refugee camps in Beirut by the Lebanese Forces, a powerful private army controlled by the ultrarightist Christian Phalange Party. The Phalangists acted in complicity with and under the protection of the Israeli army, which had occupied Beirut and most of southern Lebanon.

Worldwide revulsion at the massacre — including huge and unprecedented demonstrations inside the Zionist state itself — made continued Israeli occupation of Beirut politically impossible. Thus the U.S. marines and other imperialist units were brought in to fill the gap.

The Israeli pullback from Beirut a year ago marked the Zionist rulers' failure to fully achieve the aims they had set for their June 1982 invasion of Lebanon. While it dealt big

military blows to the Palestine Liberation Organization by destroying all the PLO's positions in southern Lebanon and forcing a PLO withdrawal from Beirut, the Israeli onslaught failed to destroy the PLO or drive it from Lebanon entirely.

### Zionists' aims unfulfilled

On the contrary — several thousand PLO fighters remain in Lebanon, and the PLO's heroic resistance to Israeli terror won new understanding and support for the Palestinian struggle throughout the world. Despite having imposed the Phalange-dominated Gemayel regime on the Lebanese people, the Israelis also failed to put an end to armed resistance by the Muslim and Druse populations and the various currents of the Lebanese left against rule by the privileged Maronite Christian minority.

Nor were the Israelis able to force the withdrawal from Lebanon of the Syrian armed forces, which have occupied large areas of the north and east of the country since intervening in the 1975-76 civil war. Under the present circumstances, the Syrian forces constitute a major obstacle to the imperialists as they try to shore up the Gemayel regime against its opponents and prevent the PLO from regaining a strong position inside Lebanon.

Because the Syrian government of Hafez Assad gives material support to the Druse and other forces fighting Gemayel and his imperialist backers, the Beirut regime has charged that Lebanon is actually facing a "foreign invasion." Reagan admitted in a September 9 speech that there seemed to be an

## Arafat hails Lebanese fighters

Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yassir Arafat returned to Lebanon September 16 for the first time since Syrian government interference in the PLO forced his absence from the country in June.

Arafat was greeted two days later by a large crowd of Palestinian refugees and PLO fighters at the Nahr al Bared refugee camp near Tripoli on Lebanon's northern coast.

"We are meeting here when the American fleets are in the sea, with the British and the French and their aircraft," Arafat said. "It is not by coincidence or by chance."

Arafat affirmed the PLO's political support for the Lebanese opposition forces

fighting Amin Gemayel's Phalangist government. "We are in one trench with the Lebanese national forces," he declared.

The PLO leader pointed out how Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who had just resigned, and his defense minister, Ariel Sharon, had expected to "liquidate the revolution and liquidate the Palestinians" with their invasion of Lebanon in June 1982.

"And where is Begin?" Arafat asked. "Where is Sharon? Where is Haig? They all went to disaster."

"And where is the Palestinian revolution?" he continued.

"We are here!" the crowd shouted back.

"The winds did not shake the mountain," Arafat responded, smiling.

"outright civil war" going on but White House officials later issued a retraction.

### Lebanese people's struggle

In fact, the current conflict is indeed a civil war — the continuation of a lengthy struggle by the majority of the oppressed and exploited of Lebanon against a privileged minority backed by imperialism.

Like all preceding Lebanese governments, the regime of Amin Gemayel is based on a system of political discrimination giving key posts and prerogatives to the minority Maronite Christian population. The majority of Lebanese adhere either to Sunni or Shi'a Islam. Others belong to the Druse religion, an early offshoot of Islam that has borrowed from Christian, Jewish, and other doctrines. Nor do the Maronites — some 30 percent or less of the population — represent all Lebanese Christians, who also include Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, and others.

The system of discrimination against non-Maronites was first imposed by the French imperialists, who ruled Lebanon as a colony from 1920 to after World War II. When the country gained independence, the predominantly Maronite bourgeoisie perpetuated the system as a means of guaranteeing the interests of their imperialist masters and fortifying their class rule over the workers and peasants, who are largely Muslim.

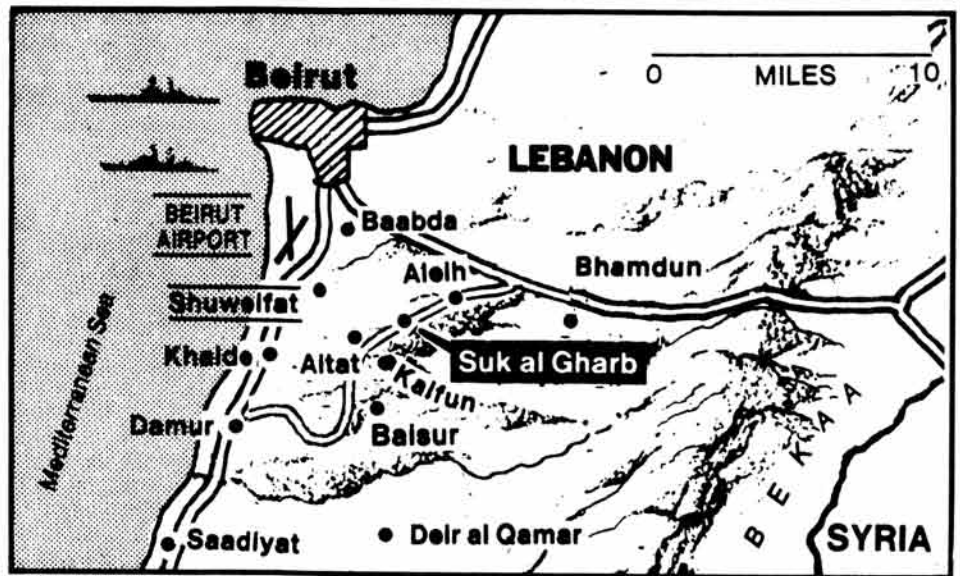
Resistance to this oppression has been at the root of Lebanon's recurring civil wars — in 1958, 1975-76, and again today. "The whole system is so unjust that it is no longer tenable," a former Lebanese cabinet minister told *Time* magazine. "Yet Gemayel can continue only if he perpetuates the system. Lebanon has reached a crossroads."

### Resistance by Shi'ites, Druse

The current crisis exploded at the end of August when Phalangists in West Beirut launched an unprovoked attack on activists from the Shi'ite Muslim organization Amal (Hope). Amal's militia forces fought back and were joined by fighters from other Muslim militias. The Lebanese army then came to the Phalange's aid and occupied West Beirut after a night of intense street fighting.

Shi'ite Muslims make up one-third of Lebanon's population and predominate among the poorest and most oppressed sectors. As *Miami Herald* correspondent Dan Williams put it, the Shi'ites "used to be taken for granted as the silent sufferers, the garbage collectors, the waiters, the mechanics, the maids, the poor farmers of Lebanon." But Lebanese Shi'ites began to radicalize in 1978, inspired by the revolutionary upsurge in Iran, where the bulk of the population is Shi'ite. Amal was organized that year to defend the Shi'ites against the Phalange and other rightist groups and to press for an end to discrimination against Muslims.

When the fighting broke out in August, Amal leader Nabih Berri presented three demands to the government: resignation of Gemayel's cabinet, a greater share of decision



making power for Shi'ites and other Muslims, and the disbanding of all militias, starting with the Phalange itself. "The time for one-party hegemony is over," Berri declared.

Besides Amal, other forces have also come together to oppose the Phalange-dominated government. In July, the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), headed by Druse leader Walid Jumblatt, joined with Christian ex-President Suleiman Franjeh, Sunni Muslim ex-Prime Minister Rashid Karami, and a number of leftist political groups to form the National Salvation Front (NSF).

The new front announced it was taking responsibility for administering the Syrian-occupied areas of northern and eastern Lebanon. It said it would cooperate with Syria and Libya, and it denounced the pact Gemayel had signed with Israel in May legitimizing Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. That pact also called for an end to longstanding Lebanese government commitments to the PLO and other Arab countries to aid in the struggle against Israel.

### Israeli pullback

The Druse fighters affiliated to the National Salvation Front have been in the forefront of the current armed resistance to the U.S.-backed Phalangist regime. The fighting has centered in the Shuf Mountains, the traditional home of the Druse population.

The Shuf had been occupied by Israeli forces since the 1982 invasion. Under Israeli protection, some 2,000 Phalangist troops had taken over a series of Druse villages during the past year, terrorizing the local population.

Because the pullback from Beirut a year ago had failed to quell discontent inside Israel, the Zionist rulers decided in August to carry out a further withdrawal to the areas south of the Awali River where their forces are now establishing permanent fortifications and military bases.

In effect, this decision meant a further retreat from the aims of the 1982 invasion, al-

though major Israeli troop concentrations remain within 10 miles of the Shuf, and joint Israeli-Phalange patrols continue north of the Awali River. Still, the rulers in Tel Aviv turned down urgent appeals from Washington and the Gemayel regime to delay the September pullout from the Shuf Mountains and to attack Druse positions there.

"Israelis have been deeply divided on the wider goals of the war," correspondent David Shipler commented in the September 5 *New York Times*, "but few Israelis opposed the idea of driving the P.L.O. out of southern Lebanon. It seems possible, therefore, that leaving the army to police the south will stir considerably less political ferment than the wider deployment has, especially if Israeli casualties from guerrilla attacks decline and reserve callups decrease."

In fact, Israeli casualties in Lebanon over the past year have been heaviest precisely in the southern areas where the occupation is now being consolidated. Israeli intelligence officials have warned of "extensive cooperation between terrorist cells and local Lebanese residents. In South Lebanon, residents who aided Israel in the past are now ignoring or are hostile to Israeli forces." (Quoted in *The Middle East*, July 1983.)

### Blows to Phalange

Israel's pullback from the Shuf Mountains opened the way for the Druse militias to beat back the Phalangists, which they proceeded to do beginning September 4. The Phalange was dealt heavy blows, with many of its best fighters killed or wounded. A "Western military source" quoted in the September 15 *New York Times* said the Phalange was "no longer capable of projecting power" beyond East Beirut and areas to the north. Wealthy Christians interviewed at a yacht club north of Beirut told *Times* reporter E.J. Dionne, Jr., September 15 that they were "very pessimistic" and suffering "shock from the defeat in the mountains."

The rout of the Phalange in the Shuf set off

alarm signals in Beirut and Washington. While Reagan turned down a request from a panicked Gemayel for the imperialist forces themselves to reoccupy the Shuf, he did issue orders for air and naval artillery cover to be provided to the Lebanese army as it went to the Phalange's rescue. Gemayel and Reagan fear a linkup between the Druse fighters in the Shuf and other opposition militia forces in West Beirut and the capital's suburbs.

Fighting has centered on Suk al-Gharb, a Shuf town just three miles east of the U.S. embassy and Gemayel's presidential palace. The September 20 *New York Times* reported that top U.S. officials consider the defense of Suk al-Gharb by the Lebanese army crucial "not only because of the possible threat to Americans if it fell, but also because its fall could demoralize the American-trained Lebanese Army and perhaps lead to the collapse of Mr. Gemayel's American-backed Government."

The *Times* also reported that Reagan's special Middle East envoy, Robert McFarlane "had been urging all month that the marines be allowed to go into the Shuf Mountains to back up the Lebanese Army."

#### Deeper into war

As Gemayel's regime becomes more and more shaky, Washington and its imperialist

partners are being drawn still deeper into the Lebanese civil war. The September 14 *New York Times* spelled out the stakes as the Reagan administration sees them:

"Well-placed officials say the overthrow of the Lebanese government would be a severe jolt to American diplomacy in the Middle East that the United States could not afford.

"It would not only put the marines in grave jeopardy but also remove a buffer for Israel, demoralize moderate Arabs, deter other Middle Eastern leaders from reaching agreements with Israel as President Gemayel has done and raise questions about Washington's ability to back up its commitments, these officials said."

Reagan has tried to blame the governments of Syria and the Soviet Union for the fresh outbreak of civil war in Lebanon. "The Soviet Union is a hostile influence there," Reagan said in an interview in the September 26 *Newsweek* magazine. "It is time that more people in the world and certainly in our country realize that the Soviet Union is bent on imperialism, on expansion and aggression."

The U.S. Congress is in agreement with Reagan on the need for intervention in Lebanon, despite the heavily publicized dispute in recent weeks over whether Reagan has the right to put troops into combat situations abroad without Congressional approval.

Democrats and some Republicans in Congress have demanded that Reagan comply with the 1973 War Powers Act, which requires the president to inform Congress when U.S. troops overseas are in danger of "imminent hostilities." The president must then withdraw the troops within 60 days unless Congress explicitly approves keeping them there.

The law was passed in the wake of the Vietnam War, which was waged without a Congressional declaration of war.

If Reagan does not comply with the War Powers Act, Sen. Charles Mathias warned, he "runs a serious risk that the American people will not support our commitment in Lebanon." Mathias himself supports the navy and marines' actions there and wants to invoke the War Powers Act so that Congress can help rally public support for intervention.

But the deaths of four marines and the wounding of more than two dozen others have alerted U.S. working people to the dangers of a new Vietnam War in the Middle East. According to a poll conducted by *Newsweek* before the latest fighting but after the first two marines were killed, 53 percent of the U.S. people want the marines withdrawn. As Washington sends more troops and warships to support the very forces responsible for the bloody massacres at Shatila and Sabra in 1982, that figure can only rise. □

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## Nicaragua

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# Air attacks: new escalation of CIA war

*Documents link pilot to U.S. embassy in Costa Rica*

#### By Michael Baumann

MANAGUA — With the aerial bombardment of Sandino Airport September 8, and a similar attack on the northern port city of Corinto the following day, the U.S. government's undeclared war against Nicaragua has been ominously escalated another notch.

As advisers and weapons pour into Honduras to the north, and warships are on station just off both of Nicaragua's coasts, counter-revolutionaries organized by the CIA have mounted airborne bombing attacks on the two central targets pointed to by President Reagan in public news conferences earlier this year.

Shortly after dawn September 8, an unmarked civilian aircraft flew in from the Pacific Ocean at tree-top level and bombed the airport. One employee was killed, three were wounded, and an estimated \$300,000 in damage was caused.

Arriving soon after the explosion, this reporter saw the extensive damage to the airport, just outside Managua. Two 500-pound bombs had been dropped. Shattered glass lay everywhere. Part of the passenger terminal was completely destroyed, and the air was

thick with a mixture of smoke and the acrid smell of scorched building material.

That same morning another civilian plane bombed a residential area in southwest Managua, near the home of Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto. D'Escoto is the Sandinista official who was targeted for death several months ago in a CIA poisoning plot. These bombs fortunately fell into an empty lot, and apart from shattered windows no damage was done.

Both planes had flown in from Costa Rica, whose northern border is some 80 miles south of the Nicaraguan capital. The one that attacked the airport was shot down by Sandinista anti-aircraft batteries.

Documents retrieved from the plane's wreckage showed that the pilot, Augustín Román Maradiaga, carried a U.S. "green card" identifying him as a resident of the United States. Both he and the copilot were equipped with U.S. military-issue parachutes. The counterrevolutionary organization headed by ex-Sandinista Edén Pastora, a recipient of CIA funds and arms, has publicly claimed credit for the attack.

Also on September 8, Commander Daniel Ortega revealed in a speech several days later, a group of saboteurs "trained and sent by the CIA" used explosives to destroy some buoys and damage an underwater oil pipeline at Puerto Sandino, 35 miles north of here. Ortega said that it was not yet clear how much the attack on the oil terminal would reduce Nicaragua's oil supplies, but that the facilities were being repaired.

#### Bombing of Corinto

On September 9, two more unmarked aircraft entered Nicaragua, this time from Honduras, and bombed the port facilities in the northern city of Corinto. Only heavy anti-aircraft fire from the port's defenders prevented a disaster. One of the rockets fired by the planes fell within 80 yards of two tanks filled with more than half a million gallons of highly flammable chemicals.

The attack on Corinto could have cost thousands of lives. The port city, a major fuel and chemical storage center, is located on a spit of land off Nicaragua's Pacific coast. A single bridge serves as its major connection

with the mainland.

On their first pass the planes dropped two bombs that fell in the sea and did no damage. Two rockets were then fired. They landed near enough to the storage tanks to blow holes in two of them. One of the rockets struck within 50 yards of the Soviet merchant freighter *Polesk*, which was unloading cargo in the port.

Before flying back to Honduras, the planes turned and fired rockets at the city's sole bridge, causing some damage.

Had they been successful in setting fire to the chemical tanks and cutting off escape from the city, thousands of civilians could have perished in the resulting fire.

As it was, more than 400 people living near the damaged tanks had to be evacuated from their homes to escape the poisonous fumes. Small children were carried out in damp sheets to protect them from the chemical mist, which caused serious burns on contact with skin. A number of firefighters and civilian volunteers had to be hospitalized after they broke into convulsions caused by prolonged contact with escaping fumes.

#### 'Indiscriminate terrorism'

At Nicaragua's request, a special session of the United Nations Security Council was held September 13 to hear evidence of the direct U.S. complicity in these attacks.

At the session, Nicaraguan Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Tinoco distributed to council members and reporters photocopies of documents found on the downed counterrevolutionary pilot. These included: a multiple-entry permit to the United States, his "green card," a Florida driver's license with a Miami address, credit cards, a pilot's license, and logs showing flights to Central America.

There was also a card listing officials at the U.S. embassy in Costa Rica, on the reverse side of which was written a telephone extension for a "David Anthony" at the embassy, and an appointment to meet him in the "Texas Burger Restaurant" in Moravia, a San José suburb near the embassy.

Citing this evidence, Tinoco declared that the CIA was waging "indiscriminate terrorism" to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. He said that he was appearing before the UN Security Council to "alert the international community to the alarming escalation of aggression."

#### U.S. hypocrisy

There is no limit to the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, Commander Humberto Ortega, Sandinista minister of defense, told reporters here the day of the first attack.

"They claim to be defending humanist civilization when they cry out about the South Korean airliner that was shot down because it violated Soviet air space. Yet the reality is that it is the United States itself that is using the cover of civilian aircraft to carry out military missions."

Commander Tomás Borge, in an interview

with *Intercontinental Press* and other correspondents September 12, put the air attacks in the context of the extreme difficulties the *contras* (counterrevolutionaries) are having in making headway on the ground.

"This is an escalation that is connected with the military defeats [their] 'task forces' have suffered," Borge said.

"Why are they using airborne terrorism now? Because they have no social base for carrying out other types of operations in our country. . . .

"All their support is outside the country. That's why they have to resort to the use of planes."

In regard to the U.S. role in the attacks, Borge said, "Not so much as a leaf can stir in Central America — except in Nicaragua, of course — unless it is first authorized by the U.S. government. In the final analysis, these attacks are the responsibility of the U.S. government."

#### Peasants desert counterrevolution

Underscoring Borge's point about the *contras'* lack of support, the Sandinista government has announced that of the 420 Nicaraguan peasants estimated to have been recruited to the armed counterrevolution — either by force or by propaganda — some 200 have deserted and surrendered with their weapons.

The 200 who surrendered have received generous treatment from the revolution. About half have already been released and are back working their land. The other half are still being investigated. If they are cleared of any serious crimes, they too will be released. "There are many more who want to desert," one of the peasants, Elías Hernández Sánchez, told a televised news conference September 10, "but they are still afraid." They are told by the *contras* that if they surrender, they and their families will be killed by the Sandinistas.

The desertions are in part the product of a successful educational campaign that has been carried out in the northern border region by the army, cadres of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), and religious figures sympathetic to the revolution.

To undercut the *contras'* lying claims that the Sandinistas intend to take away small farmers' land, army and civilian education teams have explained in detail the government's recent decree wiping out the debts of virtually all small agricultural producers. As for fear of reprisal, the best proof that there will be none has been the humane treatment already received by those who desert the counterrevolution.

#### New invasion

The air attacks came on the heels of an intensified invasion by counterrevolutionary ground forces in both the north and the south. In the two-week period between August 28 and September 9, more than a dozen major armed clashes took place.

These attacks claimed the lives of 20 Nicaraguan soldiers and at least 22 civilians. Eighteen of the civilian casualties were un-

armed peasants in La Waya, a small village in northern Matagalpa Province. On September 3, counterrevolutionaries entered the peasants' village, slit their throats, and burned their homes to the ground.

In the same two-week period, Sandinista defense forces killed more than 95 *contras* and prevented them from setting up any permanent bases.

In a meeting with foreign correspondents September 8, Vice-minister of the Interior Luís Carrión sketched out the current stage of the ground war.

Some 1,300 counterrevolutionaries had infiltrated Nicaragua in recent weeks, he said. About a thousand entered from the north and some 250 from the south.

One "task force" from the north has penetrated as far south as southern Jinotega Province to a little more than 100 miles north of Managua. Another is located in northern Jinotega Province, and the third is in the northern part of the Atlantic coast province of Zelaya. All three units are being pursued by Sandinista troops.

Although there are some similarities to the massive invasion carried out last February and March, Carrión said, the *contras* appear to have given up all hope of any "immediate victories." Instead they have been reduced to carrying out a "war of attrition" — sabotage and terror. A key target is the coffee harvest, scheduled to begin in the northern areas next month with an estimated 20,000 volunteer workers.

In the south, Carrión said, Sandinista troops have struck a heavy blow at Pastora's forces. Some 250 of them had crossed the border in an effort to take the Atlantic coast port of Bluefields. But in the course of 20 days of fighting in southern Zelaya Province, most of them had been driven back to the Costa Rican side of the border. On September 9, a plane attempting to resupply the remaining forces was shot down by Sandinistas about three miles north of the Costa Rican border.

A piece of the first enemy plane shot down by Nicaragua was presented September 9 in a special ceremony to visiting Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach.

Thach said it would be placed in a museum in Vietnam, next to the remains of the first U.S. plane shot down there in 1964.

"This piece of aluminum is worth more to us than any medal of gold," he said. "Vietnam and Nicaragua will be competing with each other to see who can obtain the most aluminum medals like these."

If the United States invades Nicaragua, Thach warned, "It won't be just a second Vietnam they face but many new Vietnams."

"And the defeat the United States will suffer will be a thousand times worse than the defeat they suffered in Vietnam." □

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# Anti-Pinochet protests mount

*Concessions fail to put brake on mass upsurge*

By Fred Murphy

For the fifth time in as many months, massive numbers of Chileans took part September 8 in a National Day of Protest against the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Throughout the day, thousands took to the streets in Santiago and other major cities, confronting police who wielded clubs, fired tear gas, and aimed water cannon against the protesters.

At noon some 1,000 people, including leaders of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), attempted to hold a sit-in at a major square in the center of the capital. The action was immediately attacked by the police with tear gas and water cannon. PDC President Gabriel Valdés was drenched and narrowly missed being struck by a tear-gas grenade.

The crowd refused to disperse and fought back against the cops. "A steady hail of rocks clattered against the sides of water trucks and against the plexiglass shields of police," *Miami Herald* correspondent James Brooke reported. "Often forced to retreat, the police eventually dispersed the demonstrators with tear gas grenades.

"Office workers in the downtown area watched riot police grab young men by their hair, throw them face-down on the floors of police buses, and repeatedly kick them and beat them with night sticks."

## 'It's going to fall'

The protests spread throughout the poor and working-class neighborhoods of Santiago during the evening. Youths built barricades to keep out the police, while motorists sounded their horns in rhythm with a jingle sung by protesters: "It's going to fall, it's going to fall, the military dictatorship is going to fall."

The September 9 *New York Times* reported that in La Legua, a poor neighborhood in northern Santiago, "most of the 36,000 people took to the streets, banging pots and pans and setting bonfires on every corner."

Not only was participation on September 8 as extensive as in previous protests in July and August, but this time the actions continued for days afterward. One of these was described in a September 10 Associated Press dispatch from the Chilean capital:

"Riot police battled rock-throwing demonstrators tonight as tens of thousands of Chileans turned out for a funeral for one of the people killed during the recent antigovernment protests. . . .

"Police armed with clubs, tear gas and shotguns fought with many of the 6,000 chanting people who accompanied the funeral cortege



Police haul away student during protests against Pinochet dictatorship.

along a nine-mile route from a Santiago slum to the municipal cemetery. An estimated 30,000 people lined the streets and highways as the mourners passed in what appeared to be the largest single gathering of antigovernment demonstrators in a decade of military rule."

## Brutal police methods

As of September 12, Pinochet's police had reportedly killed 10 persons, bringing the death toll in the antidictatorial upsurge that began in May to nearly 50. Dozens more were wounded and hundreds arrested.

While the regime did not mobilize the army for the September protests as it had the previous month, police tactics matched those used on August 11. Residents of poor neighborhoods charged that police fired tear gas into homes, broke windows with rocks and clubs, and beat bystanders in an effort to halt the demonstrations.

Pinochet attempted twice during the protests to launch countermobilizations of the regime's supporters. Some 20,000 government employees, schoolchildren, and troops were summoned for a march in downtown Santiago on September 9. Public workers were threatened with firings if they failed to attend.

On September 11, the tenth anniversary of Pinochet's bloody coup against the elected government of President Salvador Allende, the authorities attempted to hold another such rally in the neighborhood of Pudahuel. But the 5,000 persons rounded up for that action began chanting antigovernment slogans instead and had to be dispersed with tear gas.

## Halfhearted concessions

The breadth and prolonged character of the September protests came despite some halfhearted concessions offered by the dictatorship in preceding weeks. Some 2,000 of the more than 10,000 exiles officially banned from the country have been allowed to return, and on August 28 the state of emergency in effect ever since the 1973 coup was allowed to expire.

While the latter move means local commanders can no longer declare curfews, ban meetings, or censor publications, a state of "risk of disturbance to internal order" remains in force. Under this, Pinochet can still order people detained for up to 20 days without informing anyone, exile or banish individuals to internal exile without going through the courts, and ban meetings or publications by issuing special decrees.



On August 25 Pinochet's recently appointed civilian interior minister, Sergio Jarpa, held the first of a series of meetings with leaders of the Democratic Alliance (AD), the bloc of opposition political parties that has been calling the National Days of Protest since July.\* The AD presented Jarpa with eight immediate demands, including the end of all restrictions on assembly and expression, the return of all exiles, the legalization of political parties, and the issuing of an electoral law.

The AD seeks to negotiate a resolution to the current crisis whereby Pinochet would resign and a provisional government appointed by the military would schedule elections within 18 months. Jarpa has indicated that some political parties may be legalized and that congressional elections could be held in 1987 or sooner. But he has scoffed at calls for Pinochet's resignation.

The dictator himself devoted the vast bulk of a two-hour speech on September 11 to a defense of his regime as "a new system, full of humanism and with a clear democratic character." He denounced opposition leaders as "agents of violence" who lack "the most elemental political realism."

In protest against Pinochet's violent repression of demonstrators, the AD announced September 9 that it was breaking off talks with Interior Minister Jarpa.

#### Radical groups resurface

Meanwhile, more radical forces have begun to emerge publicly on the Chilean political scene. Four organizations announced in Santiago September 3 that a "people's democratic movement" would soon be formed, comprising the Communist Party, one faction of the Socialist Party, the Christian Left, and the United People's Action Movement. All these groups formed part of Allende's People's Unity (UP) coalition and were driven underground after the 1973 coup.

On September 6, the Communist Party held a public news conference to announce its support for the day of protest. CP representatives told the press that "the most brutal repression hasn't succeeded in destroying us. . . ." Several hundred CP supporters tried to hold a march the same day but it was broken up by police.

Some 2,000 persons gathered September 11 at the grave of Salvador Allende in Viña del Mar. The crowd included both members of parties that had belonged to Allende's UP as well as Christian Democrats. The latter party had bitterly opposed Allende's government and backed the 1973 coup.

The Christian Democrats play the leading role in the Democratic Alliance, from which the Communist Party and currents to its left have been excluded. Since July the AD has formally called the National Days of Protest,

\*The AD includes the Christian Democrats, the Radical Party, the Social Democratic Party, and one faction of the Socialist Party. All are bourgeois parties with the exception of the SP.

but the CP and other leftist groups have played a key role in organizing the demonstrations at the neighborhood level.

According to correspondent Jackson Diehl of the *Washington Post*, AD leaders are now "worried about the consequences of the violence" but "maintain that they may not have the strength to end the protests. . . . Political groups that do not continue to support some

kind of demonstrations, they say, may be swept aside by the public."

Before the latest protests, AD leader Jorge Lavenderos warned that his coalition's talks with the regime represented "Chile's last chance to secure changes through peace and order. Failing that, we are certain that there will be an uprising here, a guerrilla war, an Iran." □

## Peru

# Blanco suspended from parliament

## Part of rightist escalation

[The following protest statement, issued by Hugo Blanco, appeared in the September 12 issue of *Inprecor*, a fortnightly magazine published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The translation from the French is by *Intercontinental Press*.

[Hugo Blanco is a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Peruvian section of the Fourth International.]

\* \* \*

On August 29 I was suspended from my functions as a member of parliament for having used the parliamentary rostrum to accuse Gen. Clemente Noel, military chief of the Ayacucho region, of murder.\*

I protest the form and substance of this hasty procedure, which suspends my mandate through the end of the parliamentary session, i.e., until December, and deprives me of my parliamentary immunity during that period.

This procedure goes against Article 10 of Chapter 9 of the internal rules of the legislative chambers, which stipulates that such a suspension cannot exceed 15 days.

The manner in which this suspension was voted is illegal according to the very rules of the Peruvian parliament. The vote must be taken by calling on deputies to rise or remain seated. Abstention is excluded. A roll-call vote must be taken if a deputy calls for it.

But the vote that suspended me was a complete farce that discredits this parliament. It took place anonymously, and deputies were simply asked to approve the proposal by banging their desks, by acclamations, by volume of sound as it were. As a result, the chair could not even furnish a breakdown of the vote!

The demand by parliament member Enrique Fernández Chacón for a roll-call vote received no response from the chairman of the chamber.

In the final analysis I stand by my accusations of murder and genocide. I cite lists of

names of peasants executed and villages bombed on Gen. Noel's orders. And I am not the first one to make them public. Already at the beginning of the year the judge of Ayacucho province called for Gen. Noel's indictment. Then in late June the vice-chairman of the Chamber of Deputies' commission on human rights filed a similar demand.

These indictments did not lead to a judicial inquiry solely because the general is covered by his military functions and because journalists no longer have access to the operational zone. Involved in my suspension is the negation of the most elementary democratic rights. It takes place in the context of a rightist couple-like escalation, marked by a campaign of denunciation of Amnesty International, by a restriction of democratic guarantees for the coming [municipal] election campaign, and by systematic harassment against my party, the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT): an attack on its offices several weeks ago, an assault against one of its elected officials, the arrest and torture of one of its trade-union leaders.

Experience has shown that any back-pedaling in the face of this type of right-wing escalation serves only to increase the right's arrogance. The democratic gains of the masses must be defended step by step, without yielding to the threats and blackmail.

That is why, once again, I alert public opinion and call for protests against a flagrant violation of parliamentary freedoms by an Assembly that is supposed to defend them.

Lima, August 31, 1983

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[The following selections deal with the September 1 shooting down of the Korean airliner by a Soviet interceptor.]

## Rouge

"Red," newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. Published weekly in Paris.

In a back-page article in the September 9-15 issue, Christian Picquet noted that the downing of the Korean airliner, as expected, "could only provoke an anticommunist outburst."

In this way, the U.S. imperialists sought to "make people forget that not so long ago the United States was dropping tons of napalm on Indochina and that today it seeks to strangle the Central American revolution."

Since all the information on the incident comes from sources that have a stake in telling only part of the story, Picquet wrote, three questions remain unanswered.

The first: "Why did the USSR act in this manner?" Picquet considered it unreasonable to assume that the Kremlin shot down the airliner as a warning to Washington in the present nuclear arms negotiations (as some commentators have suggested), since the incident places the Soviet Union in a difficult position before world opinion.

However, Picquet wrote, it is possible that this was "an uncontrolled decision of a faction of the ruling apparatus, which, in a country endowed with such centralized and bureaucratic structures, says a lot about the regime's crisis and the contradictions that run through it."

The second question: "How could the South Korean airliner deviate from its route?"

The third: "Are we witnessing an episode in the war of the secret services?" Noting Moscow's charge that the Boeing crew was involved in an espionage mission, Picquet wrote that "despite the horror that the action of the Soviet interceptor inspires, this explanation is perfectly credible." He cited the admission by Marcel Le Roy-Finville, former head of the French secret service, that French commercial airliners were used in the 1950s to spy on the Soviet Union.

"Whatever the real explanation," Picquet continued, "the catastrophe . . . serves as an indicator of the threats that the deterioration of East-West relations poses. . . ."

After detailing the increase in imperialist arms spending and NATO's decision to deploy new missiles in Europe, Picquet stated that "the Kremlin bureaucrats have responded only by increasing their own military potential, with the aim of forcing the opposing bloc to sit down at the negotiating table," even though the buildup does not correspond "to the real imperatives of defense against imperialism."

Moreover, Picquet continued, "The destruction of the South Korean airliner is a blow to all those fighting against the imperialist arms drive. The Western governments are going to take advantage of this unspeakable act to justify their warlike course."

"Mass action is therefore more indispensable than ever. If there is a lesson to be drawn from these latest events it is that nothing can come out of the narrow framework of negotiations between the two blocs. It is up to the people to intervene to put an end to a process that can lead to humanity's destruction, and to impose universal disarmament."

The article concluded, "It is with that kind of perspective that the Fourth International will support the antiwar demonstrations projected for next month in all of Western Europe, and that in France the LCR will try to give the projected demonstrations the maximum strength."

## THE MILITANT

A revolutionary socialist newsweekly published in New York City.

A front-page editorial in the September 16 issue explained that the U.S. government has used the downing of the Korean Air Lines jet "as the pretext for a new round of prowar and anti-Soviet propaganda. . . ."

"They are using the incident to divert attention from the U.S. military buildup along the Nicaraguan border, a buildup that is part of the broader U.S. war in Central America which has claimed the lives of thousands.

"It also served to minimize the impact of the announcement that 2,000 additional marines were being deployed off the Lebanese coast, as the U.S. gets even more deeply involved in defending the proimperialist regime there.

"Within hours of the crash, it was apparent that Washington was preparing to milk the event for every drop of anticommunist propaganda possible."

The editorial pointed to the support Washington's campaign received from other imperialist governments concerned with gaining domestic support for the placement of U.S. nuclear missiles in Western Europe.

A number of inconsistencies in Washington's version of the event, exposed by statements from the Soviet government and news agency, were cited.

"Washington's purpose in launching such an unrestrained publicity offensive, the editorial went on, "is another attempt to chip away at working people's deep-seated opposition to a new Vietnam. The same goal underlies the U.S. rulers' ongoing propaganda campaigns around the Soviet army's intervention in Afghanistan and the events in Poland, both of whose 'memories' Reagan invoked in his televised speech.

"Portraying the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire' and scare stories about a 'Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan axis' threatening U.S. security is the standard fare today to justify U.S. war moves."

The editorial contrasted Reagan's feigned outrage and grief over the loss of life aboard the airliner to his disregard for the deaths of 600 Nicaraguans in the past month at the hands of CIA-sponsored counterrevolutionaries, the tens of thousands slaughtered in El Salvador, and the many more victims of imperialism in Indochina and the Middle East.

In response to a major theme of the U.S. big-business press, the *Militant* explained, "to the degree that the Soviet Union reacts to intrusions across its borders, it's because it is threatened by a U.S. military noose.

"Land and sea-based nuclear missiles surround the Soviet Union.

"The Pentagon maintains tens of thousands of troops in Western Europe and South Korea. . . ."

"And U.S. Air Force planes routinely fly along the Soviet border near the strategic military bases on the Kamchatka Peninsula and Sakhalin Island."

The editorial concluded, "The government propaganda offensive is not making big headway with most working people in the United States. There are a lot of questions about the facts, a lot of suspicions about the White House version of events, and, especially, a lot of concern about war.

"The overwhelming majority of people in this country are against U.S. intervention in El Salvador. They oppose the deepening involvement of the U.S. Marines in Beirut. And they're not for pouring millions and billions more into the war budget.

"Washington's reactionary campaign is not in the interests of working people. That's why we oppose this campaign, and all the measures that have been taken against the Soviet Union by Washington and other imperialist governments."

## DIRECT ACTION

Socialist weekly published in Sydney, Australia. Presents the views of the Socialist Workers Party, the Australian section of the Fourth International.

"Korean airliner: Behind Reagan, Hawke war hysteria," declared a front-page headline in the September 6 issue, referring to Prime Minister Bob Hawke of the Australian Labor Party.

In an article on page 3, Geoff Streeton began by pointing to the hypocrisy of the outrage over the downing of the Korean airliner expressed in the capitalist news media. He cited the example of the Israeli shooting down of a Libyan commercial airliner over Egypt in

1973, which received scant coverage.

After examining the questionable circumstances of the Korean airliner's intrusion into Soviet airspace over the sensitive Kamchatka Peninsula, Streeton wrote, "At the very least, the intrusion appears to have been a provocation designed to test the resolve and military preparedness of the Soviets. . . ."

"When U.S. demagogues claim the 'Soviet attack' on the airliner was 'unprovoked,' they are being less than truthful. In fact, the U.S. has for many years set out to create such incidents in the North Pacific. . . ."

"The Korean airliner's intrusion, which has to be regarded as deliberate, fits directly into this pattern. The real barbarians in this case are not the Soviets, who very likely believed they were shooting down a military aircraft, but the people — the South Korean military? The U.S. CIA? — who consciously sent a plane-load of 269 civilian hostages into a perilous situation. . . ."

"The U.S. and South Koreans have an obvious interest in involving the Soviets in some horrific incident in the region. In recent months the Reagan administration has been applying pressure on Japan to step up its arms spending — a move generally unpopular among the Japanese public. Having the Soviets shoot down an airliner over the Sea of Japan would seem ideally suited to changing Japanese domestic opinion.

"Now that the attempts to create a useful incident have paid off, right-wingers in the U.S. are not missing a beat. On September 4 it was reported that a message along the following lines was being broadcast over coast-to-coast television: 'If after this latest act of Russian barbarism you still support the nuclear freeze, think again. If you don't support the freeze, ring this number.'

"To some people, it seems, 269 civilian deaths are not enough."

## Guardian

*An independent radical newsweekly, published in New York.*

An editorial in the September 14 issue began:

"The Soviet destruction of the South Korean 747 which penetrated sensitive Soviet airspace last week was a twofold tragedy.

"First was the unnecessary loss of the 269 passengers and crew aboard. The Korean airliner, of course, had no business penetrating USSR territory. But shooting down the passenger jet was an unacceptable response for which the USSR must be held accountable and condemned. This is so despite the strong possibility that the plane was mistaken for a U.S. reconnaissance jet or was itself engaged in an intelligence mission.

"Even more disastrous, in the long run, is the new wave of Cold War hysteria which the downing of Flight 7 has fueled in the West. The fateful missile fired by a Soviet interceptor last week has become a powerful propaganda

weapon wielded by Washington and its allies to build an international anti-Soviet consensus and escalate attacks on the peace movement. One target is the international movement opposed to NATO's cruise and Pershing 2 missile deployment planned for this fall. In addition, the incident provides Washington with potent ammunition to call for increasing military spending and deploying dangerous new weapons systems."

After exploring a number of the questions that have been raised by the airliner incident, the *Guardian* concluded:

"The peace movement can and must resist any efforts by Washington and its allies to derail it. The tragedy was, after all, a product of the Cold War and the arms race. The USSR perceived a threat in the intruding plane because a genuine threat does indeed exist in the world today: the unprecedented U.S. arms buildup and belligerence around the world. The Soviets reacted with deadly force, irrefragable and inexcusable as it was in this particular situation, because at this stage in the arms race, nuclear devastation could be only minutes away. . . ."

"While Reagan and his reactionary ilk will try to use this incident to further escalate the arms race, the peace movement has the opportunity to expose how these and worse disasters are inevitable until genuine disarmament efforts replace Cold War as the central political theme of our time."

## Internationalen &

*"The International," weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International. Published in Stockholm.*

The September 8 issue ran an editorial on the Korean airliner incident entitled "Who bears the responsibility?"

It began by noting that, although Washington admitted that it was following the course of the airliner for two and a half hours before it was downed, it made no attempt to contact the Soviet military leaders or warn the pilot. Instead, it snatched at the incident in order to discredit the Soviet disarmament initiative.

"Nor has the situation helped the Soviet regime," the editorial went on. "True to habit, it first denied practically any knowledge about the incident, then later made an admission. As this is being written, the latest version is that the MIG jet fired warning tracer shots along the Korean plane's course, and that the Soviet pilot believed that he was moving against a spy plane of the RC-135 type or that it was impossible to positively identify the plane.

"If the Soviet military leaders knowingly shot down a friendly passenger plane with 269 people on board, it would be an abomination that must be condemned.

"But all judgment falters. New factors have come into the picture. An American spy plane crossed the larger plane's course two hours before the catastrophe. At night this aircraft can be difficult to distinguish from a passenger

plane of the Boeing 707-type."

*Internationalen* pointed as well to a number of other questions that have been raised: How could a plane with such modern equipment unknowingly go so far off course? Why did the U.S. and Japanese intelligence agencies not sound the alarm while they were tracking the plane's course? Was it not true, as Moscow maintains, that the Korean pilot could not be reached by radio? Was the plane indeed on a spy mission, as the Soviet authorities state?

"One thing is nevertheless certain. The incident comes as a godsend to Reagan and his ilk in the American Congress. Many critical voices are now being drowned in the American government's crocodile tears over the innocent victims, an American government that, like its predecessors, does not hesitate to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of people on the altar of profits and rearmament, from Hiroshima in 1945 to Central America today.

"Reagan is a cynical power-politician in imperialism's service. He has no right to put words like 'innocent victims' in his mouth.

"In spite of the Soviet government's lies or half truths, in spite of how the incident over the Soviet island, Sakhalin, actually occurred, people who see beyond their noses must reject the U.S. propaganda barrage. The Social Democratic government [in Sweden] is not heeding Reagan's call for a boycott or isolation of the Soviet Union. The Swedish pilots' association has not allowed itself to be utilized to help Reagan place a new generation of nuclear missiles in Europe.

"It is this growing peace sentiment that film star Reagan attempts to confuse and break asunder with his hypocrisy.

"Two hundred sixty-nine human lives have been wasted. Neither the Soviet nor the American government has up to now succeeded in presenting a credible explanation why."

## rood

*"Red," Flemish-language fortnightly newspaper of the Revolutionary Workers League (RAL), Belgian section of the Fourth International. Published in Brussels.*

The front page of the September 8 issue carried the headline, "Imperialist provocation answered by bureaucratic military force."

An unsigned article inside the issue began by examining some of the many questions surrounding the Korean airliner incident, including the possibility that the airliner's "accidental" straying into Soviet airspace may have been intended as a provocation, similar to the Gulf of Tonkin incident that Washington used to justify its intervention in Vietnam.

*Rood* then went on:

"Reagan is shedding crocodile tears. But we are certain that he is not grieving. The top official of American imperialism is not in a particularly good position to cry over the Boeing victims. American imperialism killed hundreds of thousands with its atomic bombs in

Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It dropped napalm and dioxin over Vietnam. It bombed Laos back into the Stone Age. It supports military dictatorships that murder and torture. Therefore, there is no doubt that we must struggle first of all against the policies of Reagan and his European NATO allies.

"Let's not fall into the trap: Reagan is using the Boeing incident to sow doubts and divisions within the antimissiles movement. We have to continue and strengthen the fight against the war that Reagan is preparing.

"We also had — and have — no confidence in Andropov: the Boeing incident changes nothing in this regard. In response to Reagan's threats, the bureaucratic caste in Russia relies

first of all on its military might, instead of and (if necessary) at the expense of anticapitalist mobilizations by the workers and oppressed of the world. The Boeing incident proves this yet again. Mistakenly or not, the Russian authorities shot down the Boeing. They want to make it clear to Reagan and the CIA that they will protect Soviet airspace at any cost. At any cost! They offer up 269 human lives and wipe their feet on the peace movement and all those who are fighting against American imperialism.

"It is not vital to know who in the Soviet hierarchy made the ultimate decision, nor whether it was a military blunder. We in the Fourth International and the RAL know that

the USSR has been living under the yoke of a bureaucratic caste since the time of Stalin and that it is no paradise of humanity, peace, and socialism, despite the achievements of the October Revolution. The bureaucratic caste will use all repressive means against the workers and peoples within its 'sphere of influence' when they challenge its power (Afghanistan, Poland . . .).

"Neither excuses for Reagan nor trust in Andropov are justified. We must independently continue and strengthen the struggle against the NATO missiles. We, along with more than 100,000 others, will be at October 23 [a day of protest against NATO missiles], and our slogan will be: 'Nuclear weapons, no way!'"

## FEATURES

# U.S. anti-Soviet campaign unraveling

## Skepticism grows over Reagan's version of Korean jet incident

By Steve Wattenmaker

In the two weeks since the September 1 downing of a South Korean airliner by a Soviet jet fighter, Washington has done everything possible to sustain its anticommunist propaganda around the incident. The U.S. ruling class is particularly anxious to exploit the tragedy to undercut opposition to current U.S. war moves in Central America and Lebanon.

Following the Reagan administration's lead, the major U.S. newspapers, radio, and television have sought to keep the campaign alive. For two weeks after the incident, the *New York Times* devoted several pages to it each day, grouping its coverage under a black-bordered running headline. Newscasters provided grisly descriptions of mutilated bodies washing ashore in Japan.

During a September 6 United Nations Security Council debate on the affair, the U.S. delegation played garbled tapes of the Soviet fighter pilots' exchanges as they tracked the airliner. Supposed transcriptions of their remarks simultaneously flashed on a television monitor in Russian and English.

Soviet UN ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky accused Washington of staging a "provocative spectacle" in the Security Council.

After furious behind-the-scenes lobbying, the U.S. government finally persuaded a majority of the council to vote for a resolution "deploring the destruction" of the Korean Air Lines jet.

### U.S. grounds Aeroflot

After they returned from their summer recess, Democratic and Republican members of Congress added their voices to the anti-Soviet propaganda chorus.

The House of Representatives voted 416-0 on September 14 to condemn the Soviet government for "a cold-blooded barbarous attack," calling it "one of the most infamous and

reprehensible acts in history." The Senate passed the same resolution the following day by a vote of 95-0.

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration took the lead in pressing temporary international sanctions against the Soviet airline, Aeroflot.

The U.S. government, which has no direct air links with the Soviet Union, ordered Aeroflot to close its offices in the United States. Other governments have denied Aeroflot landing rights in their countries for up to 60 days.

In addition, airline pilots associations or governments in some 19 countries have temporarily suspended flights to the Soviet Union.

On September 16, Washington took the unprecedented step of denying landing rights to an Aeroflot plane scheduled to bring Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to the opening session of the UN General Assembly at the end of September.

The State Department informed Moscow that all New York area airports would turn away Gromyko's plane. Washington said if Gromyko wanted to come he would have to arrive on a Soviet military transport and land at a U.S. Air Force base in southern New Jersey. Gromyko then canceled his trip to the UN saying that U.S. authorities could not guarantee his safety.

Reagan's propaganda around the South Korean airline incident is aimed at justifying the growing U.S. military role in Central America and diverting attention from the U.S. Marine buildup in Lebanon.

The same day Congress passed the resolution condemning the Soviet Union, for example, the House approved a 1984 military appropriations bill for \$187.5 billion. Included in the bill was a provision to drop a ban on the production of chemical warfare weapons. The moratorium on their manufacture had been in effect since the height of the anti-Vietnam War

movement in 1969.

"Advocates of the nerve gas program argued in the debate that voting for the measure would send a message to the Soviet Union in response to the fatal downing of a Korean Air Lines passenger jet," the September 16 *New York Times* reported.

### Poll shows skepticism

Despite the government's massive propaganda barrage, U.S. workers are increasingly skeptical of Washington's version of the incident. They also sense that the Reagan administration is using it to beat the drums for war.

The unraveling of Washington's credibility was highlighted in a poll published in the September 16 *New York Times*.

Although 55 percent of those surveyed said they approved of Reagan's overall approach, 61 percent felt the U.S. government was "holding back information people ought to know." Those who doubted Washington had told the full story were also more likely to believe that the U.S. government "bears a significant share of blame for the incident."

A 48 percent plurality of those polled also suspected Washington's war aims, agreeing that "the risks of taking stronger action to punish the Russians are greater than any satisfaction it might give us."

The fear that Washington was stirring up the incident as an excuse for war was also echoed by U.S. industrial workers interviewed in factories across the country by the revolutionary socialist newsweekly *Militant*. A worker in a California plant manufacturing armored personnel carriers for the Pentagon remarked:

"One guy [the Korean pilot] makes a mistake. Another guy [the Russian pilot] makes a bigger mistake. I hope Reagan won't make the biggest mistake of all and start a war over this."

This increasing skepticism over Washing-

ton's version of the airliner's downing has been fueled by new revelations that suggest the Reagan administration is covering up its own involvement in the incident.

The first big blow to Washington's story came September 4, when it was forced to admit that a U.S. Air Force RC-135 reconnaissance jet had flown near the Korean airliner shortly before the Boeing 747 entered Soviet air space.

Another blow came when the White House had to revise its transcript of the Soviet fighter pilots' communications. The taped conversations were the U.S. government's one piece of tangible "evidence" that Moscow shot down the airliner without warning. Washington's proof was the fact that the first transcript of the tapes did not include any attempts by the Soviet pilots to contact the Korean plane or force it to land.

However, the new transcription has the Soviet pilots saying that they fired a cannon burst alongside the plane, a clear signal to the Korean pilot to land.

In addition, Moscow released more information detailing the evasive maneuvers the Korean pilot took to shake off his pursuers — including lowering his wing flaps to drastically slow the airliner in hopes that the Soviet fighters would fly past him and he could slip away.

So far, the least discussed aspect of the whole affair is the possible role of the U.S.-backed regime in South Korea. Ernest Volkman, the national security editor for *Defense Science Magazine*, told the Canadian Broadcasting Company that Korean Air Lines planes regularly overfly Soviet air space to gather military intelligence. The Soviet Union alleged September 16 that it had information that the pilot of the downed airliner, who was a colonel in the Korean air force reserve, had bragged to close associates about his spying exploits.

The fact has also emerged that the Soviet Union was scheduled to conduct a missile test in the area on the morning of the incident.

Each day brings new contradictions for the U.S. version of what happened. The idea that it is Washington that bears responsibility for the tragic incident is gaining more credence.

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# The Libyan airliner affair

## No U.S. outrage over 1973 Israeli attack

By Paul Siegel

[The following article is taken from the September 23 issue of the U.S. socialist news-weekly *Militant*.]

\* \* \*

On Feb. 21, 1973, Israeli fighter planes shot down a Libyan passenger jetliner over the Israeli-occupied Sinai peninsula. One hundred eight men, women, and children, including a U.S. citizen, were killed.

The Israeli government admitted that its air force shot down the plane, stating that it had done so only as a "last resort." It leaked statements to the press hinting that the pilot of the plane might have been engaged in a suicidal terror mission.

The contrast between the tone of judicial evenhandedness with which the U.S. government and press responded on that occasion and the storm of hypocritical indignation they launched in response to the downing of the South Korean passenger plane is instructive about how they operate.

The Nixon administration, reported the Feb. 23, 1973, *New York Times*, "refused to comment on the shooting." And it never did issue an official statement.

A tape recording of conversations between the pilot and the Cairo control tower were retrieved showing that the plane had lost its way because of instrument failure. The crew believed that the plane was over Egyptian territory west of the Suez Canal and was being followed by Egyptian MIGs.

In the face of this evidence Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said that a mistake had been made; but he continued to insist "that does not put us on the guilty side."

The U.S. news media followed the lead of the government. The *New York Times* did not have a six-column front-page headline with page after page of stories following the front-page story, as it did with the South Korean plane. Very soon the event became an inside-page item and then was dropped.

The *Times* background story on international law on the first day tended to exonerate Israel.

"Specialists in international aviation," according to the article, "said that there were no clearly established principles of international behavior defining the degree of force a country may use if a pilot refuses to land. . . . Regarding commercial planes, Prof. Oliver Lissitzyn of Columbia University School of Law said . . . he personally believed that a nation had the right under some circumstances to shoot down a foreign airliner over its territory if it refused to land and if there existed a 'state of hostilities or tension' between the two countries. There would have to be a 'reasonable'

suspicion that the plane was being used for some military purpose, he said."

In the case of the South Korean plane the *Times* also had a story on international law. This one, dated September 2, however, did not begin by saying that "there were no clearly established principles of international behavior" as to the force that may be used if the pilot of an intrusive plane refuses to land. Rather, it began with the categorical statement: "Although nations have complete control of the airspace over their land and territorial waters, they may shoot down intruders during peacetime under only the most extraordinary circumstances, authorities on international law said yesterday."

The same Prof. Lissitzyn is quoted, but he does not now give his personal opinion that a nation has "the right under some circumstances to shoot down a foreign airliner over its territory" (incidentally, the Sinai peninsula was not part of Israel but was territory occupied by it). Instead, he is quoted as saying the matter is "controversial."

But in any event, the Russians "have to show that the plane was embarked on a hostile mission" for it to claim that right. "Reasonable suspicion," it seems, is no longer enough.

In its own voice the *Times* September 2 editorial on the South Korean plane, headlined, "Murder in the Air," concluded "no circumstance whatever justifies attacking an innocent plane." But its editorial on the shooting down of the Libyan plane was entitled, "Tragic Blunder," and concluded by saying, "The probability is that there simply was a series of dreadful blunders, for the fatal culmination of which Israel must accept ultimate responsibility." In short, Israel only blundered and was not alone in making blunders — somewhat different from the phrase "cold-blooded mass murder" which the *Times* now uses.

By March 1, 1973, the *Times* was saying editorially: "No useful purpose is served by an acrimonious debate over the assignment of blame. . . . The basic fact illustrated by this tragic incident is that clashes . . . are going inevitably to occur . . . as long as the two sides remain locked into the rigid stand-off which has produced such a sterile stalemate all these years."

In other words, if the Arab countries do not want their planes shot down, they should come to terms with Israel.

This contrast between the way the 1973 incident and the downing of the Korean airliner were treated underlines that fact that it's not innocent lives that motivates Washington's outrage today, but the opportunity to whip up an anti-Soviet campaign — a campaign which serves to cover up its own aggressive moves in Lebanon and Central America. □

# Irish fighter appeals to British workers

Speech by Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams

[In recent months there have been growing contacts and dialogue between left-wing forces in the British Labour Party and representatives of Irish organizations struggling to end British rule in Northern Ireland. The largest of these groups is Sinn Féin, the political organization in solidarity with the Irish Republican Army.

[In July, Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, who was elected to the British Parliament from West Belfast the previous month, visited London at the invitation of the head of the Greater London Council (GLC), Ken Livingstone.

[Livingstone, a leader of the left wing in the Labour Party, had first invited Adams and other Sinn Féin leaders to visit London last year. But that visit had to be cancelled when the British government banned the Sinn Féin leaders from travelling to Britain in November 1982. The travel ban against Adams had to be rescinded following his election to the British Parliament, even though Adams refuses on principle to take his seat in that body.

[In February, Livingstone led a delegation of GLC members on a visit to Belfast to examine the conditions under which the oppressed Catholic population is forced to live.

[While in London, Adams held a press conference attended by more than 100 journalists, had a discussion with 15 Labour members of the GLC and Labour Party left-winger Tony Benn, met with a number of Labour members of Parliament, and addressed a mass meeting at Finsbury Town Hall, London, on July 20.

[The text of Adams' speech there, which is reprinted below, is taken from the July 28 issue of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, the weekly newspaper of Sinn Féin. The footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

\* \* \*

During this visit we have had the opportunity to outline to many people the republican position and to break through the wall of disinformation built by the British government around Ireland. We have also asserted the right (and this is an important victory that you and we have asserted) of republicans to speak in Britain and to exchange views and information with political activists.

The manner in which the media reported this visit in comparison with the contrived hysteria generated by them over the proposed visit last year, and the Belfast visit by Ken Livingstone and Steve and Cathy Bundred, is proof of how the people of West Belfast were able to force the Thatcher government to lift my exclusion order. It is a disgrace that Danny Morrison, the Sinn Féin elected representative for Mid-Ulster who only missed election as an MP [Member



GERRY ADAMS

An Phoblacht

of Parliament] by 79 votes, and Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Féin elected representative for Derry, are still excluded.

Sinn Féin stood in the British general election on a republican ticket. We stood for the right of the Irish people to national self-deter-

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## Socialism in Ireland can only be secured when we have independence . . .

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mination and in defence of the right of Irish people to engage in armed struggle. We stood in opposition to the political cult of loyalism and for the removal of the loyalist veto.<sup>1</sup>

We stood for a British withdrawal, on republican socialist policies, despite the united opposition of the British and Irish establishments, the Irish Catholic Hierarchy, the Protestant churches, the united wrath of the [pro-British] unionist parties, the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party], and Uncle Tom Cobbley and all.

We secured more than 100,000 votes and

1. British governments led by both the Labour and Conservative parties have stated that they will not negotiate any settlement in Northern Ireland that is not supported by the pro-British segment of the population, thereby giving the "Loyalist" forces an effective veto.

now command the electoral support of 43 per cent of the anti-unionist electorate. We fought the election against the background of a systematic campaign of harassment and arrests by the British army and the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary]. Four of our candidates were arrested, literature was seized, offices raided, and election workers detained.

The result surprised many short-sighted observers and totally smashed the British prop-

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## No nation that enslaves another can itself be free . . .

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aganda projection of our struggle as a criminal conspiracy. Margaret Thatcher, during the recent and historic hunger-strike,<sup>2</sup> was silly enough to declare that republicans were playing their last card.

What does she say now, faced with the reinvigorated and more consolidated republican resistance? For once she says very little because she has to face the fact that the Irish struggle will not go away and that she cannot forever distort the situation in our country.

What her government is doing in our country is wrong. The Irish people have the right as a nation to be free, and the British government will save the British people and the Irish people from a continuation of our ongoing tragedy if they act now to resolve the issue.

There is really no question of whether the British should disengage from Ireland. The only question is when and how they should disengage. A necessary first step must be the unilateral removal by the British government of the loyalist veto. No national political minority has the right to tie the majority of Irish people against their will to the parliament and laws of a foreign British power.

For our part, we realise, as republicans, that in shaping a new, united, and independent Irish society full guarantees of civil and religious liberty must be given to Protestants and those who have misguided and understandable fears for their future. Secularism is an important dimension of Irish republicanism.

The next step must be for the British government to negotiate the terms for a British withdrawal and the disarming of the RUC and the UDR [Ulster Defence Force], both British

2. In 1981, seven members of the Irish Republican Army and three members of the Irish National Liberation Army died during a hunger strike in the H-Blocks of Britain's Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland.

forces, so that the conditions for withdrawal be secured in a manner most advantageous to the establishment of a peaceful, united, and stable society in an independent Ireland. This then is the alternative to the British connection.

Many of you people here tonight are involved with labour and socialist politics. Irish republicanism is a philosophy in which the nationalist and socialist dimensions are the two sides of the one coin. Sinn Féin has socialist objectives and is developing and winning support for its socialist politics.

The acid-test of commitment to socialism in both Britain and Ireland is to be found in one's attitudes to the issue of Irish self-determination. In Ireland, you can't be a socialist without being a separatist. In Britain, you can't be a socialist if you condone, support, or ignore the continuing colonial stranglehold which the British government maintains over our country.

The leadership of the Labour Party is a disgrace to the proud history and ideology of socialism. The only contact which the majority of Irish nationalists have had with the Labour Party until recently was Merlyn Rees, Roy Mason, and Don Concannon. Merlyn Rees is infamous in nationalist Ireland as the man who bowed to the loyalist UWC [Ulster Workers' Council] neo-fascist strike.<sup>3</sup> Roy Mason strutted among the natives, a political pygmy with his safari suit. And Don Concannon who made his disgraceful visit to the bedside of Bobby Sands, IRA Volunteer, freedom fighter, and Irish MP.<sup>4</sup>

The invitation to us to visit London, and the

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## There is complete harmony between the fight for Irish independence and the struggle of the working class in Britain and Ireland for the overthrow of capitalism . . .

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visit by Ken Livingstone, Cathy Bundred, and Steve Bundred to Belfast, has done a lot to rectify this situation. This meeting tonight has further helped this development.

It is our contention that, in socialist terms, socialism in Ireland can only be secured when we have independence and that a precondition for the emancipation of Irish workers is the

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3. As a result of the May 1974 strike of loyalist workers organized by the Ulster Workers' Council, British authorities dropped a plan to guarantee the Catholic minority a share in government in Northern Ireland.

Merlyn Rees was at that time the British government's secretary of state for Northern Ireland.

4. Roy Mason was defense minister in the last Labour government. Don Concannon, as Labour Party spokesman on Ireland, made a special trip to the deathbed of hunger-striker Bobby Sands for the sole purpose of informing Sands that the Labour Party was completely opposed to the hunger strike and the demands of the prisoners.

severing of the connection between Britain and Ireland.

This is also essential for the freedom of the British working class. No nation that enslaves another can itself be free. The same methods used by the British ruling class against us will be used by them against you.

Plastic bullets, which have murdered 14 Irish people including 7 children, have been issued to the British police for use against disaffected sections of your people — the blacks, the unemployed, and alienated youth — and Kenneth Newman, who learned his strategies from the RUC, is now in charge of the police in London.

We do not charge the British people with the past and continuing crimes of their government. We are not motivated by racial hatred. At the worst, to quote James Connolly:

"We charge them only with the criminal apathy in submitting to slavery and allowing themselves to be made an instrument of coercion for the enslavement of others."

## Irish activists framed up

### Show trials based on informer testimony

#### By Will Reissner

Nationalist forces in Northern Ireland are mapping out plans for a broad-based campaign against the British government's growing use of informers to send opponents of British rule to jail.

More than 140 people attended a Belfast conference August 28 to build a campaign to defeat the British strategy of using the unsubstantiated testimony of informers to win convictions in show trials.

The meeting was sponsored by the Relatives for Justice committee, composed of family members of those already jailed after being fingered by informers. The gathering decided to sponsor a major conference on October 2 to plan out the campaign. In the interim, marches and rallies are scheduled, and petition campaigns and fund-raising activities are being mounted.

In recent months British authorities have been able to get several former members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) to cooperate with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The British have used psychologists, as well as a "carrot and stick" policy of using savage sentences coupled with promises of leniency, to pressure prisoners into working with them.

One of those now in jail as a result of the unsubstantiated testimony of an informer is Jim Gibney, a leader of Sinn Féin, the largest organization in the struggle against British rule.

From his jail cell, Gibney pointed out the danger of the British policy. "No one is safe," he wrote in a letter to the Sinn Féin weekly *An Phoblacht/Republican News*. "It does not matter who you are, what position you have or

We wish comradeship and express solidarity with British workers and your three million unemployed, but we emphasise, as the vital principle of our political base, the need of separating Ireland from England and making it absolutely independent.

There is no conflict, on the contrary, there is complete harmony between the fight for Irish independence and the struggle of the working class in Britain and Ireland for the overthrow of capitalism.

Our visit is part of the process of normalising relationships between us and those in Britain who suffer under and resist the policies of the same government and the same ruling class responsible for the denial of national rights to the Irish people. We have made a good start, there is still a lot to be done, we in Ireland and you here.

The blanketmen and women in Armagh [women's jail] declared in our language "tiocfaidh ár lá," which translates "our day will come." They meant all of us. □

which political party or organisation you belong to. If the RUC think you are a potential troublemaker and they have an informer to 'do' you, then you will do a spell in here."

Thirty-five people have already been convicted on the testimony of former IRA member Christopher Black, who has been released from prison and is now reported to be resettled with a new identity in Australia. Scores of others are facing charges based solely on informer testimony.

One former INLA member, Harry Kirkpatrick, agreed to become an informer for the RUC after being sentenced to almost 1,000 years plus five life sentences, on 77 charges. The judge, however, set no minimum sentence, and Kirkpatrick was persuaded to cooperate with the British in return for leniency.

The recent spate of informer trials highlights increased British psychological warfare in Northern Ireland. The Royal Ulster Constabulary is using psychologists and isolation techniques to break republican prisoners, even conditioning some to reject their friends and families and begin identifying emotionally with the RUC.

A stark example of the results of this was provided during the testimony by former INLA member Raymond Gilmour when he was brought into court July 22 to testify against 28 people he had named.

As Gilmour entered the court, his mother, whom he had not seen during the nearly one year he had been in jail, called out: "Raymond, Raymond, don't you know your mother's here? God forgive you!" After she and two daughters and a son were forcibly evicted from the courtroom, Gilmour calmly resumed his

testimony.

Because convictions can be gained on the testimony of a single informer, the control over prisoners exercised by the RUC opens the way for the British authorities to plant charges against any activist on their hit list.

Gibney has appealed to nationalists in Northern Ireland to use the 1981 campaign in support of the H-Block hunger strikers as a

model for fighting the show trials. In his letter to *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, Gibney wrote:

"The experience gained in the H-Block movement should be fresh in the minds of those who were involved in that campaign. The cornerstone of that campaign was its non-sectarian appeal within the nationalist community, members of any party and members of

none were welcome to participate."

Gibney added that "when the British government sees an effective and vocal opposition once again trudging the streets of the nationalist North, then, and only then, will they rethink their actions.

"The informer policy can be opposed and defeated. It merely requires a will to do so," he concluded. □

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## Canada

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# Labor protests sweep British Columbia

## *Massive fight against government's antiworker offensive*

**By Will Reissner**

The conservative government of British Columbia, Canada's western-most province, has launched the most far-reaching attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of working people yet seen in Canada in the current economic crisis.

These attacks are contained in a July 7 budget and accompanying legislation presented by Premier William Bennett's Social Credit party government. The legislative package would lead to huge cuts in social services, abolition of the province's Human Rights Commission, loss of 13,000 public-sector jobs, wage controls, and restrictions on the right of public and private-sector workers to bargain collectively.

The Social Credit government is also moving to freeze teachers' wages for three years and has begun to dismantle the provincial automobile insurance system. Plans are under way to sell off part of the insurance system to higher-cost private companies.

The effect of these measures is a massive transfer of wealth and resources from working people to the corporations. And with human and labor-rights provisions gutted, employers will be emboldened to step up the rate of exploitation of their workforce.

Vancouver daily newspapers have published polls indicating that residents of the province oppose the government's budget measures by a three-to-one margin.

### **Labor fights back**

The provincial government's program is sparking a powerful response from British Columbia's trade-union movement. British Columbia workers have the highest rate of union organization in North America and are backed by a labor party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), that regularly wins more than 40 percent of the vote in provincial elections.

Close to 45,000 people poured into Vancouver's Empire Stadium August 10 to protest the government's policies. Tens of thousands of workers left their jobs for several hours to attend the demonstration. Government offices



*Socialist Voice*

Demonstration of more than 25,000 on July 27 outside British Columbia Legislature in Victoria to protest budget laws.

were closed and Vancouver's public transit system was shut down as 1,000 bus drivers marched into the stadium. About half the participants were women.

This demonstration followed mobilizations of 25,000 marchers in the provincial capital, Victoria, on July 27, and nearly 20,000 in Vancouver on July 23.

A dozen more rallies took place in towns and cities throughout the province in August. On August 17, some 4,000 people marched in Bennett's hometown, Kelowna. In all, more than 100,000 people have demonstrated against the government's program in the space of a few weeks.

The province's organized labor movement has taken the lead in building these protests. On August 18 British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL) President Art Kube held a press conference to denounce proposed

changes in the province's Labour Code that would decisively alter the rules of collective bargaining in favor of the bosses. Kube pointed out that "the government knew its plans to dismantle human and civil rights and essential social services would be effectively opposed by B.C.'s labor movement so they have set out to literally destroy us."

International Woodworkers of America leader Clay Perry made a similar point, stating that the Social Credit government is out to destroy the union movement because in British Columbia, as in South Africa and Central America, trade unions are "the last effective resistance to tyranny."

The BCFL has taken the initiative to build a labor united front called Operation Solidarity, which includes unions that are not members of the federation. Unions representing 500,000 workers in the province have enlisted in the campaign.



Operation Solidarity organized the rallies that have already taken place, and has established a Solidarity Coalition that includes dozens of organizations representing women, the unemployed, churches, tenants, immigrants, and minorities.

#### **NDP: an underutilized weapon**

The organizers of the protest campaign have not, however, made full use of the strength of the New Democratic Party in the struggle.

The September 5 issue of *Socialist Voice*, the fortnightly newspaper of the Revolutionary Workers League, Canadian section of the Fourth International, pointed out, "The NDP is an enormously important weapon in labor's arsenal in the current showdown. The NDP has a province-wide organizational machine which can be used to build the protest.

"Moreover," *Socialist Voice* continued, "the very existence of the NDP provides a perspective for where the struggle must go. Of how the Socreds [Social Credit government] can be booted out of Victoria and replaced with a government that represents labor and its allies."

Leaders of the BCFL and of the NDP argue that the protests will be more effective if they are posed as non-partisan, as above politics. But, as *Socialist Voice* noted, "there's nothing non-partisan about what the Socreds are doing. They're out to make B.C. a more profitable home for business. Labor has a political fight on its hands. And it needs to use every weapon it can — building coalitions, holding mass demonstrations, organizing strikes, building its own political party — to win."

Although the NDP has not been at the forefront of the struggle, it has contributed to the fight against the budget. A special brochure — *NDP Advocate* — was published explaining the content of the proposed laws, and the NDP legislative caucus has been filibustering to delay their passage through the legislature in order to buy time to build the strongest possible opposition movement.

#### **Petition campaign**

NDPers are also being urged to participate in the huge petition campaign against the budget that was launched August 30 as Phase Two of Operation Solidarity.

Over the first weekend in September, more than 100 activists from throughout the province attended a two-day conference on the mechanics of organizing a successful petition campaign.

The Solidarity Coalition will highlight a different group affected by the budget during each of the seven weeks of the petition drive. Province-wide signature-gathering blitzes are planned for September 24 and October 15.

The petitions are already available in English and Chinese and will be translated into other languages to increase support for Operation Solidarity among British Columbia's large immigrant communities. The importance of this move was demonstrated by the formation of the Sikh Solidarity Coalition, representing 50,000 members of six Sikh temples in the

Vancouver region. The Sikhs are an immigrant community that originated in the Indian sub-continent.

The Sikh Solidarity Coalition is focusing on opposition to the abolition of the Human Rights Commission, and is attempting to enlist the 23 other Sikh temples in the province behind the campaign.

#### **Role of women**

A Women Against the Budget coalition has also been established. Many of the government's measures will hit women especially hard. Women workers make up a large proportion of the public sector. They rely on child care to free them up for jobs, and face discrimination in hiring and wages. Single mothers with children will be especially hard-hit if the plans to eliminate the Residential Tenancy Act go through, since this will allow landlords to evict tenants without having to show cause.

Child-care worker Ruth Annis told a September 7 rally in Vancouver organized by the Women Against the Budget coalition that the Social Credit government intends to force women to work longer hours at home to substitute for the social services that are being cut.

That same day, 23,000 hospital workers learned that the government had revised their contract under the wage controls program. The workers will receive a 4 percent increase over 20 months. But the 7 percent shorter work-week they were awarded in binding arbitration has been eliminated. This sets the stage for more staff cuts. If the hospital workers do not accept this "voluntarily," the government can order even more cutbacks.

#### **Strike preparations**

Other public sector unions are moving into strike position. Some 15,000 government clerks and maintenance workers in the British Columbia Government Employees Union have voted 80 percent in favor of strike action over a contract fight on working conditions.

Clerical, maintenance, and cafeteria staff at

Kwantlen community college are already on strike. Faculty association president Ralph Stanton reported that only 15 of the 220 faculty members crossed picket lines. Such solidarity among the faculty is "unique in the recent history of B.C.," Stanton said.

Contracts for 180,000 public sector workers expire on October 31, and 60,000 workers in the sawmills and pulp and paper mills are voting on a forest industry offer. In the first two forest-industry unions to vote, more than 75 percent of the workers rejected the offer.

The stakes for workers throughout Canada are high in this battle. What the Social Credit government can get away with in British Columbia will serve as a model for other provinces and for the federal government. Frank Miller, trade minister in Ontario's Conservative Party government, told a conference of provincial premiers in early August: "If Bennett succeeds, I think every government will end up doing the same thing, in its own way. If he fails, the cause of government restraint will have been set back for a decade. Either way, there's an awful lot riding on what happens out there."

Earlier this year the Parti Québécois government of Quebec applied brutal anti-labor measures against its 300,000 public sector workers. Despite a hard-fought battle by the unions, the public sector workers went down to defeat there. Labor's defeat in Quebec helped prepare the ground for Bennett's war on the unions in British Columbia.

Therefore, solidarity by workers in the rest of Canada and in Quebec is essential for the fight being waged by the British Columbia workers.

Some steps have already been taken. On August 24, the General Council of the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) sent a resolution of solidarity and support to the British Columbia workers. The National Union of Provincial Government Employees, which represents 240,000 workers across Canada, raised \$120,000 in just two weeks for its brothers and sisters in British Columbia. □

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# Workers, farmers take to streets

*Protest austerity drive, collaboration with NATO*

**By Argyris Haras  
and Natasha Terlexis**

ATHENS — After almost two years in power, the government of Andreas Papandreou and his Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) is in trouble. Numerous strikes, demonstrations, and other mass mobilizations in recent months reflect a widespread and growing disillusionment in the government among this country's workers and farmers.

The PASOK, a capitalist party that uses radical populist rhetoric, was elected in October 1981 on the basis of a series of promises: to pull Greece out of NATO, to close down the four U.S. military bases in the country, to call a national referendum on whether or not Greece should remain in the European Economic Community (EEC), and to institute basic changes in the economy, such as "socialization" of basic industry and foreign trade.

The defeat of the rightist New Democracy Party and the electoral victory of the PASOK in 1981 expressed the broad sentiments among Greek workers and farmers in favor of these demands. The election results were greeted with massive and enthusiastic rallies.

So far, however, the Papandreou government has not even moved in the direction of fulfilling its basic preelection promises.

## **Papandreou okays U.S. bases**

Greece's membership in NATO and the presence of U.S. bases here have been the main tools of U.S. imperialist intervention in Greek internal affairs, as in the case of the rightist military coup in 1967 and the CIA-directed military regime that ruled the country until 1974.

These bases have also served as a springboard for U.S. aggression in the Middle East. They service the U.S. 6th Fleet, which was put on alert to back up Israel during the 1967 and 1973 Mideast wars. They were also used during Washington's ill-fated 1980 military raid into Iran, carried out under the guise of a "rescue operation" of the U.S. embassy hostages.

The demand that the U.S. bases be immediately dismantled and that the country get out of NATO is a central issue in Greece today. It is the cutting edge of the peace movement here, as indicated time and time again by the mobilizations of hundreds of thousands of workers, farmers, and students.

Despite this overwhelming sentiment, Papandreou has shifted his stance on this issue.

On July 15, after several months of negotiations, an agreement on the future of the bases was signed by representatives of the Greek and

U.S. governments.

The main points of the agreement are that: the bases will remain in Greece for the next five years; and the government in power in 1988 may then reopen negotiations over the fate of the bases.

The Papandreou government tried to portray the agreement as a victory for Greece, as a step in the direction of removing the bases.

But, as a representative of the U.S. embassy noted the next day, "There is no point in the agreement that was signed that provides for the withdrawal of the bases. . . ."

Another U.S. representative told a reporter for the Associated Press, "We could not be more happy."

The New Democracy party hailed the agreement as a continuation of its policies by the PASOK.

In addition to the agreement on the bases, the government has dropped all talk of getting out of NATO.

The signing of the base agreement elicited immediate and massive protests throughout the country.

On July 16, the day after the signing, rallies and marches were held in 35 cities and towns protesting the sellout. The mobilizations involved tens of thousands. In most cases, they were called by the Greek Committee for International Peace and Détente (EEDYE), the largest peace group in the country and the one led by the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Greece (KKE).

A major demonstration of more than 100,000 took place in Athens on July 28. It was backed by the EEDYE and dozens of unions.

The KKE itself denounced the agreement and called for a national referendum to decide the future of the bases.

During the first half of 1982, just after the PASOK's electoral victory, the Papandreou government took some measures that were welcomed by working people. The minimum wage was increased by law by 50 percent. Modest tax breaks were instituted for low-income families.

However, by mid-1982, as the world capitalist economic crisis was deepening, Papandreou announced austerity measures similar to those of the other imperialist governments of Europe, as in Britain, West Germany, and France. A wage freeze was declared, and no steps were taken to confront rising unemployment and massive layoffs.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, unemployment jumped from 6.1 percent in 1982 to more than 10 percent by mid-1983.

Committees of the unemployed were formed

and marches against unemployment started spreading this June. They were backed by several unions — with the garment workers' union in the forefront — and by the KKE.

On June 7, some 3,500 unemployed youth marched through the center of Athens demanding jobs. A lead banner in that demonstration, carried by members of the garment workers' union, declared, "Unemployment concerns not only the unemployed, but all workers, who may be out on the streets tomorrow. We refuse to join the ranks of the unemployed according to the directives of the Common Market and the monopolies."

In early July, tens of thousands of workers marched for jobs in Athens in two big mobilizations led by the construction and the garment and textile workers' unions.

## **Textile workers demand nationalization**

The recession has hit workers in the textile industry hard.

In many cases, bosses got loans from the state-owned National Bank to continue running their ailing businesses, only to declare bankruptcy later. In most of these cases, the textile workers demanded nationalization of the bankrupt firms.

The most militant action took place at the Michaelides textile factory in Thivai. When the company announced plans to close the plant, the 1,200 employees protested by organizing a march in Thivai that was joined by several thousand other unionists.

The government, which in the past had promised to place all "problematic" corporations (those threatening to shut down) under state control, did not respond to the workers' demands.

On July 20, the workers' union local organized a march and rally in Athens outside the offices of the Ministry of National Economy. The rally was attended by virtually all of the 1,200 workers, who demanded that the government nationalize the company.

Also protesting the EEC demand for reduced cotton and textile production in Greece, the demonstrators shouted, "Common Market means unemployment!"

Their union called for Greece to withdraw from the EEC.

Several strikes took place in the chemical industry during the spring and in July. They were initiated by various union locals in the industry after 16 of the country's 20 chemical companies announced huge profits for 1982 but continued to lay off workers and refused to grant wage increases demanded by the unions.

Transit workers in Athens carried out one of the most militant strikes during the spring.



Workers from Michaelides textile plant in Thivai demonstrating outside the Ministry of the National Economy in Athens July 20 to demand the nationalization of the company.

They refused to accept the austerity measures put forward by the state-owned transit company and demanded wage increases. The government declared the strike illegal and forced the workers back to work.

#### Antiunion laws

Faced with increasing workers' mobilizations and strikes, the Papandreou government put forward its so-called Socialization Law.

Article 4 of the law requires that all union decisions must win approval by at least 51 percent of all members. In case of a strike vote, those who do not vote because they are on vacation or leave or simply do not want to vote would be counted as voting no. Not only does this article of the law cut across the ability of unions to call strikes, but it also institutes government intervention in the internal affairs of the unions.

Most workers viewed the law as antiunion. They responded to it with huge mobilizations and a 48-hour general strike in mid-June. The president of the General Confederation of Workers (GSEE) — who, like all GSEE Executive Board members, was appointed by the Supreme Court — resigned in protest against the law.\* So did the unionists affiliated with the two Communist parties.

Despite the massive protests, the government pushed the law through parliament.

What the law means concretely became

\*The overwhelming majority of the appointed leaders of the GSEE are affiliated to the PASOK. A few are affiliated with the two Communist parties (one pro-Moscow, and another, much smaller, Eurocommunist) or the New Democracy party. This leadership was supposed to work toward calling a democratic convention of the GSEE that would include representatives of all the unions, the most radical of which had been kicked out of the GSEE during the previous rightist regime. But during its one and a half years in office, the leadership has not made any moves toward such a convention.

clear when special police forces were used to attack two strikes, one by ship workers in Athens in late June and another by construction workers in Thessaloniki. The police broke up picket lines, escorted scabs, and arrested union leaders, who were charged with aiding illegal strikes.

The law also outlines what the government meant by "socializations." In the already state-owned companies, such as the utilities corporation and the phone company, as well as in the mining industry (which Papandreou had promised before his election to nationalize), "control councils" are to be set up.

These councils are to include representatives of the companies and the workers. Their function will be to "advise" the companies on matters like production and productivity and to oversee the administration. But they will have no decision-making powers whatsoever.

Council members, moreover, will not be allowed to make public any company "trade secrets." This means the workers will have no control over the company books. The law also provides for large fines and jail terms for anyone who publicizes such secrets.

The obvious purpose of these councils is to try to make the workers collaborate with the companies and government in their austerity drive, and to convince the workers to cut their own wages and accept government interference in their unions.

#### Crisis in agriculture

Greece's entry into the Common Market in January 1981 and the government's agrarian policies that went along with the EEC's directives have hit Greek farmers especially hard.

The agricultural policy is decided basically by the EEC. It consists of set prices for exported agricultural products, production limits, and protectionist measures for the products of EEC member-countries, such as lower tariffs on exports within the Common Market.

Since different countries in Europe export similar products — for example, Greece, Italy, and Spain export olive oil, fruits, and wine — these protectionist measures tend to pit the farmers of one country against those of another.

On the other hand, the prices set by the EEC are in most cases so low that they cannot even cover the farmers' production costs.

In Greece in 1982, farmers were forced to dump 193,000 tons of fruit, mostly peaches, oranges, apples, and watermelons. Some 180,000 tons were dumped in the first half of 1983 alone. Yet in July, as a result of an EEC agreement, Greece was forced to import a token amount of peaches, about 21 tons, from Morocco, Tunisia, and Israel.

Cotton production, estimated at 700,000 tons per year, was forced down to 430,000 tons, even though Greece is the only cotton exporter within the EEC. This caused a depression among the cotton producers and also affected the textile industry, one of Greece's basic industries.

A similar thing happened with the tobacco crop and wine reserves.

All these measures, combined with very low prices for other products, like potatoes, are causing tens of thousands of bankruptcies and foreclosures among Greek farmers. The EEC estimated earlier this year that the peasant population of Greece would be reduced from 957,000 families in 1978 to 375,000 families in 1988.

The crisis has also hit agricultural workers, who mainly pick cotton, fruit, and tobacco on a seasonal basis. In the first 10 days of July in Macedonia, one of the areas that produces most of the fruit in northern Greece, 10,000 agricultural workers were thrown out of work by massive dumping of fruit. A large percentage of these workers are from the Turkish-speaking minority in Greece, one of the most exploited layers of toilers in the country.

At the same time, thousands of workers in the fruit processing factories in northern Greece were also laid off.

#### Farmers mobilize

In response to this crisis in agriculture, farmers throughout the country have begun to mobilize in defense of their interests:

- On June 29, the General Confederation of Farmers Associations of Greece (GESASE) organized a conference of the grape, raisin, and wine producers in Khalkis. The conference demanded that the government pay higher prices for grapes and denounced EEC proposals that the state-set prices for raisins be abolished and annual raisin production reduced by 20,000 tons. (If production went above the limit of 80,000 tons, the EEC threatened to lower the price it set.)

The Papandreou government initially claimed it would fight against these proposals. But by July 21 the Greek representative to the EEC had accepted the proposals almost in their entirety.

The next day, hundreds of representatives of

various farmers' organizations assembled in Iraklion, a city in one of the large raisin-producing areas, and planned a march and rally in the same city for August 1. Thousands of farmers turned out for the rally and demanded the rejection of the EEC proposals.

- On July 12, a conference of wheat producers in Thivai demanded a moratorium on their debt payments to the state-owned agricultural bank. They have been hit by low production due to a devastating drought this year.

- On July 16, some 1,500 farmers from 15 towns around the city of Tripolis in southern Greece closed the national highway to Athens with dozens of tractors. They demanded that the government take responsibility for the sale of their products (mostly cranberries) at prices that would at least cover their costs. They stayed on the highway all day and decided to withhold their products from the market until their demands were met.

- On July 17, thousands of farmers, family members, and supporters, accompanied by 2,000 tractors, took over the downtown area of Veroia in northern Greece in one of the largest

peach-producing areas of the country. They demanded that the government take measures to stop the massive dumping of peaches and cited Greece's membership in the EEC as one of the reasons for the catastrophe they face.

- On July 18, about 500 farmers from the farming areas north of Athens launched a tractorcade toward the capital to demand that the government take measures to save their potatoes, which were rotting in the fields. The police blocked the tractorcade.

- On July 20, however, hundreds of potato producers, with 250 tractors, closed the bridge over the Nestos River in northeastern Greece, blocking traffic between major cities in that region. They demanded that AGREX, the state-owned exporting company, buy the 30,000 tons of potatoes that were rotting in their fields.

A common thread in all these mobilizations has been the growing consensus among Greek farmers that the Europe of the EEC is a Europe for the capitalists and the big agrobusinesses, at the expense of the small farmers.

Yet amidst all this ferment, the government

accepted the presidency of the EEC for the next six months, indicating Papandreou's intention to tie Greece even more firmly to the Common Market.

Such policies, combined with the Papandreou government's antiunion actions, austerity drive, and continued collaboration with NATO and U.S. imperialism, have convinced growing numbers of workers and farmers in Greece that this government is not their government. They are losing their illusions in Papandreou and the PASOK.

The disenchantment with the government was reflected to an extent in the last municipal elections, in which the vote for the Communist Party of Greece rose.

But it has been demonstrated most clearly in the massive mobilizations of workers and farmers around the country in the past few months.

When Papandreou won the 1981 elections, he hoped to be able to ride the radical sentiments for change that helped bring the PASOK into office. But the tiger has proven exceptionally difficult to ride. □

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## Upper Volta

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# French-backed regime overthrown

## *Mass rallies greet radical officers' coup*

### By Ernest Harsch

In his first major news conference after seizing power in the West African country of Upper Volta, Capt. Thomas Sankara on August 21 reaffirmed his government's anti-imperialist stance.

Upper Volta, he said, has embarked on a "revolutionary course." Although the August 4 overthrow of the regime of Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo was carried out by members of the armed forces, Sankara stressed that the new government was not a military one. (When the actual composition of the government was announced a few days later, only five of its 20 ministers and secretaries were from the military.)

The army itself, Sankara said, would be purged of "reactionary elements" in order to transform it into "an army of the people, a revolutionary army."

On foreign policy, Sankara declared, "We support all liberation movements." He responded sharply to the widespread accusations in the imperialist news media that his assumption of power was a "pro-Libyan coup," stating that his government was independent and "free vis-à-vis Colonel Qaddafi." At the same time, he defended Libya from the imperialist-inspired slanders against it, blasting the "partial, arbitrary, and unjust" news reports that tried to create the image of a "Libyan peril."

Sankara vowed to try to maintain friendly

relations with all neighboring West African states. Regarding ties with France, Upper Volta's former colonial ruler, Sankara said that they would be "relations of friendship," but that all accords between Upper Volta and France would be reviewed in light of the "policies and ideology" of the National Council of the Revolution (CNR), the main governing body.

Despite Sankara's assurances, the coming to power of the CNR has aroused concern among neighboring proimperialist regimes, as well as in Paris and Washington. At a time when the French and U.S. imperialists are seeking to isolate Libya within the region and are intervening directly in Chad to prevent Libyan-backed forces from winning the civil war there, Sankara's defense of Libya comes as a clear challenge.

Moreover, the manner in which the CNR has come to power — in the midst of an unprecedented popular upsurge — has reinforced the imperialists' fears.

### Militant union movement

Upper Volta, one of the poorest countries in Africa, has long been dominated by French imperialism. Its 7 million inhabitants have been subjected to economic policies that keep them impoverished and their country dependent on the French market. The average life expectancy in Upper Volta is 39 years, the

lowest in the world. The adult literacy rate is a mere 5 percent.

When the French imperialists granted Upper Volta its independence in 1960, they ensured that a neocolonial regime was installed to help protect their interests in the country.

From its earliest days as an independent state, however, Upper Volta has had a strong and militant trade-union movement. In 1966 the regime of Maurice Yaméogo was ousted by a military coup, following a general strike sparked by Yaméogo's austerity policies.

For 14 years, Gen. Sangoulé Lamizana ruled the country. But strikes, demonstrations, and other union actions eventually undermined his regime as well. In an attempt to try to end this unrest, Col. Saye Zerbo staged a coup in November 1980. He banned all trade-union activity, outlawed strikes, and arrested union and political activists. Besides the unions, a particular target of Zerbo's repression was the Patriotic League for Development (Lipad), a political organization which has close ties to the union movement and professes socialist policies.

Zerbo's crackdown generated widespread discontent, not only among workers, but within the ranks of the army itself. Sankara, the minister of information, was sacked in early 1982 for publicly criticizing military rule. Finally, on November 7, Zerbo was overthrown in a coup spearheaded by noncommis-

sioned officers and rank-and-file soldiers.

The new governing body, the People's Salvation Council (CSP), was chosen largely through elections within military units around the country. The CSP in turn elected Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo as president.

The CSP quickly abandoned Zerbo's repressive and anti-working-class policies, released jailed union and political activists, and reinstated fired workers in their jobs.

The CSP, however, was not politically homogenous; it represented various currents, including sectors of the military hierarchy that favored continued controls on the unions and close ties with French imperialism.

#### Sankara spurs mobilizations

Sankara emerged as the leader of the most radical wing in the CSP. His selection as prime minister in January reflected the growing strength of this current within the council.

After becoming prime minister, Sankara moved to mobilize active popular support. At public rallies around the country, he promised to try to end Upper Volta's domination by imperialism.

In February, Sankara visited Libya, and upon his return spoke favorably of the Libyan government. He later arranged for Qaddafi to pay a visit to Upper Volta.

At one mass rally in early April in Ouagadougou, the capital, Sankara asked the crowd, "If we could develop Upper Volta in the same way that Colonel Qaddafi has developed Libya, would you be content, Yes or No?"

The crowd shouted back, "Yes!"

Speaking at the summit conference of the Movement of Nonaligned Nations in New Delhi in March, Sankara declared his government's support for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the western Saharan independence struggle, and the liberation movements in southern Africa. He condemned Washington's arming of the counterrevolutionary bands attacking Nicaragua, as well as the imperialist intervention in El Salvador.

The CSP also established close ties with the government of Flight Lieut. Jerry Rawlings in neighboring Ghana, which came to power through a coup led by radical officers and which has supported ongoing anti-imperialist mobilizations in that country.

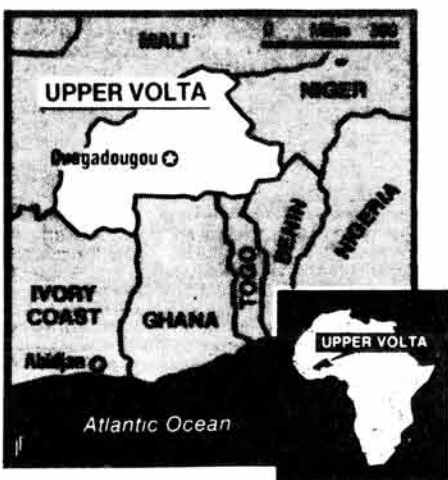
In May, Sankara stepped up his denunciations of imperialism and "internal enemies of the people" in a series of speeches in Fulani, Djiola, Moore, and Bobo Dioulasso. He received an enthusiastic response. At the rally in Bobo Dioulasso on May 14, tens of thousands chanted his name.

#### Mitterrand's failed coup

The French imperialists and their allies within Upper Volta took fright. They moved to eliminate Sankara and stifle the rising anti-imperialist sentiment reflected in the mass rallies.

On May 16, French President François Mitterrand's adviser on African affairs, Guy Penne, arrived in Ouagadougou. The next day,

while Penne was still in the country, a palace coup was carried out by rightist officers in the CSP. Sankara was deposed and arrested, as were a number of his closest collaborators and several leading unionists. Since a large section



of the CSP itself was sympathetic to Sankara, it was eventually dissolved by the new authorities.

To justify this crackdown, President Ouédraogo and other officials claimed that Sankara had been plotting with members of the Lipad and other leftist groups to seize power and turn Upper Volta into a "communist society."

The coupmakers, however, were not strong enough to put down resistance and consolidate their rule.

Soon after the coup, students took to the streets of Ouagadougou, chanting "Down with imperialism!" and stoning the French embassy.

The army garrison in Pô, near the border with Ghana, went into open rebellion. Under the command of Blaise Compaoré, one of Sankara's closest colleagues, it succeeded in gaining control of the entire region.

After more than two months of stalemate, Sankara's supporters struck back. On August 4 the troops in Pô, joined by other units, marched on Ouagadougou and overthrew the Ouédraogo regime. Sankara was freed and assumed leadership of the new ruling council.

Within a week, the last resistance by rightist officers was crushed with the death of Col. Gabriel Somé Yorian, the main figure in the May 17 coup. The top officer corps was also purged.

In his first radio broadcast on the night of August 4, Sankara charged that the previous regime had served "the interests of the enemies of the people," and those of "foreign domination and neocolonialism." He called on the population to "form committees for the defense of the revolution everywhere, to participate in the great patriotic struggle to block the internal and external enemies who threaten the people."

The next day, the first demonstrations of support for the new government began. Ac-

ording to a report in the August 15 London weekly *West Africa*, "By 8 am thousands of people were out on the streets of Ouagadougou on mopeds or in cars, driving slowly around, mostly just looking at the armed forces and commandos. Nobody appeared to be afraid: two well-dressed middle-aged women gave a cheer and a clenched fist salute to a passing jeep full of soldiers."

In subsequent days, demonstrations swept other parts of the country, including Bobo Dioulasso, Ouahigouya, Banfora, and Boromo.

The new cabinet, announced on August 24, included a number of members of the Lipad, as well as those military figures most closely identified with Sankara: Blaise Compaoré, Jean-Baptiste Lingani, and Henri Zongo.

According to the August 31 Paris weekly *Jeune Afrique*, Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) have already been set up in the neighborhoods of Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso, and other towns. Trade unionists and members of the Lipad and the Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party (PCRV) have played a prominent role in their establishment.

In an interview broadcast over the national radio, Maj. Salam Kaboré, the national chairman of the CDRs, explained that the committees would help to politically educate and mobilize the population against imperialist domination, as well as perform cultural, socioeconomic, and military functions.

While there would not be a general arming of CDR members, Kaboré said, representatives from each neighborhood would be trained in the use of arms. "Our objective," he said, "is to know that any Upper Voltan can use a weapon at any time and defend his country and his revolution against all enemies." □

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# Immigrant workers build new unions

*'Allah is on the side of the workers'*

[The following is an interview with F.L. Derry, a fork-lift operator and General Confederation of Labor (CGT) shop steward in one of the major Renault automobile plants near Paris. It was obtained by Steve Craine for *Intercontinental Press* in New York in August.]

\* \* \*

*Question. Recently the bosses in both privately-owned Peugeot and nationalized Renault auto companies have announced plans for major cutbacks in the workforce through firings and other means. What does this represent for auto workers in France?*

*Answer.* Well, first there's an economic change. Everyone is expecting a deepening of the economic crisis in the fall. That's a little bit different from what you have in a lot of other countries, where there's the beginning of an upturn. And this is going to hit the automobile industry in particular.

There is another aspect as well. It is part of a real offensive by the bosses in automobile against the workers, particularly to roll back the gains of the strikes we have had over the past year and a half.

In some of the plants the layoffs will take on the dimensions of a purge of the workforce. For instance Talbot, a company that belongs to Peugeot, plans to fire 4,000 of the 16,000 workers in their main plant. And it is not going to be done by seniority or anything, so the bosses can just go through and root out every union militant.

This is going to mean we will have some very important struggles to defend our positions and the gains we made.

*Q. Could you outline what some of those gains have been, and who has been involved in fighting for them?*

A. We have had a series of strikes since the new Socialist Party, Communist Party, and Left Radical government was elected in May and June of 1981. Several months after that, strikes began in some automobile plants and then spread from one company to another. The strikes have partially broken the wage restraints policy set up by the government, smashed a number of company unions, and led to the establishment of unions that have a radically different character than anything we've seen up to now — mass unions of unskilled immigrant auto workers. Also, one of the demands of these strikes was to allow unskilled workers the chance to become skilled workers. This has a very political dynamic to it because the unskilled workers are women and immi-

grants, so it amounts to a movement against racism and sexism.

To understand what's happening, you have to see who the auto workers are.

The first and most important fact is that in most auto plants in the Paris area the blue collar workforce is 50-60 percent immigrant, and if you talk about the unskilled workers on the production line, the figures are much higher.

*Q. What has been the special role of the immigrant workers in the development of these strikes?*

A. That's exactly the point of the strikes. These have been strikes of immigrant workers. While there had been some strikes of immigrant workers in the past, it had never been on a scale like this. Moreover, the recent strikes were marked by a deepening consciousness of the immigrant workers, not just as workers, but as immigrant workers.

Every nationality in the plant is different. Their levels of consciousness are different. Their experiences are different. So not all immigrant workers played an equal role in these strikes.

I work for Renault, where we have very few Turks, but at Citroën, which was one of the more radical strikes, there were many Turkish workers.

The most important nationalities are the North Africans — Moroccans and Algerians. And there are big differences between the Moroccans and Algerians in the level of consciousness and how they look at things.

The Algerians made a revolution and many of the workers in the auto plants today were part of the FLN (National Liberation Front), suffering years of imprisonment or torture at the hands of the French government or the French army in the early 1960s. Many of their relatives were killed. They were underground, or gave money to the FLN or helped organize the FLN or engaged in armed actions. They have an extremely deep anti-imperialist consciousness and a political consciousness.

The Moroccans are very different because they didn't have a revolution for their independence. It was more or less given to them without very much of a struggle, and their political consciousness is therefore different. They tend to be more to the right and support the current government in Morocco, which is very conservative and supports U.S. imperialism. So their consciousness is more contradictory.

As the strikes developed, the Moroccan workers, who had been the most conservative, began to play the leading role. And it has changed their consciousness about things. It

shows the impact of the strikes in Morocco in 1981 and of the Iranian revolution.

In addition to the Algerians and Moroccans, we have many Portuguese, who are also very radical and were affected by the events in Portugal in the 1970s. Also there are Spanish workers; Africans, from many different countries; and workers from the Caribbean: Haitians, because they speak French find it easier to come to France, and workers from the Antilles, who are not classified as immigrants because they have French nationality, but are immigrants in reality because they are Black and are subject to racism like the others.

*Q. How have the bosses traditionally used these differences to divide auto workers and keep back workers' struggles?*

A. Well they've always tried to divide up the nationalities, turning one against the other, dividing them up by language groups. In places where workers didn't speak French, the only contact with each other would be through company-organized interpreters. They always tried to turn one group against the other, and when one group got too strong in the plant they would go out and recruit another nationality.

That's one of the mistakes Citroën made. They had many Moroccan workers in the plant so they started recruiting African workers. When they had quite a few African workers they started recruiting Turkish workers, thinking they are all different, they are all going to fight amongst each other. But there was a common denominator among them, that is, Islam.

Islam has been very important in these strikes. Islamic leaders played a special role, and the demand for religious freedom and a place for worship was one of the central demands in a number of the strikes. Workers at Citroën and Talbot demanded and won the right to have a mosque in the factory.

Another important feature of the situation in the plants is the division between skilled and unskilled workers. This division is also a racial division — unskilled workers are immigrants; skilled workers are French. There are some unskilled workers who are French, but there are very few skilled workers who are immigrants.

But it's not just immigrants who are unskilled. Women who work in the plants are unskilled as well. In many plants women went out with the same demands as the immigrants: to not remain "OS" (unskilled workers) for the rest of their lives.

*Q. What is the political reflection of these racial, sexual and skill divisions in the workforce?*



May 26, 1982, march of 80,000 in support of strike by immigrant workers at Citroën plant in Aulnay-sous-bois.

A. There's sort of a general prejudice that automobile workers at Renault are all Communist Party supporters and Stalinists, all men, all French, and all white. When you walk into the plant you find they are in the great majority non-white and non-French. There are women, but they are a distinct minority (about 10 percent). And certainly the immigrant workers are not at all Stalinist.

The unions in the plant are almost all white, all French, all skilled workers, and all male. In some ways the unions — both CFDT [French Democratic Confederation of Labor] and CGT [General Confederation of Labor] — are strong in a limited milieu of French, white, skilled workers, or a sort of aristocracy of the workforce who have long CP traditions. When you get into the production line, or among laborers or fork-lift operators, except in rare cases, the unions are almost not present.

Q. So, what has happened in the past year has tended to break this traditional pattern?

A. Right.

Q. Could you describe the actual course of these strikes?

A. There were three waves of strikes. The Mitterrand government was elected in May and June of 1981. Almost immediately after the elections the vacations began, and almost nothing happens during the summer. When people came back to work in September, after they took a month or two to organize, strikes began in October or November in Renault. This was the first wave of strikes. They were centered on Renault. They didn't go beyond Renault. They didn't go to all the plants, just a few.

Women workers in the shop where they make the seats, a traditionally female job, struck for wages and for job training. In some other places, fork-lift operators, who in most

shops have a strong immigrant composition, struck too. The strikes were not generalized, but were what are called *grèves bouchons*. That is, strikes of limited numbers of workers in a particular post or shop which block the production line. Other workers do not go out, but they don't have any work because the line is blocked.

The central idea that came through this strike was "don't remain unskilled for the rest of your life." The demands were against this sort of apartheid and sexism that you have in the shops, where each post is determined by race and by sex — in this post only Africans, in the next one only Arabs, in the next one only French or only women. People wanted to have job training, move up, and become skilled workers. One of the demands was that the company would have to post on the bulletin board when openings occurred so anyone who had that training could bid for them. And this was won.

There were also demands specifically for immigrants: to have the company subsidize immigrant workers to go home to visit their families. The right to take unpaid vacation, in addition to the paid vacation, to go home for a longer period of time. So specifically immigrant demands were mixed in with unskilled workers' demands.

This period of strikes went on for several months, then gradually died out in the spring. As it died out, a second series of strikes began, not in Renault, but in Citroën. Here the strikes were radically different. Citroën and Talbot, both of which belong to Peugeot, were in a different situation because unions there had been totally suppressed. They had company unions, which were really run by thugs.

Here, the strikes were for the right to have a union. These were mass strikes, with mass picket lines blocking the gates, spreading from one factory to another. Armed battles were fought every morning in front of each gate to

ensure that the plants would be closed — armed struggles between striking immigrants and French scabs. And for the immigrants to lay a hand on the holy white French skin represents a dramatic change in consciousness.

This strike started in one plant, at Aulnay-sous-bois, and spread to many other Citroën plants. It lasted for five weeks, with a victory for the workers. And after the victory at Citroën it spread to Talbot, where they were also victorious. Out of these strikes, real unions were constructed, and the company unions destroyed.

These strikes went on through the spring and fall of 1982. Then, in December and January, a new wave of strikes started in Citroën, and within weeks had spread to almost every major automobile plant, including a Fiat plant and companies affiliated to Renault or Peugeot. These were mostly in the Paris region, but there were some that joined in other parts of the country also.

In some plants these were *grèves bouchons* again. In one big plant there was a lockout of 12,000 workers because a minority had blocked the production line. In some other plants there were mass strikes with occupations of the plant.

Here the demands began to get all mixed together. You had the continuation of the demand for job training and advancement for the unskilled, along with specific immigrant demands. You had a struggle to protect and defend the new unions built at Citroën and Talbot, which were under attack. And you had a new demand which began to become more and more important during the strike: for a raise of 300 francs (per month) for everybody.

The idea of 300 francs for everybody was important because it went against the government wage austerity guidelines. What happened at Renault is that the strike became a major political issue. It became a test of force between the government and immigrant workers. And the government began to make racist attacks against the workers and charged that the workers were refusing to accept negotiated settlements.

Q. Could you give examples of the racist attacks by the government?

A. On the last week of the strike the prime minister, Pierre Mauroy, made a statement that these immigrant workers were being manipulated by "foreign political and religious groups," and that they don't understand the political realities of France. This was followed by a declaration by the minister of police, Gaston Defferre, who is also the mayor of Marseille, saying that the workers were being manipulated by Shi'ite fundamentalists from Iran. Of course, the strikers were Moroccans and Algerians, and there are no Shi'ites in those countries. It demonstrated total disdain. Here's the mayor of a city with the largest Arab population in France and he doesn't know the difference between the major religious groups.

This was followed by a declaration by President Mitterrand supporting Mauroy. So it is

quite clearly government policy to attack these workers in a racist way and to turn the French workers against them.

Also, at this point, we were entering a preelectoral period in France. The immigrants were going on strike anyway. And they didn't care what the electoral effects of it might be. Many of the French workers were very worried about the election, and the government's argument was, "See, these immigrant workers are going to blow the election. They're going too far." And many French workers did fall for this.

There was a real racial tension in all the factories between white, skilled, French workers and unskilled immigrants who supported the strikes.

*Q. What is the significance of the new unions that were established by the strikes at Citroën, and how are they related to the national union federations?*

A. The new unions that were created at Citroën and to a lesser degree at Talbot were the most important gain of the strikes. They are all part of the CGT. Before 1968 there had been a CGT at Citroën and it had been important. But following the strikes in 1968 Citroën was able to break the union because many workers were discouraged and demoralized. By physical force they drove the union militants out and the unions were destroyed. For almost 15 years there have been no real unions in almost any Citroën plant.

One of the ways they were able to break these unions was by using police repression against immigrant workers. Moroccan workers, in particular, are affected by police repression inside France, where the Moroccan police have their own network, which is very brutal. When people go back to Morocco they disappear.

In the plant where the big strike started in Aulnay-sous-bois, in the seven or eight years prior to the formation of the union 140 workers from that one plant had disappeared. They were Moroccans and they were either expelled from France or they went back on vacation and just disappeared, imprisoned or forbidden to leave the country again.

It should be said that Citroën-Talbot-Peugeot is the largest private company in France. So you had the largest private company using police, para-police, and terrorist methods to break the unions and establish company unions. And they succeeded. It was the biggest blow to the workers movement in a long time.

They also used racism — an established policy of racism, openly expressed. For instance, the foremen and management personnel at Aulnay-sous-bois openly used the word "slaves" to describe the immigrant workers. And the actual incident that touched off the strike there was when a worker went up to a foreman to protest the speed up of the production line and the foreman said, "I don't speak to slaves."

The worker went down the line and repeated

at each post the response of the foreman. And as he went to each post they all walked out. By the time he got down to the end of the line there were 1,500 workers on strike, and the next shift went out, too. That's how the strike began.

It started independently of the union. When the strike began the CGT had less than 10 members in the plant — a plant of over 6,000 workers. But there were organizations in the



Akka Ghazi, CGT secretary at Citroën, Aulnay-sous-bois.

plant: secret organizations, nationality by nationality. As the struggle developed, a system of parallel stewards grew up, independent of the CGT, but working with it and essentially taking it over. These were called struggle delegates. Or in some places they were called delegates of the production line. So you had two systems: the official shop stewards of the company union, and then parallel to that the shop stewards that were unofficial, not recognized, who were called struggle delegates or production line delegates. These names show that the others were not on the production line and did not struggle.

There was some organization of Moroccan workers, particularly of fork-lift operators at Aulnay-sous-bois. But the company spotted them. They saw them eating together. So they tried to break them up, putting them on different shifts. At one point the company trained fire hoses on Muslim workers as they attempted to hold a prayer meeting in the plant.

In response to this repression, a Moroccan fork-lift operator named Akka Ghazi approached the CGT and said, "I'll provide you with Moroccan fork-lift operators to be candidates in the next union elections." This was the first time the CGT had immigrants willing to be on their list. But the elections were rigged, and the CGT slate lost. The strikes began as the only strategy to break the company union.

This group of struggle delegates, which was then completely outside the union, grew and just took over the formal leadership of the union as well. The CGT now has 2,000 unskilled, immigrant members and an all-immigrant leadership there. This compares with about 10 members, all skilled, French workers

close to the Communist Party, before the strike. They are not opposed to the official, national CGT leadership. They work with the CGT bureaucracy, and even with the Communist Party, but they are by no means controlled by the CP.

Akka Ghazi, who was elected secretary of the union, wasn't even a CGT member before the strike. There has been a lasting change in the consciousness of immigrants. And this is an important factor. Immigrants have fought back and won. And they have a force. So how can you use it? How can we do in our plant what they did at Citroën? We discuss this a lot. Immigrants discuss it.

Many of the immigrants are against the unions. They feel the unions are racist. Some immigrants are for the right politically. Why? Because the left represents to them the unions and workers who are against them, who want to kick them out of the country. So they are confused about this.

But if you say, "What about the CGT at Citroën?"

"Oh, but that's not really the CGT. That's us."

*Q. What are the official positions of the CGT and CFDT on questions of immigrants' rights? Isn't there some basis for the immigrants' suspicions of the unions and left parties?*

A. Well, the CGT, and especially the Communist Party, actually led racist attacks against immigrants in one town. The Communist Party mayor of the town led an assault with bulldozers on an immigrant housing project in the town. And there have been similar attacks in other places led by the Communist Party. And Socialist Party members of the government have attacked immigrants, as I mentioned. The CGT and CFDT, on the other hand, have been much more controlled about the immigrant question because there are so many immigrants in their plants and they are trying to enter the milieu of immigrant workers, so they are much more careful. There are now growing numbers of immigrants who are entering the CGT or in some places the CFDT also, especially in automobile.

The unions are not against people doing work among immigrants or against racism, but most of the people in the unions as they are today just do not do it. In my plant, when I was asked to be shop steward I said I wanted to form an immigrant commission. And the CGT said fine. They said it was good they had someone to do it, because they hadn't had anyone willing to do it before.

The main economic campaign of the CGT is "Buy French, Produce in France," and that doesn't have very much influence on immigrants. In my plant, for instance, they distributed a national leaflet of the CGT in Renault which explains that Renault is investing too much in other countries. They are setting up factories in Yugoslavia and in Africa and investing in the United States instead of in



France. Of course, Arab workers say that it is not so bad that they are building factories in Morocco or Algeria. In fact they think there should be more of that.

The other day a Moroccan worker came up to me and said, "Did you see this leaflet?"

I said, "Yeah, I saw it, but I didn't hand it out. It's not a good leaflet. I don't agree with it."

"I don't agree with it either," he said. But it was a CGT leaflet, so he was a little worried. Now he's reassured — I'm really on the side of the immigrants, not on the side of the leadership of the CGT.

So the immigrant workers see this aspect of the CGT as being proimperialist, racist, and national chauvinist, and they don't agree with it. If they are joining the CGT it is in spite of that.

*Q. What kind of impact will the victories of these strikes have on the fight against racism in French society at large?*

A. The establishment of these new unions was the most important blow against racism since the independence of Algeria, which was, of course, an enormous blow against racism. When Arab countries won their independence and had their own governments they gained a certain respect and dignity. The strikes at Citroën were strikes for a union and for dignity. And dignity means no more racism. Immigrants everywhere saw it that way. So it did have a big effect.

In every auto plant and elsewhere in society other strikes of immigrant workers began, encouraged by the victory of Citroën — garbage collectors, sweepers, and other occupations that are filled by immigrants.

As the immigrant character of the strike wave became more and more marked, so did the Islamic character.

During the struggle at Citroën, after they had gone back to work but before they had the election for union recognition, the workers held a big union election rally. It was organized as a mechoui, a North African barbecue. One of the speakers at this rally was the Hajj, who was also one of the leaders of the strike. He is called the Hajj because he has been to Mecca, and he was one of those who attempted to hold prayer meetings in the plant.

He began, "Allah Akbar [God is great]. What we have just lived through God has permitted us to live through. Citroën has betrayed us. Citroën has forced us on our knees, and God does not want us to be beaten men. He has given us courage, he has given us strength. We are no longer slaves, and they must respect our liberty and our dignity. We have our place among those who stand upright, and we are ready to seize our victory from Citroën. There are those who still have fear in their hearts. They must know that liberty and dignity have no price. Give us tomorrow the strength to be free. Don't accept remaining in the lowest job classification all your life. Vote for the CGT! It's the key to winning your dignity and a job skill."



January 1983 strike at Renault factory in Flins.

In a subsequent strike, at Chausson, an automobile plant that belongs half to Peugeot and half to Renault, 1,500 workers occupied the factory. At a rally of the 1,500 workers, the speaker, who was speaking in Arabic, translated the last sentence of his speech for the benefit of French reporters: "Allah is on the side of the workers."

Statements like these became the object of further racist attacks by the government, saying, "See these are all backward believers in fanatical religions." This shocked a lot of immigrants. They had developed a certain confidence in the government and now the government was turning on them using racist attacks to try to break their strike and turn the French workers against them. Before they felt they had a government that was not going to be like the last one, that was not going to attack them, or send in the troops to break up strikes, so they pressed ahead. Now the government was turning against them, so they felt they had to be more careful.

What has happened now is that there has been a growing wave of attacks on immigrants — racist murders. Some of them were planned, like arson attacks on immigrant housing projects, which have resulted in a considerable number of deaths.

There have been immigrants killed by police officers. A Tunisian on a bicycle was stopped by an officer, shot in the head and killed. The police officer was found to be drunk, and there was nothing done to him. A guard in a supermarket shot and killed a young Algerian he said had stolen a shirt. No French people are ever shot and killed for stealing shirts.

Other attacks have been carried out by racists, people who openly went out to get Arabs. A young Algerian, at the beginning of July, was attacked by three French people who had been cruising around the neighborhood to kill an Arab. That's what they told the police, that they had been hunting all night to kill an Arab.

*Q. And what has been the response to these attacks?*

A. In some housing projects where young

kids have been killed, there have been violent reactions by young immigrants. They go on demonstrations, they fight with the police.

There has been no organization, it's just a spontaneous reaction to whatever particular racist attack has taken place. But they show the deepening consciousness of what is now called the second generation — immigrants born in France. They are still Arabs and thus subject to racial discrimination. There is increasing anger and bitterness among them.

So the question is, how can we tie some of these things together? In my plant, every time there is a racist attack like that I go to every union bulletin board and paste up the newspaper articles about it. Now immigrants have been coming up to me with local Arabic papers so I can post up their editorials about these attacks.

Now they want me to do more, so we have started to discuss the possibility of having a demonstration. At the moment there is nothing concretely organized. It is just a growing sentiment that someone should do something.

*Q. What do you anticipate as the response of the auto workers to the coming offensive of the bosses against the workers, both immigrant and French?*

A. First, the situation is difficult because we are expecting a big increase in unemployment, and that has cooled a lot of the sentiment for struggle. People are going to be much more careful. They won't want to go too far. There is the problem of victimizations. And, as always at the beginning of an economic crisis, you have to be very careful or you can work yourself into a defeat.

The most important thing is that we have to try to preserve and defend as much as we can of the new unions that have been created, with their mass character and their immigrant and unskilled worker composition. For instance, in Talbot, one of the main plants where these new unions have been set up, the bosses are planning to lay off 4,000 workers. And who will they lay off? Certainly it will be immigrant and unskilled workers in massive numbers. Many of these immigrants have been in the country for 20 or 30 years, but without jobs and with no job training and no possibility of getting another job, they will be expelled from the country.

These layoffs are economic, but also political. They are against the unions. And they are also racist — against the immigrants. They will be used to try to break these more massive, militant unions that have been set up, to try to break them because they are unions and because they are organizations of immigrants. We have to find a way to tie up the struggle to defend these unions with the struggle of immigrants in general, to see if we can't find some way of mobilizing broader forces.

So that is our problem now. We will have to see how long the crisis is, how deep it is. Once the upturn begins, if we have been able to preserve these unions, we will be able to go back on the offensive again. □

# Where the revolution stands today

## Interview with Iranian socialist

[The following is an interview with an Iranian revolutionary socialist visiting the United States. It was obtained by *Intercontinental Press* in August.]

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*Question. Could you describe what is going on in the war between Iraq and Iran?*

*Answer.* Contrary to the reports we see in the imperialist press, the Iraqi regime has not withdrawn its forces from Iran. Since the great victories that were won by it in the spring of 1982, Iran has made some military advances, but there are still a few hundred square kilometers of land held by Iraqi forces, including a couple of small cities.

Border cities are still being shelled by the Iraqis, who also carry out ground-to-ground missile attacks.

The Iranian city of Dizful has been hit more than 90 times in the past 18 months by ground-to-ground missiles. Abadan is still being shelled. The Iraqis continue to receive military aid from the imperialist governments. Just recently the French government gave Iraq sophisticated airplanes so that they can hit the oilfields.

*Q. What is the attitude of the Iranian population toward the war now?*

A. The Iranian people rightly consider Iraq the aggressor in this war. They view the war as an attack on their revolution. But the conflict has now lasted three years, and it appears to be in a stalemate. There have been reports of a number of small demonstrations by people living in the Iranian border areas demanding that the government take action to protect them. The population of the rest of Iran is not under attack, but in a city like Dizful they are attacked every week, and they feel nothing is being done about it.

If a settlement could be made to remove the Iraqi troops and provide some compensation to Iran, I think the population would be satisfied.

Among many of the toilers in the border areas there is a sense that this war has dragged on for too long. But at the same time they don't want the Iraqis to win. The war effort still has support in the factories. Volunteers still go to the front to fight, and material support continues, especially among the toilers, the workers and peasants. There's a strong feeling that the revolution has to be defended.

*Q. Can you say something about the general view of foreign policy among the Iranian people?*

A. There is strong feeling in Iran against world imperialism and in solidarity with liberation movements around the world. This sentiment is so strong that it has been reflected in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic. One of the best examples of this has been the solidarity and support for the revolutions in Central America.

People look up to the example of Cuba. They follow the news of what is taking place there. The Cuban government has opened an embassy in Iran, and many of the articles that are written about the world situation in the Cuban daily *Granma* are translated in the Iranian press.

Most recently, for example, there have been articles in [the Tehran daily] *Kayhan* on Suriname and what is taking place there. An interview with a Surinamese leader was translated from *Granma*. Iran's minister of health just visited Cuba and came back and gave a comprehensive report about health care in Cuba that was broadcast on national television.

The Nicaraguan revolution has also had a big impact in Iran. Around the fourth anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution, in July, there were articles in all the papers portraying the leadership of the Nicaraguan revolution as true revolutionaries standing up to U.S. imperialism.

News from Nicaragua is closely followed in Iran and the big demonstrations against U.S. imperialism that take place in Nicaragua are shown on television and talked about. Recently, Nicaragua's minister of culture, Ernesto Cardenal, visited Iran and met with Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini said he supported the Nicaraguan revolution and that it should stay on its anti-imperialist course. This had a big impact.

There have also been economic agreements between Iran and Nicaragua, with Iran importing sugar and meat, and a trade delegation going from Iran to Nicaragua.

The Iranian government also has good relations with the freedom fighters in El Salvador. The FDR [Revolutionary Democratic Front] has been recognized by the Iranian government as the legitimate representative of the Salvadoran people, and news of the struggle there is prominently featured in the newspapers and on television.

Another people that Iranians solidarize with are the Palestinians. The movement against the shah was always anti-Zionist in addition to being anti-imperialist. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) opened an embassy in Iran right after the overthrow of the shah.

But at the time of the 1982 Israeli invasion

of Lebanon, differences between the Iranian government and the leadership of the PLO were openly expressed. The Iranian government's position was that the PLO should have remained in Beirut and died to the last person there as martyrs, rather than retreat.

Because of its differences with the PLO, the Iranian government has started a slander campaign against [Yassir] Arafat and the leadership of the PLO. They even say that the PLO leaders have betrayed the Palestinian movement, and there were even some demonstrations in Iran where the slogan "Death to Arafat" was raised. This is very bad and plays into the hands of the imperialists.

The Arab summit conference in Fez in September 1982 and the resolution that came out of that conference was distorted in the reports in the Iranian press. The text of the Fez resolution was never printed in Iran, but it was presented as an unprincipled compromise with imperialism.

So, the relationship is very bad between the Iranian government and the PLO. The Iranian government takes the same kind of stand as the Libyan and Syrian regimes. They try to exploit the differences within the PLO to undermine Arafat and change the leadership.

The Iranian government and press try to portray all kinds of demonstrations in the West Bank and Jerusalem as being organized and led by Islamic currents rather than the PLO, so it is very hard for Iranians to get a good idea of the real situation there.

Meanwhile, the monarchists in exile — in their press and on their counterrevolutionary radio — also criticize Arafat and say that from the beginning they said correctly that the Palestinians are terrorists. Middle-class elements inside Iran have begun saying things like, "Arabs are not brave enough to fight." This kind of anti-Arab attitude was fostered under the shah and it is surfacing again.

Even some workers in the factories, while solidarizing with the Palestinians, will say that the problem is that the PLO is not brave enough to fight.

*Q. What is the extent of the government's propaganda attacks on the Soviet Union? Are they increasing?*

A. Prior to the banning of the Tudeh [Communist] Party and the charges of spying made against Soviet diplomats last May, the attacks on the Soviets were not of equal weight with those on imperialism. The government's slogan was "neither west nor east," but the bulk of its attacks were against the U.S. government.

But around the time of the arrest of the

Tudeh leaders, the government attempted to put equal weight on the Soviet Union in its slogans. "Death to the Soviet Union" received more play and was pushed in government-sponsored demonstrations. But among the population at large it did not go over so well. It is obvious that the involvement of the Soviet Union inside Iran has not been like that of the United States. The Iranian people have not been oppressed by the Soviet government, so there is not the same basis for a big campaign against the Soviets.

The charges of spying had an impact, but after a short period of time that passed. People are becoming less trustful of the government and they don't believe all these government claims about the Soviet Union.

But the counterrevolutionaries, far-right elements in the government, and procapitalist liberals like [former Prime Minister Mehdi] Bazargan really played up the anti-Soviet theme. The Bazargan organization's press is now being sold in the streets of Tehran, and they recently held a convention and march.

Among the workers and the general population, however, there has been little impact. Anti-U.S., and especially anti-French, sentiment is very strong.

*Q. In the working class, where does the fight against the labor law stand?*

A. It is important to note that following the insurrection against the shah the working class in Iran was in a very favorable position to struggle for its rights, and it gained many things. Wages were doubled after the insurrection, and workers were able to form factory committees, called *shoras*. They were able to unify these shoras on a national level and began to pressure the government to recognize them as legitimate organizations.

But the capitalist government tried to reverse this movement by saying that the shoras should stop organizing until a new labor law was introduced. In the labor law that was drafted by the government shoras were mentioned, but the government had veto power on the question of recognizing them. There was no mention of women's rights, there was no provision for health insurance, and there were no provisions against child labor, no provision for a minimum wage.

There was a massive outpouring of opposition to the new law. There were discussions in the shoras, spontaneous meetings in the factories where workers elected representatives to go to the Ministry of Labor.

The opposition was so great that the government had to back off. A commission was appointed by the prime minister to draft a new law. Months have passed and nothing has emerged. They are trying to buy time.

*Q. What is the situation of the shoras and what is the character of their leadership?*

A. At this point there is a stalemate on the labor law and no new shoras can be formed right now. When the term of the old shoras



Results of Iraqi bombing.

ends, the bosses and the government attempt to dissolve them.

But that depends on the relationship of forces within the factories. Many big industries still have shoras. The shoras still hold elections and are still accredited. They have meetings and fight for the immediate needs of the workers. They organize for the war effort, participate in the Jihad-e Sazandegi (Reconstruction Crusade) in the countryside and so forth. They are still alive, although limited in their activity.

The Workers House in Tehran, which is the main organization carrying out activity among the workers, is still functioning and tries to organize and have discussions about the new labor law. But it is also under attack, even though it is controlled by the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP).

It used to have a newspaper, which was an IRP workers newspaper called *Salehan-e Sazandeh*. Because the pressure on them was so great, the paper started to come out irregularly, and then for three or four months it was not published. Then one issue came out that was filled with attacks on the Soviet Union and the Tudeh Party.

Now it is coming out again, but very irregularly.

Some of the news about what is going on in the factories is reflected in *Jomhuri-e Islami*, the newspaper of the IRP. So there is not a complete lack of coverage, and workers find ways to exchange information and news. The Workers House also has wall newspapers that are pasted up in each factory, where they are read by the workers. These have some coverage of international events as well, including El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Since the shoras have been banned in many places, another form of organization that popped up in a lot of factories was cooperatives. Because of the economic situation — the shortages and the inflation — the idea arose that in each factory a co-op should be formed to buy goods and sell them at cheaper prices to

the workers. The idea was then introduced that the boards of the co-ops should be elected by the workers in the factory. Workers in many factories that did not have shoras held elections for co-ops because there was no law forbidding that.

And it got wider than that, with some of the co-ops coming together in federations, especially in the Tehran textile industry. So the workers tend to use any opportunity that comes along to try to get themselves organized to fight back and defend their economic gains.

Within the factories those workers who are the most active supporters of government policy tend to be a minority. The majority of workers support the war effort and the revolution in general, but not the repressive measures and the economic attacks carried out by the government. They criticize these moves but don't have any leadership to pose an alternative.

*Q. What are the conditions of the working class regarding unemployment, inflation, housing, and the like?*

A. The government says the inflation rate is around 15 percent, but it seems that it is much higher than that, double or more.

Although essential goods like bread, meat, milk, and things like that are rationed and sold at cheaper prices, there is a black market. In the working-class and poorer neighborhoods the distribution is better organized because people are more concerned about getting things at the official prices. Many workers can get goods through the co-ops at the places where they work.

But overall, the economic pressures on the workers are intensifying and the standard of living is worsening.

The unemployment rate is still very high. The exact figure is unknown, but it is very high, especially among the youth. The migration from the countryside to the city is also continuing at a rapid rate.

It is estimated that Tehran now has over

seven million people. It is faced with a big shortage of housing, lack of adequate electricity, water, sewers, and so forth.

The housing situation has become much worse.

A law was passed to defend the rights of tenants, but it was vetoed by the Council of Guardians, which is similar to the cabinet in other countries. Landlords are charging exorbitant rents and demanding huge deposits that are very hard for anyone to put down.

The government made a gesture by announcing that anyone with more than one house would have the others confiscated by the government, which would rent them out. This was big news and people were very happy about it. But the measure has not been put into effect.

This summer there have been water shortages in Tehran. What makes people angry is that the government does not announce ahead of time that there will be water shortages. Water in a number of working-class neighborhoods was cut off for days. There were demonstrations calling for the resumption of water service.

Counterrevolutionaries and monarchists have tried to intervene in these actions and have been mounting a big propaganda campaign over the past few months around these shortages.

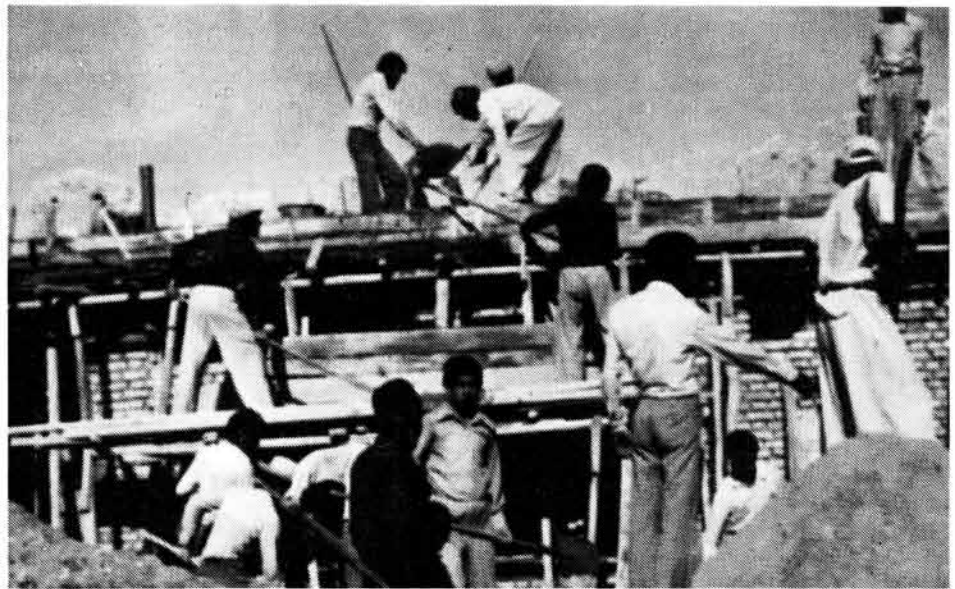
I should mention that the monarchist groups outside the country have begun to unify around the shah's son, and they have formed a new alliance. Some of the people who have joined this coalition are former figures from the government, like former naval chief Ahmad Madani. Recently Shapur Bakhtiar [the last prime minister appointed by the shah] issued a joint statement with another of the shah's former prime ministers in support of a constitutional monarchy.

*Q. What about the peasantry?*

A. One of the big movements in Iran, to an extent that is unprecedented in any of the past revolutions, has been the peasant movement. That is due, I think, to the link between the cities and the countryside, which has greatly increased in the past couple of decades.

Many of the peasants have come to the city, have gone through experiences in the work force and in political discussion, and have gone back to the villages and participated in political action for the first time. Before the overthrow of the shah there were demonstrations in many villages organized by religious figures.

Many of the workers in the factories are people who have migrated from the countryside and who still have close ties to it. For example, of the 40,000 steelworkers in Isfahan, some 20,000 work eight hours in the factory and then go home and work on their land. They go back and forth. Among autoworkers as well, many have families who still work on the land. Naturally they are sensitive to what takes place in the villages and are affected by developments there. More than at any time in



The Reconstruction Crusade at work.

the past there is a close objective link between the cities and the villages and an interaction between them.

Also, the mass media — radio and television — are now in the villages. There is more communication and contact, so the level of consciousness of the peasants has increased.

In many villages they were able to kick out the khans [tribal chiefs] and the landlords after the insurrection. Although the peasants were not able to take the land, they developed confidence that they could do something and stand up to the khans, who used to beat them up. An important part of this change came from the participation of the villagers in the anti-imperialist nationalist movement. The peasants are optimistic. Now they say they can breathe. They don't have material goods and they don't have land, but they feel they can hold their heads up. No one is beating them up every day anymore.

Statistics show that the amount of land the peasants were able to seize and the amount that the government has distributed has been tiny. There has not been any kind of comprehensive land reform. But what is important is not so much the amount of land the peasants have got as their feeling of hope that they will get land. They have begun to struggle around the land issue.

This is linked to the big participation of peasants in the war. In all the villages there are recruiting posts for the army and these give training in the use of arms. In almost every village the Revolutionary Guards set up training camps, and peasants volunteer to go to the front. Many of these young peasants who go to the front and fight intend to go back and get some land.

In many areas peasant shoras have been set up as a result of work done by the Jihad for Reconstruction. A law to allow peasant shoras was passed by the parliament, so they are legal. There are now 20,000 village shoras out

of the 70,000 villages in Iran, and new shoras continue to be set up.

*Q. What is the composition of the peasant shoras? Who can belong to them?*

A. None of the people who were tied to the former regime can be in the shoras. No agents of the absentee landlords who fled can be in the shoras either. The Jihad has to certify that people in the shoras are good Muslims, and the Jihad itself has a representative in the shora.

From the information in the media, and from the Jihad's television program, where they often interview people from shoras in different villages on what they have done, I get the impression that they are organizations that work in the interests of the peasants. In certain places they help organize cultivation and distribution of water, cattle, fertilizer, etc. In other places they are less organized than that.

Without the presence of the Jihad in the villages many of the shoras would not have been organized. The revolutionary youth in the Jihad, who are sent to the villages by the government, are affected by the village when they get there. They become involved in the life of the village and begin to work to set up organizations. Even remote areas like Baluchistan, which is very backward, have had situations where villages have been attacked by bandits and agents of the landlords, and the Jihad has gone to the Revolutionary Guards and gotten arms to give to the peasants to defend themselves.

Especially in the last year, since the land reform law that was passed by parliament was vetoed by the Council of Guardians, the landlords have started to return and to put on pressure to get their land back. In many places there were confrontations. The government said that the question of ownership has to be decided. So the issue has not been settled and there will be a struggle.

*Q. What is the condition of the Kurds and the other oppressed nationalities today?*

A. The Kurdish struggle is the central battle among oppressed nationalities today. Since the spring there has been a major government offensive that has intensified the war inside Kurdistan. According to reports in the Iranian press this offensive has been very strong, with a lot of casualties on both sides. The government claims that many areas have been taken out of the hands of the Kurdish fighters. From the reports available, it seems that this is true.

The war in Kurdistan is damaging to the revolution. The government's refusal to recognize the national rights of the Kurdish people, and to grant the Kurdish demand for autonomy, has divided Iran and is responsible for the war in Kurdistan. Recognizing the national rights of the Kurds would help the struggle against imperialism and against the Iraqi invasion.

The political line of many Kurdish groups, unfortunately, has shifted from backing the anti-imperialist struggle to collaborating with enemies of the Iranian revolution. This makes it more difficult to win the support of other Iranian working people for their national rights. The Kurdish Democratic Party, for example, has aligned itself with [former President Abolhassan] Bani-Sadr and the Mujahedeen. Many of the Mujahedeen members fled from Iranian cities to Kurdistan and are fighting there.

But the Kurdish movement has not been destroyed, despite the blows that the government has inflicted on it. It is still there, and it is making it difficult for the government to control Kurdistan. Occasionally discussions arise in the Iranian press on Kurdistan, with some articles advocating more aid for Kurdistan and the development of industry in the area. These ideas are also raised by some Revolutionary Guards who have been in Kurdistan.

There have been reports of youth in the Revolutionary Guards who have gone to Kurdistan and then opposed the war there. People in the Guards sometimes say, "What are we doing in Kurdistan, we should be fighting the Iraqis on the southern front." But when big questions or hesitations arise, those people are asked to resign from the Guards or are purged. And these are only scattered cases, not some big movement.

*Q. What is the state of democratic rights?*

A. The daily press in Iran — there are four national newspapers — is completely controlled by the government. It has very little circulation. One of the national dailies circulates 40,000 in the whole country. It is like before the insurrection, when no one read the papers because there was nothing in them.

If you want to print a book you have to find a publisher who will do that. After it is printed you take it to the Islamic Guidance Committee and they read the book and decide if it can be circulated. If they don't approve it, all the money has gone down the drain. This is the

same way that censorship worked in the shah's time.

A lot of people have gotten rid of their books because of fear. You can tell by going to the garbage dumps. You also find lots of political books and magazines in abandoned buildings.

*Q. How were the arrests of the Tudeh Party members received by the workers?*

A. The arrest of the leaders of the Tudeh Party is clearly an attack on the working class and on the workers organizations, as well as on the Tudeh Party itself.

Within the factories, around the time of the arrests, rumors began to circulate that the government had lists of Tudeh Party members in the plants. I have one friend whose name appeared on such a list along with about 30 other workers. She was not a Tudeh Party member, and as far as she knew none of the others on the list were either. They were activists. But a lot of them began to resign from their jobs to avoid arrest.

Later it was announced that 3,000 Tudeh Party members had been arrested. There were arrests even in small cities in the provinces. There are estimates that there were 10,000 active members of the party. Not all were arrested, and some who were picked up have been released.

The Tudeh Party was the major remaining organization on the left that functioned semilegally. So when it was banned, workers connected this to the general attack on democratic rights. But there was no outpouring of sympathy for the Tudeh Party. At the same time, government efforts to whip up anti-Tudeh actions were unsuccessful.

This year the government tried to use May Day for a big demonstration of anti-Soviet and anti-Tudeh slogans. These chants were broadcast over the loudspeakers, and they were picked up by the workers, but they did not last long. This anti-Soviet type of thing didn't take on a mass character at the demonstrations.

*Q. What is the situation of women today?*

A. The overthrow of the shah in 1979 opened up the chance for women to achieve their rights, including the right to participate fully in all aspects of society. The issue of women's rights remains a big one in the minds of the people. And women continue to be active politically, especially in the working-class neighborhoods, despite efforts to push them back into the home.

One example is a first aid class that was established for women. The participants were mainly from working-class districts. They discussed everything from the war, to high prices, to the fact that privileged people in the Islamic hierarchy and government don't have to stand in line at the markets like everyone else.

There was big opposition among the women to the fact that you had to go to ideology classes if you wanted to take the first aid course. Eventually the authorities had to cancel the ideology class.

After the revolution, women were able to move into some technical jobs they had previously not been allowed to hold. Now there are moves to push them out again. The great majority of women work in very low-paying industries, like textiles, garment, and candy-making. Today the wearing of scarves is compulsory, and all women have to wear them on the job and in the streets. Women don't have to wear the veil — the chador — but they do have to keep their hair covered. People have been fired for not wearing scarves.

In terms of jobs, generally there is not much hiring of any kind because of the widespread unemployment. There are certain jobs that are traditionally women's jobs, where the pay is less than for men's jobs, and women are still hired for those.

There is not a conscious policy to exclude women in most places, although that exists in certain areas. For instance, in the universities, women are not hired as professors because the authorities don't want women teaching men. In elementary schools and secondary schools, women are hired to teach the female students. Even in the elementary schools, they don't want women to teach boys. And it works in reverse too. They don't want men to teach women.

*Q. Are all the schools segregated by sex, including the universities?*

A. Universities are not segregated, but women have to sit on one side of the room. Since the universities have reopened, only about 10 or 15 percent of the former student body has been allowed to return. These were the people who belonged to Islamic associations or who were not politically active.

Some 85 percent were not allowed to come back, either because they belonged to the wrong group or were charged with being sympathizers of political groups.

*Q. Are there any other developments in the factories around women's rights?*

A. There have been some fights around day-care centers. Attempts to close them down bring opposition.

The overwhelming majority of daycare centers were started after the revolution. These are not state-run facilities, but rather centers in the factories. They did not exist in the shah's time, so they are something that was gained through the revolution. Now there are attempts to take them back. There are struggles waged to keep the centers, and sometimes the women win. Sometimes they end up having to pay a fee as part of maintaining the center.

The way the centers work is that the factory management hires someone to take care of the workers' children. Of course many places are not of good quality. In many places there is no running water and the premises are not very clean, but it is better than what they had before, when they had to leave their children at home or find someone to watch them. □

# Regime fans anti-Tamil pogroms

*Army and police role in murderous attacks*

By Upali Cooray

COLOMBO, August 2 — Sri Lanka, often referred to as the "paradise island" in tourist brochures, is going through the most serious social crisis in its history.

The scale and the barbarity of the violence used by the Sinhala majority against members of the minority Tamil nation have surpassed those of the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1958, 1977, and 1981. The hysteria that gripped the majority of Sinhalese is not yet over. Fresh rumors lead to new outbursts of attacks, searches for "tigers" (the term used to describe Tamil nationalist guerrillas in the north), the burning and looting of Tamil shops and houses, and the killing of innocent Tamils living in Sinhala areas.

## Death and destruction

It is difficult to estimate the number of innocent Tamils killed in this pogrom, and it will take a long time before we can calculate the damage it has caused the economy.

According to government figures, more than 17 factories have been destroyed. Among them are some of the largest workplaces in and around Colombo. Cuntex (Colombo), Hirdramani (Nugegoda), and Maharaja's (Ratmalana) are some of the workplaces employing more than 2,000 workers that have been burned down by Sinhala goon squads.

Every known Tamil shop has been burned and looted. This has been the pattern not only in Colombo, but also in every town and village throughout Sri Lanka, except in a small number of isolated cases, such as the jewelry shops on Sea Street, which for some unknown reason received special protection from the police.

According to government estimates, there are more than 25,000 Tamil families in various refugee camps in Colombo alone. Apart from this, there are similar camps in Kandy, Galle, and all other main towns. Most of these refugees will never be able to return to their former homes because their belongings have been looted or burned and their houses completely destroyed. Whole areas have been flattened to the ground.

The army, navy, and air force, deployed to "prevent" violence, have in fact played a key role in fanning the flames of communal hatred. In some instances they have taken the initiative, and in others they have supplied petrol and other flammable materials to Sinhala goons. In all instances, they have stood by without intervening, while the goons destroyed Tamil lives and property. The police rarely intervened against the arsonists and Sinhala mobs.

The few Sinhalese who had the courage to intervene in this situation to protect their Tamil brothers have been attacked or threatened.

The barbarity of those involved can be gauged by the manner in which innocent Tamils were killed by these mobs: People were beaten to death and their private parts burned. Some were tied to lampposts and set on fire. Vehicles with little children in them were overturned and burned, together with their passengers.

On July 26, the government announced the death of 35 Tamil prisoners, most of whom were being held in remand under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Two days later the government announced the death of a further 18 detainees. According to the official communiqué, other prisoners set upon these Tamil inmates and killed them.

The official version is difficult to believe, particularly in light of the fact that the persons killed are those considered by the security forces as hardline separatists. Among those killed was Dr. S. Rajasunderam, the secretary of the Ghandiyam Movement in Vavuniya and an activist in the Movement for Interracial Justice and Equality.

It is difficult to see how these prisoners could have been killed by Sinhala prisoners without the support and connivance of the prison officials. Unconfirmed reports say these detainees were in fact killed by the army. In light of what has happened elsewhere in the country, this is a more likely explanation.

## Outburst not spontaneous

The present wave of anti-Tamil violence was initiated after the death of 13 Sinhala soldiers in Jaffna who were engaged in an action with Tamil guerrillas. The government had decided to bury these soldiers with full military honors at the Kanatte Cemetery in Borella, in Colombo. Although only close relatives of the dead were apparently notified, some 7,000 persons had gathered at the cemetery. According to government reports, the bodies could not be brought to the cemetery in time, and therefore the burial was called off and the bodies were given to the relatives.

It was after this that the crowd at the cemetery became incensed and went on a rampage, burning Tamil shops and beating Tamils.

President J.R. Jayewardene gave credence to this version of events, seeking to support the idea that this was all a spontaneous affair. He declared that the "Sinhala nation, by the violent acts they have committed in the last few days," had tried to tell the government that it should take a tough stand against separatists.

A closer examination of the pattern of

events does not support the view that all this brutality and violence, death and destruction, was caused by a spontaneous outburst of rage against the killing of the Sinhala soldiers by the Tamil nationalist guerrillas.

In general, ordinary Sinhalese were not involved in these activities, except where rumors of "tigers" attacking their localities reached their ears. In most cases the attacks were spearheaded by known criminals and thugs. In some instances the army, navy, and air force were involved.

Secondly, these actions seem to have been well-planned. Shops were burned not with makeshift flammable materials, but often with fuel barrels placed in the shops or factories instead.

Thirdly, the army and police made no serious attempt to stop the attacks.

Last, but not least, the government-controlled news media had, in the preceding week, printed a number of news items and articles that heightened communal tension and anti-Tamil feelings. Jayewardene himself gave interviews to the BBC and the *Daily Telegraph* in Britain indicating that he was going to take a tough stand against the Tamil separatists.

It may well be that the government decided to appease the armed forces, who were increasingly restive about the restrictions that were being placed on them. In the last two months, there had been a number of desertions in response to the "pussyfooting" of the government.

In any event, if the government had really wanted to control the situation, it could have acted immediately and decisively to put a stop to the acts of violence.

## Banning separatism

Now the government is passing legislation that will make it illegal for any political party or individual to raise the demand of a "separate state." Anyone who does will not be able to run in elections, will lose their civil rights, will forfeit their property, and will not be permitted to engage in any profession.

Thus, by increasing the repression still further, the government is seeking to compel the Tamil people, the vast majority of whom have been alienated by the policies of this government, to abandon their demand for a separate state, called Eelam.

It is very unlikely that the vast majority of the Tamil people will be intimidated by such threats. The legislation will only mean the denial of parliamentary representation to members of any Tamil party of serious standing. As far as the Tamil guerrillas are concerned, it will make no difference to their strategic orien-

tation, and they are unlikely to be frightened by being deprived of their civil rights. Therefore, the Tamil-speaking areas of the north and east will remain the Achilles' heel of Jayewardene's policies.

Meanwhile, the food shortage created by the pogrom is beginning to affect the Sinhala population as well. Essential food items have risen by as much as 70 percent or 80 percent. For instance, a kilo of rice, which was between 7 rupees and 9 rupees is now 15 rupees. Coconuts have risen from about 2 rupees to 5 rupees. [1 rupee = US\$0.04] Certain items like fish and beef are now almost unobtainable.

While the government may be able to remedy this situation within a short time, the prices will not come down to their original level.

Most serious, however, is the loss of jobs as a result of the destruction of factories and businesses. All over the country, as many as 50,000 people may find themselves without jobs, causing them enormous hardship.

The government may also find that the adverse publicity will substantially reduce the number of tourists coming to Sri Lanka and the willingness of foreign investors to set up enterprises, since the government may prove incapable of protecting their investments in such a volatile country.

The government is obviously reaping the fruits of its own policies. In the past it has mobilized goon squads against its opponents in the presidential elections, the December 1982 referendum, and the local government and by-elections this year.

The government has also refused to initiate any meaningful dialogue with the representatives of the Tamil people, thereby undermining the credibility of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF, the party representing the Tamils in parliament) in the north and east. Contrary to its election manifesto, the government failed to make any meaningful concessions to the Tamils, who were subjected to various discriminatory laws. Instead, it embarked on a policy of increased repression: the enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the stationing of a large contingent of troops in Tamil-speaking areas, and the refusal to recruit Tamils to government jobs. It justified these actions on the grounds that they were needed to stamp out "terrorism."

However, the government-controlled media failed to distinguish between those who stood for setting up a separate state through armed struggle and the vast majority who did not; its political propaganda thus fanned the flames of communal hatred.

Therefore, it was not surprising that the anti-Tamil violence that erupted on July 24 took such a barbaric and ugly turn. Once President Jayewardene and his government embarked on their policy, they could not control all the consequences of their actions. The goon squads and the armed forces went beyond the limits desired by the government.

In the weeks and months to come, when all the economic and social consequences begin to

surface, Jayewardene and his government may find themselves in a deep and acute political crisis. The president may become a prisoner of an increasingly ambitious army, or the clamor for his replacement may become too deafening to ignore.

In the meantime, the victims of the violence are still not sure whether the attacks will cease or end in a massacre of those in the refugee camps as well.

#### A new twist

On July 29, events took a new twist. The worst had seemed to be over by July 28, and the government announced a relaxation of curfew regulations (originally it had announced that the curfew would be lifted on July 30).

However, a small news item in the *Island* stated that on July 28 a group of six people who had allegedly come to attack the Fort railway station had been killed. This item acquired a new meaning by the afternoon of July 29 when the word got around that "tigers" had come to Colombo and that they were shooting at security forces from rooftops.

Within minutes the whole of Colombo was in the grip of another bout of hysteria. News travelled rapidly, and by early afternoon people were pursuing every Tamil still living amid the Sinhalese in an effort to destroy the "tigers."

An accurate estimate of the persons killed and wounded in this attack is difficult to obtain, but according to government figures 30 persons were killed. In most instances, petrol was poured on them and set alight. While the victims were rolling on the ground in agony, the mobs continued to beat them with sticks and metal rods. The situation had gotten completely out of hand; the army and police themselves got scared.

In view of this development, Prime Minister Ranasighe Premadasa himself "addressed the nation" and made it clear that no "tiger" had either come to Colombo district or engaged in any violent act in that area. He went on to say that the rumor about "tigers in Colombo" had arisen because of an incident in the Fort, in which certain persons had thrown a bomb at security forces; it so happened that those concerned were all Sinhalese.

And because of this, 30 people were killed and hundreds injured — all of them, of course, Tamils.

#### 'Communist plot'

On July 30, the government announced the proscription of three political parties: the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP — People's Liberation Front), and the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP — New Equal Society Party).

At first the government gave no reason for this surprising decision. After all, like all other leftist parties, these three have been opposed to communal violence.

The first clue came in the speech of Minister of State Ananda Tissa de Alwis, broadcast over the radio. Although he did not name any

particular political party, he claimed that there had been a definite plan behind the communal violence, a hidden hand. The supposed plan was to be put into effect in stages: first, to set the Sinhalese against the Tamils; then the Sinhalese against the Muslims; and finally Sinhalese against Sinhalese (that is, Buddhists against non-Buddhists).

The minister capped it all by stating that the whole plot had been planned in another country, in the offices of some university dons! But since Sri Lanka is friendly to all countries, he said, it would not be correct for him to divulge which it was. This latter statement was missing from the English version of his speech, however.

It was obvious that the government was seeking to place the whole blame on leftists who had supposedly conspired to overthrow the state by fanning communal violence. On Sunday, July 31, the government said that the parties had been banned either because they were involved in the events that occurred after July 24, or that they would be an obstacle to the restoration of "law and order."

The government also announced that it had sealed the printshops of *Attha* (the Communist Party paper), *Seenuwa* (the JVP paper), *Vame Satana* (the NSSP paper), and *Dinakara*. The latter paper is the daily of former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party, which is against all forms of separatism and terrorism.

The decision to silence all opposition parties with some ability to inform the people of what really happened in the week beginning July 24 was obviously taken because the government was afraid that the real facts would soon come to light, and that this would make life very uncomfortable for the government.

After all, the evidence pointed to the fact that the government party supporters took a leading part in the pogrom, the army was actively engaged in encouraging the arsonists, and the deaths in prison of Tamil detainees were probably organized by the army with the knowledge of top people in the government.

The crucial question now is whether the government will again allow these parties to function legally or force them underground. The choice before President Jayewardene is not an easy one. □

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# Broad resistance front formed

*Pledges fight against apartheid policies*

By Ernest Harsch

Amid shouts of "Amandla!" — the Zulu word for power — more than 12,000 people, most of them Black, rallied near Cape Town August 20 to condemn the apartheid regime's racist policies. It was the largest such antigovernment action to be legally held in South Africa in several decades.

Even more significantly, the rally marked the inauguration of a broad coalition, called the United Democratic Front (UDF), which has been organized to fight new government measures designed to entrench the white ruling class's domination over the oppressed Black majority. The UDF has emerged as the largest and most representative front of Black and antiapartheid organizations since the 1950s, when the now-outlawed African National Congress (ANC) led in the formation of the Congress Alliance.

As a symbol of its political links with that earlier period of struggle — and in an open act of defiance against the apartheid authorities — the UDF's inaugural rally named Nelson Mandela as one of the front's patrons. Mandela, the central leader of the ANC, has spent the past 22 years in prison, serving a life sentence for his role in the fight against white minority rule.

## Reagan and Thatcher condemned

Since outdoor rallies are banned, the organizers of the UDF's kickoff action held it in the Rocklands Civic Centre in Mitchell's Plain, a segregated township for Coloureds (those of mixed ancestry) just south of Cape Town. To extend the capacity of the site, a huge tent was erected next to the center, and a video relay system was installed to project the proceedings onto large screens.

According to a report in the August 22 *Sowetan*, a Black-run daily in Soweto township near Johannesburg, "Although the organisers had expected the rally to be a success, the massive turnout from throughout the country was beyond their expectations.

"The crowd swelled steadily from 9 am and when the emotional rally ended in a frenzied mood of speeches and songs, more than 12,000 people were jampacked into the main hall and adjoining tents with a massive television screen."

One of the featured speakers was Rev. Allan Boesak, the president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and a prime initiator of the UDF. He noted that the government had expected the Black population to become paralyzed with fear following the massive repression of the 1960s. "Instead," Boesak said, "they find a rising tide of political and human consciousness that swept away complacency

and shook South Africa to its very foundations."

Boesak attacked in particular Prime Minister Pieter Botha's plan for constitutional changes which provide for the establishment of three separate parliaments, one for whites (as now exists) plus one each for the Coloured and Indian sectors of the Black population. Since Botha's plan excludes the African majority and seeks to sow divisions within the Black population as a whole, it is widely rejected by Blacks as a ploy to maintain white supremacy.

"To be sure, the new proposals will make apartheid less blatant in some ways," Boesak told the crowd. "But for those of us who are black and who suffer under this system, there is no positive side" to the proposed changes.

Other speakers included Aubrey Mokoena of the Release Mandela Committee; Helen Joseph, a prominent white opponent of apartheid; Sheik Gamiet Gadier, the chairman of the Muslim Judicial Council; and Samson Ndou of the General and Allied Workers Union.

The rally also received a message of support from the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which is fighting for Namibia's independence from South African rule.

The rally adopted a series of declarations and resolutions pledging to fight Botha's constitutional plan, segregated housing, the rising cost of living, and racist education policies.

The participants likewise condemned the U.S. and British governments' aid to the apartheid regime, declaring, "We demand the immediate end to the United States and British Governments' support for the South African Government and we reject the policy of constructive engagement."

"Constructive engagement" is the euphemism President Reagan has adopted for his policy of closer and more friendly ties between Washington and the Botha regime.

## Influence of ANC

Despite the fact that it has been outlawed since 1960, the ANC's political aims and the armed struggle it is waging are gaining more widespread support in South Africa. This was reflected at the UDF rally.

The three people who were elected national presidents were all prominent ANC figures: Archie Gumede, a former executive member of the ANC; Oscar Mpetha, a trade unionist who was a former president of the Cape Province ANC; and Albertina Sisulu, whose husband, Walter Sisulu, is imprisoned with Nelson Mandela.

Mpetha, who is 74 years old and in ill

health, has just been sentenced to five years in prison for his political activities. Two days after the UDF rally, the Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal, despite the fact that he is expected to live for only two more years at most.

Albertina Sisulu was arrested just before the rally, and thus could not attend. She is scheduled to go on trial in October on charges of furthering the aims of a banned organization — the ANC.

Many of the organizations and individuals in the UDF are clearly sympathetic to the goals that the ANC is fighting for, and have declared their support for the ANC's program, the Freedom Charter. However, the UDF itself states that it is not a "Charterist" organization. It declares that its ranks are open to all those who oppose Botha's constitutional proposals.

## One million members

The UDF, in fact, is extremely broad. Participants at the Mitchell's Plain rally represented more than 400 different organizations. These included the South African Allied Workers Union and the Council of Unions of South Africa, two of the largest Black union federations in the country; the South African Council of Churches; the Azanian Students Organisation; the Soweto Civic Association; the Federation of South African Women; the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses; and the Islamic Council of South Africa.

The combined membership of all the groups belonging to the UDF is at least 1 million.

There are some antiapartheid groups and currents, however, that are not part of the UDF. One of the most prominent is the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo), which emerged out of the Black Consciousness movement of the 1970s. It has sharply criticized those organizations that support the ANC's Freedom Charter, focusing on their willingness to work with antiapartheid whites. Azapo is attempting to build another coalition of Black organizations, called the National Forum.

Despite the political differences between the UDF and the Azapo-led National Forum, the UDF has initiated unity talks with Azapo. It has also appointed a delegation to approach the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), a predominantly Black union federation that is also not part of the UDF.

At an August 1 news conference in Johannesburg announcing the rally plans and the decision to launch the UDF on a national level, a UDF statement was read stressing that it is "a united front in which all organisations will keep their identity and independence."

"Whilst the UDF articulates the viewpoint of the broad cross-section of the people," the statement went on, "we accept as fundamental that the main burden of exploitation and discrimination falls on the poor. Accordingly the main thrust of the organisation is directed towards the participation of working people in the work place, in communities, and wherever they may be." □