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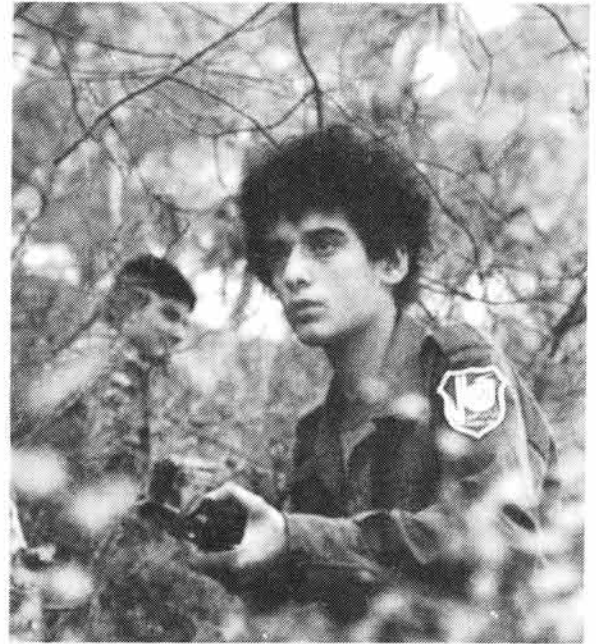
February 20, 1984

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Lebanon

Reagan Threatens Escalation as Beirut Regime Nears Collapse



Amal militia members near Beirut.

U.S.-Honduran Buildup Targets Central American Revolution

**Vanuatu's Gains
Since Independence**

**Mubarak, Hussein Press PLO
for Political Concessions**

French Jets Combat Chadian Rebel Forces

Reagan weighs escalation as Beirut regime nears collapse

By Fred Murphy

The renewed outbreak of full-scale civil war in Lebanon and the virtual collapse of President Amin Gemayel's government have brought U.S. imperialism to the brink of a major military escalation in the Middle East.

The Reagan administration faces a stark choice — either greatly step up intervention in order to maintain a proimperialist regime in Beirut, or risk a stunning setback to imperialist interests throughout the region.

For Washington's Lebanese clients to be driven from power would be a big blow to Israel, which installed the Phalangist regime after invading Lebanon in 1982. It would strengthen and inspire the Arab masses and weaken other proimperialist rulers such as Mubarak in Egypt and King Hussein in Jordan. It would give an especially big boost to the Palestinian struggle.

Faced with these prospects, President Reagan ordered a series of new moves February 7. The 1,600 U.S. marines stationed at

the Beirut Airport were to be redeployed to more defensible positions on ships just offshore. U.S. naval commanders were authorized to use the massive firepower of the battleship *New Jersey* and other vessels of the Sixth Fleet in support of the Lebanese army. Air strikes were authorized for the same purpose. Reagan also pledged to step up U.S. aid to the Lebanese armed forces, on which, he declared, "the primary responsibility rests for maintaining stability in Lebanon."

On February 6 and 7, U.S. naval guns repeatedly opened fire against rebel positions in the mountains around Beirut. At least one U.S. air strike was launched as well.

Reagan threatened specifically to bombard targets in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon. Such a move would pose the danger of a U.S. war against Syria.

None of Reagan's moves offered much hope to President Gemayel himself. By February 5, his regime barely existed. Prime Minister Shafiq el-Wazzan and his entire cabinet res-

igned that day in response to a call by opposition leader Nabih Berri for all "Muslim and patriotic" ministers to give up their posts. Berri, who heads the Amal militia based among Lebanon's oppressed Shi'ite Muslim population, also called on army troops and officers to "assert their total refusal to take part in any operation against the people."

Within two days, entire units of the army were reportedly deserting or refusing to fight. Berri asserted February 6 that 9,000 army troops had placed themselves under Amal's command.

The new outbreak of fighting — perhaps the heaviest since Lebanon's 1975-76 civil war — began February 2 when Amal fighters resisted an attack by the Lebanese army on their positions near the southern suburbs of the capital. These neighborhoods — Hayy el-Sollom, Shiyah, and Burj el-Barajneh — have been the strongholds of Amal and other opposition militias. U.S. officials had reportedly been urging the Beirut regime to launch an offensive there for several months.

The army responded to Amal's resistance with three days of murderous shelling and rocket barrages. It was in answer to this onslaught that Nabih Berri called for insubordination within the army. He denounced "the shelling of the heart of populated areas" and the "destruction of tens of schools, clinics,

It takes money to get out truth on Grenada

Within a period of just two weeks in October, the workers and farmers government of Grenada was overthrown by renegades, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and a number of his closest comrades were murdered, and U.S. troops invaded that Caribbean island with the aim of wiping out the last vestiges of the Grenada revolution.

We at *Intercontinental Press* felt that this setback was of such importance to the future of the Marxist movement and the world revolutionary process that a special effort was called for on our part. To help arm revolutionary fighters with the political lessons of this defeat, we sought to get the available facts, documentation, and analysis of these events out to our readers as quickly as possible. We thus published a special issue of *IP* (dated Nov. 7, 1983), outside of our normal fortnightly schedule.

We followed this up in subsequent weeks with further news articles, analysis, and documents, including Fidel Castro's November 14 speech outlining the Cuban response to the overthrow of the Bishop government and the U.S. invasion.

Our December 26 issue (the last in 1983) featured an exclusive interview with Don Rojas, former press secretary to Maurice Bishop and former editor of Grenada's *Free West Indian* newspaper. Rojas, who

was one of the last surviving New Jewel Movement leaders to have spoken with Bishop (less than an hour before the prime minister's murder), provided an insider's account of the factional struggle led by Finance Minister Bernard Coard that led to Bishop's overthrow, and drew some lessons for revolutionaries in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

We received a significant response to that issue of *IP*. Dozens of people who heard about the interview or saw paid *IP* advertisements in other publications wrote to us for single copies and subscriptions. Some bookstores requested bundles to sell.

The interview, or parts of it, has been reprinted by a number of other publications, both within the United States and abroad. The All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, wrote requesting a copy, and the Center for Developing-Area Studies at McGill University in Montreal is planning to include the Rojas interview in a set of documents on the Grenada crisis.

The interview is also getting around to activists in the Caribbean, including within Grenada itself. Several progressive and revolutionary organizations in the region have ordered bundles.

Our Grenada coverage, of course, is only

part of what we do. In a similar way, we try to cover the most important events in the world class struggle as a whole.

But it costs money to provide the kind of coverage that *IP* readers have come to expect.

The special Grenada issue, for example, cost us about \$1,700 extra. To obtain the Rojas interview, we had to send staff writer Steve Wattenmaker to Montreal, where Rojas was at the time.

Such expenses came on top of our "normal" costs — which are rising. Like working people all over the world, we are caught in the squeeze of the capitalist economic crisis. This year, we expect to have to pay 10 percent more for printing and postage than we did in 1983.

The fact is that the income we receive from subscriptions and bookstore sales does not cover the cost of putting out *IP*. We operate on a deficit.

To help make up that difference, we rely on you, our readers. By sending a contribution, you can assist us to continue providing the kind of in-depth coverage that has become known around the world. Help us get out the truth on Grenada.

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hospitals, and orphanages."

Berri also joined Druse leader Walid Jumblatt in demanding that President Gemayel himself resign. "I have only one condition," Berri said February 6, "that there be a new president not from any party. If Reagan bombarded New York City, do you think the people would elect him?"

Gemayel's response to the new crisis was to call for a further round of "national reconciliation" talks with his opponents and to declare a 24-hour, shoot-on-sight curfew. But his offer that "everything is negotiable" came too late to stave off the disintegration of his authority.

The principal demands of the opposition are an end to domination by the extreme-rightist Christian Phalange Party and the repudiation of President Gemayel's May 17, 1983, agreement with Tel Aviv sanctioning continued Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. That accord "has come to symbolize . . . all the political changes and Phalangist advantages wrought by the Israeli invasion" of 1982, *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman wrote February 6.

Besides the Phalange and the regular army dominated by Phalangist officers, a key additional prop of this regime has been the so-called multinational peacekeeping force of U.S. Marines and French, Italian, and British troops that has been stationed in Beirut for the past 17 months. The U.S. and French units especially have intervened openly in the intermittent civil war to keep Gemayel in power.

Washington has also provided the Lebanese army with some 100 military advisers and a \$1 billion aid program, with the goal of expanding it from a force of 37,000 troops to one of 60,000.

The aim of the U.S. imperialists and their allies was to help Gemayel consolidate his rule throughout the Lebanese state by suppressing the armed opposition and forcing the withdrawal of Syrian forces that have occupied parts of the country since intervening to halt the 1975-76 civil war. Reagan and Gemayel agreed with Tel Aviv that the 10,000 or more Israeli troops occupying southern Lebanon should remain there until these goals were achieved.

But the current fighting points up the Beirut regime's incapacity even to make a start on such an ambitious project. In the face of this situation, the *Washington Post* reported February 6, the Israeli government "has urged the Reagan administration to demonstrate a renewed commitment to . . . Gemayel with a show of military force against the antigovernment Druze and Shiite Moslem forces."

An Israeli official also told the *Post*, however, it would "not be appropriate" for Israeli forces to intervene for this purpose. Still, he said, Israel would "stand fast" in southern Lebanon regardless of what happened to Gemayel's regime.

In fact, the Zionist rulers are under mounting political pressure at home for a total withdrawal from Lebanon. While the latest fighting

raged in Beirut, some 40,000 persons marched in Jerusalem February 4 to demand an immediate pullout of troops and a halt to Jewish settlement on the occupied West Bank. This action, sponsored by the Peace Now organization and endorsed by 39 members of the Israeli Knesset (parliament), was the largest demonstration ever held in Jerusalem.

Reagan himself faces a similar problem.

While there have not yet been significant street protests in the United States, public opinion polls have repeatedly shown an absolute majority favoring the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. By redeploying the marines to warships offshore, Reagan hopes to undercut this sentiment and buy time for the bigger moves that will be necessary to preserve imperialist interests in Lebanon. □

—IN THIS ISSUE—

Closing news date: Feb. 7, 1984

CENTRAL AMERICA	68	Shultz, emissary of war — by Steve Wattenmaker
MIDDLE EAST	70	New pressure on PLO — by Fred Murphy
	71	Jordanian strike force aimed at Iran — by Harry Ring
CHAD	72	French combat rebel forces — by Ernest Harsch
MOROCCO	75	Scores killed in price protests — by Will Reissner
BRITAIN	76	Thatcher hits labor — by Steve Wattenmaker
NEW ZEALAND	77	Year of attacks on workers — by Eileen Morgan
EL SALVADOR	79	FMLN controls one-third of country — Interview with Salvador Samayoa
NETHERLANDS	81	Fighting experience for public workers — by Herman Pieterse
KOREA	83	Massive U.S. military maneuvers — by Will Reissner
NICARAGUA	84	Significant advances for revolution — by Michael Baumann and Jane Harris
	89	Sandinistas hail Cuban aid — by Michael Baumann
VANUATU	90	Achievements since independence — by Andy Jarvis
	91	"We have united the people" — Interview with Barak Sope
URUGUAY	96	General strike defies regime — by Fred Murphy
DOCUMENTS	74	End the repression in Tunisia — Statement of Revolutionary Workers Group
	80	FMLN addresses U.S. people

Intercontinental Press specializes in political analysis and interpretation of events of particular interest to the labor, socialist, colonial independence, Black, and women's liberation movements.

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Shultz, emissary of war

Tour lays ground for greater U.S. intervention

By Steve Wattenmaker

U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz added another threatening note to Washington's ongoing campaign against the Nicaraguan revolution February 2. Speaking in Venezuela, Shultz said Sandinista warnings that the White House was readying plans to invade Nicaragua show that "[Commander Daniel] Ortega and his colleagues must be worried, and if I were them I'd be worried, too."

That very same day, the U.S.-backed counterrevolution struck another blow against Nicaragua. Six CIA-supplied Honduran aircraft, taking off from bases inside Honduras, bombed a military camp 60 miles northwest of Managua, destroying fuel storage tanks and killing several soldiers. The next day, more planes attacked a civilian-military radio installation near the Honduran border.

In an effort to justify such attacks against Nicaragua, Shultz used the old ploy of portraying the victim as the criminal. Referring to the Sandinistas, he declared in his Venezuela speech, "They are the people who have harassed the church and the Pope. They're the people who have suppressed the press; they're the people who have built up an armed force that goes beyond anything that anyone could conceivably think is needed for their own self-defense and internal security."

The secretary of state made his remarks during an eight-day trip to Latin America and the Caribbean that began January 31 with a stop in El Salvador. He plans to conclude his trip with stops in Barbados and U.S.-occupied Grenada.

Along with the recent Kissinger commission

report on Central America, Shultz's tour is part of the White House propaganda campaign to justify mammoth increases in military aid to the Salvadoran dictatorship, new provocations against the Nicaraguan workers and farmers government, and the transformation of Honduras into a permanent staging area for U.S. military aggression against the peoples of both El Salvador and Nicaragua.

\$376 million for El Salvador

The Kissinger commission, made up of leading Democrats and Republicans, released its findings January 11. The aim of the presidentially appointed panel was to provide bipartisan cover for Washington's military intervention against the revolutions unfolding in Central America.

The commission, which included AFL-CIO labor federation head Lane Kirkland and several Democratic Party liberals, presented a ringing endorsement of current U.S. policy in Central America. The commission echoed the administration's main excuse for its arms buildup in the region, charging that Nicaragua is serving as the base for "Soviet and Cuban efforts to penetrate Central America." And that, the panel said, poses a challenge to the security of the United States.

Therefore, the commission concluded, Congress should authorize a major increase in military aid to El Salvador, and Washington should continue to back the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary incursions against Sandinista territory.

Following closely on the heels of the Kis-

singer report's publication, President Reagan announced February 3 that the administration will seek to supplement this year's \$65 million package of military aid to El Salvador with an additional \$179 million. The request for fiscal year 1985, he said, would total about \$133 million.

These figures approximate the Kissinger commission's recommendation that Washington provide the Salvadoran regime with \$400 million in military aid in 1984 and 1985 to "break the military stalemate" there.

'A very good record?'

In addition to discussing these new aid proposals with Salvadoran officials during his stopover, Shultz took the opportunity to laud the regime for what he called "considerable" progress in ending human rights abuses.

The secretary of state told reporters traveling with him that the Salvadoran regime had "done quite a number of things" to curb death squad activity since Vice-president George Bush visited El Salvador last December. As part of an effort to polish up the regime's image, Bush had told the Salvadoran government that Washington wanted it to take action on a specific list of purported death squad organizers.

While more needs to be done, Shultz said, "It's basically a pretty good record though, a very good record." In fact, the "progress" Shultz cited has been restricted to a few cosmetic transfers of military officials linked to right-wing terrorist activity.

Toasting Provisional President Alvaro Magaña at a luncheon held in the presidential palace in the hills overlooking San Salvador, Shultz piously proclaimed, "Death squads and terror have no place in a democracy, and I mince no words in saying it here or anywhere else."

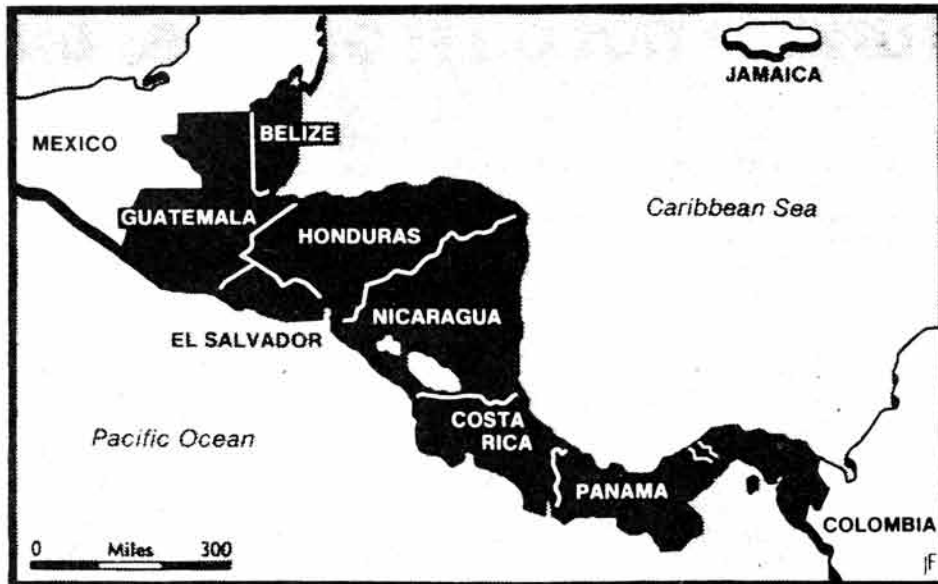
Shultz's remarks are part of the administration's stepped-up public relations campaign to portray the bloody Salvadoran regime as steadily moving toward "democracy" under prodding by U.S. officials.

The administration plays up the death squads in an effort to get the Salvadoran regime and regular army off the hook. But statistics compiled by the Archdiocese of San Salvador show that during 1982 and 1983 it was the Salvadoran army and Salvadoran security forces who were directly responsible for 65 to 70 percent of the thousands of assassinations of civilians in the country.

U.S. condoned death squads

Testifying in Washington before a House subcommittee February 2, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador Robert White presented evidence that U.S. officials have condoned, if not encouraged, death squad activity for years and protected the Salvadoran exiles living in Miami who finance the terrorist operations.

According to White, the U.S. embassy in San Salvador developed a high-level informer inside the death squads who identified six wealthy Salvadorans who "hatch plots in





U.S. 'advisers' training Honduran troops. Under guise of repeated U.S. military exercises, Washington is converting Honduras into a permanent staging area for aggression against the peoples of Central America.

Miami and communicate instructions to their agent" inside El Salvador. That agent, White said, was Roberto D'Aubuisson, leader of the right-wing ARENA party.

White testified that the embassy passed that information on to Washington and even gave the State Department evidence that D'Aubuisson personally organized the notorious 1980 assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Washington did nothing with the information, White said.

D'Aubuisson was among Shultz's luncheon companions during his stop in San Salvador. After the meal, when asked if Washington would be concerned if D'Aubuisson, ARENA party candidate for president, won the March 25 elections in El Salvador, Shultz replied, "We believe in the democratic process and we believe in fair and open elections and we believe that under those circumstances you accept the verdict, whatever it may be, of the people who do the voting."

Honduran buildup

Shultz's remarks threatening Nicaragua and the administration's huge budget requests for El Salvador are closely tied to a major buildup of U.S. combat forces in Honduras. Beginning in early February 1983 the Pentagon began establishing Honduras as a permanent garrison for U.S. army and naval units in Central America. This was done under the guise of staging military "exercises" in Honduras.

The first major influx of 1,600 U.S. troops took place Feb. 1-6, 1983. In addition to joining 4,000 Honduran soldiers near the Nicaraguan border, the exercise was used as a cover for transferring tons of U.S. war matériel to Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries.

Then in August 1983 the Pentagon followed up these first maneuvers with Big Pine II, lasting an unprecedented seven months and involving 5,000 U.S. troops. A key aspect of this phase of the buildup was a virtual U.S. naval blockade of Nicaragua's east and west coasts by dozens of vessels, including aircraft carriers and the battleship *New Jersey*.

Washington also used Big Pine II as its jus-

tification for building a permanent infrastructure of military airfields, radar bases, barracks, field hospitals, roads, and other projects in Honduras. The Pentagon established a training camp for Salvadoran soldiers staffed by U.S. Green Beret advisers and began converting Puerto Castilla on Honduras' Caribbean coast into a major U.S. naval base.

A Senate investigation made public February 1 documented the Pentagon's plans to eventually staff the naval base with a contingent of 1,000 U.S. military personnel and send \$32 million to create a permanent training facility for the Salvadoran army troops. The report also charged that the Pentagon was using disguised funds to build four more airstrips in Honduras than Congress had authorized.

According to the January 29 *Washington Post*, unmarked helicopters carrying CIA agents in charge of the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary operation routinely make use of the new airstrips built by U.S. Army engineers. Moreover, one field in northeastern Honduras near the town of Aguacate is reported to be a main base for resupplying the *contras*, as the counterrevolutionaries are known.

The Nicaraguan army shot down an unmarked U.S. helicopter January 11 near the border, after it overflew Nicaraguan territory near the scene of intense combat against an invading *contra* force. Managua charged that the aircraft, whose pilot was killed, was assisting the *contras*.

'Grenadero I'

Any remaining doubt that Washington was using the fiction of "war games" as an excuse for establishing a large-scale, permanent military presence in Honduras was put to rest February 1 by Pentagon chief Caspar Weinberger. After the Big Pine II "maneuvers" officially end later in February, he said, the Pentagon plans to leave a force of 700 to 800 soldiers in Honduras.

At the same time, Pentagon sources revealed that planning is already underway for the next stage of the U.S. buildup in Honduras, tentatively dubbed "Grenadero I." Although

officials were quick to reassure reporters that "Grenadero" was not meant to refer to Grenada, the Pentagon's message could not have been more clear.

The new U.S. troop concentration is to be in a narrow strip of land that borders both El Salvador and Nicaragua along the Gulf of Fonseca. Less than 20 miles west of the operation's headquarters in the Honduran town of San Lorenzo is El Salvador's La Unión province and beyond that the Salvadoran rebel stronghold of Morazán.

Due east is the border with Nicaragua, an area where *contra* attacks have been fierce and frequent. Due south is the vital Nicaraguan port city of Corinto.

Over the past year, the Pentagon has built up the military airstrip at San Lorenzo to accommodate giant C-130 military cargo planes, installed a major U.S. radar base on an island in the Gulf of Fonseca, and deployed up to 1,000 U.S. troops to accompany Honduran combat patrols near the Nicaraguan border.

Although exact U.S. strategy during the next phase of the "maneuvers" is not yet known, there is mounting evidence that U.S. combat troops will move against El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).

Some Pentagon officials with knowledge of Washington's plans have already indicated "that the exercises could embroil U.S. forces in the Salvadoran civil war," according to a report in the February 2 *Washington Post*. There are other reports that the Honduran army is already relocating Salvadoran refugees from near the border to camps deeper inside Honduras.

The FMLN itself, in a communiqué issued January 18, warned that plans for an invasion of El Salvador had already been put into motion "under the guise of a third stage in the joint maneuvers that U.S. troops have been carrying out in Honduras since August 1983." (See communiqué, page 80.)

Whatever scenario Washington opts for in the coming months, its overall strategy is pointed unswervingly toward using military force — including U.S. combat troops — to block the advance of the Salvadoran liberation struggle and to attack the workers and farmers of Nicaragua. Shultz's visit to Grenada is an intentional reminder that U.S. imperialism will take whatever armed action it deems necessary in its effort to strangle the social revolution shaking Central America and the Caribbean.

But as the FMLN said in its communiqué, "If the United States government wants them, there will be negotiations and peace. If it prefers, there will be invasion, dirty war, dishonor for the Americans, and, in the end, victory for the revolution." □

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New pressure on PLO

Mubarak, Hussein seek political concessions

By Fred Murphy

King Hussein of Jordan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak — key clients of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East — have moved to take advantage of the recent blows dealt to the Palestine Liberation Organization. With Washington's blessing, these Arab rulers have begun a drive to blackmail the PLO into a retreat from its uncompromising stand for Palestinian national self-determination and against Arab recognition of the Zionist state of Israel.

This campaign of diplomatic pressure comes in the framework of the grave defeat suffered by the Palestinian struggle as a result of the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon. A further opening was provided by the Syrian regime's treacherous drive to control or split the PLO, which culminated in the December 20 evacuation from Tripoli, Lebanon, of PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat and 4,000 Palestinian fighters.

These defenders of the PLO's unity and independence were forced to leave Lebanon after a weeks-long siege in which hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese lost their lives. Arafat and the loyalist fighters had been surrounded at Tripoli by opposition elements of the PLO backed up by Syrian troops, tanks, and artillery.

The meeting in Cairo

Upon leaving Lebanon, Arafat proceeded to Cairo for a meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak. This unilateral move by the PLO chairman served to whet the appetites of the imperialists and their Arab clients for political concessions by the Palestinian movement. Arafat became the first top Arab leader to visit the Egyptian capital since the late Anwar el-Sadat signed the traitorous Camp David accords and concluded a peace treaty with Israel.

While Mubarak's relations with Tel Aviv have been quite cool since the invasion of Lebanon, he has shown no inclination to repudiate the Camp David betrayal.

The PLO chairman explained to reporters aboard the ship carrying him from Tripoli that in his view the time had come to bring Egypt back "inside the ring." Among Arab countries, he said, "Egypt is the main power, the main weight. You know, it is our duty to push Egypt more and more. Without this strong role, the Arab world will suffer."

Arafat's move was rapidly disavowed, however, by the rest of the central leadership of the PLO. The Central Committee of Fatah, Arafat's own organization, met for several days at the beginning of January and criticized the PLO chairman in a statement for "a personal initiative contrary to the rules of collec-

tive leadership traditionally upheld within Fatah." Khaled el-Fahum, chairman of the Palestine National Council (PNC, the PLO's parliament-in-exile), termed the meeting with Mubarak "a flagrant violation of the rules of the PNC." (At its February 1983 meeting, the PNC had voted that the PLO's relations with Cairo must be defined "on the basis of [Egypt's] abandoning of the Camp David policy.")

The debate on strategy and perspectives in the new and difficult situation facing the Palestinian movement is continuing within the PLO and its member organizations.

Reagan Plan

The Reagan administration hailed the Cairo meeting as "an encouraging development" and expressed hope that such talks would "serve to persuade Mr. Arafat that peace negotiations within the framework of the president's [Reagan's] initiative are the best means of achieving Palestinian goals."

In fact, the so-called Reagan Plan, put forward in September 1982, explicitly ruled out any "establishment of an independent Palestinian state" or "any proposal . . . that threatens the security of Israel." In exchange for vague promises of Palestinian political "autonomy" in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Reagan demanded that the Palestinian people and the Arab regimes "accept the reality of Israel."

The Reagan Plan differed little from the Camp David accords; its main new feature was the suggestion that Palestinian "autonomy" would have to be implemented "in association with Jordan." This elicited a favorable response from King Hussein, who sensed an opportunity to restore Jordanian rule over the Palestinians in the West Bank.

The Israeli regime, of course, has no intention of relinquishing the occupied territories. It rejected the Reagan Plan from the beginning and has proceeded with a massive program of Jewish settlement on the West Bank as the prelude to outright annexation. Washington has made it abundantly clear that it will not pressure the Zionist rulers into retreating from this course; the Reagan Plan is only diplomatic bait for hooking more of the Arab regimes into a Sadat-style capitulation to Israel.

For its part, the PLO has steadfastly refused to bite. Its leading bodies have repeatedly denounced the Reagan Plan for its explicit denial of Palestinian self-determination. Yassir Arafat reiterated this position in a statement on January 1 of this year.

Pressuring the PLO into backing down from this principled stand is still a central aim of Washington and its Arab clients, however.

Mubarak's top foreign policy adviser, Osama el-Baz, told the *New York Times* January 20 that talks involving Egyptian, Jordanian, and PLO representatives were being planned for March or April. These, he asserted, would focus on "widening the terms of reference" under which negotiations with Israel could be held. The *Times* account continued:

"He noted that both Egypt and Jordan had accepted, as a basis for negotiations, President Reagan's proposal of Sept. 1, 1982. . . . But he said that because the P.L.O. objected that the proposal did not call for an independent Palestinian state, the best way out of the deadlock would be for the three Arab parties to meet and try to work out a compromise."

Hussein's ploy

A further aim of Reagan's diplomacy has been to have King Hussein supplant the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people in any negotiations. Hussein held a series of meetings with Arafat in the early months of 1983 to try to get the PLO to go along with this demand. The PLO leadership firmly rejected such a course, and the talks broke off in April.

Now King Hussein has renewed his pressure on the PLO by reconvening the Jordanian parliament, which includes deputies elected before 1967 by the Palestinian population of the West Bank. The parliament had been suspended in 1974 in deference to the Arab League's recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

In an address to parliament January 16, Hussein called on the "free and legitimate" PLO to join him in seeking a "practical formula" for Mideast peace negotiations. In a dispatch from Amman to the January 17 *Washington Post*, correspondent Edward Walsh offered the following explanation for Hussein's moves:

"Hussein reportedly has decided that the evacuation of Arafat's forces from Tripoli, Lebanon, and the disarray it has caused within the PLO has created an opportunity for him to pressure the PLO to join the peace process. . . .

"Hussein has said that if the PLO loses its legitimacy and the confidence of Palestinians because of internal turmoil, he will feel free to seek arrangements with a new leadership that could speak for the Palestinians."

But Palestinians on the West Bank know from bitter experience the oppressive nature of the Jordanian monarchy, having lived under Hussein's rule from 1948 to 1967. The king's moves to call into question the PLO's legitimacy have already met with a sharp rebuff on the West Bank.

On January 23, more than 1,000 representatives of 31 different Palestinian organizations and institutions met at Bir Zeit University on the West Bank to discuss Hussein's moves. According to the January 25 English edition of the Jerusalem weekly *al-Fajr*, those in attendance represented "virtually all levels of Palestinian organisation in the occupied territories: voluntary work committees, workers' and professional unions, women's committees, uni-

versities, vocational and secondary school student councils and blocs, writers and artists federations, journalists and youth committees in towns, villages and camps."

PLO — sole representative

A statement adopted unanimously by this gathering condemned the recall of the Jordanian parliament in the following terms:

"The Jordanian regime's claim that its move represents the legal responsibility which the regime has toward the occupied territories is mere deceit and a lie. This is clearly shown by the fact that the PLO has acquired its legitimate and legal responsibility which can be seen from its recognition by Arab, Islamic, nonaligned countries as well as by UN resolutions and conferences stating that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Pales-

tinian people including those who live in the occupied territories.

"As for the Jordanian claim that its move was decided upon to fill the political vacuum in the occupied lands before the Israeli occupation had a chance to do so, this claim is also false. Otherwise, the occupation [authorities] would not allow West Bank parliamentarians to travel to Jordan nor would they allow the Jordanian regime to reap the fruit of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The Jordanian parliamentary move served to circumvent the achievements of the PLO. The new Jordanian parliament conspiracy is only one ring in a series of conspiracies against our people and our cause. The reactivation of the parliament has strong ties with the Camp David accords and the Reagan plan, which attempt to pressure the PLO into giving up its mandate." □

U.S.—Jordanian strike force

Aimed at Iranian revolution

By Harry Ring

[The following article is taken from the February 10 issue of the U.S. revolutionary socialist newsweekly *Militant*.]

* * *

The Reagan administration is asking Congress to finance an 8,000-member special Jordanian military unit to act in cooperation with U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

According to the administration, the unit would be used to "protect" Arab states in the Gulf. Coming on the heels of Reagan officials' renewed attacks on Iran, the proposal is a clear threat to the Iranian revolution and Arab peoples in the region as well.

Congress is being asked to appropriate \$220 million for a Joint Logistic Planning Force between Jordan and the United States. The Pentagon would equip the Jordanian troops, and the U.S. Air Force would take responsibility for transporting them to the field of battle.

According to the proposal, the rapid deployment force would be limited to areas within a 1,500-mile radius of Jordan. It is less than 500 miles between the Iranian and Jordanian borders.

Congressional approval was sought for such a project on a secret basis last year. That proposition was shelved mainly because of concern about Israeli opposition. The Tel Aviv regime has generally opposed increased arming of Arab governments.

However, Washington has now apparently persuaded Tel Aviv that the Jordanian strike force will not be used as a defense against some future Israeli aggression, but only against Arab or Iranian forces deemed hostile to imperialist rule of the Mideast.

Following Washington's January 26 disclosure of the strike force plan, King Hussein of Jordan said that the new military unit would be used only for Jordanian self-defense or at the



King Hussein during visit with Reagan in December 1982.

request of another Arab government, not in response to Washington's dictate. In an effort to project an independent image to neighboring Arab nations, he declared:

"These weapons become Jordanian weapons once they are in Jordanian hands. They will be used for legitimate self-defense needs and to honor our Arab obligations, if others ask us to help. Jordan will not act in the area on behalf of the United States . . ."

But it is impossible to believe that Washington would put weapons in Hussein's hands unless it was convinced they would be used according to U.S. orders.

In addition to the Persian Gulf deployment

force, the Reagan administration is notifying Congress it plans to sell Jordan some \$40 million worth of hand-held antiaircraft missiles.

These, the White House assured, would be used exclusively to aid friendly Arab regimes to suppress domestic insurrection.

Organization of the Jordanian-U.S. force is related to the Iraqi war of aggression against Iran.

The Iraqi war began back in September 1980, some 19 months after the victory of the Iranian revolution. But in more than three years of fighting, Iraq has proven unable to deal any decisive blows against Iran's forces. Iraq's desperate efforts appear to include use of World War I type mustard gas, according to the British publication, *Jane's Defense Weekly*.

This has forced Washington to drop its initial posture of "neutrality" in the war and make more explicit its support to Iraq.

Last December, U.S. officials made it known to Persian Gulf governments that it would regard an Iranian victory as "contrary to U.S. interests."

This past January 1 the *Washington Post* reported that the decision to openly favor an Iraqi victory was described by an official as prompted by "the disaster for U.S. interests if the Iranian revolution were to spread triumphantly in the strategic region."

The overthrow of the shah of Iran by the revolutionary masses of that country was a historic blow to imperialism in the entire region. The U.S. oil magnates and bankers deeply fear that the Iranian victory could spark similar struggles in other parts of the region. And rightly so.

Washington's determination to crush the Iranian revolution was underlined by a January 23 declaration by the Reagan administration branding Iran a "terrorist" nation.

In Washington's Orwellian doublespeak, that means the Iranian people have been targeted for escalated terrorist attacks by U.S. and allied forces.

The label "terrorist" is pinned on all who dare to challenge imperialist domination.

Announcement of the "terrorist" designation was coupled with an ominous declaration by Secretary of State George Shultz that U.S. forces might have to make "preemptive" strikes to prevent "suicide" attacks on their gunboats in the Mideast.

The Iranian government promptly replied that it would respond to any "adventure" by Washington.

U.S. officials were compelled to acknowledge they could produce no serious evidence of any planned "suicide" attack.

Meanwhile, the move to create the Jordanian-U.S. force represents a serious threat to Iran. Equally, it is a menace to all liberation forces in the area.

Pushing ahead with the project will deepen U.S. military involvement in the region. That could also lead to an even greater toll of U.S. soldiers than has already occurred among Marine forces garrisoned in Beirut. □

Mitterrand orders step-up of colonial war

French jets combat rebel forces

By Ernest Harsch

By attacking Chadian rebel forces on January 25, the French government has issued an "open declaration of war" against the people of that Central African country, according to rebel spokesperson Abdelrahman Moussa.

The accuracy of that statement was underscored within a few days of the attack, as French President François Mitterrand ordered a sharp escalation of Paris' military intervention in Chad. The number of French warplanes there was tripled, French troops were ordered to move their military line further northward into rebel-held territory, and officials in Paris warned of possible air strikes in northern Chad.

The fighting on January 25 was the first involvement of French forces in direct combat in Chad since Mitterrand dispatched 3,000 troops there in August 1983 to help prop up the proimperialist regime of Hissène Habré, which is engaged in a civil war with a coalition of forces led by former President Goukouni Oueddei.

Failed talks, renewed war

Since that time, an uneasy stalemate had prevailed in the war. The French troops had set up a "red line" through Chad, along the 15th parallel, to separate the rebel-held north from central and southern Chad, where most of the country's population lives. This intervention halted a major advance southward by Goukouni's forces.

To justify this French imperialist intervention in Chad — a former French colony — the Mitterrand government claimed that its goal was to achieve a "peaceful" solution to the war and that the presence of French troops would facilitate negotiations between Goukouni and Habré.

In fact, Goukouni's Transitional Government of National Union (GUNT), based in the northern town of Bardaï, indicated its willingness to negotiate and sent a delegation to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, to attend talks arranged under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). But Habré refused, and OAU Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam accused Habré of wrecking the talks.

Faced with Habré's intransigence — and Paris' unwillingness to force him to the negotiating table — the GUNT launched an attack on January 25 against a garrison held by Habré's troops at Ziguey, just south of the "red line." According to a broadcast over the rebel station Radio Bardaï, units of Goukouni's National Liberation Army overran the garrison and "completely annihilated" it.

Although the closest French military posi-



Chadian rebel forces in strategic northern town of Faya-Largeau, which they have occupied since June 1983.

tion was some 100 miles away, at Salal, French Jaguar and Mirage fighter planes were quickly dispatched to attack the rebel column as it headed back northward. In the subsequent fighting, the rebels suffered an undisclosed number of casualties. One Jaguar was shot down, and its pilot killed — the first acknowledged French combat death in Chad since August. A Mirage was also hit but managed to return to its base.

As a justification for this raid, the French authorities claimed that their planes were fired on without provocation and that they simply retaliated.

Abdelrahman Moussa, the GUNT spokesperson, responded to this charge: "We deny having provoked the French. We were attacked and we simply acted to defend ourselves."

And rejecting the Mitterrand government's implication that the French plane was downed by Libyan troops, Moussa pointed out that the rebel forces were also capable of using SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles.

In the immediate wake of the battle, four new Jaguars were rushed to Chad from a French base in Gabon, where they had been stationed as a back-up force during the initial French intervention in August 1983. But for Mitterrand, even that was not enough. Other Jaguars and Mirages were sent from bases in France itself, raising the total number of French warplanes in Chad to about 24, or three times the number before the January 25 clash.

On January 27, Paris ordered its troops in

Chad to move the "red line" 60 miles farther north, to the 16th parallel. "Their orders are to engage hostile troops if they enter the new zone," a French military spokesman said. "It's like the 200-mile limit Britain put around the Falklands," he added, revealing the inspiration the French imperialists have drawn from London's war in 1982 to prevent Argentina from regaining its Malvinas (Falklands) Islands.

But Paris may not wait for rebel troops to cross the new line. Government officials have indicated that the new warplanes sent to Chad may take part in air strikes deeper into the rugged desert and mountainous north controlled by Goukouni's supporters. "We reserve the right to strike where we want," one high-level French Defense Ministry official arrogantly proclaimed.

Charges against Libya

Repeating one of the imperialists' favorite justifications for intervening in Chad, the Mitterrand government presented its latest moves as a response to Libyan "aggression."

A day after the January 25 battle, a French government representative declared that "Libya appears to be responsible" for the shooting down of the French Jaguar.

Paris — as well as the Reagan administration in Washington — frequently portrays Goukouni's forces as Libyan puppets and even attributes the bulk of the fighting in the region to Libyan troops. Just a week before the latest escalation of the war, Gen. Jean Poli, the French commander in Chad, charged in an interview in the January 18 Paris daily *Le Monde*, "The

north is on the road toward annexation by Libya."

The Libyan government of Muammar el-Qaddafi, while openly acknowledging that it provides assistance to Goukouni's forces, denies the French and U.S. charges that there are thousands of Libyan troops in Chad.

In an interview in the January 2 London weekly *West Africa*, Issa Abdallah Mohamed, the secretary general of the Chad National Liberation Front (Frolinat), the largest current within the GUNT, explained:

"It is not really a question of the Libyans attacking the French; it is more a question of the Chadian people deciding to fight or not to fight. The Libyans are our friends, and they are helping us to fight against imperialism. That is all. . . . It is rather, a problem between the French and the Chadians, in which the Libyans happen to be involved."

Under the French boot

The "problem" between the people of Chad and French imperialism is a long-standing one. Colonized for most of this century by the French, Chad is one of the poorest countries on earth. Some 90 percent of its population of 4.5 million eke out a meager existence from primitive agriculture and stockraising. Barely 18 percent of the people can read or write.

Although Chad gained its independence in 1960, it remained under French imperialist domination. The commercial economy of the south is dominated by a French monopoly that exports the cotton grown by the Sara peasants of the region. Paris has frequently intervened to maintain a proimperialist government in Ndjamenana that can defend its interests in the country.

That has not been an easy task. Since the mid-1960s, an insurgency based primarily among the Arabic-speaking peoples of the north and center of the country has periodically challenged Paris' dominance. That insurgency has historically been led by Frolinat.

Although Frolinat split into several factions during the 1970s, the French were nevertheless

forced to make some concessions and allow the establishment of a coalition government in 1979 that included 11 different political and military groupings. It was headed by Goukouni, the leader of the largest Frolinat faction.

But the French and U.S. imperialists remained hostile to the Goukouni government. They disliked some of Goukouni's anti-imperialist foreign policy stands and were opposed to the inclusion of prosocialist currents within his coalition. Above all, they distrusted his close ties with the radical nationalist Qaddafi government in neighboring Libya. This distrust turned to alarm when Goukouni invited several thousand Libyan troops into Chad in late 1980 to help put down a rebellion led by Habré, a renegade Frolinat leader who had broken from the coalition and sought to overthrow the government.

The imperialists much preferred Habré to Goukouni. They secretly armed and financed Habré's rebellion, an operation in which the

CIA played a direct and decisive role (see box).

With this imperialist backing, Habré finally succeeded in marching on Ndjamenana in June 1982 and seizing power. Goukouni and most of his other partners in the GUNT withdrew into the countryside.

A brutal dictatorship

Habré quickly sought to consolidate his rule through widespread repression. Supporters of the GUNT were arrested, tortured, and killed, both in the capital and in other cities and towns that fell to his troops.

In October 1983, Amnesty International released a report charging that more than 160 civilians had been killed by the Habré regime over the previous 15 months, many of them in towns and villages far from battle zones.

"After President Habré took control of the central government in Chad's civil war in June 1982," an Amnesty International press release reported, "his troops tortured and killed civil-

How the CIA brought Habré to power

In 1980, Hissène Habré, who was then defense minister in the Transitional Government of National Union (GUNT) headed by President Goukouni Oueddei, began an armed rebellion to try to overthrow the government. Goukouni, with the help of Libyan troops, drove Habré from the country, across the border into neighboring Sudan.

Shortly thereafter, in early 1981, the CIA stepped into the picture to boost Habré's fortunes.

Details of this CIA intervention in Chad were provided in an article by Jay Peterzell in the January 21 issue of the U.S. weekly *Nation*. His article was based on "a score of interviews with current and former Administration officials, Congressional sources and African diplomats."

In March 1981, Habré requested arms from Washington. But, according to one U.S. official, he did so with the knowledge that the U.S. authorities were already willing to provide them. "We were passing word to Habré through Sudan that we would be interested in doing this," the official said. By the time Habré made his request, "the decision had been made. . . . In [Secretary of State Alexander] Haig's mind it was a foregone conclusion. . . . He just had a fixation on using Chad as an arena for bloodying the Libyan nose."

So by early spring 1981, U.S. sources told Peterzell, Washington began supplying Habré with money, arms, ammunition, vehicles, gasoline, and other equipment. This supply operation was coordinated with the Egyptian and Sudanese regimes, and the Sudanese minister of state security arranged the deliveries to Habré.

According to Peterzell, "By the time the Libyans withdrew from Chad in November 1981, U.S. aid commitments to Habré totaled about \$10 million. Officials estimate that as much as 50 percent of the amount allocated for military equipment was required to cover transportation costs, leaving roughly \$5 million to \$7 million in aid and matériel."

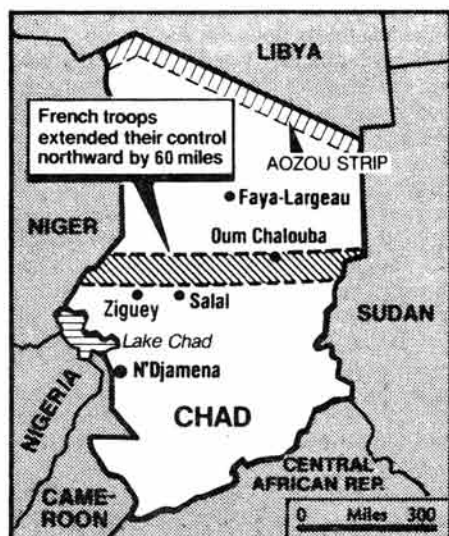
Contrary to press reports at the time, Washington did not ask the Egyptian and Sudanese regimes to stop aiding Habré following the Libyan withdrawal from Chad. Nor was U.S. aid cut off. "It continued," one State Department official told Peterzell. "By that time, we had a lot of confidence in him [Habré]."

At the same time, Washington aided Habré's rebellion indirectly, through one of its key African surrogates: the Mobutu Sese Seko regime of Zaïre.

Following the Libyan withdrawal from Chad, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) sent an African "peacekeeping" force to Chad to serve as a buffer between Habré's forces and those of Goukouni. It was composed of Nigerian, Senegalese, and Zaïrean units, and financed by Washington and Paris.

According to several U.S. and African sources, the Zaïrean contingent actually helped Habré's troops by letting them through OAU lines to attack Goukouni's forces.

In June 1982, thanks to this U.S.-orchestrated war against the Goukouni government, Habré's heavily armed troops succeeded in capturing Ndjamenana and installing a new regime that was directly beholden to U.S. and French imperialism.



ians in a number of areas in the south of the country. . . . Killings, torture and arbitrary arrests have continued this year. . . ."

In addition, the human rights organization went on, many people who had been arrested en masse for suspected disloyalty remained unaccounted for.

Citing examples of eyewitness reports it had received, Amnesty International pointed to reprisal killings by Habré's troops in the Doba region of southern Chad. Following some sporadic guerrilla attacks on cotton depots, his troops moved into 15 surrounding villages in April 1983, beating people and murdering an estimated 40 villagers chosen at random. Similar massacres occurred elsewhere as well.

Since August 1983, Habré's dictatorship has been directly reinforced by foreign troops. In addition to the 3,000 French troops sent to prop up his regime, the U.S.-backed regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaïre dispatched some 2,300 soldiers. Several U.S. military "advisers" are in Chad as well.

Besides maintaining the "red line" and carrying out actions against the GUNT forces in the north, the French troops have also played a key role in securing Habré's position in the capital and other towns in the center and south. The January 18 *Le Monde*, noted the "severe security measures taken in Ndjamena, particularly by the French."

In addition, the Habré regime has received tens of millions of dollars in military and economic aid from Washington and Paris.

Despite such direct imperialist backing, the Habré regime remains weak and unstable. It has a very limited base of support within the country, comprised primarily of Habré's own army and sectors of the armed forces of the French-backed neocolonial regime that existed before the GUNT was set up in 1979.

Rebels for 'a new society'

In contrast, Goukouni's GUNT remains a broad coalition. Except for Habré's group and another small Frolinat splinter led by Abba Siddick, it includes all the surviving forces that made up the original coalition when Goukouni was in power in 1979-82.

Although most of these groups are based in the north and center, there are also representatives of the Sara people of the south, who had not previously been drawn into active resistance to French imperialist domination on any significant scale. Habré's repressive policies have served to spur more of them into action, and armed attacks on government forces in the south have risen markedly over the past year.

According to Frolinat Secretary General Issa Abdallah Mohamed, the GUNT is politically a "coalition of elements from the far right, the centre and the far left."

Mohamed added, however, that Frolinat was the major political force in the coalition and was represented in the GUNT through four of the military formations taking part in the war. He said that Frolinat's program, approved during a reunification conference in May 1981, was "a national democratic one aimed at

building a non-capitalist society. The ultimate goal is socialism. It stresses the withdrawal of foreign troops from Chad, the breaking up of traditional systems and the building of a new society based on equality, brotherhood and justice. Nationalisation and agrarian reform would take place, and we would lay the foundations for industrialisation. On foreign policy, we would build good relations with all non-aligned countries and peace-loving nations. . . ."

DOCUMENTS

End the repression in Tunisia!

Statement of Revolutionary Workers Group

[On January 6, the Revolutionary Workers Group (GRT), a sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Tunisia, issued a statement in Tunis, the capital. It was released on the same day that President Habib Bourguiba announced that previously scheduled hikes in the prices of bread and other staple foods had been rescinded in wake of several days of mass demonstrations and street clashes in Tunis and other cities and towns.

[The following excerpts from the GRT statement appeared in the January 23 issue of *Inprecor*, a French-language fortnightly published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

More than one hundred deaths, several hundred people wounded, and thousands of arrests — that is the gruesome toll in the disturbances that have taken place throughout the country. . . .

Today, three days after the proclamation of the state of emergency, the government, surprised by the rapid spread and breadth of the movement, is retreating from its decisions. Whatever the political motivations behind Bourguiba's maneuver, which was aimed at recouping the losses suffered during the discontent, the mass movement has, despite its spontaneous character, inflicted a serious setback to the government's policy. . . .

Despite strong discontent within the ranks of the trade unions, the leadership of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) found itself out of step with the mass movement. This was because of the UGTT leadership's support to [Prime Minister Mohammed] Mzali's policy and its refusal to mobilize the workers around clear and unifying objectives.

The workers' demonstrations and strikes that were initiated by certain regional unions or in sectors of industry and the strong discontent at the rank-and-file level must be transformed into a broad movement of working-class response to the regime's austerity plan and its policies whatever form they take.

Paris' intervention — fully supported by the Reagan administration — is designed to block such forces from coming to power and seeking to implement their demands, which could challenge continued imperialist domination over Chad. It is likewise aimed at preventing them from forging firm alliances with other forces in the region, like the Libyan government, that are also in conflict with imperialism.

As in Lebanon, such aggression is the true face of the French "peacekeeping" force. □

- Immediately and unconditionally lift the state of emergency and the curfew throughout the country!

- Send the army back to the barracks!

- Immediately and unconditionally free all those arrested, and immediately halt all legal proceedings!

- Immediately compensate the families of victims of the bloody repression!

- Dissolve the Destourian* militias and punish all their members and leaders!

- Dissolve the BOP and all the repressive bodies!

Although the regime is now pulling back from some of its decisions, it will spare no efforts to regain the ground lost in recent days. It will do so by forcing the working class and masses of the people to pay dearly, while continuing to apply its austerity plan and to carry out its policy of repression.

This means that the working class must advance in closed ranks to defend its purchasing power by putting forward unifying demands, through its own methods of struggle and organization, in defense of the autonomy of its trade-union organization. In this way it can take charge of the defense of the interests of all the workers and disinherited masses.

- For a freeze on prices of basic necessities!

- No to the austerity plan! For a policy of full employment!

- For indexing wages on the basis of the unions' price index!

- For unrestricted freedom of organization, expression, and press!

- For a general amnesty!

The Chamber of Deputies, which is simply a rubber-stamp chamber and which was not democratically elected, loudly defended the government's decisions until the very end, despite the violent opposition of the people. We must denounce it and demand its dissolution. □

*The Destour Socialist Party (PSD) is the ruling party in Tunisia. Destour is the Arabic word for "constitution." — *IP*

Scores killed in price protests

Monarchy faces sharpening social tensions

By Will Reissner

Two weeks of clashes in January between demonstrators and security forces throughout Morocco have dramatized the discontent facing that country's U.S.-backed monarchy.

On January 25 the Moroccan government announced that 29 people had been killed and 114 wounded in the disturbances, which were triggered by increases in the price of basic necessities. But diplomats based in Morocco told a reporter from the Paris daily *Le Monde* that the death toll was at least 60. The Spanish press put the number of dead at up to 200.

In a 20-minute television address January 22, King Hassan II blamed the protests on a "multi-faceted plot," which he claimed involved supporters of Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Israeli secret service, and Moroccan "Marxist-Leninists," a reference to the outlawed Ilal-Amaam (Forward) group.

Hassan claimed that this unlikely coalition had come together to try to wreck the Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca, which closed on January 19.

Student protests

In fact, the demonstrations began two weeks earlier, on January 5, when high school students took to the streets in a number of cities to protest an increase in the fees charged to take final examinations.

The student protests quickly spread to other sectors of the population, including workers, angered by price increases scheduled for January on a broad spectrum of products.

People in Morocco had before them the example of nearby Tunisia, where days of massive protests had forced President Habib Bourguiba to announce January 6 that price hikes for bread and other foods had been cancelled.

On January 8, three days of demonstrations began in the southern city of Marrakech against a 20 percent rise in electricity rates. King Hassan had to rush troops into the city from the Western Sahara, where most of the Moroccan army is bogged down in an eight-year-old war against guerrillas of the Polisario Front, who are fighting for the Western Sahara's independence.

Unrest grew throughout the country as price increases for bottled gas, which is the main cooking fuel of Morocco's poor, and gasoline went into effect.

In the face of the burgeoning protests, King Hassan, like his Tunisian counterpart, was forced to rescind the price increases already announced.

The real source of the tensions was not outside agitators, as Hassan claimed, but the grinding poverty of Moroccan workers and farmers, their steadily declining living stan-



dards, and the severe economic and financial crisis rocking the country.

Making do on 42 cents a day

More than half of Morocco's 25 million inhabitants live below the official poverty line. Of those, 9.4 million people must try to exist on less than 42 cents per day per person.

Unemployment is estimated at 30 percent of the work force. Few youths entering the job market can find employment. The traditional safety valve of emigration to jobs in Western Europe is being restricted by the economic crisis in France, Belgium, and other traditional destinations.

The country's economic woes have been worsened by severe drought in 1979, 1981, and again last year.

In addition, the price of phosphate, Morocco's leading export product, declined by one-third in 1983, and remittances from Moroccan workers in Western Europe, another key source of foreign exchange, have levelled off as a result of the recession there.

The European Economic Community has added to Morocco's foreign exchange problems by imposing restrictions on Moroccan exports of fruit and textiles to Western Europe.

As a result of these economic problems, Morocco is drowning in debts to imperialist banks. Recently the government had to ask for a rescheduling of repayment on the \$11 billion foreign debt, which is equivalent to 90 percent of the country's annual gross domestic product (GDP). By contrast, the foreign debt in 1972 was \$900 million, amounting to 17 percent of the GDP.

In order to secure an agreement rescheduling the foreign debt, the regime had to accept an austerity program worked out by the International Monetary Fund. This program is designed to divert funds from domestic consump-

tion to interest payments.

Among the measures in the package are big cuts in government expenditures, a devaluation of the currency, and the increases in the price of basic necessities that had been announced for early January.

That the population exploded in anger should come as no surprise, given the fact that wages have been frozen for two years, while prices have virtually doubled in the past three years.

In June 1981 protests broke out in Casablanca following a 30 percent rise in the price of basic necessities. In those disturbances at least 66 people were killed and 110 wounded by security forces according to the government's figures. Opposition groups put the number of deaths at more than 600.

Moreover, the stark contrast between the poverty-stricken living conditions of the vast majority and the ostentatious luxury of the tiny layer of landlords and capitalists and the royal family makes the situation all the more explosive.

War in Western Sahara

Despite Morocco's desperate economic straits, King Hassan remains committed to the war in the Western Sahara, which consumes 40 percent of the government budget. The cost, estimated at \$1 million to \$2 million a day, is only partially underwritten by the oil-rich monarchs of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Since Moroccan troops invaded the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara in 1975, most of the 170,000 soldiers of the Moroccan army have been bogged down in the counterinsurgency campaign against the Polisario Front.

Unable to defeat the Polisario forces, the Moroccan army has constructed a 400-mile-long wall through the desert in an attempt to keep Polisario out of key areas.

Most opposition political groups have supported Hassan's war in the Western Sahara and have been unable or unwilling to play a role in the struggles against the monarchy's policies.

The largest opposition parties, the Istiqlal (Independence) Party and the Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP), have been brought into Hassan's cabinet.

Although 21 members of the USFP were arrested during the January protests, the USFP limited itself to printing a list of their names, without comment, in its newspaper.

The Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS — the Communist Party) is also a staunch supporter of the "recovery" of the Western Sahara.

There are, however, signs that opposition to the war in the Western Sahara is growing. During the demonstrations in Marrakech on January 8, 9, and 10, for example, the outlawed Ilal-Amaam group distributed leaflets charging that Morocco's financial crisis was brought on not by drought or higher oil prices, but by "the war that the criminal Hassan II is waging against our brothers in the Western Sahara." □

Thatcher wields ax against labor

'Onslaught' most serious in 50 years

By Steve Wattenmaker

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government has launched a frontal assault on trade union and democratic rights, aiming to inflict a serious defeat on the entire British labor movement. The government's strategy is to:

- Enforce and extend a series of union-busting measures passed by Parliament beginning in 1980. Known as the Tebbit laws (after Thatcher's employment secretary Norman Tebbit), they attack such fundamental union rights as the closed shop and solidarity strikes. The laws also lay the basis for undermining the traditional links between the unions and the Labour Party and subject the unions to massive lawsuits and court interference.

- Dismantle whole sections of local government controlled by the Labour Party. Thatcher has proposed abolishing metropolitan councils in London and other major cities. The impact of this move would be not only to weaken the Labour Party but to pave the way for drastic cuts in government funding for education, transportation, and other social services.

- Enact a new police bill that would broaden the powers of the police to stop and search without warrant and otherwise trample civil liberties. Britain's oppressed Black population is a special target of this proposed legislation.

Unions under fire

Ten years ago the British labor movement defeated a similar antiunion offensive launched by the Conservative government of Edward Heath. Called the Industrial Relations Act, Heath's union-busting legislation was fought on the picketline by millions of trade unionists.

The struggle came to a head in 1972 when special courts set up under the Industrial Relations Act jailed dock workers for "illegal" picketing. The rank and file of the British trade unions exploded in a massive show of resistance that forced the officials of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to threaten a general strike. The Tory government thereupon backed down. Two years later Heath was voted out of office, and the Labour Party was voted in.

Throughout the rest of the 1970s British capitalism fell deeper and deeper into crisis along with its allies in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. As a consequence Britain's bankers and industrialists stepped up their pressure on the labor movement, demanding big concessions at the bargaining table and blaming the governing Labour Party for all of Britain's economic woes.

The Labour Party leadership's failure to ef-

fectively mobilize British workers to combat the offensive contributed to Margaret Thatcher's election victory in 1979. Since regaining power the Tories have dealt the labor movement one blow after another. These reverses were registered in Labour's disastrous defeat in the June 1983 elections.

Thatcher's aim now, the January 6 British weekly *Socialist Action* explained, is to escalate the attacks to the point of securing a "thoroughgoing organisational defeat of the Labour movement."

By November 1984 the closed union shop will only be legal if it is accepted by 80 percent of the work force. This measure alone, if allowed to stand, will cut hundreds of thousands out of trade union membership in the next five years. Union membership is already declining sharply, with a drop of 500,000 just in the last year.

Britain's rulers successfully utilized another section of the Tebbit laws in a recent strike by printers in Stockport, near Manchester. The law allows employers to sue unions that engage in solidarity strikes, or secondary picketing as it is sometimes called.

In an attempt to break the union in one of his shops, Eddie Shah, a small newspaper publisher, fired six union members and replaced them with nonunion workers. A strike was called, and the printers' union, the National Graphical Association (NGA), shut down other shops operated by the same employer. Shah sued the NGA for lost business under a provision of the Tebbit law, and the courts ordered the NGA to pay damages totalling more than one million dollars.

The NGA called a two-day strike of all printers nationwide and finally approached the TUC leadership to support and sanction another national walkout to beat back the employer-government assault. What started as a small strike by early December 1983 had mushroomed into a direct test of strength between Thatcher's union-busting policies and the labor movement as a whole.

At this critical moment, however, the TUC General Council voted not to back the printers and advised the NGA to respect the law on secondary picketing. The defeat for labor was enormous.

Labour Party targeted

A section of the Tebbit laws, which were passed in 1980 and 1982, aims at breaking the traditional bond between British trade unions and their political arm, the Labour Party. This is another key component of Thatcher's plan to hobble the unions' power.

The law allows individual union members to sue their unions if they object to the union making regular contributions to the Labour Party. In the past, individual unionists could refuse to pay their portion, but the right of the union as a whole to make contributions to the party was unchallenged. The Tories' goal with the new law is to break as many as half the trade unions away from their affiliation with the Labour Party over the next several years.

Rather than resisting this attack, the current right-wing leadership of the Labour Party is giving aid and comfort to the Tories in their efforts to sever the Labour Party from its financial and organizational base.

Speaking in early January, deputy leader of the Labour Party Roy Hattersley offered the analysis that "the trade unions themselves are going to be a diminishing force in British political and industrial life." He argued that the Labour Party should lessen its dependence on the unions to become more "a coalition of ideas" and less a "coalition of interests."

'A big challenge'

Contrary to this view, the strong ties between the unions and the Labour Party continue to strengthen the position of British workers in their conflicts with Britain's capitalist rulers.

Tony Benn, a leader of the Labour Party's left wing, explained in the January 13 *Socialist Action* that the "Tory onslaught" poses a big challenge to the labor movement.

"What is really at stake is the whole tradition of political trade unionism, which we thought we had established when the Labour Representation committee was set up over eighty years ago, and which led to the formation of the Labour Party itself, and then to the adoption of socialism in its 1918 constitution.

"For it was the steady decline of political trade unionism in recent years which gave the Tories the chance they had been waiting for, to attack trade unionism, and to try to break the links that it has with the Labour Party."

The Thatcher government has also targeted another blow at the Labour Party by declaring the abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) and other metropolitan governments by 1986. The GLC and many of the other councils are now controlled by the Labour Party.

Abolishing the councils would do more than simply undercut a base of Labour Party power. In taking direct control of the social services the councils now administer, the Thatcher government plans to cut some £20 billion in funding for education, transportation, firefighting, and other vital services. For example, the To-

ries have already proposed a 20 percent cut in the GLC's budget for fire services, meaning a reduction of 1,400 firefighters. Thatcher's plan to take direct control of public education after the GLC is abolished will cost 4,000 jobs and result in a 75 percent cut in money available for books and other teaching materials.

To protest these attacks, some 30,000 workers demonstrated in London January 24 in an action spearheaded by workers from the GLC and the Inner London Education Authority.

Accompanying its sweeping attacks on the trade unions and Labour Party, the Conservatives have also introduced legislation to beef up the police at the expense of democratic rights. Thatcher's proposed Police and Criminal Evidence Bill expands police powers to stop and search "suspects," arrest organizers of demonstrations where violence *might* take place, and conduct intimate body searches of anyone in police detention.

While the police bill attacks democratic rights across the board, it aims especially at Blacks, trade unionists, Irish nationalists, and antiwar activists. Russel Profitt, one of the Labour Party's few Black councillors called the police bill "another attempt to manage rebellious youth, the most rebellious element of which is Black youth, of course."

In April 1981 the south London neighborhood of Brixton exploded after Blacks there had suffered weeks of intense police harassment. Authorities had used "sus" laws — provisions that allow police to stop and search on "suspicion" — to stop more than 1,000 residents of the area.

Taken together, the scope of the attacks on the British working class amounts to "the greatest assault on the Labour movement for fifty years," the January 6 *Socialist Action* warned.

"Far more people than ever before will find out in 1984 that Thatcherism and capitalism mean not just mass unemployment and rising poverty but the elimination of major democratic rights, the weakening of the power of ordinary workers to defend themselves against their employer, the destruction of a major part of the most important social gains the working class has made."

Revolutionary Marxists in Britain have been fighting for the left currents within the Labour Party and the unions to rebuild the leadership of the British labor movement along class-struggle lines, as part of launching a militant counterattack against Thatcher's policies.

An important test for the Labour Party, and especially the left wing, is next month's by-election for Parliament from Chesterfield. This will not only be the first seat the Labour Party has contested since their June 1983 defeat, but the candidate is Tony Benn.

The fight for every progressive cause in the coming year, *Socialist Action* concluded, is "inextricably bound up with the defence of the organised labour movement against one of the greatest assaults ever launched on it. Defeating that attack is the number one priority in Britain this year." □

New Zealand

Year of attacks on workers

Antiunion laws, assaults on democratic rights

By Eileen Morgan

[The following article appeared in the Dec. 2, 1983, issue of the Auckland, New Zealand, fortnightly *Socialist Action*, which reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, New Zealand section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

For working people, 1983 has been a year in which they have faced steadily escalating assaults on their jobs, living standards, union organisation, and democratic rights.

- At the end of October the total of those registered as unemployed or in subsidised work schemes stood at 114,075. Over the 12 months to the end of October registered unemployment has risen by 40 percent, and the number of people out of work for more than six months was up 98 percent to 15,242.

- The extension of the wage freeze until February 1984 has meant a further erosion of real wages for workers. While wages have remained frozen, prices have continued to rise. The Consumer Price Index rose 5.3 percent in the year to September 1983.

The government has already made it clear that wage controls will continue in 1984. In mid-November [Prime Minister Robert] Muldoon gave the union movement two options — a "small" general wage order on April 1 and no 1984 wage round, or no wage order and a "constrained" 1984 wage round beginning in June. On November 21 Muldoon announced that any wage order would be less than 4 percent.

Individual employers, including those in major export industries such as meat and timber, have also pushed ahead with attacks on wage and manning levels and working conditions.

- Other government policies, such as the 1982 tax "reforms," have contributed to the erosion of the living standards of lower-paid workers. Figures for the entire full-time workforce show that the real disposable incomes (that is, wages after allowing for taxes and inflation) in the year to June for the bottom 20 percent of income earners have dropped by 4.4 percent, while the real after-tax incomes of the top 20 percent have increased by 9.3 percent.

Democratic rights

- As the living standards of working people continue to worsen, the government has also been strengthening the powers of its repressive apparatus — particularly the police and the courts. As the police shooting of Paul Chase on April 18 graphically illustrated, Maori and Pacific Island workers have borne the brunt of

increased police violence and harassment.¹

Unionists, socialists, and other political activists have also been victims of increased harassment from both the police and the Security Intelligence Service. The overall effect of this, plus the government's moves to introduce harsher legal penalties and more anti-union legislation, has been the erosion of the democratic rights of *all* working people.

This year has also seen further attacks on women's rights. Women, along with Maoris and Pacific Islanders, continue to be among the worst affected by the economic recession. The government has launched propaganda attacks on the right of married women to work and on domestic purposes beneficiaries. There have been further attempts to tighten up New Zealand's already highly-restrictive abortion law — culminating in the introduction of the Kidd bill.²

- At the same time as the government's and employers' war against New Zealand workers has escalated, the government has tied itself even more closely to the war moves of United States imperialism. Almost alone in the world, the Muldoon government fully endorsed the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

New Zealand's ties to Anzus [Australia, New Zealand, U.S. Treaty Organization] have been strengthened, and 1983 has seen a steady stream of U.S. and British warships visiting this country. At the same time, the government has continued its hostile stance against the national liberation struggle of the Kanak people in New Caledonia and other antinuclear and independence movements in the Pacific.

- Uppermost in most workers' minds, however, is the major step forward the ruling class has taken this year in its plan to weaken union organisation.

The Industrial Law Reform Bill — which removes the unqualified preference clauses from awards, restricts the activities of unions and their officials, and introduces youth rates for workers under 18 years of age — was introduced in July. Despite widespread opposition to this legislation, the government has made it clear that it intends it to become law before parliament ends for the year.

Youth rates

Speaking in parliament, Minister of Foreign Affairs Warren Cooper described the Industrial Law Reform Bill as "the best thing that could

1. Maori worker murdered in his home by police.

2. Officially known as the Status of Unborn Children Bill, it is designed to make it virtually impossible for any woman to obtain a legal abortion.

happen out there in the marketplace." In other words, the true purpose of this bill is not to give workers more "freedom," but to make it easier for the bosses to lower real wages.

A key part of the bill is the proposed introduction of youth rates into all awards. As well as increasing the exploitation of young workers and undermining the principle of equal pay for equal work, this provision will increase competition among workers.

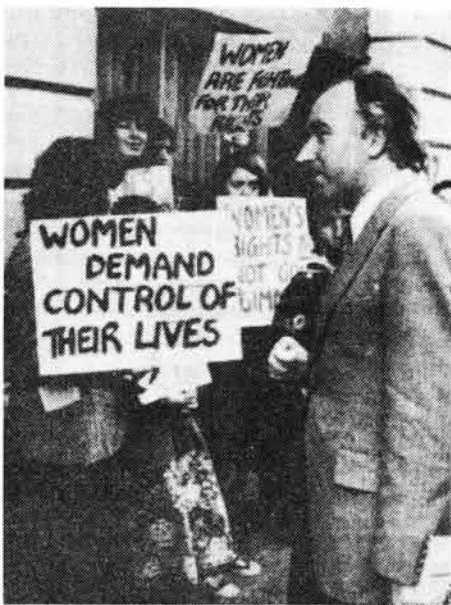
In a situation of high unemployment, youth rates can be used to force adult workers to accept lower wage increases, or even work for below-award wages, for fear of being replaced by younger workers. In this way, the wage levels of the whole working class will be dragged down.

Accompanying the Industrial Law Reform Bill is the Wages Protection Bill, which was introduced into parliament last month. This allows employers to deduct money paid to workers while they are absent, locked out, or suspended. It also puts the full responsibility for the collection of union fees on to trade unions.

Another piece of anti-union legislation, the State Services Conditions of Employment Bill, has now passed its second reading in parliament. This bill changes the basis of pay-fixing for public servants.

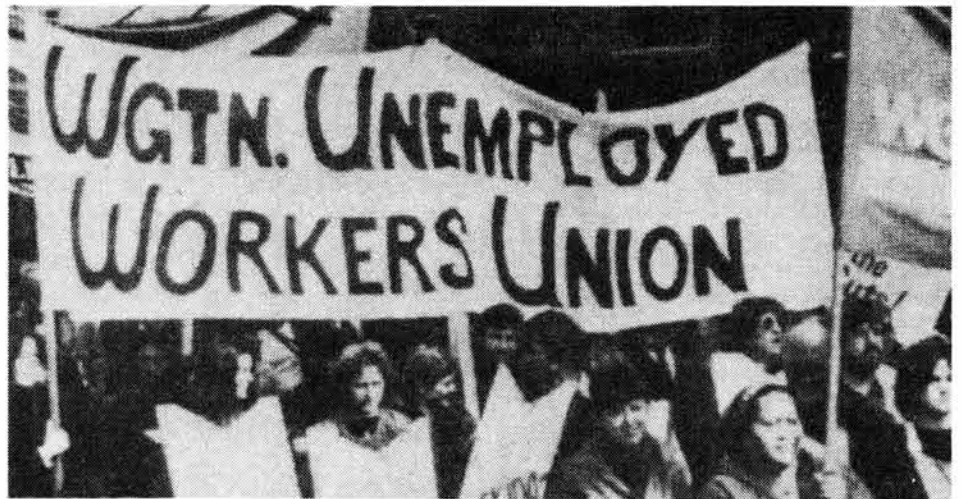
Planned stoppages by electricity workers in protest at the bill last month led to threats to deregister the Public Service Association and introduce emergency regulations under the Public Safety Conservation Act. The bill has now been amended to contain a clause allowing for the banning of any strike that would affect the supply, control, or operational management of the electricity system.

The focus of the union movement's response to these anti-union attacks has been to try to persuade the government and the bosses to change course. The emphasis has been on negotiations, submissions to select committees, and encouraging union members to write



Socialist Action

Women confront National Party politician.



Socialist Action

Unemployed workers march in Wellington.

to their MPs, rather than on mobilising the working class to take action in defence of their interests.

Closed shops

Union officials point to the doubts being expressed about the Industrial Law Reform Bill by some major employers as proof that this is the correct approach.

These doubts reflect the concern felt by sections of the ruling class about the speed at which the anti-union attack is being pushed ahead. In general, the workers they employ are in larger, more powerful unions which will be able to enforce union coverage of their plants.

Recognition of this fact has led the Employers Federation and some major employer groups to propose that the bill be amended to provide for closed shops in workplaces where they are supported by a majority of workers.

At the same time, however, these employers are in favour of the overall weakening of union organisation. While they may not immediately attempt to remove union organisation in their own plants, the government's new industrial legislation will give them the legal power to do so when they feel the relationship of forces is sufficiently in their favour.

A number of unions have also indicated that their members will enforce closed shops in their workplaces and refuse to work with non-union labour. On its own, however, this is not an adequate response.

Thousands of workers are employed in smaller factories and businesses, where the union has less power. Often, the workers in such jobs are from the most oppressed layers of the working class — youth, women, Maoris, and Pacific Islanders. These workers are the first targets of this anti-union legislation, and they will feel its full effects.

If workers in the stronger industrial unions concentrate solely on enforcing closed shops in their own plants, they will be turning their backs on these workers and the type of labour movement solidarity that is needed.

The anti-worker attacks being launched by

the ruling class cannot be turned back by appeals to "reason." The interests of the capitalist class and its political representatives are totally contradictory to the interests of working people. The only realistic perspective, therefore, is to mobilise the working class as a whole in a national fightback aimed at defeating the bosses' plans.

Labour Party

Such a fightback cannot be confined to industrial action. It has to take place on the political level as well. Many workers are looking to the election of a Labour government in the 1984 elections as a key part of defending their interests.

Unfortunately, the parliamentary Labour Party, led by David Lange, Geoffrey Palmer, and Roger Douglas, have proved unable to answer the challenge and stand firm by the unions and the working class. Instead, they argue that "realistic" policies are needed to appeal to a "basically conservative" electorate.

While telling the workers that it cannot make "extravagant" promises to improve their standard of living, the Lange team aims to convince the bosses that it would be a better manager of the capitalist economy than the National Party.

This strategy has not gone unchallenged. A debate on the Labour Party's direction and programme is taking place among many party activists. This had its reflection in the support for party president Jim Anderton at the annual conference and in a number of electorate challenges to sitting MPs. In response, the parliamentary wing of the Labour party has stepped up its attempts to stifle dissent.

This means that the union movement has two important political tasks in 1984. It has an important role to play in the defeat of the Muldoon government and the election of Labour. At the same time, it must take the lead in *transforming* the Labour Party so that it once again becomes a party which defends the interests of workers and working farmers, not those of the bosses. □

FMLN holds sway in one-third of country

Interview with Salvador Samayoa

[The following are excerpts from an interview with Salvador Samayoa, a leader of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador. Conducted by Blanche Petrich, it appeared in the January 22 issue of the Mexico City daily *Uno más Uno*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

In eastern El Salvador there are villages and towns whose inhabitants will "never again" be subjected to the army's invasions and massacres; places where the old paramilitary organization *Orden* — that at its height counted 50,000 armed ultrarightists in its ranks — will never be seen again; where people's power now organizes commercial and productive activity as well as schools that provide education and centers for military and political training.

In these towns, said Salvador Samayoa, a leader of the People's Liberation Forces (FPL), one of the five organizations that make up the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, columns of 300 to 500 well-armed guerrillas regularly pass through and are fed and sheltered by the inhabitants.

In this zone, which now embraces a third of El Salvador's territory, Samayoa explained, the insurgency operates on three levels: a regular rebel army with units that have mobility on a national level and have extended their theater of operations over 80 percent of the country's land surface; local guerrilla units that carry out operations in a particular region; and militias that defend the towns and protect the families of the combatants.

"The formation of these militias allowed us to take an important step forward. Concern for their families and for local struggles always used to put a brake on the guerrillas' ability to move elsewhere. Now we have been able to arm self-defense forces with small-caliber rifles, old weapons, and shotguns usually used for hunting. And our capture of massive numbers of M-16 rifles from the Salvadoran army has improved the firepower of our regular units."

Samayoa was the young minister of education who surprised the first military junta when he announced at the beginning of 1980 that he was joining the armed struggle against the regime.

He explained the factors that show the development of the Salvadoran guerrilla struggle in the last several years: for example, two years ago it would take the rebels 10 days to achieve their objectives in a clash with the army — now the government troops can be defeated in a matter of hours. The harassment of the army barracks in San Miguel lasted for 11

hours; the Cuscatlán bridge, the last highway span connecting the eastern part with the rest of the country, was destroyed in two hours; the El Paraíso barracks in Chalatenango fell after two hours of combat.

"We have the capacity to wipe out a company, a battalion, or even a brigade," Samayoa said. "In the eastern and northern provinces where the army still controls the provincial capitals, they are isolated from the population, immobilized. This is the case in La Unión and San Miguel. In the north of Morazán and Chalatenango provinces our forces dominate. There we have liberated territory, and if the army comes in they don't even last four days."

Question. Has the FMLN and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) considered the possibility of establishing a provisional government in this zone?

Answer. It was considered, but we concluded that this would not mean a significant step forward in the war. The organizational structure we have is satisfactory for the time being. Since we already enjoy international recognition on the basis of the territory we hold, we believe that the question depends more on political factors than on legal considerations.

Q. How has the establishment of a training center [for Salvadoran army troops] at Puerto Castilla, Honduras, affected the development of the guerrilla struggle?

A. Puerto Castilla represents a gigantic failure for the United States' plans. First, there are political conflicts between the government of El Salvador and the Honduran military. The United States forgot to take this historic problem into account. How could [Washington] expect that the Honduran army would come to the defense of its enemies? The peace treaty signed three years ago by San Salvador and Tegucigalpa settled nothing.

For another thing, training the Salvadoran army outside the country is artificial and cannot replace the experience of real combat. The training time is very short and the costs are very high. There are still Salvadoran soldiers at Puerto Castilla, but it can never be a permanent base for large-scale training. Instead, the Pentagon has announced the establishment of new bases in Sonsonante, La Unión, and San Vicente.

Q. And the joint Honduran-United States military maneuvers, Big Pine II and III?

A. As with all the U.S. military plans, this also is ill-timed. It comes at the wrong moment to contain the military advance of the FMLN. Among their objectives is to continue "clean-up" operations against the population near the Honduran border so as to reduce our logistical support and increase their own ability to contain us in the north.

It is the same old "anvil and hammer" tactic that has already failed. While they have tried to push the FMLN toward the north, the army has instead been losing its positions. During 1981 in Chalatenango alone, the army held 36 positions. Today they only have half a dozen, and of these only the provincial capital is of any importance.

Q. Do you foresee a big offensive against rebel positions in the eastern part of the country before the March elections?

A. I certainly hope so. The government units would suffer immense defeats as they moved in, allowing us to capture many weapons. The rebels always come out the winners in ambushes.

Q. Are there possibilities for the rebels to extend their power into the western provinces?

A. It is very difficult. Historically we still face the burden of the repression [that hit western El Salvador in the wake of the failed 1932 insurrection there]. In past decades the west did not experience as much turbulence, in part because it is better-off economically due to the cultivation of coffee and a different pattern of land ownership. Moreover, our movement suffered heavy blows in 1981 in Metapán, Santa Ana, and Ahuachapán.

Q. And on the urban front?

A. It is surprising, but San Salvador is the main base of support for the revolution. Don't forget that in 1980 some 300,000 people — out of 800,000 inhabitants — came out into the streets. There, half the city's population lives in a belt of misery surrounding the capital.

This is the permanent social base of the revolution. Historically, the ruling party has never won a single election in San Salvador, in spite of fraud and repression. Militarily, the capital is dominated by the security forces and the army. We do not have military objectives that we would classify as priorities now in San Salvador. Our only objective there would have to be to defeat the central army installation. But the capital is a place that is fundamental politically. □

FMLN addresses U.S. people

'In the end, the revolution will win'

[The following communiqué, addressed to the people of the United States, was issued in El Salvador on January 18 by the General Command of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). It was signed by all five of the FMLN commanders: Leonel González, Roberto Roca, Shafik Jorge Handal, Fermán Cienfuegos, and Joaquín Villalobos. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

According to President Reagan's instructions, the invasion of our country has been set in motion under the guise of a third stage in the joint maneuvers that U.S. troops have been carrying out in Honduras since August 1983.

It has been announced that the "Big Pine" or "Ahuas Tara III" maneuvers will take place during June, in the area known as "Three Points," where the borders of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala come together. This will include a landing of U.S. troops on Salvadoran territory near the department of Chalatenango, one of the main bases of the FMLN.

Intelligence sources affirm that because of unresolved differences with the Guatemalan government and, especially, the notable advances made by the FMLN, another alternative is being prepared: to move the maneuvers ahead to February, carry them out in southeastern Honduras along the coast of the Gulf of Fonseca, and carry out the landing of U.S. troops on Salvadoran territory near the department of Morazán, another of the FMLN's main bases.

In either of these two variants, "Ahuas Tara III" would be the cover for invading our country in an effort to impede the victory of the Salvadoran people over the half-century-long genocidal dictatorship that has caused nearly 90,000 deaths, 50,000 of them in the last four years.

The danger of an invasion has increased since the Kissinger commission report, which was greeted with such enthusiasm by Reagan. The report has, correctly, been described by many Latin American and U.S. figures as "a war plan" counterposed to the peace effort that the Contadora group is carrying out in the region.

We warn that we will treat such foreign-troop landings on El Salvador's territory as what they are: *an invasion and aggression, which will receive the appropriate military response.*

Nobody disputes the fact that the FMLN has been advancing and beating the dictatorship and its criminal army, despite the continuous and growing aid in money, advisers, and weapons provided by the U.S. government.

There is only one explanation for this: *the Salvadoran people are on the FMLN's side.*

The usual explanation from the White House and the Salvadoran dictatorship is that our advances are due to our supposedly receiving weapons from Cuba and the Soviet Union.

If these arguments had any truth to them, why is the dictatorship's army being defeated despite the fact that it has more soldiers and officers, more and better arms (including planes, helicopters, and maritime vessels, all of which we totally lack), and despite the fact that it controls the machinery of state and, in addition, has the active aid of the U.S. government, the most powerful economic and military power in the West, located a few hours by air from our country?

How can one explain these realities without accepting the fact that the Salvadoran people are determined to defeat the dictatorship, at a cost of the supreme sacrifices needed to achieve that?

The great majority of the soldiers in the dictatorship's army are recruited by being captured in the agricultural plantations, the city streets, while getting off busses, or leaving schools, stadiums, movies, or work places. They do not go into combat of their own free will and therefore they are deserting in growing numbers or are being taken prisoner, often without firing a shot. More than a few ask to join the ranks of the FMLN.

Many family members of the deserters are seized as hostages by the army to force them to return to the barracks. The population complains about all this every day.

An ever growing portion of the money of the U.S. taxpayers that the Reagan administration sends to the dictatorship is consumed by the graft of the corrupt military and political command. Can this be called popular support, democracy, national will, etc.? The U.S. military advisers are well aware of this situation, and the people of the United States should demand that they be given an honest, public report.

It is, therefore, very clear that if the U.S. troops were to come, they would fight against the Salvadoran people, resolved to do whatever is needed, and not against a "handful of terrorists" as the White House usually calls us. The United States would become embroiled in a long and dirty war in which its soldiers and officers would be covered in infamy, uselessly killing tens of thousands of unarmed people, destroying poor villages and cities. And a great many of them would also die, uselessly, on our soil, causing mourning in thousands of families of simple, hardworking American people.

In the end, the revolution will win, come

what may. But a badge of dishonor will mark the history of the United States and will leave its mark on our relations, which we want to be constructive and friendly, and on the relations of the United States with all of Latin America. By acting like arrogant and remorseless emperors toward our peoples, those who govern the United States are sowing the wind, and will reap new whirlwinds.

We do not want to get involved in a war with the United States. We do not want more Salvadoran blood to be shed. We do not want our country to suffer more destruction. Nor do we want to kill young Americans. There should be no doubt that we would kill many, taking into account our considerable combat experience, the fact that we would be fighting on soil that we know like the backs of our hands and that we love because it is our homeland, while the invaders will be outsiders who will not have the motivation that inspires bravery and resolve.

Consistent with this situation, for the past three years we have repeatedly proposed negotiations to achieve a just and worthy political solution for our people. It has been Ronald Reagan's government that has systematically impeded negotiations, relying on the persistent collaboration of the multimillionaires of the criminal Salvadoran oligarchy, who prefer the destruction and depopulation of the country to the loss of their outrageous privileges.

Even a portion of the army is in favor of negotiating peace, and this could already have been achieved if the U.S. government had wanted it, despite the rabid obstinance of the oligarchy.

We are for a negotiated solution. We propose installation of a broadly representative government, a purge of the army, dissolution of the criminal police bodies, integration into a single national army, necessary social and economic transformations, and, on this basis, the holding of truly democratic and honest general elections.

Today, under the reign of the dictatorship, of the death squads, of the massacre of the civilian population by the army, there cannot be a free vote that is worthy of the name of democratic elections, and we have correctly declined to put down our weapons to take part in the electoral farce called for March [25].

To claim that we are a danger to the security of the United States is to put forward a bald-faced lie. The facts have shown that it is rather the United States government — arming the

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killers to the teeth and preparing to invade us — that is today the main destroyer of the life, security, and independence of the Salvadoran people.

We repeat: if the United States government

wants them, there will be negotiations and peace. If it prefers, there will be invasion, dirty war, dishonor for the Americans, and, in the end, victory for the revolution. The decision is in Washington's hands. The Reagan govern-

ment should give the people of the United States the opportunity to influence this decision, before sending their sons to murder pregnant women, children, and old people, and to die without glory for an unjust cause. □

Netherlands

Fighting experience for public workers

Defeat of strike spurs discussion among union ranks

By Herman Pieterse

[The following article appeared in the January 30 issue of *International Viewpoint*, a fortnightly review published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

* * *

"There is very little either Christian or democratic about the Christian Democratic Party." "One thing is clear, this government has to go."

When you hear talk like that at a Dutch union meeting, it means that something is going on. But when you hear these and many other such remarks at a meeting of the Christian Federation of Government Employees (CFO — Christelijke Federatie van Overheidsperoneel), you can talk about a new political situation in the country.

The change was brought about by a seven-week-long confrontation between the Christian Democratic-Liberal government headed by Ruud Lubbers on one side and the public-workers union on the other.

Since September, there had been grumbling among the public service workers. And this is a very important sector in the Netherlands. There are 700,000 public service workers, plus another 500,000 workers whose wages and working conditions are tied by law to those of the public workers. This is out of a total working population of about 4 million.

This 1.2-million-strong sector includes such important groups of workers as those at the power generators, on the railroad, all the mass-transport workers, and those in the municipal services such as garbage collectors and street cleaners, as well as the post, telecommunications, customs, and harbor-service workers. It also includes, of course, teachers, the police, and those working in the offices of the various ministries and the provinces.

What prompted the confrontation was a 3.5 percent wage cut. Under the pressure of the public workers actions, this cut was reduced at an early stage by 0.5 percent. On December 14, parliament passed a law to meet this agreement. But, although the direct result of the October, November, and December actions thus seems very small, it would be wrong to talk about a clear defeat.

The terms of the conflict were already evi-

dent in October. The government showed in an initial round of negotiations on October 5 that it was not ready to make any concessions to the union representatives. Provocative statements by Rietkerk, the Liberal minister of the interior, provided the match that set the powder alight.

On October 17, the railroad workers in Amsterdam started it going with work-to-rule actions (this was three weeks ahead of the plans of the union leadership). The rest of the country followed. The local bus services started rotating strikes. The other public service workers also staged a couple of actions. (Bus and rail workers belong to the transport union, other public service workers to the big civil service union.)

The escalation of the actions can be dated from November 2. The second round of negotiations brought a limitation of the wage cut to 3 percent. But that was as far as the government was prepared to go. The negotiators for the state said that they were bound by the agreement on which the ruling coalition is based. And that was that.

Within five days the most important actions were underway. The railway workers went from work-to-rule actions to region-by-region rotating strikes. The post was paralyzed by strikes at the sorting centers and by the postal drivers.

The customs workers started work-to-rule actions, which led in particular to major delays for truck traffic. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the sanitation workers went on strike. At the same time, other municipal services started rotating actions. In Amsterdam public transport stopped totally five times for a morning or a day. In Rotterdam after a week the transport workers started an unlimited strike.

In a number of other places also, other public services conducted various forms of actions. In all, tens of thousands of people were directly involved in the actions.

To be sure, the numbers of actual strikers were kept down by the tactic of rotating strikes and strikes at key points, which made it possible for quite small groups of strikers to paralyze enterprises and services.

Between November 18 and 21, the strikes went into a third phase. A judge ordered a third round of negotiations. In the first place, the General Federation of Government Employees

(ACOP — Algemene Centrale van Overheids Personeel), the civil service union belonging to the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions (FNV — Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, the Social Democrat-dominated federation of unions), seemed to be becoming isolated.

A compromise proposal was rejected by the ACOP, but the Christian union and the two right-wing unions of higher functionaries continued to discuss it all night long.

After a sleepless night, even these two conservative unions proved unable to reach an agreement with the government. Lubbers' hard line had brought the four unions together.

Finally, it was a combination of attrition and court injunctions that brought the actions to an end. In particular, when the postal workers and the Rotterdam city workers were ordered back to work, the public workers unions suffered a hard blow. The reiteration by the Liberal and Christian Democratic majority in parliament that they would continue to support the government also did not offer much hope. Between December 2 and December 9, most of the actions were ended.

The reasons for failure

How could a struggle with such mass support be ended in this way? And why was it practically only the public workers union that went into action?

Since the formation of the Lubbers government in November 1982, the old days when this country was supposed to be an "oasis of social harmony" have been fading fast. But, overall, the union movement remained very much oriented to negotiating in the framework of the tripartite bodies (labor, government, and employers) that abound in this country. The various strike waves that hit the Netherlands in the early 1970s hardly affected this traditional attitude.

When the crisis set in earnest in 1980, it led to a tougher austerity government here in the Netherlands as well. That is what the Lubbers government represents.

Because of an unfavorable relationship of forces in parliament and the reactions by the union movement to attacks on the workers' gains in 1977, 1980, and 1982, neither the Christian Democratic-Liberal coalitions that ruled the country in 1977-81 and 1982 nor the Christian Democratic-Social Democratic coa-

litions that governed in 1973-77 and 1981-82 were able to push the austerity drive very far.

Nonetheless, since 1979 real wages in the Netherlands have declined by 8 percent in industry and by between 16 percent and 20 percent in the public sector. But this did not solve the country's serious fiscal problems, for a number of reasons. First of all, up to 1982 the number of persons employed in the public services rose steadily. Secondly, through a complicated mechanism the evolution of wages in the public sector is linked to that in industry. Of course, this system has been breached from time to time, which explains how wages could fall faster in the public sector. But the system as such remains in force. Thirdly, social-welfare expenditures have increased enormously as a consequence of unemployment. In this respect, the Netherlands leads the Common Market, with a 17 percent unemployment rate.

It was impossible to pursue a severe austerity offensive and at the same time keep up the complex system of social partnership. But the previous governments proved unable to mount frontal attacks on it.

It is the Lubbers government precisely that has taken on the goal of dismantling this system.

In what is presented as a "no nonsense" cabinet, the leaders of the two big bourgeois parties have worked out a complete program for demolishing the social welfare system and eliminating social expenditures. In every test, the parliamentary majority seems to have given the government very nearly a blank check.

Politically the Lubbers government has not had an easy time of it. Obviously, an austerity program of this sort also harms the interests of a lot of Christian Democratic supporters. Thus the government's relations with the 350,000-member Christian National Federation of Trade Unions (CNV — Christelijke Nationaal Vakverbond) are already not the best.

Moreover, a considerable number of those who vote for the Christian Democratic Party are pensioners, and so were hit as hard as the public service workers by the 3 percent cut.

The government's operation as a whole is supposed to produce savings of 10.5 billion guilders (roughly 3.5 to 4 billion US dollars) at the expense of the public workers.

More cuts inevitable

Three of these 10 billion guilders are supposed to come from a reduction in the number of jobs. The 3 percent wage cut is supposed to have another 2 billion. That means that in the coming year still more stringent measures are going to be needed to save the remaining 5.5 billion. More wage cuts are, thus, inevitable.

Recently, the government has floated a draconian plan for social cutbacks. It is supposed to go into effect on July 1, 1984, but it will probably be implemented in stages spread out over a year and a half. This plan is designed to cut back social spending by another 10 percent. It is, moreover, another step to-

ward a total revision of the system of social spending, which in turn would result in new and drastic cutbacks.

Lubbers is not altogether crazy. So, the government has drawn up an overall plan involving cuts in taxes and social insurance payments that will favor workers in industry in 1984. It needs to play the public and private sectors off against each other to get the political room to launch further attacks on the living standards of working people. In fact, about 180,000 minimum-wage workers in the private sector were also hit by the 3 percent wage cut.

The government has been able to create divisions. The tendency has always been to look on public workers as people who are paid too much for doing too little. Declining wages in industry have fostered envy against the supposed advantages of public workers.

The fact that wages have been harder hit in the public sector is very little known. The wage differentials that existed before and the relatively small layoffs in the public services up till now have strengthened the impression among industrial workers that public workers are well off.

Of course, this is precisely where the unions had an important role to play in informing the workers of the real situation. The next largest union, the Industriebond-FNV (which includes most industrial workers) deliberately neglected this task. It formally supported the public workers. But in its paper, *ZIN*, generous space was allotted to opponents of the strikes. Moreover, the union leadership did not bother to correct any of these statements or reply to them.

The FNV (which has about a million members) as a whole supported these actions as a matter of course because they were against cutbacks. But no proposals for organizing concrete solidarity were forthcoming. In many cases, this kind of solidarity had to be organized against the opposition of the FNV. The isolation of the public sector, which naturally came under heavy fire from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces and the media, did not make it any easier to carry out the actions.

There is a constant threat of division between the various unions as well. There are two big labor federations in the Netherlands, plus a number of smaller independent unions.

In the public workers actions, this meant that in addition to the FNV and CNV unions, two small right-wing unions were also involved, the Federation of Middle and High Level Public Servants (CMHA — Centrale Middelbare en Hogere Ambtenaren) and the Civil Servants Union (AC — Ambtenaren Centra).

Only the FNV unions went out on strike, although the CNV unions often participated in the actions. The two smaller groups were involved only in the negotiations. Time and time again they seemed ready to make a deal with the government ahead of the FNV unions, but finally the government's hard line did not permit this.

Thirdly, the forms of action adopted had

their limitations. The pinpoint strikes did make it possible to paralyze large sections of public services and enterprises at minimal expense to the unions' strike funds. But this method was an obstacle to extending the actions. It was precisely in the last phase of the strike that this problem became clear, when court orders were sufficient to stop the decisive actions.

Lastly, from the beginning the political stakes of the actions were not clearly understood. The union leaderships apparently thought that they could get some more concessions by a show of force. By November 2, it was clear that this was not so. But the union tactics remained tied to this orientation.

If the actions had won any real success, this would have led directly or indirectly to the fall of the government. Neither the Christian Democrats nor the Liberals wanted to run that risk, in particular since they faced the possibility of defeat in early elections. The polls indicate that the Social Democrats would make big gains and the government parties would lose their majority.

Public workers ready for action

The most important development in this strike is that tens of thousands of people participated in actions for the first time. Before this there was scarcely any strike tradition among public workers, except in mass transport and certain municipal services. Now when the government makes the next round of cutbacks it will have to face a very widespread readiness for action on the part of the public workers.

The public workers unions have grown both in terms of members (the largest civil service union gained more than 10,000 members) and activists. Although a lot of the leaders are politically inexperienced, they continue to enjoy considerable confidence among the membership, especially in the case of the *Abvakabo*, the main FNV union for the public sector.

The actions were stopped by court orders that banned further strikes. There was a lot of grumbling among the ranks, but most of them did not feel that their leaders had let them down.

The defeat the public workers suffered in this round of cutbacks can, thus, be attributed to the political inexperience of most public workers. The courts have long been regarded as sacred. Now a whole series of decisions have made it crystal clear how judges act in big class conflicts. And the previous respect for the courts is fading. But this process takes time.

Some of the court decisions were quite significant. Although there is no formal strike ban, everywhere that the actions had a real effect the judges banned further strikes. This is an ominous sign. The courts banned strikes at the same time that they recognized the formal right to strike of public employees (except for the police). This sort of reasoning, thus, could be applied to industrial as well as public workers.

It was against this open class justice that the strikes at key points strategy proved particularly ineffective.

The Netherlands has seen other such strike bans. In the engineering industry on more than one occasion banned strikes have been continued by elected action committees.

Such action committees also played an important role in this strike. The central decisions were left to the union leadership. But the committees had a say in the forms of action, about the most effective way of paralyzing the key point selected for a strike.

In view of this success, it can be expected that in subsequent actions such committees will again be called upon to play a role. Thus, the means is at hand for continuing strikes in the face of court injunctions.

In the coming months there should be many discussions in the public workers unions. The most important questions are what attitude to take toward the courts and the policy of pin-point strikes.

The Socialist Workers Party (SAP — Socialistische Arbejders Partij), Dutch section of the Fourth International, publicized its ideas on these questions during the strikes through large-scale leaflet distributions.

Where possible, the SAP members played an active role in the action committees and worked in particular to build solidarity between the public and private sectors. In Amsterdam, for example, this led to the issuing of joint leaflets by leading unionists in various unions and to a common demonstration. The SAP's proposals for working toward a general strike of the public sector were generally well received.

Two political tests

This wave of strikes is the second big confrontation between the Lubbers government and the opposition. The first, the fight against the Cruise missiles, is not yet decided. In the second, the government won a material victory but one that looks likely to prove politically a pyrrhic one.

Opposition to austerity is now widespread in the union movement. A whole sector that had been quiet has now gone through an important experience in action. And in large sections of the workers movement, there is a climate of strong political opposition to the Lubbers government, even in the Christian unions.

This does not mean that things are going to be easy in the union movement. This government is determined to push austerity, and so it is prepared for hard confrontations.

In June 1984 we will face the final decision on the Cruise missiles and a first phase of a new offensive against social spending. The need is more and more clearly posed for ousting this government and replacing it with a Social Democrat government not tied to right-wing coalition partners.

Many thousands of people in the unions are beginning to see this. At the same time, we are seeing a process of differentiation among vari-

ous unions and in various unions between different layers of the apparatus. The most right-wing leadership, the one in the FNV Industriebond, is now facing opposition in its own apparatus. Similar processes are going on in other unions.

In the coming six months, we should see important political developments in the Dutch labor movement. Discussion should begin on

the most important labor contracts in industry, which will run out on January 1, 1985. There is every indication that the political stagnation that has reigned in the labor movement since the onset of the crisis in 1980 can be broken.

The task of the revolutionary socialists is to help to advance class-struggle answers and to promote the development of a militant left current. □

Korea

Massive U.S. military maneuvers

North Korea calls for talks, reunification

By Will Reissner

Huge U.S.—South Korean military maneuvers on the Korean peninsula began in early February. The "Team Spirit '84" exercises will involve 207,000 troops, 60,050 of them U.S. military personnel.

During last year's "Team Spirit '83" maneuvers, U.S. and South Korean troops simulated invasions of North Korea by land, sea, and air, prompting the North Korean government to put its armed forces on a "semiwar" footing from February 1 to the end of the exercises in mid-April.

In hopes of easing the mounting tensions and growing danger of war on the Korean peninsula, the North Korean government called January 10 for three-way talks between North and South Korea and the United States. The proposal was made in letters to the U.S. and South Korean governments.

The North Korean letter to Washington characterized the present situation as one of "mutual distrust" and warned that a "trifling incident" could trigger war between the huge armies facing each other across the demilitarized zone.

"Should a war break out again in Korea," the North Korean letter noted, "it would . . . inevitably expand into a nuclear war." It is believed that the Pentagon has more than 1,000 nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea. U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Edward Meyer warned in 1983 that if war did break out in Korea, U.S. forces could use tactical nuclear weapons stockpiled there.

The North Korean letter to the U.S. Congress proposed that three-way talks focus on "signing a peace agreement" between the United States and North Korea to supplant the 1953 armistice that ended the fighting in the Korean war and also proposed the adoption of a mutual "declaration of non-aggression between North and South of Korea."

After the peace treaty and nonaggression pacts are worked out, the North Korean proposal continued, a conference could be held between North and South Korea to work out "a confederation based on regional autonomy, leaving the existing socio-political systems in

the north and the south as they are."

The reunification of Korea, which has been divided since 1948, is a major concern of the 60 million Koreans on both sides of the border.

A separate North Korean letter to South Korean authorities dealt with reunification proposals in greater detail. The letter proposed that "a national conference embracing various parties, groupings and circles including the authorities of the North and South should be convened" to discuss reunification. The conference "may discuss the question of founding a neutral confederal state, leaving the systems in the North and the South as they are and allowing autonomy in the two regions," the letter added.

Or, "if the Seoul authorities had another reasonable proposal for the founding of a unified state, it may also be discussed," the North Korean proposal stated.

South Korea's Minister of National Unification Sohn Jae Shik responded on January 11 to the North Korean proposal by stating that before any talks could take place, the North Korean government must apologize for a bombing incident in Rangoon, Burma on October 9, in which 17 high-ranking South Korean figures were killed. The North Korean government has denied any involvement in or responsibility for the bombing.

South Korean authorities also arrested three prominent figures — a Methodist minister and two academics — for allegedly praising the North Korean position on national unification as more reasonable and democratic than Seoul's policy.

Rev. Cho Seung Kyuk and professors Lee Young Hee and Kang Man Kil have been in custody since late December. They were formally charged on January 10, the day North Korea made its peace and reunification proposal public.

A South Korean government official told Ian Buruma of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that it would be "dangerously confusing to the people if we were to allow anyone anywhere to discuss the issue [of reunification]. We have government organs to deal with it." □

Revolution gains despite war's heavy toll

Significant advances for workers and farmers

By Michael Baumann
and Jane Harris

MANAGUA — Nicaragua is the only country in Central America where literacy is rising and the infant mortality rate is dropping.

Where poor peasants are receiving land and workers are encouraged to form unions.

Where luxuries are expensive but basic food items are cheap and medical care is free.

Where the sight of a military or police uniform instills confidence, not fear.

It took the beginnings of a social revolution to make these changes. The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship on July 19, 1979, by the workers and farmers of Nicaragua — under the leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) — was only the first and in some ways the easiest step.

Today, four and a half years later, continues the even harder part: consolidating the workers and farmers government that was set up, carrying through the progressive social measures and introducing new ones, and meeting the needs of the toiling masses in a situation of undeclared war with the world's most powerful imperialist nation.

From the point of view of U.S. imperialism, the Sandinista revolution is simply *too attractive* to the exploited toilers of the entire region. Washington fears that its example will be contagious. If economic blockade, sabotage, and attacks by counterrevolutionary bands cannot bring it down, U.S. and other foreign troops will be used.

An invasion by the armies of Honduras and Guatemala, led by Argentine advisers, was called off only at the last minute in March 1982 because the Malvinas war intervened.*

In November 1983, one month after the U.S. occupation of Grenada, the Sandinista leadership warned that Nicaragua faced a similar danger. Sandinista commanders put Nicaragua on a virtual state of alert, explaining that all intelligence and troop movement reports indicated that an imminent invasion was possible. Several thousand U.S. troops were massed near the northern border, about to take part in major "maneuvers" with the Honduran army.

Civil defense plans became the order of the day, as well as an intensified militia training program.

As tens of thousands of Nicaraguans

mobilized in preparation to confront an invasion, Sandinista leaders initiated a political offensive, both at home and abroad. They initiated a series of measures to try to unify the nation against the imperialist threats, undercut the support for the counterrevolution that exists among some sectors of the poor peasantry and middle-class layers, and defuse many of the pretexts that Washington may seek to use to justify an invasion.

- All censorship on the right-wing daily *La Prensa* was lifted, with the exception of defense and consumer information.

- Amnesty for all Miskito Indians except counterrevolutionary leaders was decreed.

- Safe-conduct returns were guaranteed for all Nicaraguan nationals, excluding National Guard leaders, with rights to full participation in the 1985 elections. In addition, those returning are eligible for land under the agrarian reform program. Former landowners would either have their original properties returned, or, if they had already been distributed to the landless, would receive compensation.

- Overtures were made in the countryside to improve working relations with medium and large producers so as to present a united front in face of threatened imperialist invasion.

Speaking at a number of meetings with relatively well-off producers in the north, Commanders Jaime Wheelock and Víctor Tirado said that some errors had been made by the revolution, causing some farmers unjust prison sentences. Speaking at one such meeting in Jinotega province December 5, Wheelock pledged speedy release in such cases, as well as return of confiscated land.

Besides such measures by the FSLN leadership, U.S. citizens resident in Nicaragua made clear that under no circumstances do they want to be "rescued" by Washington. Every Thursday they and visiting U.S. delegations picket the U.S. embassy as a reminder.

Confidence in masses

These moves by the Sandinista leadership — while audacious and far-reaching — are a sign of the revolution's strength.

"Two years ago we could not have lifted censorship of *La Prensa*," one FSLN militant told *Intercontinental Press*. He explained that sectors of Nicaragua's barely literate population had been confused by the daily, which had played a progressive role in toppling Somoza. "Today there is much more clarity."

Junta member Sergio Ramírez, speaking at the National University December 20, remarked on how much the average Nicaraguan had learned in the last four years about world politics. "Why, we have a country of experts.

People know what's going on in Lebanon, in El Salvador, in Argentina, in Grenada."

While Sandinista cadres *IP* interviewed said they expected the ideological struggle to intensify with the new political opening for the right wing, they expressed tremendous confidence in the masses.

As Commander Jaime Wheelock put it in a speech December 9, "We have more than 600,000 activists in the popular organizations. I believe the Sandinista Front is the strongest political organization in Nicaragua. And perhaps, from the point of view of moral and political strength, stronger than any other that has ever existed in Nicaragua, or Central America."

This moral and political strength — combined with the political caliber of Nicaragua's revolutionary Marxist leadership and the integration of the working class and substantial sections of the poor peasantry into the revolutionary process — will provide a formidable obstacle to imperialism's plans to overthrow the revolution. Should direct U.S. intervention be launched against Nicaragua, this strength will serve to sustain a determined war of resistance. The political cost to Washington of such a war, most Nicaraguans believe, will eventually drive imperialism out.

The weapon of diplomacy, backed by the revolution's international prestige, has also been a powerful defense.

The Sandinistas' proposals to the Contadora Group (Panama, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela) for initiating a peace settlement in Central America go to the heart of precisely what Washington claims is the source of the problem — "outside interference." They suggest that *all Central American countries* get together and agree to forbid foreign military installations, bases, or training centers on their soil.

Following such agreement, and the signing of nonaggression pacts with its neighbors, Nicaragua is fully prepared "to initiate immediate negotiations with the United States to reduce the import of weapons, limit or eliminate the number of military advisers, and place reasonable limits on military buildup in the area."

This reasonable proposal has more clearly put the political burden for initiating armed conflict on Washington, and will thus serve to up the political cost of U.S. intervention. Washington's only response so far has been to dismiss it as "clearly insufficient."

"The Reagan administration is waging a war against Nicaragua that is no less real because it has not been officially declared." With these

*A report in the Dec. 3, 1982, *New York Times*, based on information leaked by the CIA, called the planned invasion "one of Washington's most ambitious attempts to bring down a foreign government since the Kennedys unleashed the Central Intelligence Agency against Fidel Castro."

words, delivered to an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council May 9, 1983, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto accurately summed up the situation Nicaragua faces.

Cost of war

Just in 1983 alone, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega stated in a year-end report, Nicaragua has suffered:

- 19 air attacks, including the bombing of its major civilian airport.
- 16 naval attacks, including the bombing of its main fuel storage depots on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.
- 3 major counterrevolutionary invasions, each one numbering thousands of troops.
- 495 armed confrontations with *contra* forces.

That the main aim of these attacks is to spread terror can be gauged from the fact that Nicaragua suffered more civilian than military casualties. Some 300 soldiers died defending Nicaragua's freedom this year. At the same time 346 civilians were killed, some 500 wounded, and another 500 kidnapped.

Economic costs of the war have been staggering. In a report issued Nov. 3, 1983, a commission headed by Minister of Social Welfare Reinaldo Tefel cited the following as *conservative* estimates of the impact of the combined U.S. economic and military offensive. The figures cover the period between March 1981 and October 1983.

\$36.2 million	Physical damage
\$37.2 million	Damage to productive facilities
\$38.2 million	Delays in projects and programs
\$20.5 million	Lost income
\$230.0 million	Blocked loans and credits
\$36.0 million	Cutoff in U.S. aid
\$14.0 million	Cutoff in U.S. sugar purchases

The total cost comes to more than \$400 million, a sum equal to one full year of Nicaragua's export income. Looked at another way, the sum is equivalent to all goods and services produced by the entire population over two full months.

In terms of food production, the situation is dramatic. "There have been great direct losses in the agricultural sector as a result of the military attacks," the commission stated. "But it must be pointed out that this is small in comparison with the decline in production caused by terrorist actions. Such activities have forced peasants to retreat toward the cities for protection and have placed obstacles in the way of providing inputs and technical help at the time they are needed."

The result was a big drop in the amount of basic food crops planted in 1983 and the prospect of grave food shortages in the cities in 1984. A full one-third of the food crops — 200,000 out of 600,000 acres — that were scheduled to have been planted this fall could not be sown because of the war.



Strategic fuel depot at Puerto Corinto destroyed in a naval attack by CIA-backed counter-revolutionaries.

In a country as poor as Nicaragua, few people expect miracles overnight. In addition, there is general recognition throughout the society that much progress has been held up by the cost of the war.

One indication of this sentiment is the fact that in the long lines that develop from time to time to purchase rationed commodities — such as at the neighborhood supermarket regularly visited by these *IP* correspondents — very little grumbling about the revolution or the government per se is heard.

Anger, when expressed, tends to be focused on price-gouging merchants in the privately owned markets, lazy clerks, unresponsive individual officials, and obvious cases of corruption or government bungling.

The basic strength of the revolution lies in the confidence among broad layers of the masses that the revolutionary process is headed in the right direction, and that the government is *theirs*. Concrete, tangible proof of this is the gains that have already been achieved.

With that in mind, let us look for a moment at two of the most important conquests of the Nicaraguan revolution — the gigantic strides made in expanding access to health care and education.

Health care: example and challenge

In 1983 Nicaragua was chosen as a model country in the field of health by the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Through vaccination campaigns in which hundreds of thousands have participated, polio has been eliminated. As well, great progress has been made in combating diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, and malaria. Government subsidies on basic food items have sharply reduced malnutrition. Potable water and the use of latrines has been introduced in new parts of the country. Some 300 health centers have been constructed in the countryside.

Visits to these health centers, as well as to urban clinics and hospitals, are free. Prescriptions, no matter how costly the ingredients, are provided at a charge of \$1.

The war has taken a major toll on efforts to expand health care. For example, in March 1983, when *IP* visited a clinic in Somoto, a northern border town, with visiting World Health Organization Director Halfdan Mahler, the health center was empty.

A nurse explained that *campesinos* are afraid to travel with the *contras* around. Transportation is difficult during the day and virtually impossible after dark.

Taking this into account, the Health Ministry has formed brigades of health workers who try to reach peasants in isolated areas.

Health workers and clinics have been a principal target of the *contras* over the last two years. Twenty-eight centers have been destroyed in the north and 12 doctors murdered. Vaccination campaigns have had to be suspended in many areas.

In March 1983, the FSLN daily *Barricada* ran a series of frank, critical articles analyzing the country's continuing health care problems. The number-one problem, *Barricada* pointed out, was imperialism's blocking of hard currency needed to buy medicines. But it noted a host of other problems as well: the flight of doctors and nurses from Nicaragua and the plight of those who remained (overworked), lack of hospital beds, lack of refrigerated warehouse space to store medicines, and last but not least, disorganization and inefficiency in the Health Ministry.

During the year, substantial funds were swindled out of this ministry and *Barricada* pointed out that it could be the fault of no single individual. Had the workers been keeping their eyes more open, it could have been prevented.

The fact is that Nicaragua has few trained accountants and administrators on whom it can count. They are still in training.

In preparation for the eventuality of an invasion, the Health Ministry's efforts have concentrated on massive education, particularly for high school students, in first aid.

While touring first aid classes at Elvis Diaz High School in Managua, Health Minister Lea

Guido explained to *IP* that once the students receive basic training, "next year we will multiply the effort. The goal will be one first aid worker in each family."

Also in preparation for all-out war, FSLN member and pharmacist Ligia Marcenaro told *IP* she was working on a computerized inventory of the country's medicines. The idea, she said, was to streamline the operation, cut down on duplicate brands, and see what can be dispensed with or produced inside the country.

Education: ongoing battle

Like health care, educational improvement is a particular target of the contras. In 1983 some 50 teachers were murdered and more than 300 adult education centers were forced to close.

Following the spectacular 1980 literacy campaign, roughly half the adult population was involved in follow-up courses. Overall, nearly a million people are involved in one form or another of organized educational activity. The aim is to bring the entire population to at least a fourth-grade level, the requirement international experts say is needed to prevent a regression to illiteracy.

To begin to meet this goal, the revolution has more than tripled the education budget to \$180 million a year, built more than 1,200 new schools, and created 3,000 new teaching posts.

With increasing defense needs, this ambitious program of advancement has been difficult to maintain. Commander Jaime Wheelock has estimated that from 15 percent to 20 percent of Nicaragua's economically active population is involved in the defense effort, a dramatic drain on human resources.

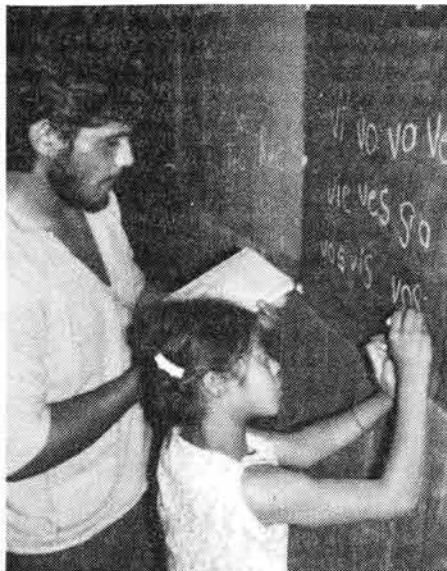
In March 1983 a public discussion opened up regarding a fact that pointed to serious underlying problems in the entire system of higher education. Even by the most liberal grading standards, 60 percent of all university students were failing one or more subject.

The discussion — carried out in the two daily papers that support the revolution, as well as in the Education Ministry and informally — served to focus attention on some of the main problems the universities face.

Some pointed to strictly educational factors, such as the poor preparation many students receive in high school. Under Somoza, no degree was necessary to teach high school, and many poorly trained teachers from this era have not yet been retrained or replaced.

Others, particularly student activists, pointed out that it is very difficult to go to school as if things were normal when in fact they are not. There is a war going on. There are frequent mobilizations for defense, for volunteer production brigades in the countryside, and for necessary political meetings. All of this naturally has a cost.

Students also noted the difficulties in obtaining textbooks (often only the professor has a copy) and the poor quality of some of the professors. Some professors left the country. Others, often the best, are today running entire branches of the government. Their replace-



Larry Boyd/IP

Nearly 1 million Nicaraguans are involved in some form of organized educational activity.

ments are precisely that — substitutes who are not as well prepared as the individuals they have had to step in for.

Serious study is new to thousands of students. Many admit they are unaccustomed to the discipline required.

Also pointed to was the fact that several thousand of the country's best students are not here in the universities at all but studying abroad on government scholarships. The return of these future professors, engineers, accountants, and scientists holds the long-range key to this and many other educational problems.

But in the meantime, no effort can be spared in working with the resources available. "Education is not only a basic element of development," Minister of Planning Henry Ruiz told a group of teachers in Managua last year. "It must also be converted into a tool that will enable the working class to take leadership of the country."

Citing similar problems faced by the Bolsheviks in the early years of the Russian revolution, Ruiz said: "It's true that cultural problems can't be resolved with the same speed as political and military questions. But we have to do something. That's the challenge we face."

Wheelock, addressing the opening of university classes March 9, 1983, told the students, "We have some of the largest rice complexes in Central America, without one single technician. We have a minister of agriculture," referring to himself, "who is a semi-lawyer.... We can't continue improvising...."

"If the material base we have today prevents a rapid advance, our men and women have to redouble their efforts to assure that progress is somehow accomplished."

Referring to several of the greatly respected Sandinista leaders, Wheelock warned the students, "Neither Bayardo [Arce], nor Humberto

[Ortega], nor Tomás [Borge], nor Daniel [Ortega], nor anyone is going to solve the problems of this country without the help of our people and without your help."

Agriculture: backbone of economy

After the war, the factor that perhaps most greatly shapes the course of Nicaragua's revolution is the country's social composition: it is made up overwhelmingly of peasants, artisans, and merchants.

Nicaragua is fundamentally an agricultural country. It has one large city, Managua, the capital; and half a dozen semi-urban centers tied closely to the surrounding countryside (such as León, Masaya, Granada). The great majority of the remaining urban areas are in reality agricultural villages with populations of 2,000 or less.

Food and fiber account for 70 percent of all exports, provide raw material for two-thirds of the country's economically active population (an estimated 630,000 out of 900,000). By comparison, industrial workers make up less than a tenth of the economically active population.

The great preponderance of rural producers in the population is a major element in dictating the pace and rhythm at which the revolution can advance. To assure a continued flow of food to the cities, export crops to foreign markets, and raw materials to the factories and mills, not only is the support of the poor and landless necessary but also, at this stage, the support of the middle and rich peasants as well.

Nicaragua's agrarian reform has been carefully adjusted to this reality, as has the pace of other social changes. The aim is to aid the historically most exploited, while avoiding at nearly any cost unnecessarily aggravating relations with relatively well-off producers.

The expropriation of the properties of Somoza and his associates, followed by confiscation of idle land, gave the revolution a sufficient quantity of land and facilities to begin the first stage of the agrarian reform.

The state now manages 2.8 million acres, reorganized in some 100 agrarian complexes, producing for the benefit of the entire society. This amounts to nearly a quarter of all cultivated farmland in the country.

Confiscation of idle land made available more than 1 million additional acres. Since October 1981 this has been distributed to more than 25,000 families, both individual producers and members of cooperatives.

All of this was done without touching the middle peasantry (owners of between 85 and 285 acres) and confiscating less than a quarter of the land of the rich peasantry (owners of between 285 and 860 acres). Large, efficient capitalist producers who were not directly linked to the Somoza regime were not affected at all.

At present there is no limit on the amount of land a single individual, corporation, or family may own. The only condition for retaining ownership is that it must be utilized productively.

Although the long-range goal is to expropriate the large plantation owners, there are no immediate plans to do so. To the contrary, the government is currently discussing with medium and large producers the issuance of "certificates of inaffectability" — formal legal documents pledging that their land will not be confiscated so long as they continue to produce.

Unlike many other countries in Latin America, Nicaragua is not *land-poor* in the usual sense. A population of only 3.5 million inhabits a country of 57,000 square miles. To meet the problem of rural underemployment, distribution of land is being combined with other measures. These include the introduction of perennial crops (such as African palm and cacao) in the tropical regions, intensification and mechanization of traditional agriculture, and placement of processing industries in rural zones.

A much greater problem in Nicaragua is poor *land use*. In some parts of the country cattle graze on rich bottom land while subsistence farmers try to eke out a living on rocky hill-sides better suited to pastureland. Farmers on the agricultural frontier in the center and east of the country grow perishable products that often rot before they can be shipped to market. Sugar must be exported to buy beans and corn, in cases where often it might make more sense to use the canefields for food crops.

Gradually straightening out this structural problem, inherited from Somozaism, is the long-range goal. The immediate priority is to consolidate the changes that have already been made and to continue crash economic and technical aid to those rural producers who need it most.

They are encouraged, but not forced, to join cooperatives. Free land, subsidized loans, and priority in social services have led more than two-thirds of Nicaragua's peasants to join one form of cooperative or another. The cooperatives now account for more than a quarter of all agricultural production, and the goal is to eventually double that to 50 percent. There are no plans at this time to increase the state's share in agriculture, nor to confiscate more of the big landowners. New land, as it becomes necessary, will be provided by opening roads, decentralizing storage and transportation facilities, and changing the pattern of land use.

Industry: starting out with a junkyard

If Nicaragua's agriculture exports \$10 in goods for every \$1 in raw materials it must import, Nicaragua's industry presents the reverse image. The country's factories, for every \$1 in goods they export, must import \$2 in raw and semifinished materials.

A visit to almost any Nicaraguan factory will quickly explain why. Under Somoza, Nicaragua's industry was built upon the rejects of more industrialized societies, particularly the United States.

Is your equipment worn out or obsolete? Why not sell it to Somoza? This exchange must have taken place in dozens of U.S. corporate

boardrooms over the decades the dictatorship was in power.

The main equipment in Nicaragua's gold mines predates World War I. Much of its textile machinery had already seen better days by the end of World War II.

Spare parts for this ancient machinery, hard to get under the best of circumstances, are nearly impossible to obtain under the U.S. economic blockade. Each factory, to maintain production, must have a permanent force of "innovators" whose chief task is to fashion parts out of scrap. They work wonders with the materials at hand (the country does not have a single steel mill), but the high cost of the finished product cannot compete abroad.

The most modern of the plants, in the drug and chemical industries, mainly repackage and put the final touches on finished and semifinished products imported from abroad.

The immediate goal of the revolutionary government in industry is simply to keep it running. One key consideration in this is the need to save jobs. Despite the war, the international economic slump, and the shortage of hard currency to import raw materials, only 4,000 jobs were lost in all of Nicaragua's industry in 1983. Of these laid-off workers, government programs provided alternative employment for more than half.

Longer-range plans are to completely change the face of Nicaragua's industry. What exists will be kept running as long as humanly possible. But new investment will be focused on industry matched to the country's overall needs — primarily the processing of its agricultural products.

Instead of exporting cotton to buy socks and exporting raw lumber to buy building materials, Nicaragua will gradually turn toward establishing facilities to process the raw materials right here. This will add value, increase export income, and provide tens of thousands of new jobs.

Also on the drawing board is a "dry canal" — a standard-gauge railroad connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Such a project will help integrate the Atlantic Coast region more closely into the rest of the country. Its physical isolation, combined with a greater degree of social and economic backwardness, has today enabled the counterrevolution to make greater inroads there.

Such a railroad will also save tens of millions of dollars a year now spent for transportation through the Panama Canal. Nearly all of Nicaragua's industry and population is located on its Pacific coast. Yet nearly all its trade is with countries bordering the Atlantic — the United States and Europe. Virtually everything, in both directions, has to pass through the Panama Canal, adding time and cost to each shipment.

Completion of the coast-to-coast railroad, projected for the end of the century, will also help meet the goal of industrializing the Atlantic coast. As a first step, a new deep-water port is already being dredged there.

On Dec. 4, 1983, the Nicaraguan govern-

ment announced two important decrees. One, as mentioned before, declared an amnesty (without actually using the word) for virtually all Nicaraguans who had left the country since the revolution.

Elections: political challenge to bourgeoisie

The second decree set Feb. 21, 1984, as the official opening of the electoral process. On that date are to be announced basic procedures for the elections, scheduled to be held in 1985. All who return under the terms of the first decree are eligible to participate, both as voters and candidates.

The pair of decrees was a major blow both to the lying campaign of imperialism abroad that Nicaragua is a "totalitarian" country and to domestic reactionary forces.

The internal right wing, initially caught off guard, responded that the amnesty decree was not "broad enough." *La Prensa* even went on a short-lived campaign demanding that it be extended to all counterrevolutionaries, including top leaders of the former National Guard. But hatred of these murderers runs so deep that *La Prensa* had to quickly change its tune, claiming in a front-page editorial that its views had been "misinterpreted."

The political shifts that culminated in the December 4 decrees actually began with discussion of the first piece of election legislation, the Law of Political Parties. The law, as finally passed Sept. 2, 1983, after lengthy discussion in the Council of State, represented a shift in some aspects from the initial draft — largely drawn up by the FSLN in February 1982.

In particular, the rights of political parties are spelled out in abundant detail. These include the right to seek state power, criticize the government, maintain public offices, hold demonstrations, collect funds, and publish periodicals. On the other hand, parties must abide by the laws of the country and refrain from calling for a return to Somozaism.

Despite the situation of ongoing combat in the border provinces, wartime censorship has been greatly eased. The only remaining restrictions at this time are intended to prevent artificial creation of panic. To block the spread of *bolas* (phony rumors), reports on military and consumer affairs must originate from government sources.

In addition, as the election campaign gets under way, all 10 political parties have been promised ample TV and radio time on government-owned stations.

For those political parties that are opposed to the revolution, the prospect of competing with the FSLN in elections presents quite a quandary. The more they explain what they really want — an end to agrarian reform, return of confiscated properties, dismantlement of the mass organizations — the more they isolate themselves from the hundreds of thousands in this country who have benefited precisely from such measures and freedom to organize.

In the last analysis, the real social base of these parties rests on the economic power

capitalism still holds (ownership of large enterprises that function as part of the mixed economy) and, more broadly, on the continuation of capitalist economic relations in the countryside.

Public program of counterrevolution

The right-wing parties — a year before the elections — have already begun to claim in advance that the elections will be “undemocratic.”

In a statement published in *La Prensa* December 26, Nicaragua's publicly organized right-wing forces — big business, agribusiness, the rightist parties, and the two rightist union federations — joined together to make additional demands on the government. (Virtually the only group missing from the signers was the Catholic church hierarchy, which maintains a propaganda stance of being “above politics.”)

The statement amounts to an open program of the domestic counterrevolution.

It begins by prefacing a list of some 50 demands and preconditions with the claim that if so much as “a single one of them is lacking, the [electoral] process will be corrupt, unjust, and fraudulent — that is, phony.”

The thrust of the first major group of demands is for absolute separation of state and party. That is, although the FSLN organized and led the 20-year struggle to overthrow the dictatorship, and is recognized by hundreds of thousands as the vanguard of the revolutionary process, it has no right to a commensurate role in the government, army, police, agrarian reform, etc.

The second major point is to demand a complete separation between the state and the mass organizations. In other words, the right wing seeks to roll back precisely the process of popular participation in decision-making that makes the Nicaraguan revolution so strong — the active role of the mass organizations in the affairs of state and everyday life.

Their third major demand is for repeal of all the laws they do not like — naturally quite a few. Among the decrees they mention by name as the most abhorrent are those that ordered confiscation of businessmen caught in economic sabotage, confiscation of idle land, and confiscation of properties of absentee owners.

To top things off they oppose military conscription (but not the U.S. war that makes it necessary) as a “violation of human rights.”

Reactionaries in church robes

The Catholic church hierarchy may not have signed the right-wing program for rolling back the revolution. But in 1983 it missed few other opportunities to display its hatred for the changes that are taking place. Two major events stand out.

The first was the carefully planned visit in March of Pope John Paul II who, in less than 24 hours, succeeded in attacking almost every aspect of the revolution. His major targets included the efforts to replace ignorance with scientific education and the “people's church”

— neighborhood religious groups and parishes that actively support the revolution. He also went out of his way to snub the mothers of 17 Sandinista soldiers who had been killed in battle shortly before his arrival, refusing even to answer their pleas for a prayer.

The pope's failure to call for peace — much less express sympathy with a people that has lost 50,000 sons and daughters in the last six years — bred anger and confusion among broad sectors of this largely Catholic population. His stance was intended to bolster the propaganda campaign carried out more nakedly by the armed counterrevolutionary gangs — that the Sandinistas intend to enforce atheism, are diabolically opposed to religious freedom, and therefore are themselves to blame for U.S. aggression.

Following his visit, one of the armed groups based in Honduras even circulated a leaflet in the border provinces bearing a photo of John Paul II with the message: “The pope is on our side.”

Many Nicaraguan Catholics, after thinking things over, realized that this message was not without some truth. Yet what it changed was their view of the pope and the local hierarchy, not their support for the revolution. Others remain confused, torn between their religious training and the revolutionary process in which they are taking part.

A second major campaign carried out by the hierarchy was its attempt, largely unsuccessful, to undercut compliance with the new military conscription law that took effect Oct. 1, 1983.

In response to escalating defense needs, the revolutionary government instituted a draft. As a first step all young men between the ages of 17 and 22 were required to register at booths set up by neighborhood mass organizations. Out of the projected pool of 200,000 candidates this was expected to provide, 15,000 are eventually to be called up for two years' active duty.

The Catholic church hierarchy led the right-wing public campaign against the draft, claiming to do so on the grounds of “conscientious objection.” They protested that “no one can be asked to take up arms for a political party,” in essence claiming that the Sandinista People's Army is no more than an armed wing of the FSLN. Who they thought should defend the country against counterrevolutionary terror attacks they did not say.

Opponents of the draft eventually went so far as to try to hold demonstrations, organized from right-wing pulpits, to urge non-compliance with registration. These planned actions never took place — not because the government stopped them, but because mobilizations by outraged members of the mass organizations at each rallying point prevented the reactionaries from even stepping out into the street.

A few thousand sons of the rich and middle classes left the country to avoid registration. Some in both rural and urban areas simply never showed up to register. But on the whole

the church hierarchy was able to make relatively few inroads with its objectively pro-imperialist campaign. An estimated 90 percent of draft-age youth signed up, along with several thousand women volunteers.

Council of State

Over the last year and a half, Nicaragua's Council of State has come into its own as a genuine organ of people's power. A co-legislative body, it has the right to introduce legislation and discuss and suggest amendments to government decrees.

At times, discussion inside the body as well as broader consultation with the delegates' constituencies determined that the revolution could not move as fast as advanced layers of it would like to.

For example, a draft law on housing — which would have eliminated rent for thousands — has all but officially died. Heated debate, even among members of three small parties that generally support the government, made clear that confiscations under the law would affect many poor and middle layers of the petty bourgeoisie — layers the government is now seeking to draw closer to the revolution.

FSLN alternate delegate to the Council of State Sebastian Castro explained to a group of visiting U.S. workers and solidarity activists in late November that more study of the housing situation is needed.

Other major laws discussed this year, such as the ones on political parties and military conscription, served as a forum for sharp ideological debate with the reactionary forces represented in the Council of State. Open opponents of the revolution hold about a quarter of the seats in the 48-member body. This far over-represents their actual strength in the population. Rather, it is a reflection of the revolution's guarantee of a full hearing to opposition views.

Major debates in the Council of State are often attended by large audiences of students, soldiers, Sandinista Defense Committee (CDS) members, as well as by visiting international delegations. They serve as an example of the extensive democratic rights that working people in Nicaragua today enjoy.

Since the council's inception in 1979, many of the right-wing forces have gradually pulled out, unwilling to accept the minority role their support in the population dictates.

The council also serves as a forum for debate among revolutionary forces. A case in point has been the role of the Association of Nicaraguan Women—Luisa Amanda Espinosa (AMNLAE), which introduced the hotly debated Law on Nurture in October 1982.

This law seeks to lift the burden from an estimated 60 percent of Nicaraguan mothers who raise their children singlehandedly, and to distribute responsibility between the father and other family members. It was passed by the Council of State in November 1982 but has yet to be ratified by the Junta of National Reconstruction.

AMNLAE also plans to introduce a law au-

thorizing investigation into paternity when the council begins its session again in 1984. At present as many as 15 percent of the mothers who seek enforcement of the Law on Nurture cannot be helped because the fathers of their

children refuse to acknowledge paternity.

Another victory for AMNLAE, the product of lengthy debate, was its role in convincing the parliament that women should be allowed to participate in active military service. □

Sandinistas hail Cuban aid

'Our friendship with Cuba is not negotiable'

By Michael Baumann

MANAGUA — "Even if we were to be offered all the gold of Wall Street in return for halting our cooperation and friendship with Cuba, we would respond that our principled friendship with Cuba has no price tag. It is not negotiable."

These were the words of Commander Bayardo Arce, coordinator of the Political Committee of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Arce was the keynote speaker at Nicaragua's celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Cuban revolution, a meeting of more than 1,000 invited guests here January 5.

The theme of the meeting was Nicaragua's gratitude for Cuban aid in development and the determination that imperialist pressure, no matter how great, would not drive a wedge in the political solidarity between the two countries. At the same time, it was made clear that circumstances may require a reduction in the number of Cuban internationalist volunteers in Nicaragua. The full text of Arce's speech was printed in the January 7 issue of the Sandinista daily *Barricada*.

'Disinterested cooperation'

Referring to the imperialist propaganda campaign against Cuban aid, which is frequently echoed by domestic right-wing forces, Arce said:

"Some have spoken recently, often more ill intentioned than well intentioned, about the 'Cuban presence in Nicaragua,' to use the phrase they use to refer to the fraternal, friendly, and disinterested cooperation Cuba has provided Nicaragua."

He denounced the sheer arrogance of the campaign. Those abroad who call the loudest for ending Cuban cooperation "are precisely those who are not prepared to give us an iota of aid or else offer it on the basis of unacceptable conditions and demands . . . who think that sovereignty consists in their determining for us who can and cannot be our friends."

It may be the case, Arce, said, "that with the development of the Nicaraguan revolution, our government will judge it necessary to reduce the level of [Cuban] cooperation. But never, ever, will there be any reduction in our friendship with the people of Cuba, with their government, with their party, and with their highest leader, Fidel Castro."



COMMANDER BAYARDO ARCE

The FSLN, he said, would like to use the anniversary celebration to thank Cuba for its aid and "to state categorically that it is we Nicaraguans who determine in a sovereign manner who our friends are, and that Cuba occupies a special place among our friends."

Volunteer teachers and doctors

In the course of his speech, Arce singled out education, health care, and reconstruction as three major areas in which Cuban aid had left its deepest impact.

Each year since the triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution, Arce said, Cuba has provided 2,000 volunteer teachers. In addition, some 2,000 Nicaraguan students are permanently enrolled in primary and secondary schools on Cuba's Isle of Pines — all at no charge. Hundreds of these students have already graduated as middle-level technicians and skilled workers and are now at work rebuilding the Nicaraguan economy.

In health care, over 1,500 Cuban doctors have worked in Nicaragua. They have performed 65,000 operations, assisted at 30,000 births, and provided more than 5 million consultations with individual patients. Other Cuban medical personnel have taught courses in technical and professional skills, trained hospital administrators, trained technicians in the maintenance and repair of medical equipment, and aided in the development of

Nicaragua's pharmaceutical industry.

Many of the Cuban doctors have been permanently based in remote rural areas, where material conditions are difficult and they are a prime target for roving counterrevolutionary bands. Several of them have been killed in terror attacks.

Training Nicaraguans

In the field of reconstruction and production, some 150 Nicaraguan workers in various trades receive technical education in Cuba each year. This is in addition to the 500 sugar mill workers who have been trained in Cuba to run Nicaragua's giant new Tipitapa-Malacatoya mill, scheduled to open next year. Planning, financing, and construction of the mill has also been carried out with largely Cuban aid.

Ten fishing boats have been donated by the Cuban people, and their crew members have been trained in Cuban fishery schools.

"We have also been able to count," Arce said, "on solidarity and material support in the food industry, light industry, basic industry, the mines, metalworking, and the sugar industry. . . . We have received help in training Nicaraguan technicians and workers in the drying and storing of grain, in the rehabilitation of our textile industry, in restarting the production of industrial gases and chemicals, in the production of rubber, and technical help in exploiting nonmetallic minerals. . . ."

"In almost every branch of industry Cuba has helped train a good share of the Nicaraguan technicians who will be the technological base helping to maintain and develop our industrial sector."

In transportation, brigades of volunteer Cuban construction workers have been instrumental in building the first overland route linking Nicaragua's Pacific and Atlantic coasts. The road, a major engineering feat, crosses 260 miles of jungle, forest, and mountains and required construction of 90 bridges.

Moreover, said Arce, the Nicaraguan people will never forget the vast quantity of Cuban aid shipped in immediately after disastrous floods here in May 1982. This included five factories for turning out prefabricated houses, 20,000 tons of cement, 40,000 roofing panels, 15 tons of medicine, and 500 tons of rice.

"Finally," he said, "although we may perhaps have overlooked some sphere of aid, we cannot close without mentioning the advisers who have helped our cadres in the complex task of training our armed forces."

During 'dark years of struggle'

Arce concluded by recalling the warm and fraternal welcome Cuba had extended leaders of the Nicaraguan revolution during their long and difficult struggle against the dictatorship.

"When dawn was scarcely even a hope; when the name of Nicaragua was neither known nor mentioned anywhere in the world; when the Nicaraguan people were condemned to genocide; when they were dying of hunger, exploitation, and poverty; when their human

rights were the concern of no one in the world; and when their efforts at struggle were coldly ignored in other countries; Cuba was fundamentally the only safe place in the world where the Sandinista leaders of the people were able to

recover from their wounds so as to continue fighting.

"In the dark years of struggle, only in Cuba did we find the fraternal solidarity that acted as a stimulant to our determination to fight. . . ."

There may be a "substantial reduction in what has been called 'the Cuban presence,'" Arce said, "but never will there be any reduction in the profound links of friendship and of revolutionary principles with Cuba." □

Vanuatu

Major achievements since independence

Government backs freedom struggles throughout South Pacific

By Andy Jarvis

[The following article is taken from *Socialist Action Review*, a special supplement published in the Dec. 2, 1983, issue of the New Zealand revolutionary socialist fortnightly *Socialist Action*.]

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The Vanuaaku Party was re-elected to government on November 2 with a big majority in the first general election in Vanuatu since that Pacific Island nation became an independent republic in July 1980.

The election victory is a demonstration of continuing mass support for the course charted by the Vanuaaku Party during the struggle it led for independence, and which it has been carrying out since it came to power three and a half years ago — for a complete end to all forms of colonial domination and for the development of Vanuatu as a nation run by and for ni-Vanuatu (indigenous people of Vanuatu).

For 75 years Vanuatu was a colony of Britain and France. Under their joint rule, two separate administrations and foreign cultures were imposed side by side on the ni-Vanuatu.

The Vanuaaku Party was formed in 1971 on the initiative of Father Walter Lini, now Vanuatu's prime minister.

The party campaigned for an end to the alienation of ni-Vanuatu land, pride in Melanesian culture, and self-determination for Vanuatu. It grew in size rapidly and gained mass popular support.

The party's campaign for independence also gained support internationally from Cuba and other nonaligned countries at the United Nations.

To counter the growing nationalist movement, the colonial powers and white settlers (predominantly French and Australian) consciously sought to foster cultural and other divisions among the ni-Vanuatu.

They also initiated their own political movement opposed to independence. This is the origin of the present pro-imperialist opposition party in Vanuatu, the Union of Moderate Parties.

However, because expatriates (non-ni-Vanuatu) and the business community were granted special representation in the "Representative Assembly" established by the coloni-

al powers, the Vanuaaku Party was denied its rightful majority of seats. As a result, the party boycotted the assembly, which collapsed.

New elections were scheduled for November 1977. As a pre-condition to participation in the elections the Vanuaaku Party demanded a number of democratic measures — that only ni-Vanuatu vote; that the voting age be lowered to 18; that a referendum be held on independence; and that the colonial powers agree to hand over government to the majority party elected.

The colonial powers rejected these demands and threatened violence against the Vanuaaku Party. In response the Vanuaaku Party announced it would boycott the elections and would form its own People's Provisional Government to establish independence.

People's Provisional Government

On election day, November 29, 1977, the People's Provisional Government seized control of large parts of the country in conjunction with popular village councils formed and led by the Vanuaaku Party.

Faced with this mass challenge to their rule, the colonial authorities decided to back down and agreed to United Nations-supervised elections on the lines demanded by the Vanuaaku Party.

Elections were held in November 1979 and the Vanuaaku Party won two-thirds of the seats in the new parliament.

July 30, 1980, was set as the date for independence and the handover of power to the new Vanuaaku Party government.

In a final attempt to prevent Vanuatu becoming a republic, an armed insurrection was organized on Santo — Vanuatu's largest island. The insurrection, carried out by followers of the Nagrimel movement of Jimmy Stevens, was organised by sections of the former colonial administration and the white settler community, and by the Phoenix Foundation (a right-wing organisation of United States businessmen linked to the CIA).

The colonial powers, France and Britain, refused to put down the rebellion. The Vanuaaku Party had insufficient forces of its own to take the military action needed.

On coming to office on July 30, Vanuatu's new independent government appealed for support to Australia and New Zealand and a

number of Pacific Island countries. They also refused to offer any assistance.

Finally, the government of Papua New Guinea agreed to send troops, despite strong opposition and threats against it by the Australian government — New Guinea's former colonial rulers.

With the entry of troops from New Guinea the Santo rebellion quickly collapsed. White settlers, including leaders of the opposition parties who had been involved in the rebellion, were expelled from the country.

'Radical turning point'

The independence struggle in Vanuatu marked a radical turning point in the recent history of the South Pacific. The Vanuaaku Party government is the first Pacific Island government to come to power as the result of a deep-going popular struggle against colonial rule.

Vanuatu is a small country of 130,000 people spread over 70 islands. As a result of colonial domination, it suffers from extreme economic backwardness and underdevelopment.

The new government that took office on July 30, 1980, faced many difficult problems in addition to the Santo rebellion.

It was almost completely reliant for funds on foreign aid handouts from Britain, France, and Australia.

Prior to independence, some 40 percent of the country's land was in French, British, and Australian hands. Many of the big copra plantations, the country's major export, had been allowed to run down or were abandoned by their owners during the independence struggle.

The tourist industry had also gone into decline as a result of the independence struggle and the Santo rebellion.

The civil service inherited from colonial rule was dominated by expatriates, many of whom were hostile to the policies of the new government and tried to prevent them from being implemented.

Access to education for ni-Vanuatu had been limited prior to independence, with the first two high schools being built only in the mid-1970s.

Little in the way of infrastructure — roads, water supply, communications, etc. — had been established under colonial rule.

In the first three and a half years of govern-

ment, the Vanuaaku Party has made significant steps towards overcoming these problems.

At the same time, the progressive foreign policy followed by the government has won much admiration.

Vanuatu is the first Pacific Island nation to join the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. It has given consistent support to Pacific peoples fighting for self-determination — in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Micronesia, West Papua, and East Timor.

Nuclear-free movement

Vanuatu has also played a key role in providing political leadership to the movement for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific, linking the fight against nuclear testing and weapons to the struggle for self-determination for the indigenous peoples of the Pacific.

As a result of its strong stand, many independence fighters in the Pacific look to Vanuatu both as an ally and as an example from which they can learn.

So, too, do many indigenous peoples fight-

ing for land rights and for the preservation of their cultures and activists campaigning for a nuclear-free Pacific.

Vanuatu's example has had an impact inside New Zealand, as well — on the anti-nuclear movement, among Maori and Pacific Island activists, and among a layer of trade unionists. (Vanuatu hosted the founding conference of the Pacific Trade Union Forum.)

It has set an example in asserting pride in indigenous culture and challenging racism. It has demonstrated a strong commitment to women's rights and to the trade union movement. And it has set an example in standing up to the bullying of the Muldoon government [of New Zealand].

Working people in New Zealand should view independent Vanuatu and its government as an important ally in the fight for social and political justice in this country.

At the same time, it is necessary to extend a strong hand of friendship to the people of Vanuatu and support for what they are trying to achieve in their country.

Throughout this century the peoples of the

Pacific Island nations have been dominated and exploited by imperialist big business and its political representatives in Britain, France, the U.S.A., Australia, and New Zealand.

Independent Vanuatu represents a break with that tradition. Its government and its people are attempting to build a new society where the rights of the people and their needs come first.

As such, Vanuatu's example represents a challenge to big business and the National Party government in this country.

That is why the news media often misrepresents or ridicules what is happening in Vanuatu today.

Earlier this year, newspaper reports in New Zealand claimed that Walter Lini's government was on the verge of collapse.

The landslide victory won by the Vanuaaku Party in the general elections in Vanuatu on November 2 demonstrates that, on the contrary, the course followed by Vanuatu's government during the past three and a half years has deep support among the people of Vanuatu. □

'We have united the people'

Interview with Vanuaaku Party General Secretary Barak Sope

[The following is an interview with Barak Sope, the general secretary of the Vanuaaku Party, the ruling party of Vanuatu. Sope was the first ni-Vanuatu to gain a university degree, graduating from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji in 1973. The following year, after returning to Vanuatu, he was elected to head the party. After independence, Sope was appointed as roving ambassador. In 1982 he joined the government in parliament after winning a key by-election.

[The interview was conducted in Vanuatu in August 1983 by Russell Johnson, a correspondent for the New Zealand fortnightly *Socialist Action*, and is taken from the special supplement published in the Dec. 2, 1983, issue of that paper.]

* * *

Question. The policies of the Vanuaaku Party and the Vanuatu government are often described as "Melanesian socialism," based on custom. What does your party mean by this?

Answer. At university, I studied socialism, communism, capitalism. At one point, I thought everything we studied was European. But, when you compare different societies, you can more or less say that this is a capitalist type of society and this is a socialist type of society.

We have looked at the different types of socialism in the world as well. That is why we have labelled ours as Melanesian socialism.

Everybody else says that their socialism — like European socialism — is better than some

other socialism. We say that Melanesian socialism is better — it is what we need for Vanuatu.

I think we have an example to bring to the attention of other countries. We have this type of socialism already existing in our society. The socialism we talk about is tied up with our extended family system and the land. It is a way of life our society revolves around.

For example, in our society if someone is in trouble and goes to a relative or another person, that person would give whatever he has to help. He is obliged to, because of the way our society is organised.

Another example, if you are working and earning more money than everyone else, then others would come to you more than any other person. They would depend on you more than any other person.

So, we say that Melanesian socialism exists in our society already. It exists as a day-to-day

way of life. There is no need to import it.

For example, we don't understand nationalisation of factories or companies. That is a different type of socialism. We look at socialism as a human way of doing things. Our emphasis is not on material gains, but rather sharing whatever one person has.

The majority of ni-Vanuatu are not rich. A man may end his life with nothing left. But if you ask what he has given throughout his lifetime, then he is as great as any other person in that society.

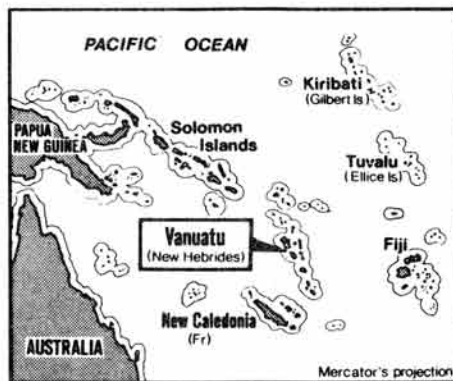
Of course, now we have to raise money to support the government. We have to raise money for schools and hospitals — all those things any government in the world has to do. And, somehow, with our system, we want to develop Vanuatu's economy based on these traditions of Melanesian socialism.

I must say it is not easy, because it is a new thing to try. You cannot just do it overnight. But we are trying to build our country that way.

Q. I see that your government is pursuing a five-year plan to develop the economy along these lines.

A. Yes, the first five years we call the building of the infrastructure. With the help of aid development, we want to build the infrastructure that the colonial powers were unable to — roads, airports, wharves, the services that are needed such as schools and hospitals, etc. That is our plan for the first five years.

Q. What are some of the achievements you



feel you have made in the first three years of independence?

A. I think the main achievement politically is that we have united the people. That has been the effort of the Vanuaaku Party even before independence.

Under French and British colonial rule, we had two administrations, two police systems, two of everything. We had to create that into one. That was hard because we had to tell people, "Sorry, you don't work any more."

After 75 years of colonial rule, we have been able within three years to dismantle the whole administrative apparatus. No other country in the whole South Pacific has done that.

What we did, immediately after independence, was we said that everybody that was working — the police, everybody — was redundant. They have no job. We told them they could remain on a month-to-month basis, and after going through an elimination process they would be told if they were to be employed or not employed.

Those people we have asked to stay on don't receive as much money as they should receive, but they have accepted to remain.

This process has been going on for the last three years, and by the end of this year we should have everybody in his right place.

Q. You have created a completely new police force — the Vanuatu Mobile Force. Do you think it reflects the new independent spirit of the people?

A. Yes it does.

When the French and British were here, their aim was to disunite the people all the time

We say that Melanesian socialism is what we need for Vanuatu . . .

for their own benefit — divide and rule. We had to get this out of people's minds. It is better to unite and work together for nation-building.

Apart from anything else, I think that has been the greatest achievement.

Several times, people have tried to break moves in this direction. But we have always taken the line that we will continue to do this. I personally feel that we have been able to make so much progress in such a short time, mainly because of the unity.

After three years of independence, people can no longer feel that they are French-oriented or British-oriented — just ni-Vanuatu!

Q. How much progress has been made in other aspects of the administration, to make it more ni-Vanuatu?

A. We have got no neo-colonialism. That has always been the strong aim of the Vanuaaku Party and the government. Any time



Proindependence demonstration in 1977 led by Vanuaaku Party.

when a ni-Vanuatu has been trained, then we take out an expatriate [foreigner]. We take them out.

Also, through the United Nations we have been able to diversify our aid — to get experts, or whatever they are called, to come and help us. That has always been a policy of the party.

Every year when we review the lists that the French, British, and Australians give to us, we cut them. If we can get someone else from a different kind of country through the United Nations, then we recruit them instead.

For example, in the planning office before independence and even after independence, you always had either French or British. We have just sacked the last one, from Britain, and put in a Korean from the United Nations Agency for Development.

We still have people from Britain and France, but they come on a different basis now. And, in addition we have people from many other countries apart from the old colonial powers.

Q. The economies of many South Pacific countries today are extremely crisis-stricken. This doesn't seem to be the case in Vanuatu. For example, your newspaper reported that inflation in Vanuatu over the last period was four percent for the rich, while for the poor prices have actually fallen. Could you explain what this is a reflection of?

A. It is a reflection of government policy. Our policy has always been to build an economy where you don't have a lot of poor people and some form of rich people.

This has been done mainly through our

Ministry of Finance. We have carried out careful market surveys. Then we have raised the sales tax on certain goods which we know the rich people pay for. The rest of the population do not pay taxes. There is no income tax.

Another reason that prices have fallen is that we have been able to strengthen our currency against other currencies. The vatu [Vanuatu dollar] is much stronger. [One vatu equals U.S. \$0.97.]

Also, we have been able to encourage the people to produce more. For example, we have

After 75 years of colonial rule, we have been able within three years to dismantle the whole administrative apparatus . . .

been able to increase the tonnage of copra by 50 percent since independence.

We have also had our people go into new areas of development like cattle, cocoa, coffee, pepper, vanilla, etc. This is difficult, but it is starting.

Where expatriates want to start a business here, we say: "Okay, you come and start in the country. But you must be with the ni-Vanuatu."

Q. I also read that the price of basic foods has fallen.

A. This is because the government has stepped in and put price controls on it. Most ni-

Vanuatu grow their food themselves. Each ni-Vanuatu in the village has his own garden. But some basic foods are imported — for example, rice, tinned fish, etc. — and the price of these is controlled.

Q. The government passed new labour laws this year designed to encourage and legalise

The government has encouraged education about trade unions . . .

the formation of trade unions, and also to lay out the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees. What has been the progress towards building trade unions in Vanuatu?

A. Because of the non-existence of trade unions, we have tried through the party to talk to workers in the private and other sectors to encourage them. We have sent workers to trade union meetings overseas to put them through courses. We have invited people from overseas trade unions to come and talk and have meetings with people here.

Through the Ministry of Labour, we have organised over 10 workshops on the trade unions. People from Fiji, and other places where they have trade unions, have been invited to come and help organise them.

The government gives backing to this. It has paid for some of the trips when we have sent people overseas to look at the different trade unions. It has paid for all the workshops in Vanuatu.

This is how you start the thing. You don't just talk about it and leave it at that. We pay for it and we organise it. Then we just give it to the private sector or to the government sector workers. If they are interested, and most of them are interested, then they spend a week, two weeks, and go through a workshop.

The government has been the only one who has encouraged this education programme about the trade unions.

We in Vanuatu are trying to bring out the good side of trade unions, because people in other countries, especially the press, always pick on the bad side of trade unions. Any strike and they label the unions as bad. But without trade unions in many of these countries, the workers would be really exploited. In Australia and New Zealand, you know, the big bosses still exploit.

Q. In New Zealand the government is passing more and more laws to restrict the rights of trade unions.

A. Yes, well, we are doing the opposite.

What I am trying to say is that trade unions can contribute to the development of Vanuatu in the sense that when the government is pumping money into national development, the benefits should go to everybody, not just those who make the decisions.

Because, one day you may be in govern-

ment and the next day you may be a worker. You may be a big person now but your son or brother is a worker. That is the way we look at things. That is why we have gone ahead with trade unions.

I have had people coming here who want to invest and they say, "You must discourage trade unions. This is what spoils Australia or New Zealand." They think we are cheap labor. They think they can exploit the situation in Vanuatu. But we say no. It is not on!

We must have trade unions. As I said, I may be a government minister, but my brother is a worker, my father is a worker. You must protect them. You cannot be in government and then let someone from outside the country, or someone in the private sector exploit you.

Q. How far has the process gone of organising trade unions?

A. What we are trying to start off with is to encourage the trade unions to work closely with the Labour Department to define areas where unions should be set up on the plantations and in the urban areas. They work very closely together to organise union meetings.

We are starting off mainly in the urban areas, because in the rural areas people work mainly for themselves. So, it has begun in building construction, on the wharves, in [the Australian firm] Burns Philp, and all these big shops selling cargo, etc.

To date, they have gone as far as forming steering committees. They have represented themselves overseas. And now most of them are drafting their constitutions. Because of the new legislation, they have to have some kind of constitution and that will entail elections and all that type of thing.

Q. Will each workplace organise its own union?

A. I think the situation will be that different areas will have one big union that they belong to.

Q. Reading through your Employment Act, I was struck by a number of provisions guaranteeing the rights of women workers. For example, employers must provide three months paid maternity leave. Dismissal because of pregnancy is illegal. Equal pay is written into the act. What does this reflect about the government's view of women's rights?

A. This is a very difficult thing for the government to do because we are fighting against tradition about the rights of women. But we have fought it and we will continue to.

You see, in our society women have less rights in traditional ways. But the government is convinced that this is one area that we don't want to remain like this.

Also, we take the view that these are our mothers and sisters. The way that we are organised in the villages, love and respect for your mother and your sister is very high. So, we cannot let them come into a new European-type of society with disrespect.

When women were employed in the new areas, the European looked down on them you see. But in our village society, my regard for my wife, my mother, my sister is high. That is the way we look at it.

So, the government is very strong, very strong on women's rights. You must respect those! So when we wrote this labour law, we took account of that.

For example, my sisters are working. I am educating my daughter, and when she comes to work she must have those rights. This is how we look at it. It is a serious type of Melanesian thinking on socialism.

When you educate your daughter, you invest just the same as you invest in your son. At the end, you want to get the same thing out for both of them.

If that is not the case, then you should leave the woman at home, no education, do nothing. Don't bring her up in the same style as your son.

But when we look at it, we think that such thinking is not straight.

Q. Is the government implementing these policies itself in relation to government employees?

A. Yes. We have started it. But it is new. It is getting under way at the moment.

Everything that we do, we have to start it with the government, and let the people see.

[Foreign investors] think we are cheap labour. They think they can exploit the situation in Vanuatu. But we say no . . .

With all this legislation, the government starts it off first, then everybody else has to follow.

When someone from the private sector, or a big shark from overseas comes and wants to invest — when he comes and talks, I say: "I'm doing it. I'm the government. I'm following the law and you are not. You cannot argue!"

Q. You outlined your views on the trade unions. In addition, during your independence struggle and since it became the government, your party has been encouraging a number of other organisations to develop — the National Council of Women, the National Council of Chiefs, a youth movement, and others. Would you like to comment on these organisations and the role you see for them?

A. Yes, we have encouraged them all along. It is official party policy. We would like for them to be united, to become much stronger, and to get more organised.

The National Council of Women was an idea of the party, and now it has gone to the level of government. The Council of Chiefs was the same thing, and the youth movement also. They all began through the party and now they have gone to the level of government.

What we want to do is to encourage them to a certain stage where they must take off for themselves. We don't want them to be dependent on the party to do everything for them, because the Vanuaaku Party machinery is also very large and we don't have enough funds.

Of course, now that we are in power, we can spend money on this. We put money in the

The government is very strong on women's rights . . .

budget for the women, for example.

It is just like we are trying to do now with the trade unions. Any way we can, we encourage them.

The National Council of Women is still in its early stages, but the Council of Chiefs is very strong. It plays an advisory role to the government. Anything to do with custom or with land, they advise the government on what to do.

Q. What is the government doing overall to try and strengthen its ties with the people — to strengthen democracy in the sense of the participation of the people in what the government is doing?

A. Any way that we can do it, we will do it. We always push very hard for the people's participation in policy and legislation.

In the economy, for example, some jobs now in Vanuatu we don't allow outsiders to come in and do them anymore. We don't need a foreigner to drive a taxi, for example, because a ni-Vanuatu can do it. It is the same with hotel workers. Only top management can be expatriates, but we only allow ni-Vanuatu to be waiters. The tourist industry is the same.

We stopped completely the expatriates shipping and trading in the outer islands. Only ni-Vanuatu own the ships.

We don't allow outsiders to own the land, only ni-Vanuatu.

We feel that the ni-Vanuatu and their land are the two most important resources that we have. So we must develop those two things.

Under our constitution, only ni-Vanuatu can own the land. They can lease it out, but that depends on them. If they want, they can lease it for 20 or 30 years. After that they take it back and do whatever they choose.

Q. In August, elections were held for Vanuatu's island governments. Could you explain what the role of these local governments is?

A. It is part of getting people to participate in government and to decentralise it. Every island has its own island government.

Elections are held every four years, the same as for the national government.

Each island has its own powers, its own areas of responsibility. As they build themselves up, slowly, they are given more power from the central government.

We have 11 island governments at the moment which cover all the areas of Vanuatu. On most of the councils, the Vanuaaku Party is a majority.

Q. Where does the Vanuaaku Party stand today?

A. I think the party still has the same support as before independence, probably more.

The party is very well organised. It is much more organised than how the government works.

The party machinery goes right down to the village level. Every village has a party committee and we are still forming committees even now.

So, the people relate to the Vanuaaku Party more than to the government. They think the government is for everybody, including the opposition. But the party is "my party." So if anybody fights the party, the party fights back very strongly on a political level.

Even if you are a minister in the government, if you don't follow party policy you will be dropped. At the party congress they can say you are out. Someone else takes over. That is how strong the party is.

When anything is done to rock the boat or things are not straight, the party is the machinery that handles it. It is the most organised.

Q. Is the party of equal strength across the country?

A. The party is strongest in the rural areas, in the villages, where about 80–85 percent of the people live.

On some islands it is stronger than on others, because in some areas before independence you had a strong French and Catholic influence hostile to the Vanuaaku Party.

In the towns, Vila and Santo, it is mainly an expatriate influence. The party and the opposition are almost equal in strength there.

Q. Has the party made progress on the island of Santo since the 1980 rebellion there?

A. Well, we have not been strong in Santo. But in the last local elections, we got 51 percent of the vote and the opposition got 49 per-

Under our constitution, only ni-Vanuatu can own the land . . .

cent of the vote. That was a complete switch around from what it was before. So we have gained support there.

Q. Could you clarify how the party is organised?

A. The party is made up of sub-committees in the villages.

It has what we call political commissars. Each commissar looks after one to three sub-committees. The political commissars meet twice a year.

There is an executive of about 27 people representing the different islands of the country. It meets every month.

The party itself holds a congress once a year.

The party also has a women's wing and a youth wing. They carry out separate activities, depending on what they want to do. But they mainly carry out political education.

Q. In the capitalist media in Australia and New Zealand during the past six months, there has been a sustained effort to present your government as being in crisis. Any division that has developed has been highlighted, and in some cases invented.

A. Well, any political party in any country has its crisis. We are a big political party, and we have undergone a crisis. And we welcome this. We have a party constitution, and we

We think our support for New Caledonia and other places is right because they are struggling now the same as we were struggling before . . .

were able to deal with it in the way we have always dealt with party problems.

We saw it politically. We didn't see the crisis as something to break the party or break the government.

In every political field you always have people who are ambitious. Instead of being only a member of parliament, they want to be a cabinet minister. Then they want to be prime minister, and after that...? The Vanuaaku Party went through that, but we sorted it out.

Q. Was there a debate on policy involved?

A. Yes, it was mainly on policy — mainly on development, how to get funds into the country — and then it affected personalities.

Q. On several occasions recently, the press have predicted the imminent downfall of Walter Lini and even the Vanuaaku Party itself.

A. What has happened is completely the opposite to what people were trying to build up.

Firstly, they don't understand. They think that we are following the same type of politics as in Western countries, what I usually call cut-throat politics.

Secondly, they miscalculated the strength of the party. The strength of the party is not based on elections alone. It is much more than that.

There will be people who will try and break the party organisation. We know this. We know this is happening. But, that is also why the party still exists. It reorganises itself all the time.

Q. The big business news media in Australia and New Zealand portrays your govern-

ment as being very radical, especially in its foreign policy. Perhaps the biggest impact has been your government's strong support for the independence struggles in New Caledonia and East Timor. Earlier this year Vanuatu attracted a lot of attention when it became the first country in the South Pacific to join the Non-Aligned Movement. How do you view the role of Vanuatu in the Pacific?

A. We are probably the only country in the South Pacific which really struggled to win its

We don't allow ships with nuclear weapons to come to Vanuatu . . .

independence. The other countries got their independence on a silver plate — even a gold plate, many of them.

Another thing that has influenced our policies very much is that we were under two European powers, the French and the British. Living under them, we knew how they were arguing among themselves here in Vanuatu.

So, even before independence we said, why take part in this? If you talk about two powers or two camps in the world, an example has been here for us in Vanuatu all the time — two big powers here for the last 75 years. And we knew how that could influence what would happen in our country.

So, we said, let's step out of it. We will go into the Non-Aligned Movement.

Vanuatu fought for independence very strongly, against injustices that our government is still trying to overcome. We think our support for New Caledonia and other places is right because they are struggling now the same as we were struggling before.

This is Vanuatu's role, because nobody else is doing it. We think these countries should be

independent. Unless they are free, we are not free.

Our role is to make the other countries support these people. That is what we are telling Australia and New Zealand. And the other Pacific countries that were colonised before, we say to them, "You have got your independence. Why forget the others?"

Take the case of East Timor. When the Falkland Islands came up, Australia and New Zealand supported Britain. But when Indonesia invaded East Timor, they didn't do anything and yet they are much closer. So, we think these countries are very hypocritical about their foreign policy and they have self-interests.

Although Vanuatu is small, we think that one way we can help those who are fighting for independence is through our foreign policy, by giving them as full support as possible.

If Australia and New Zealand, or the other richer countries followed this type of line, perhaps New Caledonia and the other countries would gain their independence much quicker.

Q. In July, your government hosted the fourth Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific Conference. The Vanuaaku Party strongly supported the conference and participated in it. How does this fit into your perspectives?

A. In some countries, people in this nuclear-free zone and peace movement have been struggling for quite a while to make their governments hear what they have to say. But in Vanuatu, they come and they see how our government doesn't only talk — it makes it happen!

For example, we don't allow ships with nuclear weapons to come to Vanuatu. Everyone that wants to come on a "friendly visit," we ask them, "Do you have nuclear weapons on board?" If they say yes, we tell them, "You don't come!" If, like the United States, they say, "We cannot declare whether we have or

not," we say, "Don't come!" If they don't want to tell us, then we have a right to tell them not to come. It is our country.

We are probably the first country in the whole world to declare ourselves a totally nuclear-free state. Next year we will write this into our constitution.

We want to show the people in this anti-nuclear movement that it is possible to achieve this if there is a will and you have a government that is dedicated to whatever it says it must do.

Q. In the non-aligned countries, Cuba has attracted a lot of admiration because of its support for independence struggles and its humanitarian aid. But in countries like New Zealand, the government and the media present Cuba as a major evil in the world. So, when Vanuatu became the first country in the

If we decide we need them, we might ask Cuba for doctors and advisers . . .

region to open diplomatic relations with Cuba, earlier this year, it raised a few eyebrows. Have you any comment?

A. We look at Cuba like any other country. We are non-aligned, so we feel that we can have diplomatic relations with any country that we choose to.

At the moment, we don't have any diplomatic relations with the U.S. or the USSR, because we feel that if we have relations with one we must have relations with the other as well. We don't want to fall into this big power division between one side or the other.

But with Cuba, we don't have any hang-ups about it at all.

Eventually, if we decide we need them, we

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might ask Cuba for doctors and advisers — maybe military advisers as well. That would shock Muldoon and his friends!

Q. Does your party or government have anything to say on the situation in Central America?

A. Yes, we don't support what the United States is doing at all. But we haven't made any statement on it.

We don't support Russia being in Afghanistan either. So our policy is clear. If they interfere militarily in other countries, we don't support it.

Q. What issues will the Vanuaaku Party be taking into the parliamentary elections in November?

A. The main issue will be economic independence, issues surrounding economic development.

Policy has already been adopted by the party congress in June, and all we have to do now is print it. At the moment we are raising funds.

We have brought this West Papuan band

over from exile in Europe to help fund-raise. They are called the Black Brothers, and of course they have a political message as well. That is one way we can give support for and help raise consciousness about the independence struggle in West Papua.

Q. To finish up, is there any message you have for working people in New Zealand?

A. I think that the only message is that whatever they say in the press and elsewhere about Vanuatu, don't listen to it or believe it too much. Come and visit Vanuatu and see for yourself what is happening here.

New Zealand is very close to Vanuatu. Instead of going to Europe, spend a trip in Vanuatu.

We are not as rich as New Zealand. But we may succeed in building a society here that we are all trying to look for — a society where people may earn more or less, but everybody gets their fair share back from the sweat that goes in to achieve this.

That is what we are trying to do in Vanuatu — build a society where everybody gets a fair share of the cake. □

gans aimed at deepening the struggle against the dictatorship.

The PIT called for a general wage increase of 2,500 pesos (US\$60) a month, quarterly cost-of-living adjustments, mutual solidarity among unions involved in wage disputes, government subsidies on the cost of basic goods and services, and an emergency jobs program. Official figures put unemployment at 15 percent, but PIT leaders say the jobless rate is actually closer to 30 percent.

Further demands called for a general amnesty for Uruguay's 900 or more political prisoners and thousands of exiles and the restoration of full political and civil rights.

The general strike marked a new high point in the upsurge against military rule that began in Uruguay last May. Previous actions included a May Day rally of more than 100,000 workers; nationwide Days of Protest in August, September, and October; and a huge rally in Montevideo on November 27 that involved up to 400,000 persons. (Uruguay's total population is only 3 million.)

The regime's response has been contradictory, reflecting sharp disagreements inside the 26-member junta of generals and admirals that runs the country. A faction favoring toleration of the protests and the holding of promised general elections in November of this year seemed to be gaining the upper hand in late 1983. But hard-liners supporting President Gregorio Alvarez came to the fore in December and tried to launch a crackdown. Press censorship was tightened, and several leaders of the legal bourgeois parties were jailed.

All a 'Marxist plot'?

In a December 1 speech, Alvarez denounced the big November 27 rally as evidence of "communist infiltration." The bourgeois parties that sponsored the rally, he charged, had allowed themselves to be made the instruments of a "subversive Marxist plot." Interior Minister Gen. Hugo Linares warned that social unrest was making the election schedule "unpredictable."

But protests continued through the year-end holidays. Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and the Feast of the Magi (January 6) were all marked by widespread pot-banging in the capital's neighborhoods — a popular form of expressing hatred for the dictatorship.

After the general strike, the regime announced it was outlawing the PIT. (In fact, the union federation had never been officially legalized.) The news media was barred from reporting on the work stoppage, and riot police were sent to dislodge workers from the ILDU factory.

More pot-banging greeted the announcement of these moves. PIT leaders went into hiding but also made known that their organization had no intention to dissolve. One, Andrés Toriani, telephoned journalists to say the PIT would defy Alvarez's ban in the belief that the regime had only a short time left in power. □

Uruguay

General strike defies regime

Upsurge against military rule continues

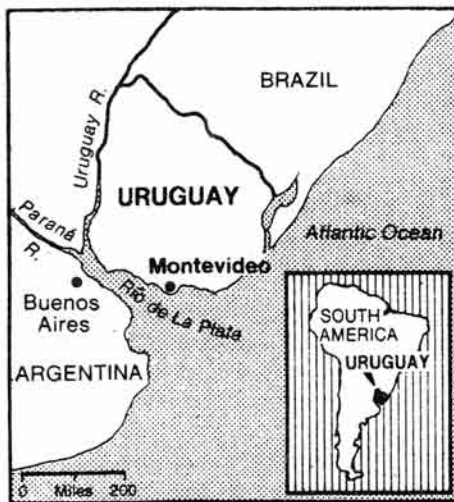
By Fred Murphy

The fight against military rule in Uruguay escalated January 18 with a 24-hour general strike that effectively shut down the country.

The streets of Montevideo, the capital, were "nearly deserted" on the day of the strike, the Associated Press reported. "Not a single bus was to be seen. Factories and stores were shuttered. Commercial activity was limited to a few bars and pharmacies."

The work stoppage was called by the Inter-Union Workers Plenary (PIT), which groups some 120 trade unions representing the bulk of Uruguay's 900,000 wage workers. PIT leaders said virtually all workers in private industry took part, while about half the country's public employees joined in despite the regime's threat to summarily dismiss strikers.

The massive action was in open defiance of a ban on strikes in force since the first days of the dictatorship in 1973. It capped an upsurge of labor protests that had begun in early January with strikes in the textile, transportation, fishing, tobacco, rubber, and electrical-goods industries. Six hundred workers occupied the ILDU wool-weaving plant on January 4, and on January 12 urban transport workers staged a militant strike. Commuters were stranded that day as most bus operators and 60 percent of taxi drivers halted work. Some 300 strikers drove their empty buses, horns blaring, through the Montevideo streets.



These struggles focused on wage demands and were sparked when the Finance Ministry ordered a sudden 30 percent hike in utility rates. The regime has refused to authorize wage increases above 11 percent, despite an inflation rate for 1983 of 51.5 percent.

Economic and political demands

The platform put forward by the PIT in the general strike combined the workers' immediate economic demands with political slo-