

# **INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS**

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## **Palestine Liberation Organization Faces Big Challenges**



Yassir Arafat



U.S. aircraft carrier *Midway* in Arabian sea.

## **In Iran-Iraq War U.S. Fleet Menaces Iran**

**Strikes Hit  
El Salvador's Capital**

**Nicaragua Sets  
Election Date**

**Interview with Peruvian Socialist Hugo Blanco**

# U.S. fleet menaces Iran

By Fred Murphy

The imperialist rulers of the United States, France, and Britain have stepped up threats against Iran by deploying warships in and around the Persian Gulf.

On February 26, the U.S. guided-missile destroyer *Lawrence* opened fire with machine guns against an Iranian plane and threatened an Iranian ship near the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

The *Lawrence* is one of five U.S. warships stationed in the Gulf. Fifteen more vessels — including the aircraft carrier *Midway* and a battle cruiser — have been deployed in the Arabian Sea near the Gulf. The total U.S. naval force in the region involves some 30 ships, a number of which are loaded with weapons, fuel, ammunition, and supplies for use by the Pentagon's "rapid deployment force" (now renamed the U.S. Central Command).

U.S. Air Force and Navy planes flying from the *Midway* and from bases in Saudi Arabia and Oman have been conducting surveillance missions over the Gulf and surrounding areas.

French and British naval squadrons have also been deployed in the Arabian Sea.

The step-up in U.S. and allied military activity near the shores of Iran came as a huge battle involving half a million or more troops on both sides was shaping up along the Iran-Iraq border. Iran's preparations for a decisive blow against the Iraqi aggressor came amid a series of missile attacks on the civilian population of western Iranian cities.

The Iranian government has charged that Iraqi forces are using chemical weapons, such as nitrogen mustard gas, on the battlefield. An Iraqi major general interviewed by Henry Kamm of the *New York Times* on March 4 said Iraq would "use all possible means to defend our country."

The general, Kamm reported, "said he never used chemical weapons in his area" but "avoided direct answers to questions on whether poison gas had been used in other areas."

The U.S. State Department acknowledged in a March 5 statement that evidence proved Iran's charges to be true. Iranian officials say some 400 soldiers have been killed and 1,000 injured by chemical weapons.

The Iran-Iraq war began in September 1980 with a massive Iraqi invasion of Iran. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein launched the attack in an attempt to overthrow the government brought to power by the 1979 revolution against the U.S.-backed shah. Hussein feared that the mass anti-imperialist upsurge then under way in Iran could spread to his own and other Arab countries. Washington and the other imperialist powers shared this fear and welcomed the Iraqi invasion.

But after nearly three and a half years of

war, the Hussein regime has been thrust onto the defensive. Its troops have largely been forced out of Iran, although they continue to occupy small areas along the border.

In October, the French government provided Hussein's air force with five Super-Etendard warplanes capable of launching Exocet missiles against ships or ground targets. The Iraqi rulers have repeatedly threatened to use these weapons to destroy Iran's Kharg Island oil-export facilities or oil tankers headed for Iranian ports.

"Any ship that approaches [Kharg Island] will be destroyed," Iraqi Information Minister Latif Nassim al-Jassem said February 27. "We address the world and warn that no ship should approach this place."

In response to such threats to cripple their economy, Iranian leaders have stated that if Iran should be put in a position of not being able to export its oil, it would take steps to close the Strait of Hormuz to shipping.

"Right from the beginning we have said, and will continue to say, that as long as our ships can pass through the Strait of Hormuz we will not do anything to anybody," Iranian President Ali Khamenei said in February. "But should the U.S. fleet and their supporters wish to do anything in the Strait, their fate would be decisively worse than their fate in Lebanon."

The Reagan administration and its imperialist allies have taken Iran's position as the pretext to step up military moves against Iran. "There's no way we could allow that channel to be closed," Reagan declared at a February 22 news conference. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said in late February that "it might be in Britain's interests to join with U.S. forces to protect . . . the oil supplies which are so vital to the West."

## U.S. show trial in Grenada

By Ernest Harsch

The U.S. imperialists, having already invaded and occupied Grenada, are now preparing to put on trial and condemn the ideas and achievements of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of murdered Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

Yet Bishop and his murdered comrades remain heroes and martyrs to the vast majority of the Grenadian population. The concrete gains that working people won during the four and a half years that the PRG was in power are still enormously popular. Washington and its appointed servants in Grenada thus find it politically difficult to denounce them directly.

Instead, they are seeking to strike at the legacy of the Grenada revolution through the trial of those who *overthrew* it, the clique of politi-

In fact, as seen from the February 26 incidents, it is the U.S. Navy that currently threatens shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

When Washington issued a demand in January that ships and planes stay at least five miles away from its armada in the Gulf, the Iranian Foreign Ministry replied that such a cordon was "a fundamental violation of all international laws . . . dealing with international flights or other conventions dealing with freedom to fly over the open seas." The U.S. threat, it said, "is, in fact, a claim of sovereignty over an unspecified area of international waters. . . . This is baseless, worthless, and legally groundless."

Behind the U.S., British, and French naval deployments off Iran's coasts and the massive French military aid to Iraq is the fear that imperialist interests throughout the Middle East would be at increased risk in the event of an Iranian victory against Saddam Hussein's aggression. Coming on top of the setbacks to imperialism in Lebanon, such a victory could inspire the masses in Iran, giving a fresh impetus to the anti-imperialist struggle there and in the Arab countries as well.

Israeli officials are reported to be particularly concerned at the prospect of an Iranian victory.

In December, according to the January 1 *Washington Post*, top officials of the U.S. State Department and Department of Defense made an unpublicized tour of Washington's client states in the Persian Gulf area to inform them that an Iraqi defeat would be "contrary to U.S. interests." According to the *Post*, the 10-day mission's "main purpose was to discuss U.S.-Arab cooperation" against Iran.

"The decision to say that the United States opposes the defeat of Iraq," the *Post* continued, "was described by officials as reflecting the relative decline of Iraq's fortunes compared with those of Iran as well as the disaster for U.S. interests if the Iranian revolution were to spread triumphantly in the strategic region." □

cal figures and army officers led by former Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard.

On February 22, the interim government set up by the U.S. occupying army brought Coard and 17 of his colleagues into court in St. George's, to be charged with responsibility for the Oct. 19, 1983, murders of Bishop and other leaders of the New Jewel Movement (NJM), who were executed as part of Coard's coup against the workers and farmers government.

All were led into the courtroom in handcuffs. Seven former soldiers of the now-disbanded People's Revolutionary Army were formally charged with the murders. Bernard Coard, Gen. Hudson Austin, Phyllis Coard, Leon Cornwall, and seven other officials were accused of conspiracy to murder. The charges

carry the death penalty. The actual beginning of the trial has been set for April 4.

Coard and his supporters, who betrayed the Grenada revolution and opened the door to the U.S. invasion, are widely hated by the people of Grenada and fully deserve to be brought to justice. According to Don Rojas, an aide and former press secretary to Bishop who was with the late prime minister shortly before he was killed, the murders and other actions of the Coard grouping "were crimes against the Grenadian people and the Grenada revolution."

"But," Rojas continued, "only the Grenadian people and not the occupation forces or their puppet have the right to dispense revolutionary justice to the perpetrators of those monstrous crimes" (interview in *Intercontinental Press*, Dec. 26, 1983).

Washington's aim, in fact, is not to dispense justice. As part of its attacks against the gains of the revolution (such as free education, health care, union rights, agrarian reform, and women's rights), it is hoping to use Coard and his gang to smear the whole revolutionary process.

The Dec. 4, 1983, *Chicago Tribune*, in a dispatch from St. George's by correspondent George de Lama, revealed some of the thinking of U.S. officials there. When Coard and the others come to trial, de Lama wrote, "an era of Grenadian history will go on trial with them, United States officials here say."

"If, as expected, Coard and Austin are charged with murder, then in this homicide the victim will stand accused as well."

An unnamed senior U.S. official told de Lama, "It's going to be a trial of the guys who killed Bishop, but also a trial of the New Jewel Movement — its total failure, the entire Cuban role here for four years. . . . When the Grenadian people see what these guys really did here, they'll be finished."

Another official predicted, "When this trial is over, Maurice Bishop will be no martyr, I can assure you of that."

According to de Lama, "Discrediting Marxism is one of the aims of the coming political trial, U.S. officials admit. . . ."

The trial thus fits into Washington's broader propaganda effort: to convince working people in Grenada — and the rest of the world — that the Coard gang is synonymous with the revolutionary leadership around Bishop, that the brutal methods of Coard's group are the methods of Marxism, that socialist revolutions inevitably lead to bloodbaths, and that Cuban aid is cynically offered to militarily dominate other countries. The imperialists then use such claims to justify their aggression against revolutionary and national liberation struggles, in Grenada and elsewhere.

The trial has another purpose as well. The U.S. occupation forces and their Grenadian cohorts hope to use it to systematically undermine the civil liberties and democratic rights of the Grenadian population as a whole.

That process began in the immediate wake of the U.S. invasion. In the name of weeding

out "dangerous subversives" and "Coardites," hundreds of Grenadians were detained for a time and interrogated. Public assemblies have been banned.

By moving most prominently against the Coard grouping at this time, the U.S. authorities are seeking to set a precedent for attacks against others. In particular, they hope to pave the way for further prosecutions and victimizations of the real revolutionary Marxist

leaders and activists of the NJM who are still alive.

NJM leader George Louison, who has already been detained by U.S. troops for questioning three times, told de Lama, "They are trying to scare us and discredit us."

If Washington is successful in using the Coard show trial to convict the Grenada revolution itself, any leaders or supporters of the revolution could meet a similar fate. □

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# Elections set for November 4

*Rightist parties demand 'preconditions' for their participation*

**By Michael Baumann  
and Jane Harris**

MANAGUA — Nicaraguans will elect their president, vice-president, and 90-member National Assembly this November 4, two days prior to the U.S. elections.

Government coordinator Daniel Ortega made the announcement to more than 100,000 people gathered here in Managua's Plaza of the Revolution February 21. Workers, soldiers, and students returning from volunteer coffee and cotton picking, old-timers from Sandino's army, delegations from more than 50 countries, and others had come to pay tribute to the country's national hero, Gen. Augusto César Sandino.

Sandino, whose poorly armed troops drove the U.S. Marines out of Nicaragua in the early 1930s, was assassinated by the Somoza dictatorship soon after.

"Here there is a war by those who want to kill Sandino again," Ortega pointed out, referring to the U.S. government, "a war by those who don't want to accept historical changes, by those who invaded Grenada" and are responsible for the bombings of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam, and the blockade of Cuba.

Since 1982, the U.S. government has spent \$73 million in order to wound, kidnap, and kill Nicaraguans and destroy their revolution. Some 1,500 Nicaraguans have been killed in the war. Why not invest that \$73 million to restore cuts in social programs for the poor, Blacks, Hispanics, and the Indians, suggested Ortega to Washington.

Explaining why the Sandinistas reject democracy lessons from the U.S. rulers, he said, "We don't want that type of democracy that in the 1960s denied millions of United States citizens the right to vote because they were Black ... a democracy where barely 30 percent of the population participates in the presidential elections ... the Ku Klux Klan type of democracy," a democracy that "uses its military and economic power to threaten and invade those who do not submit to its imperialist schemes."

No, Ortega said, that democracy is part of Somoza's time. "Here we are building our own democracy, which in turn is a contribution to the democratization of Latin America, particularly of Central America."

## **16-year-olds to vote**

Roaring applause came when Ortega, speaking for the government junta and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), said he considered that 16-year-olds had won the right to vote by their massive participation in the revolution. Legislation to make this a reality would be recommended to the country's

Council of State, he added.

Much to the fury of the right-wing bloc of political parties, who consider 16-year-olds "immature adolescents," the Sandinista Youth has been waging a campaign complete with suffrage demonstrations, leaflets, and petitions to be included in the election.

Because Nicaragua is a sparsely populated country surrounded by war, Nicaraguan youth are required by circumstance to play an important role in both defense and production. Quite a number of today's 16- and 17-year-olds took part in the war against the Somoza dictatorship five years ago at the age of 11 or 12.

Petitions bearing some 80,000 signatures were presented to the Council of State demanding the 16-year-olds' right to vote. Many of those signatures belonged to parents.

Ortega also reported that the offer of amnesty to the counterrevolutionaries (excepting their leaders) would be extended until May 4, having expired the day of his speech. So far, he said, 806 Nicaraguans have chosen to take advantage of the offer.

As part of Ortega's remarks on Nicaraguan democracy, he declared that both Christianity and Marxism are part of Sandinista democracy and extended an especially warm welcome to several priests on the platform. Among them were Minister of Culture Ernesto Cardenal and Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto, two international spokespersons for the Sandinista revolution.

"We are contributing for the first time in our history to democracy," Ortega proudly reminded those assembled. Democracy, for Nicaraguans, he explained, means literacy, health care, people's organizations, workers' rights, agrarian reform, sovereignty, independence, and self-determination. It means burying selfishness and the exploiters, he said.

The Council of State is now in daily session drafting the electoral law and expects to complete its work by mid-March.

Immediately upon the approval of the law, the Supreme Electoral Council will propose to the government junta the lifting of most aspects of the State of Emergency, possibly in April, Council of State President Carlos Núñez reported.

The election period is scheduled to begin in mid-May, with each political party that runs a full slate of candidates to receive \$600,000 in state financing. Five thousand signatures are required for national ballot status.

## **Response to Shultz**

Plans call for the installation of 6,000 polling booths at which all parties may have observers. Foreign visitors are welcome to ob-

serve, not "supervise" as U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz would have it.

Commenting on Shultz's hostile call for international "supervision," Daniel Ortega remarked that "the only supervised elections that Nicaragua has ever had have taken place during U.S. intervention" — a reference to the presidential elections of 1928 and 1932, which were run by the U.S. Marines. Today, 50 years later, Ortega said, "Mr. Shultz is still imagining elections with United States troops landing" in our territory.

In a speech to militia members February 26, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega pointed to Shultz's remarks as confirmation of the fact that elections here will not change Washington's policy of aggression against Nicaragua.

"The revolutionary reality," Humberto Ortega said, "is that imperialism wants to crush us. The Yankees are demanding democracy. I say to them that there is nothing more democratic than turning arms over to the people."

How long, he asked, does the United States think the government of El Salvador would last if it turned its arms over to the people?

## **Elections 'too soon'?**

The latest announcements on details of the elections have increased the already great political embarrassment of the right-wing parties here. Since 1979, they have been demanding "immediate elections," claiming that the only reason they had not been held was the FSLN's supposed fear of being swept out of power. Now that the date for the elections has not only been set, but moved up (it was previously scheduled for 1985), they have had to switch to complaining that November 4 is "too soon."

According to the logic of right-wing spokesman Carlos Huembes, general secretary of the rightist Nicaraguan Workers Federation (CTN), setting an early date for the elections is just another maneuver by the FSLN.

"They have moved up the date of the elections," Huembes claimed, "so as to not give the political parties the opportunity to organize and to prevent the people from learning about our government proposals."

"The FSLN is campaigning politically 24 hours a day over the means of communications that are not its property but the property of the people. The other parties don't have the possibility of expressing themselves in these media."

Among those who *should be* outraged by this statement is the bourgeois daily *La Prensa*, which printed these remarks by Huembes on its front page February 23. If the right wing cannot reach anyone, despite the fact that its



statements are daily featured prominently in *La Prensa*, it could only mean that nobody is buying the paper — which is not true.

The general response of the right wing has been to threaten abstention. This threat was made directly in a news conference in Washington February 8 by Nicaraguan agribusiness millionaire Ramiro Gurdian speaking for the big-business outfit COSEP. The right wing has also threatened indirectly, by stating a series of preposterous demands which, when they are not met, will be used to claim the elections are not really democratic.

#### Right wing's demands

On February 20, the eve of Ortega's election announcement, the right-wing umbrella organization Democratic Coordinating Committee reiterated these "preconditions" in a news conference with the international press.

- A "national dialogue" and "general amnesty" for "all Nicaraguans," including those leading the armed counterrevolution.
- Complete separation between the FSLN and the government.
- Dismantlement of the mass organizations, especially the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS).
- Repeal of decrees authorizing confiscation of absentee owners and owners caught participating in economic sabotage.
- Immediate suspension of the State of Emergency.
- No vote for members of the army or militia.
- Minimum voting age of 18, not 16.

The first four demands are, in effect, the right wing's political platform. They amount to a call for a rollback of the change in *class power* that took place in Nicaragua beginning with the overthrow of the capitalist dictatorship and its replacement by a workers and farmers government. By making them "preconditions," the right wing is demanding *in advance*, as the price for its participation in the elections, exactly what it would carry out if it were returned to power.

The fifth demand, for repeal of the State of Emergency, would better be addressed to Washington, whose war against Nicaragua made enactment of the decree necessary in the first place.

The sixth demand, that members of the army and militia be denied the right to vote, is generally passed over in silence by the right wing's international backers — and with good reason. It is hard to claim abroad that this principle of bourgeois democracy — that soldiers are also citizens — is but another example of "Sandinista totalitarianism."

On the other hand, the seventh demand, that the minimum voting age be set at 18, not 16, has been widely publicized internationally. Arguing from the absolutely true premise that the great majority of young people support the revolution and its vanguard party, the FSLN, the right wing and its international supporters go on to claim that giving them the vote is just a ballot-stuffing measure.

The fact is that the 16-year-old vote is nothing new in Nicaragua. Under the country's first democratic constitution, a product of the bourgeois revolution of 1893, 16-year-olds were given the right to vote. This gain, wiped out by the Somoza dictatorship, is now about to be restored and amplified by the revolutionary government. Gone will be the 19th-century restrictions limiting suffrage to those 16 or over who were male, literate, and married.

In reality, who has more right to vote than the young people who helped make the revolution and play a key role in fulfilling its tasks today? In revolutionary Nicaragua, 16- and 17-year-olds are the backbone of the production and education brigades in the countryside, are enrolled in the regular army, and have a large presence in the militias. "If we're old

enough to fight," they say with justice, "we're old enough to vote."

The country's largest mass organization, the Sandinista Defense Committees, and most of their parents agree. Says Panfilo José Orozco, a 71-year-old carpenter in the Managua working-class district of Monseñer Lezcano: "My son Oscar was 12 when he fought in the insurrection in Somotillo. Now he's 17 and a member of the militia. And you're going to tell me he can't vote?"

The general expectation is that the Council of State will approve the change in the minimum voting age. This will add Nicaragua to the list of countries — Cuba, Iran, Guinea-Bissau, and the Cape Verde Islands — where revolutions and national liberation struggles have brought 16-year-olds the right to vote. □

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## El Salvador

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# Strikers defy dictatorship

## Wave of work stoppages hits capital

By Michael Baumann

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — In one of the largest waves of strikes under the military dictatorship, as many as 9,000 workers at factories and government agencies have hit the bricks in El Salvador.

Revolutionary forces of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) currently hold about one-third of the country's rural area. But this is one of the few times in the civil war that workers in the cities have openly mobilized in defiance of the right-wing dictatorship.

The main demand is for an increase in wages. Paychecks have been frozen in El Salvador, by government decree, for the last four years. But prices have been rising an average of 40 percent a year.

The strikes began at the end of February, just a few weeks prior to the U.S.-orchestrated "elections" scheduled for March 25. They have been centered in the capital, San Salvador.

According to a broadcast over rebel Radio Farabundo Martí February 27, the work stoppages had begun several days earlier and spread rapidly.

Government employees at the Institute of Civil Security walked out February 22, demanding higher pay.

Foundry workers at San Salvador's Sarti steel plant went out on strike February 24, demanding a 30 percent increase in wages.

Workers at the Ministry of Education and other government offices went out on strike demanding back pay that had been owed to them for several months.

Four thousand workers at ANDA, the national waterworks, went out February 27, demanding a pay increase.

Government employees at the Institute of Distribution, a state marketing agency, have also walked out. As part of their protest, they have publicly named "corrupt functionaries" who have hoarded scarce consumer products "for their own benefit and profit."

Workers at a major textile plant in the southeastern provincial capital of San Miguel are demanding return of funds they were forced to contribute to a crooked housing scheme. They are now all unemployed, following the shutdown of the plant at the end of February.

To combat the strikes, the Salvadoran dictatorship is combining the carrot and the stick. Government employees have been offered a 10 percent pay increase, the first concession since 1979. But at the same time, both the army and the death squads have threatened to unleash a wave of terror.

Chief of the Salvadoran army general staff, Col. Adolfo Blandón, has denounced the strikes as a "campaign of economic destabilization aimed at undermining the electoral process," and says they are being "run by subversives."

An army unit surrounded waterworkers the first day of their strike, threatening severe reprisals if they refused to return to work.

The ultrarightist Secret Anticommunist Army (ESA) has phoned death threats to strikers at the Social Security Agency.

As of March 1, strike leaders had rejected the 10 percent pay increase as insufficient and said the work stoppages would continue. □

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# Respond to the Sandinistas' appeal

## Organize international solidarity brigades

[The following editorial appeared in the February 20 issue of *Inprecor*, a fortnightly magazine published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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Free Nicaragua has always attached great importance to the solidarity movements that exist throughout the world. These solidarity movements reflect the impact of the revolutionary process that began with the fall of the Somoza dictatorship on July 19, 1979. They help to expose the activities of imperialism and the counterrevolutionary forces fighting the Sandinista revolution and work to isolate the patrons of the counterrevolutionaries.

In line with these initiatives, for several years the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction have made efforts to welcome international solidarity brigades.

During the summer of 1983, hundreds of volunteers from West Germany, Argentina, Belgium, Chile, the United States, Denmark, Spain, France, the Basque country, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland took part in such brigades to show their concrete solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution.

The participants in these brigades met in August 1983 and published a common statement calling on "the governments of [their] respective countries, civic and religious figures, all working-class, peasant, and intellectual organizations, all political parties and mass organizations" to condemn the Reagan administration, to support the FSLN's peace efforts, and "to step up protest actions in front of United States embassies in each of these countries, and to use all forms of response and mobilization: public campaigns, financial solidarity, sending more brigades of volunteers."

The Sandinista press regularly reports on the arrival of contingents of volunteers and on their activities with the population. This winter, for the coffee harvest, more than 700 volunteers (500 of them from the United States) have already gone to Nicaragua in solidarity brigades from different countries.

Such international solidarity brigades are in the interest of the Nicaraguan revolution for several reasons. First of all, the brigades provide material assistance in the campaigns to harvest coffee and cotton and to build schools, health centers, and various installations. In the summer of 1983, for example, two brigades of Swiss volunteers worked with local residents to build a bridge in a neighborhood in Matagalpa.

All these activities make real contributions to the reconstruction effort being mounted by the Nicaraguan revolution.

But the volunteer labor brigades have another very important significance. The brigades help provide concrete evidence to the Nicaraguan masses of the international political support that exists for the Sandinista revolution. The brigades show the working people that their country is not isolated in the gigantic resistance they are waging against the counterrevolutionary campaigns financed and organized by the U.S. administration.

This more strictly political dimension of the international solidarity is further heightened when the "brigadistas" are present in the border areas, where the Nicaraguan fighters are in the front lines against the attacks by the counterrevolutionary forces, and will be even more so if there is more direct foreign intervention.

Solidarity movement activists from West Germany are beginning to organize just such a presence. This can have an important role as a deterrent against actions fomented by the United States. In early January a Swiss brigade of 20 people went to the area of the San Juan River along the border with Costa Rica to carry out land-clearing work.

But establishing solidarity brigades is also a way of activating the solidarity movement itself in the countries from which the volunteers are recruited. Far from being an activity isolated from the rest of the solidarity effort, it is an effective tool to popularize the real situation in Nicaragua in order to involve the workers organizations and their individual activists in concrete solidarity tasks. Descriptions and reports of the trips and experiences in Nicaragua can also be used to build informational meetings and public protests.

It has been shown in practice that many of the solidarity activists who go through this experience of mass internationalism, coming into direct contact with a living revolution, find that they are a bit more committed to the revolution's cause on their return than they were when they left.

Sending fact-finding and trade-union solidarity missions is also part of the same effort. Moreover, these missions are in line with the goals of the Nicaraguan union movement, which has just issued a call for an "International Meeting for Peace" in Managua in April.

This side of the process of sending solidarity brigades is clearly illustrated by the experience of 40 Austrian brigade-members who left for Nicaragua in early January. The Austrian movement in solidarity with Nicaragua thought that it could get 15 or so volunteers in

response to an appeal from the Rural Workers Association (ATC — the Sandinista peasant and agricultural workers organization). But within several days more than 300 people had applied. From among them, the Austrian solidarity committee selected 100 volunteers who will end up going in two trips.

For all these reasons, sending volunteer labor brigades to Nicaragua is an aspect of solidarity work that has exceptional importance for the defensive needs of the Nicaraguan revolution for expanding the solidarity movement. It is no exaggeration to say that the response in many countries has no parallel except the experience of the Spanish Civil War. Often these brigades concretely reflect an exemplary unity among different components of the local workers and people's movement. The Austrian brigade, for example, includes Social Democratic activists, members of the Communist Party, the Catholic workers movement, the Alternatives (the equivalent of the German "Greens"), Trotskyists, and activists who are not politically organized and who take part for a variety of reasons — some for purely humanitarian ends, others for more political reasons involving support to the revolutionary struggle of the FSLN and the Nicaraguan masses.

On Oct. 25, 1983, the national executive committee of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) issued an appeal "to committees in solidarity with Nicaragua" to set up brigades of volunteer workers in the medical and technical fields and other specialties. Hundreds and thousands of brigade-members from Europe, America, and Japan are expected in Nicaragua in early 1984. This is an initial, positive response to the appeal made by the Nicaraguan masses and their organizations. It is now more necessary than ever to do everything possible to stay the armed hand of imperialism. Therefore we must further extend and build upon this initial response.

Facing imperialist aggression, Nicaragua is not alone! Our response to the appeal by the Nicaraguan revolution must be: "Present." □

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# Agriculture — a pillar of the revolution

*Fighting a legacy of backwardness and imperialist domination*

By Michael Baumann

TIPITAPA, Nicaragua — "This will be the only sugar mill in the world that generates all its own electricity," engineer Enrique Reigelhaupt says. He points down to the ground. "And these little eucalyptus seedlings are the reason why."

Nearly a fifth of the 40,000 acres of land set aside for the Malacatoya sugar refinery and canefields here has been planted with eucalypt-

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This is the first of three articles on agriculture in Nicaragua. The subsequent articles will deal with the conditions of the peasantry, the formation of cooperatives, and the problems and prospects facing food production.

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tus and other fast-growing trees. Some of them shoot up as much as an inch a day.

"Here we're going to use wood for fuel," Reigelhaupt continues as he walks carefully through the freshly planted trees.

"It won't cost a cent in hard currency. It will be available right next to the power plant, eliminating transportation costs. And cutting it will provide jobs for between 120 and 300 people, depending on how much of it has to be done by hand."

Reigelhaupt, from Argentina, is one of dozens of international experts working on the project here. Many are from Cuba, which is providing much of the technology and construction materials and nearly half of the \$250 million financing for the project.

When the mill enters initial production in a year or two, it will be the most efficient sugar refinery in Central America. In addition to providing all its own fuel, the complex will be completely irrigated — increasing by a third the amount of irrigated land in the country. Ninety percent of the canecutting will be mechanized.

Construction has begun on the huge dam — 150 feet high and nearly two-thirds of a mile wide — that will provide water for irrigation from the nearby Malacatoya river.

Four thousand jobs are being generated by the construction projects alone. MIDINRA, Nicaragua's agricultural reform agency, estimates that when completed the mill will provide permanent work for 5,000 persons.

## Backbone of economy

The Malacatoya complex, slowly rising up out of what was once marginal, drought-plagued farmland 15 miles northeast of Managua, is one of the signs of the new Nicaragua

the revolution is bringing about. Symbolic as well is the forced marriage of old and new technology — hand chopped wood to fire giant stainless steel boilers — for lack of hard currency to import oil.

At a time when major agricultural investment has been slashed in the rest of Central America, Malacatoya is but one of 20 large-scale projects Nicaragua has undertaken at a total cost of more than \$1.2 billion. These include two African palm plantations on the Atlantic Coast, four tobacco projects, two modern dairies, and several large poultry complexes.

Agriculture is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the motor force of the Nicaraguan economy. It is the country's main source of hard currency, accounting for 70 percent of all exports (\$350 million out of \$500 million in 1981). Yet it absorbs only 10 percent of all imports. (Nicaragua's industry, for comparison, produces only \$80 million in export income but requires twice that amount each year in imported raw and semi-finished materials.)

Nicaragua's agriculture produces most of the food consumed in the country, provides the bulk of public revenue, and absorbs the majority of public investment. The main urban centers are dependent on this agricultural base, which provides either raw materials or a market for three-quarters of the country's industry. More than two-thirds of the country's economically active population (630,000 out of 900,000) is estimated to be employed in agriculture.

What is true for the economy is equally true politically. Meeting the needs of these rural toilers is a life-and-death question for the revolution. With an industrial working class of well under 100,000 in a country of 3 million, only a firm alliance between urban workers and rural producers can assure provision of food to the cities, continued export income, and united opposition to imperialist attack.

This has meant bending the stick toward the countryside even at the cost of sacrifices by the organized urban workers. This was shown, for example, in the decision by the union federations in late 1983 to postpone an increase in the minimum wage so as to provide additional funds for defense and for continued development of the countryside.

"If the revolution has benefited any social sector in this society it has been the peasantry, and they have benefited greatly," agrarian reform minister Jaime Wheelock commented in a recent interview. "That is why the great majority of those who defend the revolution,

with arms in hand, against the Somozaists are peasants."<sup>1</sup>

## 'Like Middle Ages'

To grasp the degree of backwardness U.S.-supported regimes imposed on rural Nicaragua for decades, it is useful to begin with one eloquent fact: *in much of Nicaragua even the plow is unknown*. According to an estimate by Wheelock, a majority of the country's basic food crops "are produced by peasants using technology at the same level as that of the Indians at the arrival of Columbus — the digging stick."<sup>2</sup>

"In a nutshell," says MIDINRA, summing up the situation the revolution inherited, "the agricultural sector reflects all the features of our country's underdevelopment. At the end of the twentieth century, the bulk of basic food items consumed by our working population are produced by animal power, in good measure human. The agro-export harvests require hundreds of thousands of workers for a two or three month period, but then can no longer offer most of them work.

"Extensive cattle raising requires landless peasants prepared to clear a few *manzanas* [one manzana = 1.73 acres] of land, work them for a season or two, and then return them to the boss so they can be reincorporated into his pasture area. This is how pastureland is cleared in Nicaragua — 'rent paid in labor' — just as in the Middle Ages."<sup>3</sup>

Only the export sector, located in a few provinces on Nicaragua's Pacific Coast, enjoys any degree of modern technology. All of Nicaragua makes do with fewer than 3,000 tractors. And more than half of these arrived from the Soviet Union after the revolution.

## Roots of backwardness

The culprit was coffee, and later cotton. Not the crops themselves, but the way the peasantry was uprooted and dispersed to make room for them.

Cultivation of coffee was introduced in the 1870s. It became the dominant export crop after World War I and remains such today, accounting for about 40 percent of all export in-

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1. Interview with Marta Harnecker, *Intercontinental Press*, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 734.

2. *Informe del Primer Seminario Sobre Estrategia Alimentaria*, MIDINRA report published in June 1983, p. 29.

3. *3 Años de Reforma Agraria*, MIDINRA report issued May 4, 1982, p. 17.



come. Large-scale cotton cultivation was introduced in the early 1950s.

Like all such abrupt changes under capitalism, introduction of these new crops brought wrenching social consequences. In the case of coffee, favorable prices on the world market resulted in the emergence of a new layer of capitalist entrepreneurs with an unquenchable thirst for land.

Tenant farmers, squatters, and Indians, who had owned land in common for centuries, were the first to be violently expropriated. Hit hard next were the small food producers, traditionally located just outside each major population center to compensate for poor transportation facilities.

Tens of thousands of small farmers were dispossessed. Many became part of the army of agricultural workers needed for three months a year during the harvest. Others retreated toward marginal, unclaimed land in the agricultural frontier to the north, center, and east of the country.

Nicaragua's coffee growers, Wheelock concludes, cold-bloodedly "destroyed the basis of agriculture for domestic consumption" because "it took up too much of the labor force in the countryside."<sup>4</sup> In the process, "they had to almost totally dismember the system of agricultural production that had been handed down from colonial times."<sup>5</sup>

It is the descendants of these displaced peasants, still located on the agricultural frontier — far from roads, storage facilities, or technical help — who today are producing most of Nicaragua's food. Rectifying the consequences of this forced population shift is ultimately the key to many of the most pressing problems faced in the Nicaraguan countryside today.

#### Transformation begins

Two of the first steps taken by the victorious revolution were to expropriate all land owned by the Somoza family, and soon after, all land owned by their associates (Decrees No. 3 and 38).

These two measures alone gave the state control over 2.8 million acres of some of the most modern agricultural units in the country. Almost all, however, were in the form of agro-export plantations and were not divided up among the landless peasants. To meet the peasants' needs for more land a later decree, confiscating all idle land, was necessary.

Immediate tasks on the big expropriated units were to revive production, which had been shattered by the war and by last-minute looting by departing owners. Many workers had not been paid in months, and most records had disappeared along with the former owners.

To restore production, tens of millions of dollars were pumped into the countryside by the newly nationalized banking system. Cheap and abundant credit was granted not only to the

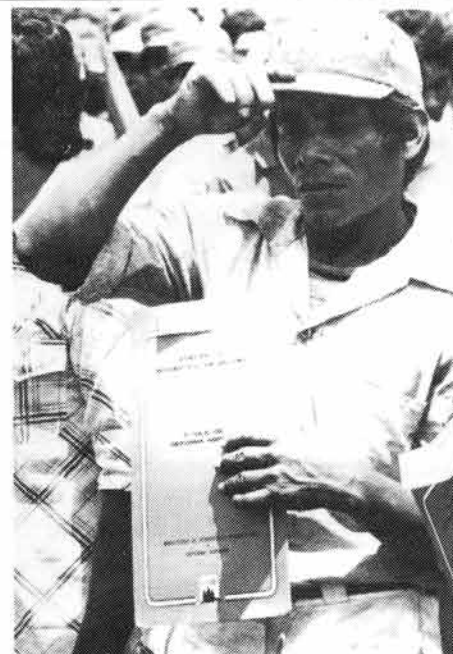
new state farms, but also to efficient big growers and peasants. The latter were encouraged to form cooperatives, both because of the long-range advantages of collective labor and to reduce the problem of providing aid to tens of thousands of individual producers.

Within two years, enormous progress was already visible. With the exception of cotton, production of cash crops reached acceptable levels of recovery by 1981. In the case of coffee, the 1982–83 harvest was the largest in the country's history. Banana production is now above the Somoza-era levels, and sugar and beef exports are equal to the best years under the capitalist dictatorship.

Even in cotton the picture is relatively encouraging. Nicaragua today produces about a third less cotton than it did in the best years under Somoza. But this is largely because lower world market prices and higher labor costs (that is, the wage and social benefits the revolution brought agricultural laborers) preclude planting the marginal land Somoza's record crops included.

Overall, the state-owned agricultural sector today employs 40,000 workers, has assets of more than \$550 million, and accounts for nearly a quarter of the country's food and fiber production. Its average productivity consistently outpaces the large private growers.

To continue and expand these gains, the revolutionary government has turned on its head



Michael Baumann/Militant

Landless peasant receives title to land he works.

the economic policy of the Somoza dictatorship. Instead of focusing on the cities, it is concentrating some 80 percent of all productive investment in the countryside.

Economic reality, Wheelock explained to a

## Help us cover Nicaragua

*Intercontinental Press* has maintained a full-time bureau in Managua since shortly after the Sandinistas overturned the Somoza dictatorship and set up a revolutionary government in July 1979. It is the only English-language magazine that has done so.

Having reporters on the scene has made it possible for us to offer our readers thorough, up-to-date reports on the Nicaraguan revolution as it has unfolded. The interviews, feature stories, speeches, and news articles that have appeared in *IP* document the course of the revolution.

Typical of our coverage is the three-part series by Michael Baumann on agriculture in Nicaragua that we are beginning to publish in this issue. A few months ago we serialized an interview with Commander Jaime Wheelock, Nicaragua's minister of agrarian reform that appeared in Nicaragua in book form as *El Gran Desafío* (The Great Challenge). It was translated by our Managua bureau.

The stepped up attacks by U.S.-backed counterrevolutionaries have made it especially important to have timely reporting. Activists engaged in solidarity work throughout the world need to get the latest reports on Washington's moves against the revolution in order to mobilize the most ef-

fective protests possible.

When the Corinto oil depot was bombed last October our correspondents were on the scene right away. Likewise they have been to the border areas where the most intensive counterrevolutionary attacks are being waged.

But it costs money to provide the kind of coverage that *IP* readers have come to expect. Articles must often be phoned into New York from Managua. Travel costs continue to mount. And, even without the added expenses of maintaining the Managua bureau, the fact is that subscriptions to *IP* and single copy sales do not generate enough income to cover our operating expenses.

Recently we have begun mailing the *IP* to subscribers in northeastern United States by first-class mail so it will arrive more quickly. (The rest of the country was already receiving it first-class.) This change, made to accommodate our readers, has added to our mailing costs.

We are appealing to readers of *IP* to help us with financial contributions. Please send whatever you can afford — all contributions, no matter what the amount, will be greatly appreciated. Send donations to *Intercontinental Press*, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y., 10014, USA.

4. Wheelock, *Imperialismo y Dictadura* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno) 1975, p. 20.

5. Wheelock, p. 19.

recent international conference in Managua, has forced Nicaragua to take a hard look at investment priorities. "We must seek an alternative model of development," he said, "agro-industrialization — the processing of our own raw materials."

Instead of simply continuing to export raw or semi-finished food and fiber, "we have to begin to exploit our own resources, in a reasonable way, primarily through the processing of our agricultural production. This is the vital center of the economic and development strategy that has been drawn up by the National Directorate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front and by the Government of National Reconstruction."

Given the shortage of resources, Wheelock acknowledged, this can only be done at the expense of other priorities, including expansion of social services.

"Of course we are aware that our children are still barefoot," he said. "We know there is great poverty in the marginal *barrios*. That more health care and housing is needed. But we could fill the entire country with houses and provide shoes for every child — and this would still not resolve the problem of backwardness and underdevelopment. . . . We have to go to the root of the problem, not its peripheral aspects."<sup>6</sup>

Most, but not all, of such increased investment will be on state-owned farms and processing facilities. Also envisioned are joint projects with capitalist agricultural producers.

Small in number but important economically, the big-business agricultural sector today accounts for half the country's production of sugar, rice, and cotton, and about a third of the coffee. They are sometimes jokingly referred to as "capitalists of a new type" — capitalists who have continued to function in a society where the workers and farmers wield political power.

Nicaragua's agrarian reform places no limit on the amount of land a private producer may own — so long as it is fully used. Consequently there still remains a significant sector of large landowners — probably a few thousand — who were never directly connected with Somoza and thus were not confiscated. Given the lack of trained technical and administrative personnel, a government takeover would have created a lot of difficulties.

The capital of this sector is tied up in relatively efficient and productive export farms. Rather than abandoning this and leaving the country, many of them decided to stay, continue producing, and see how things work out. This is a necessity to the revolution at its present stage. "We need the big growers," Wheelock told the international conference. "Their production is helpful to the revolution."

On the whole, they are not the most enthusiastic supporters of the revolution, but neither do they actively support the counter-

revolution. On occasion some have made formal protests to visiting U.S. officials — not about the revolution but about the damage to their crops caused by U.S.-financed terrorists.

The revolutionary government negotiates with this sector and tries to avoid unnecessarily antagonizing it. In general, it must sell its export crops to the government, which then markets them internationally. This means the government gets the dollars, which are then converted into Nicaraguan *córdobas* to pay the growers.

The result is that the society as a whole gets the use of the hard currency (for the import of medicine, fuel, spare parts, etc.). The individual big producer, on the other hand, can live very well in Nicaragua if he chooses to. But since his *córdobas* cannot be used in international exchange, he cannot get his capital or profits out of the country without taking a walloping loss on the black market.

To improve working relations with these large landowners, the government has met

many of their demands more than halfway. To cover increased costs, they are being paid 20 to 30 percent more for their crops this year, including a small percentage in hard currency. To bolster confidence in private investment, the government has announced that it will soon be issuing "certificates of inaffectability." These will be formal, legal documents, issued to private growers, pledging that their land will not be touched so long as a certain level of production is maintained.

The big growers retain much of their economic power. But politically and socially they have never been more isolated. They are not capitalists protected by Somoza's National Guard. They are capitalists surrounded and circumscribed by the Sandinista army, militia, defense committees, agricultural cooperatives, unions, tax laws, and ministry of labor.

The big growers are a remaining part of Nicaragua's past. In a subsequent article we will take a look at the seeds of the future — the agricultural cooperatives. □

## FSLN dialogue with shopkeepers

*'You are not the enemy'*

By Michael Baumann

MASAYA — "Small businessmen are important allies of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), of the struggle for the transformation of our society," government leader Sergio Ramírez told the audience of 800 owners of small grocery stores.

"You who are organized are part of the revolutionary process, part of the revolutionary people." We need "your participation and contribution to the solution of the fundamental problems of the revolution." At the same time, "we will look out for your interests."

In these times of war and economic difficulties, "we need the national unity of all Nicaraguan patriots, of all who want their homeland to remain free and independent."

The meeting, a dialogue between government and FSLN leaders and the small shopkeepers of southern Nicaragua was the first of its kind since the revolution. It was held here February 26 as part of the opening ceremony of the new \$10 million grain storage center, a symbol of the gains the revolution will bring over time.

The audience was a cross section of the 6,500 small shopkeepers in the region. Of them, according to government figures, 5,200 are organized in associations aimed at controlling speculation and hoarding and at ensuring equitable distribution of scarce products.

In Nicaragua, which probably has four or five shopkeepers for every industrial worker, maintaining firm and friendly relations with this large layer of small businessmen is a key task of the revolution.

Private shopkeepers control more than three-quarters of retail commerce. In the short term there are neither possibilities nor plans for significantly increasing state intervention in

this sector.

Instead the government is, on the one hand, appealing to their patriotic and nationalist sentiment. On the other, it is encouraging them to organize in associations to ensure delivery of products in such a way as to prevent any single shopkeeper from being driven out of business.

At the meeting here, more than a dozen shopkeepers took the floor to explain, in the blunt language of the marketplace, that the state distribution effort was fine in theory but was not working out brilliantly in practice.

Typical were the remarks of a grocery store owner from the small port city of San Juan del Sur. "I bring you revolutionary greetings from Zone 9, an abandoned corner of the republic," he said to applause and laughter.

"We have been promised before that we will receive ample supplies of the 14 basic products. The promises haven't been kept. We want action."

Commander Luís Carrión, vice-minister of interior and a member of the FSLN National Directorate, acknowledged the truth of this complaint. He then explained the reasons the revolutionary government was having difficulty meeting the needs of this shopkeeper and his *compañeros*.

"It would be very easy to be demagogic, to make all sorts of promises, especially in an election year," Carrión said. "But we're not going to do that. We're going to speak frankly."

Because of the war and U.S. economic pressure, he said, all we can realistically promise is "to organize to reduce the impact of the shortages. We can't solve them."

The first call on all basic goods, he said, has to go to the *compañeros* mobilized in combat,

6. Report to Forum for International Cooperation, Managua, Dec. 9, 1983.



of whom there are tens of thousands.

Second, it has to be recognized that before the revolution the cities monopolized consumption of such products as sugar, cooking oil, rice, and soap. But in the last four years state-owned distribution outlets have brought access to them to the countryside, to areas where they were unknown before. Production has increased, but not enough to meet this increased demand.

"These shortages," added Dionisio Marengo, minister of internal commerce (MICOIN), the government department responsible for allocating retail goods, "are a long-term problem. It is not going to be solved this year, perhaps not even in five years.

"We need irrigation, farm machinery, more trucks. It's easy to say this, not so easy to actually do it. It's going to take time."

What we want to stress, he said, is that

MICOIN has a "two-lane policy."

"We're going to hit the speculators hard, but we want to work closely with organized store owners. . . . Our big goal in the short term is to get rid of the idea that you grocery store owners are the enemy of the people. You're not the enemy."

The problems run much deeper, he concluded. We have to recognize that and work together in trying to solve them. □

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## Middle East

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# PLO facing big challenges

## *Unity, independence of Palestinian movement under attack*

### By Fred Murphy

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is suffering the effects of nearly two years of heavy blows to the Palestinian people's struggle. As at major turning points for the PLO in the past, an open and often sharp debate is unfolding among Palestinian fighters over how to proceed in the unfavorable circumstances brought on by Israel's U.S.-backed invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. The PLO's situation is made still more difficult by the interference of certain Arab governments in the PLO's internal life and the attempts of these regimes to subordinate the PLO to their policies. In the recent period, the Syrian and Libyan regimes have played a particularly criminal role in this regard.

### Destruction of mass social movement

Israel's invasion of Lebanon — for which U.S. support and military aid was indispensable — aimed at the total destruction of the PLO. The heroism of the Palestinian fighters in resisting Israel's vastly superior military might blocked Begin, Sharon, and Reagan from achieving this goal and forced them to pay a steep political price for the blows they did inflict.

But the Palestinian cause did suffer a grave defeat. The PLO's military units were driven out of southern Lebanon and Beirut. By sowing terror among the masses of Palestinians in Lebanon and wrecking the institutions the PLO had established there, the Israeli invasion and the massacres that followed effectively destroyed the mass social movement the PLO had come to be based on in Lebanon. The Lebanese leftist and Muslim forces that fought alongside the Palestinians were also dealt heavy blows, and collaboration between them and the PLO was effectively broken up. The defeat cost the PLO its last arena of autonomous activity in a country bordering on the Palestinian homeland.

Unlike in previous wars launched by Israel, the Arab regimes all stood aside from the battle

and left the PLO to resist the Zionist armies alone. Syria's President Hafez al-Assad, who has had tens of thousands of troops in Lebanon since 1976, scarcely lifted a finger to defend the Palestinians from the Israeli onslaught. Instead, together with Libya's Col Muammar el Qaddafi, Assad launched an operation in mid-1983 to turn the weakening of the PLO to his own advantage.

Unlike the Arab regimes, the PLO is not a bourgeois government acting on behalf of an exploiting class, but a revolutionary-nationalist movement based on the Palestinian masses. As a result the PLO continually comes into conflict with the Arab regimes. Its efforts to organize and mobilize Palestinians throughout the Arab world in the fight for national self-determination are a powerful example to all Arab workers and peasants and thus a standing threat to the region's capitalist governments — even to those that have come into conflict with imperialism.

Ever since Fatah and other Palestinian guerrilla groups wrested control of the PLO away from the Egyptian regime following the 1967 war with Israel, the PLO has had to persistently guard its unity and independence from attempts by one or another Arab ruler to housebreak or split it.

The immediate aim of Syria's Assad was to convert the PLO, or at least a preponderant wing of it, into an arm of Syrian foreign policy. He hoped to show Washington and Tel Aviv that he could control the Palestinian movement, using this as a bargaining chip in future negotiations. In carrying out this operation against the PLO's hard-won unity and independence, Assad weakened Syria's own defenses against imperialist attack, as shown by the stepped-up U.S. intervention in Lebanon during this same period.

### The Syrian operation

The opportunity for Assad's attack on the PLO came in May 1983 when several military officers of Fatah, the PLO's largest compo-

ment, mutinied in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. They were protesting the promotion of other commanders whom they considered to have acted dishonorably during the war against Israel's invasion. What began as an internal dispute in the PLO, however, quickly took on a quite different character as the Syrian regime resorted to police measures and military force to back up the mutineers.

Except for two member groups of the PLO that have very close ties to the Syrian and Libyan regimes (Saiqa and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command), the Fatah rebels gained scant support from Palestinian forces. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) were both quick to reject the Syrian-Libyan intervention, despite their initial endorsement of some of the rebels' demands.

In late June, PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat was expelled from Syria and prevented from joining loyal PLO units in Lebanon. Fatah's offices and installations in Damascus, the Syrian capital, had earlier been seized by the rebel faction with the help of Syrian military police.

Efforts by the PLO leadership to resolve the political and organizational questions in dispute failed to bear fruit. "Every time we open a door for dialogue, the Syrians close it and ignite the mutiny against Arafat," PLO military chief Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) said June 28.

In August, the PLO Central Council designated a mediating commission of 18 members to help Fatah seek a solution to its internal crisis. But Syrian pressure blocked its effective functioning. A rump of seven commission members issued a public statement in October calling on the Fatah Central Committee to cede its authority to an "interim transitional committee" of unspecified composition and to put a stop to "overt and covert propaganda campaigns against Syria."

The Voice of PLO radio station in Baghdad,



Iraq, responded to this by pointing out that the commission minority had no authority to bypass the PLO Central Council, which had received no recommendations from the commission as a whole. Moreover, the PLO broadcast noted:

The statement's writers bypass the Syrian dimension in the internal Fatah dispute, and hence bypass the occupation of Fatah's offices in Damascus; the forcing of the Palestinian forces to evacuate the Bekaa area, which is the area of confrontation with the Zionist enemy; the besieging of the Palestinian revolution forces in northern Lebanon; the open Syrian media campaign against the PLO leadership; and Syria's adoption — not to say creation — of one of the two disputing parties, not only by means of politics and the media but also by military means using the Syrian forces.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Palestinian masses were expressing their support to the PLO leadership. Writing in the February 1984 *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Samir Kassir described the reaction to the Syrian-backed rebellion in refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon:

Last May, the inhabitants of a refugee camp near Baalbek [in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley] came out en masse to place themselves between the fighters. Around the same time, the dissidents were chased out of the Yarmulk camp near Damascus, even though it had been under tight Syrian control for a long time. In October, at the same camp, 20 victims fell under the bullets of dissidents and Syrian soldiers after a demonstration supporting Yassir Arafat.

Thousands of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip demonstrated in support of Arafat in early November. A poll conducted by the Jerusalem daily *Al-Fajr* found 93 percent of West Bank Arabs supporting Arafat.

#### PLO driven from Lebanon

The PLO chairman returned to the refugee camps near Tripoli, Lebanon, in September to bolster the loyalist forces there and to lend support to Lebanese oppositionists who were locked in armed conflict with the U.S.-backed Gemayel regime. The Syrian response was to begin a siege of the camps with tanks, heavy artillery, and thousands of troops. Backed by this firepower, PLO mutineers overran the camps in mid-November. Samir Kassir described what happened next at the Nahr al Bared camp:

The camp had been occupied several days when, on November 18, taking advantage of the presence of foreign television crews covering a dissidents' news conference, the population of Nahr al Bared came massively into the streets, brandishing portraits of Yassir Arafat and setting fire to cars belonging to two rebel officials. Rebel combatants responded by firing into the crowd, killing 25 and

wounding 75 (according to International Red Cross figures). The next morning, a further demonstration broke out at the funeral of the victims.

The Syrian operation culminated in late December in the expulsion from Tripoli of Arafat and thousands of other defenders of the PLO's unity and independence.

The Syrians and their instruments inside the PLO had applied the same brutal tactics against the Palestinian masses that have made Israel infamous. Syrian artillery had repeatedly shelled the camps at Tripoli. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians lost their lives.

While Arafat and the PLO loyalists were under siege, Israeli gunboats were deployed



Syrian ruler Assad seeks to split PLO.

off the Lebanese coast to shell the Tripoli harbor and try to block the PLO's escape. "Tripoli was much more bitter" than the siege of Beirut in 1982, Arafat said later, "because I had never imagined that one day the siege would be dual: Israeli and Arab."<sup>2</sup>

Gloating over the successive blows to the PLO, the editors of the *New York Times* wrote December 23: "what Israel began has now been finished by Arabs."

#### Relations with Arab regimes

Having been forced entirely out of Lebanon by a hostile Syrian regime, Arafat and the rest of the PLO's top leadership looked elsewhere for the aid, diplomatic support, and base of operations the Palestinian movement needs to function effectively.

"We have to face the consequences that will follow this painful departure," the PLO's Baghdad radio station, Voice of PLO, said December 20. "We have left the position from

which our forces were able to face the enemy in an organized, firm, direct, and public manner. Now we have to face the enemy with methods less organized, firm, direct, and open."<sup>3</sup>

Maneuvering among the various Arab regimes has always been necessary for the PLO, owing to the nature of the Palestinian struggle itself. Displaced from their homeland by a colonial-settler state, many Palestinians must live in refugee camps in other Arab countries. For certain periods, such as in Jordan in the late 1960s and in Lebanon until the Israeli invasion, the PLO has been able to wrest considerable autonomy for itself on the basis of the organization and mobilization of the Palestinian masses in the camps. At other times, as in Jordan and Egypt since the early 1970s, and now in Syria and Lebanon, the Arab regimes have been able to forcibly block the PLO from functioning freely among Palestinians in their countries.

In a 1971 interview with *Intercontinental Press*, PLO representative Abu Omar explained the framework in which the PLO viewed its relations with Arab governments. "There are powers that exist around us, influence us," he said. "We cannot define them out of existence. We have to take them into account, even though our main dependence is on our internal resources and the mass support that we might have."<sup>4</sup>

The situation remains the same today. The PLO's approach to the problem was most recently codified in the resolutions adopted by the 16th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC)<sup>5</sup> in February 1983. The PNC adopted the following guidelines for relations between the PLO and the Arab states:

1. Commitment to the causes of the Arab struggle, foremost of which is the Palestinian cause and struggle.
2. Commitment to the Palestinian people's rights, including their rights to repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of their independent state under PLO leadership. These rights have been affirmed by Arab summit resolutions.
3. Care for the uniqueness of Palestinian representation, Palestinian national unity and independent Palestinian national decision-making.
4. Rejecting all schemes which harm the PLO's right as the Palestinian people's sole legitimate representative, in the form of delegation of, or partnership in, the right of representation.
5. The PNC calls for the achievement of Arab solidarity on the basis of Arab summit resolutions

3. Broadcast in Arabic on December 20. Translation taken from the December 21 *FBIS Daily Report*.

4. *IP*, Nov. 22, 1971, p. 1008.

5. The Palestine National Council functions as a sort of parliament-in-exile of the PLO. The 350-member body includes representatives of all the PLO's member organizations as well as prominent independent figures from Palestinian communities throughout the world. The resolutions adopted by the February 1983 PNC meeting were reprinted in the March 14, 1983, issue of *IP*.

1. Broadcast in Arabic on Oct. 13, 1983. Translation taken from the *Daily Report* of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, October 14.

For further details of the Syrian intervention against the PLO, see *Intercontinental Press*, July 25, 1983, p. 406, and Nov. 28, 1983, p. 672.

2. This was not the first time Syrian forces had shed Palestinian blood. The Assad regime sent troops to Lebanon in 1976 to block a Palestinian-Muslim-leftist victory in that country's civil war. Syrian forces there aided the 52-day siege of the Tel Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp by extreme-rightist Christian militias. Up to 2,000 Palestinians and Lebanese lost their lives at Tel Zaatar.



PLO fighters arriving in Cyprus in August 1982 after being driven out of Lebanon by Israeli invasion.

and the above principles.

Since evacuating Lebanon, PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat has visited various Arab capitals in order both to explore the possibilities for gaining greater aid for the Palestinian cause and to head off any attempts by the Arab rulers to take further advantage of the PLO's weakened condition and internal divisions.

#### The meeting with Mubarak

It was the first of these visits that stirred the most controversy — Arafat's meeting in Cairo December 22 with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Arafat was the first top Arab leader to visit the Egyptian capital since Mubarak's assassinated predecessor, Anwar el-Sadat, signed the Camp David accords and concluded a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Because Arafat's decision to meet with Mubarak was made without consultation with the rest of the PLO's central leadership and came at a time when political differences inside the PLO were sharp, its immediate effect was to exacerbate the organization's crisis.

Arafat later explained that he decided to take this step after the Egyptian regime agreed to send naval vessels to help protect the PLO loyalists' evacuation from Lebanon. "I asked for Egypt's protection, and Egypt gave it to me," he told a February 7 news conference in Kuwait. "This means that the Egyptian leadership, which was fettered by the Camp David accords, agreed to provide protection for Palestinian forces engaged in war with Israel. I consider this a violation of the Camp David accords. It was my duty to go to that president

[Mubarak] and thank him for his stand."<sup>6</sup>

The February 1983 meeting of the PNC had resolved to put the PLO "on the side of the struggle of the Egyptian people and their patriotic forces to end the Camp David policy and have Egypt return to its militant position in our Arab nation." The PNC called for relations between the PLO and Cairo to be defined "on the basis of [Egypt's] abandoning of the Camp David policy."

The Mubarak regime has in fact been distancing itself from Sadat's conciliatory policies toward Israel. Mubarak has reduced Egypt's trade and cultural ties with Israel to a minimum. He withdrew Egypt's ambassador from Jerusalem after the Israeli-supervised massacres of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila in September 1982 and has still not sent the envoy back. But the treaties Sadat signed still remain in force.

There had been broad agreement among PLO leaders before Arafat's visit on the need to encourage the Egyptian regime's apparent course away from Camp David.

After hearing a report from Arafat on his reasons for unilaterally deciding to visit Cairo, the Central Committee of Fatah dissociated itself from the meeting and termed it "an organizational violation, contrary to the methods of making decisions within Fatah and the PLO." But the Fatah statement also stressed that this

position was "not directed against constructive efforts which are exerted to restore Egypt to the Arab ranks. . . ."

The PFLP and DFLP, which after Fatah are the strongest organizations in the PLO, took positions more sharply critical of the visit to Cairo.

The PFLP denounced the visit as a flagrant violation of the PNC's resolutions and called for a campaign within the PLO to remove Arafat from the chairmanship. "Since his arrival in Camp David Egypt," PFLP General Secretary George Habash said in late December, "Arafat has ceased to be acceptable as head of the PLO." PNC Chairman Khaled el-Fahum took a similar position.

While the DFLP condemned the Cairo meeting as "irresponsible behavior" that "violated the foundations of Palestinian national unity within the framework of the PLO," it refrained from joining the PFLP in a drive to oust Arafat. It also warned sharply against attempts by Syrian-backed PLO dissidents in Damascus to set up an "alternate command" counterposed to the PLO's legitimate leadership bodies.

Among members of the Palestine National Council, views on the Cairo visit were divided. The December 28 *Le Monde* reported from Amman, for example, that counterposed statements had been issued by two groups of PNC members resident in Jordan. One charged that Arafat had violated PNC decisions and made unwarranted concessions to "the line of the Camp David accords." The other statement offered "total support" to the PLO chairman and said his move would "help Egypt detach it-

6. As reported by the Kuwait news agency KUNA; translation taken from *FBIS Daily Report*, February 8.



self from the Camp David accords."<sup>7</sup>

The imperialist news media seized upon Arafat's visit to Cairo and the public dispute in the PLO as an opportunity to relaunch its now-perennial campaign of rumors that the PLO leadership or Arafat himself is on the verge of abandoning the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. This time the theme was that the "Arafat wing" of the PLO was preparing to join Mubarak and Jordan's King Hussein in accepting the terms of President Reagan's September 1982 "peace plan." Such a betrayal would involve giving up the demand for an independent Palestinian state, subordinating the PLO to Jordan, and recognizing the state of Israel.

Charges of this kind have been revived in the imperialist press at each stage in the Palestinian movement's crisis over the past two years. They are tailored to echo and carry further some of the polemics against the Arafat leadership raised in the PLO's internal debates. The aim is to sow distrust among Palestinian fighters and try to push the disputes to an irreparable split. These charges are also designed to undermine solidarity for the PLO in other countries.

Thus, for example, the *Miami Herald's* Washington correspondent, James McCartney, asserted in a January 21 article that Yassir Arafat "has become a critical figure behind the scenes in the Reagan Administration's efforts to achieve peace in the Mideast." McCartney continued:

Officials here say the United States wants Arafat to authorize Jordan's King Hussein to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians in peace negotiations with Israel. . . .

A green light from Arafat, officials believe, might make it possible for Reagan's [September 1982] peace plan to work. The plan calls for some kind of association between Jordan and Palestinians on the West Bank. . . .

Said a State Department Mideast specialist: "If Arafat believes he must obtain a consensus among all the Palestinian factions to give Hussein a go-ahead, we're dead. There probably is no consensus within the PLO.

"But if he can seize the moment to support the moderates, maybe we can get some movement."

Articles in the February 3 *Washington Post* and February 5 *New York Times* cited anonymous "analysts" in Tunis and Cairo who claimed Arafat was determined to expel all the pro-Syrian currents from the PLO and impose "majority rule" on the rest of the organization. According to the *Post*, these "analysts" suggested that Arafat's ability to persuade King Hussein of Jordan to hold meaningful talks about the future of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip could be jeopardized unless he can excommunicate the dissidents. . . .

"Some sources . . . have suggested that Arafat was considering offering Hussein less than outright self-determination for West Bank residents."

7. For a further selection of Palestinian viewpoints on the Arafat visit to Cairo, see *IP*, March 5, p. 106.

The *Times* article likewise asserted — citing anonymous "Palestinians" — that Arafat "now says he is ready to discuss a joint peace plan with Egypt and Jordan, although he has yet to recognize explicitly Israel's right to exist." Unless Arafat succeeded in expelling "radical elements" from the PLO, the *Times* cautioned, he would be "unable to secure the support he needs for an agreement with King Hussein."

#### Imperialist pressure

It is a fact that the imperialists and their Arab client regimes have always applied pressure for a sellout by the PLO. Such pressures have been stepped up in the wake of the successive defeats the PLO has suffered in Lebanon at Israeli and Syrian hands. But the efforts of Arafat and the rest of the PLO leadership to counter these pressures through diplomatic means is hardly proof of an impending betrayal. "No negotiations" has never been a precept of revolutionary struggle, least of all when an adverse relationship of forces dictates such a step.

By meeting with Mubarak and carrying on talks in Amman with King Hussein, Arafat is

seeking to take advantage of such openings for the Palestinian cause as do exist. This is consistent with PLO policy for more than 15 years.

In the talks with King Hussein, the PLO is seeking to regain its right to organize freely among Jordan's majority-Palestinian population — a right denied it since Hussein's army brutally drove the PLO out of Jordan in 1970–71. A further aim there is to blunt any attempt by Hussein to supplant the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. There was an implicit threat to do so in Hussein's January decision to recall the Jordanian parliament, which had been suspended since 1974 and which included deputies elected by Palestinians on the West Bank before the Israeli occupation began in 1967.

On the latter question the Cairo meeting evidently served to get Mubarak to help the PLO put the brakes on King Hussein. During his February 14 visit to Washington, the Egyptian president publicly told Reagan and Hussein at a White House ceremony that "there is no substitute for a direct dialogue with [the Palestin-

## 'Al-Fajr' on Arafat-Hussein talks

[The following editorial, headlined "All Eyes Open," appeared in the February 29 issue of the English-language weekly edition of *Al-Fajr* (The Dawn), published in Jerusalem on the Israeli-occupied West Bank.]

\* \* \*

The visit by Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat to Jordan and the talks he will hold with King Hussein and high-ranking Jordanian officials raise questions about the nature of future PLO-Jordanian relations and Palestinian-Jordanian plans for the next process seeking a permanent and just solution for the Palestinian cause.

Arafat's visit to Jordan shows the level of concern in the Palestinian leadership for political work as an integral part of the struggle to try all avenues in search for a just solution that would guarantee the most basic Palestinian rights. Palestinians welcome this dialogue with Jordan only on the basis that it is among two equal political parties and based on the historical relations between the two brotherly peoples.

At the same time the population of the occupied territories view with great caution the talks in Amman between Yasir Arafat and King Hussein, even though the majority support the dialogue based on equality and mutual respect of rights and independence. This concern is not unfounded. The Jordanian parliamentary measures make us question the real intentions of Jordan towards the Palestinian cause. All signs indi-

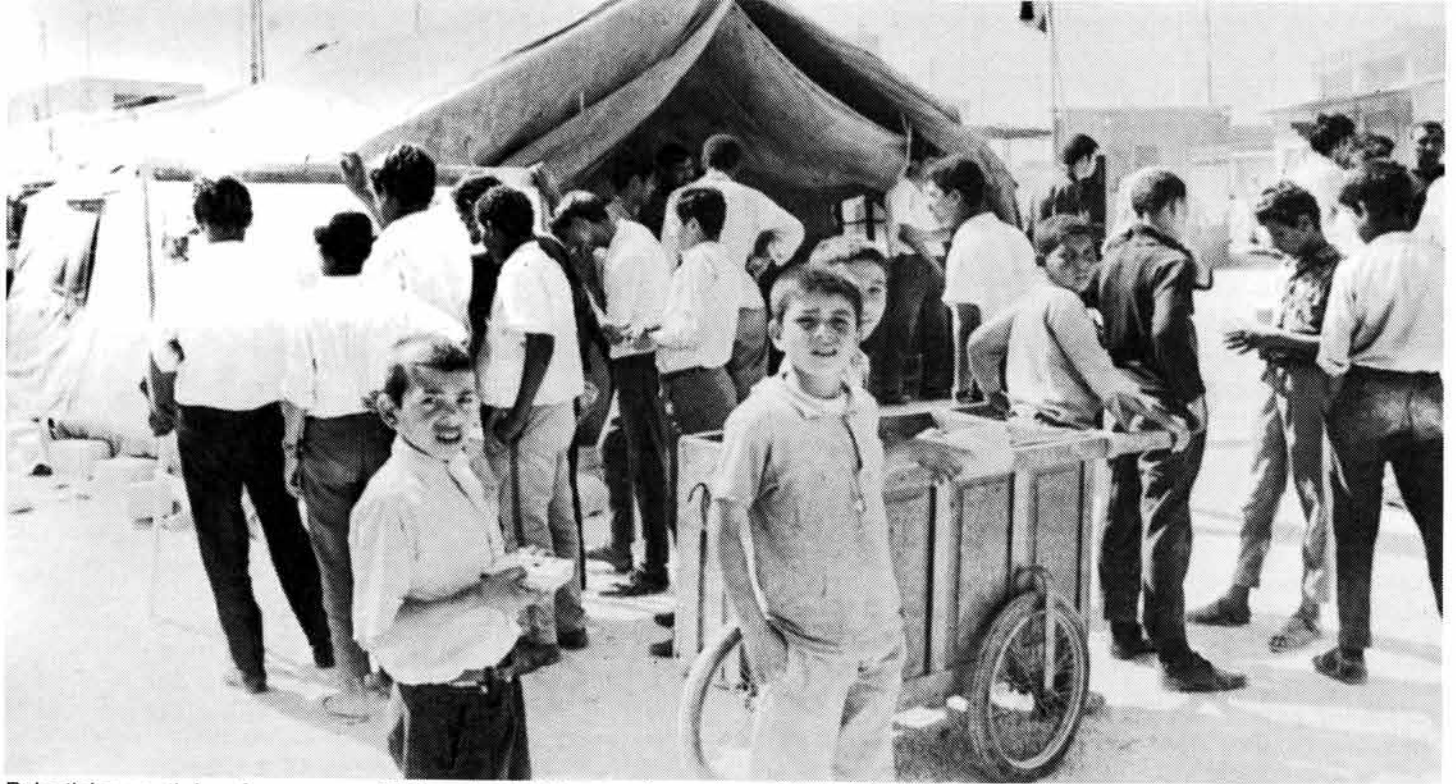
cate that these decisions do not even agree with the Fez Summit decisions which restricted the representation of the Palestinian people solely to the PLO and preserved the independence of its decision-making. The Jordanian measures are pushing for the creation of a double representation for the Palestinians that is not acceptable to our people. Secondly, the Jordanian measures, made under the pretext of steadfastness for the occupied people, were made unilaterally without coordination with the PLO.

The Jordanian side did not make clear, so far, the nature of the future relationship with the PLO, which Jordan is now urged to make clear in the current talks. Any agreement should be public to bolster the Palestinian-Jordanian dialogue and to make it more credible.

The talks between King Hussein and Hosni Mubarak with U.S. President Ronald Reagan did not indicate that the U.S. is changing policy towards the Palestinian cause and the PLO as a party in the peace process. As for the Israelis, their government has closed all doors to any chance for peace in the Middle East; it does not intend, in any way or form, to negotiate with the PLO.

Any political move to solve the Palestinian cause should be based on the decisions of the Palestine National Council and the Fez Arab Summit. Only this can give the Palestinian cause a push forward in its national and human form; not through bargaining over borders.





Palestinian youth in refugee camp. PLO seeks right to organize among Palestinians in all Arab countries.

ians] through their chosen representative, the PLO.”

The *Washington Post* reported that “Reagan glanced nervously at Hussein” while Mubarak continued:

“No other nation can speak for the Palestinians.”

#### The PLO, Jordan, and the Reagan Plan

Mubarak’s statement — from which the White House hastily dissociated itself — served to bolster the PLO in resisting pressure from King Hussein to give in to the Reagan Plan, which calls for Jordan to represent the Palestinians in any future peace negotiations with Israel.

The PLO’s continued refusal to knuckle under to this demand was evident in the joint communiqué issued by Yassir Arafat and King Hussein after five days of talks in late February. The statement reaffirmed support for the peace proposals advanced by the Arab summit conference at Fez, Morocco, in September 1982. Those proposals have also been adopted by the Palestine National Council as “the minimum for Arab political action.”

The Fez proposals call for the “establishment of an independent Palestinian state with al-Qods [Jerusalem] as its capital” and affirm “the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and the exercise of its imprescriptible and inalienable national rights under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole and legitimate representative.”

The Fez proposals thus run directly counter to the Reagan Plan, which explicitly rules out an independent Palestinian state and provides no role for the PLO whatsoever.

Addressing the Ninth Congress of Palestinian Students in Algiers on February 12, Arafat

pointed out how the Fez proposals originated:

You should . . . remember with me the Reagan plan which they tried to impose on the Palestinian people. When we entered the second Fez conference this plan already had built its nests and it was dominating all the lobbies at the conference. They thought that we, from our weak position — or what they thought to be our weak position — could have the Reagan plan imposed on us. . . . We rejected this plan and together with our brothers and friends inside the conference said that we must adopt a plan — the Arab peace plan.

Later in the speech — which was broadcast February 13 by the Algiers Voice of Palestine radio station — Arafat returned to the question of the Reagan Plan. “Do they think that the Palestinian revolution is going to submit under threat and say yes to Reagan?” he asked. “That it will submit under threat and say yes to Camp David or the conspiracies around us? No, the Palestinian revolution will not submit. The Palestinian revolution is a giant. It is a giant. A mountain is not shaken by the wind.”<sup>8</sup>

A January 22 broadcast by the Baghdad Voice of PLO clarified the PLO’s stand on the Fez declaration, saying that while it is “the Arabs’ only option so far,” it is “not the PLO’s only option.” The commentary continued:

The Arab peace plan is in fact only one of the PLO’s options. The PLO has something broader than this option — it has the national program which details the courses of Palestinian national struggle on various levels. This program calls for the intensification of this struggle by using all means of struggle, especially armed struggle, inside the occupied homeland. This armed struggle guarantees a basic

mechanism for the political option.<sup>9</sup>

What is most striking, then, about the imperialist media’s continual reports citing “informed sources,” “Western analysts,” or “Palestinians” is that such articles invariably fail to offer any quotes from Arafat himself or other PLO leaders to back up the claims of an impending sellout. It is not that Arafat hides his views from the news media. On the contrary — he is continually interviewed by the major newspapers and broadcast outlets in the cities he visits. The PLO, moreover, has several radio stations of its own in Arab capitals such as Algiers and Baghdad. So the PLO leadership’s opinions are readily available. The problem for the imperialist press is simply that what Arafat and other leaders have to say always gives the lie to its deceitful interpretations.

It is clear that this has been the case regarding the Reagan Plan and Arafat’s diplomatic efforts. Whether or not one thinks the timing and form of the Cairo visit were ill-advised and the results so far of the talks in Amman negligible, the PLO chairman cannot credibly be accused of betraying the Palestinian cause in these efforts.

Those inside the PLO who seek to put forward different proposals for what the organization should now be doing to advance the fight for self-determination will be able to do so at the next meeting of the PNC and in the preliminary discussions for it that are already under way.

While Fatah leaders have stated that they

8. Translation taken from *FBIS Daily Report*, February 15 and 16.

9. Translation taken from *FBIS Daily Report*, January 24.

will ask the PNC to expel those PLO members who took part in the armed attacks on refugee camps at Tripoli in November and December, they have also stressed the need for discussions among Fatah, the DFLP, the PFLP, and other groups in the PLO to maintain the PLO's unity, resolve outstanding differences, and reach a new consensus on the next steps in the Palestinian struggle.

#### Syrian interference continues

This is not likely to be an altogether smooth process, owing in part to the sharpness of the recent polemics. Efforts to settle the disputes in an objective, fraternal fashion are further hampered by the ongoing Syrian interference in the PLO.

In January, the Damascus offices of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), one of the PLO's smaller member groups, were forcibly taken over by a dissident faction backed up by Syrian intelligence agents. PLF General Secretary Talat Yaqub was kidnapped and held for three days. Yaqub's deputy, Abu al-Abbas, later explained in an interview broadcast by the Baghdad Voice of PLO that "the Syrian regime believes the PLF is an easy target to control, especially since there are some differences in the front within the one political framework. At the same time, the Syrian regime believes that this may deter other organizations that are still standing in the middle."

Al-Abbas pointed out the pressures facing the loyal PLO forces that are still trying to maintain a presence in Syria:

Every Palestinian there — and to be accurate, every Palestinian organization — must agree on the Syrian plan in order to act openly. [However,] struggle is not based on privileges, offices or sponsorship. . . .

We believe that the presence of Palestinian leaders enjoying some privileges in the Syrian territory can only be achieved by paying a price. This price is their inability to declare the correct stand.<sup>10</sup>

It was reported in late January that Syrian authorities had seized the passport of PLO Executive Committee member Muhammad Zuhdi an-Nashahsibi to prevent him from traveling to Tunisia for meetings with Arafat. And, in early February, Fatah dissidents and forces from the pro-Libyan PFLP-General Command reportedly attacked a base in Syria belonging to the DFLP, killing one person and wounding four others.

Despite the continued pressure and attacks on the PLO by the Syrian regime and renegade forces linked to Syria and Libya, Palestinian leaders continue to stress the importance of re-establishing ties with Damascus. "Since the very beginning of the offensive mounted against us I have declared more than once that I extend my hand to Syria so that we may confront the Israeli enemy," Yassir Arafat said December 18, "but there has been no response from Syria. I have always appealed to Syria for

the formation of a united front against U.S.-Zionist aggression and plots, but regrettably there has been no response from President Hafez al-Assad to my appeals. Nonetheless, I still extend my hand because I know Syria historically and geographically and I know how important it is for Palestine."

In an interview published February 26, Fatah Central Committee member Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) told the Italian daily *l'Unità* that the PLO remained "interested in re-estab-

lishing" relations with Syria. "At the present moment of polarization of the Arab world, we need more than ever to recompose and repair our relationships in order to confront the attack launched against us by the United States," Abu Iyad said. "We must create new ways for the Middle East to find a new balance of forces which would agree to a solution to the question of Palestine. At this moment the only solution that is proposed is the American one, which is directed at liquidating our cause." □

## Lebanon

# Israeli occupation in south

## Resistance fed by fear of a new West Bank

By Ettore Mo

[The following article from the January 9 *Il Corriere della Sera*, a major Italian daily, was translated and reprinted in the February 15 issue of *Al Fajr*, an English-language Palestinian weekly published in Jerusalem.]

\* \* \*

SIDON — The patrons of south Lebanon (yesterday the government of Jerusalem again closed the passageways on the Awali River) are the Israeli soldiers whom Ariel Sharon had sent across the border for the so-called "Peace in Galilee" campaign (an exquisite Hebrew euphemism for "invasion"), and who remained there. The scope of the operation was to secure the northern border of Israel, which used to be attacked, from Nabatiya or from the Beaufort, by the Palestinian combatants who directed their Katyusha rockets over Metullah and beyond.

Sharon's troops, destroying everything, arrived up to Beirut. In the summer of 1982, Arafat and his men left Lebanon. There are no more bombs over Metullah. There are no

Katyushas and no *fedayi* to shoot them. But the Israeli army remained and is dictating the law. On the Awali bridge, the tanks with the star of David decide who may pass and who may not. The Lebanese have to walk two kilometres on foot, with their baggage and all. Our entry visa to Lebanon (and we are in Lebanon) is worth nothing. You are being searched, interrogated, humiliated. And you'd better not protest. On the bridge there are tanks, and on the tanks there are soldiers. You must remember that they are occupation troops and show them, humbly, your passport and your press card.

I have been to Sidon and to Tyre at other times, before the occupation. Then, these towns were in Lebanon despite the incredible destruction and the inconveniences caused by the border war. The fertile garden of south Lebanon with its orange groves and lemon groves was constantly being devastated. The bombings rained over the homes, brutally interrupting the meals.

The south Lebanese never had much affection for their Israeli neighbours, but also had



Israeli army roadblock at Awali River in southern Lebanon.

10. Broadcast in Arabic January 28. Translation from *FBIS Daily Report*, January 30.



some motive for complaint against the Palestinians who brought the war into their garden. After a tragedy lasting over ten years, here now is another one. The Palestinians have gone away, but in the garden are the Israelis. And the population here being Arab and Muslim, the resulting pain and suffering are worse than ever.

Sidon is a city in a permanent state of war. You sit in a restaurant overlooking the seashore, and within half an hour you see through the big blue glass windows dozens of tanks and armoured vehicles passing along the road beneath, with helmeted armed troops aboard.

At the Israeli command post in Sidon, an officer, Lieutenant Shai Eisenberg, upholds the official line of his government: Israel remains in south Lebanon for security reasons. But his embarrassment comes through when he admits that he cannot express his true opinion because he is a soldier: "When I will take off this uniform," he says, "I will finally say what I think of it."

In south Lebanon the resistance gets stronger and more threatening, notwithstanding the efficiency of the Israeli war machine. Last week, General Moshe Levi, the Israeli chief of staff, announced new security measures against the attacks during a visit to the area.

Now the repression is exercised against the Muslims, prevalently Shi'ite, of the south,

who in turn affirm being committed not to a holy war but purely and simply to a war of national liberation. Lebanon must return to the Lebanese, this is the prevailing order of the day. Of course, the confessional element also plays a role: three religious leaders, Mohammed Arfe, Abd al-Rahman Hijazi, and Mohammed Masseudi have been imprisoned, and in prison, like the Irish of the IRA, they are conducting a hunger strike. The goal — the liberation of south Lebanon — has brought close together the Sunnis and the Shi'ites.

The former Lebanese minister of health, Nazih Bizri, who lives in a beautiful house in Sidon, recalls the time of the invasion, in June 1982, when there was no cemetery big enough to host the dead: 243 persons killed in one house alone, 224 in another, and so on.

In Sidon, thanks to the "Peace in Galilee" operation, there are still thousands of homeless persons. Hundreds had been arrested and imprisoned in the concentration camp of Ansar, from where they came out only last month, after an exchange of prisoners between Israel and the PLO.

"At that time," says Nazih Bizri, "we could not revolt. They closed us in a cage and that was it. But now there is a resistance, in the fullest sense of the term. With time, we'll get even better organised. We refused systematically any contact with the occupation troops. I would like to go to Beirut, sometimes. But to do so, I have to ask for a permit from the Is-



raelis. So, no, I don't go. I will not have anything to do with Israel. This is one weapon we have: to boycott them, and we boycott them."

According to Nazih Bizri, the resistance in south Lebanon is not Palestinian, prevalently, and the Israeli officer to whom we talked confirms: "We are in possession of all possible information on the former prisoners of Ansar who returned to their homes: their addresses, their contacts, their relationships, and all the rest. We keep them under control. It would be extremely difficult for them to act freely."

The economic activities in Sidon and in the entire south are virtually paralysed: controls of every possible kind, roadblocks, interruption of means of communication, searches, arrests. In the last days alone, more than 150 persons have been imprisoned. There are no accusations nor trials. They are only "suspected." The climate is that of an ongoing war.

The tanks are not the only Israeli weapons used. Nazih Bizri says that Israel is also using another weapon, that of destroying the economy of south Lebanon which has always lived on agriculture, on the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

"Through the Awali bridges," says the former health minister, "only five trucks a day are allowed to pass. Therefore, we cannot receive our most essential and fundamental supplies from the rest of Lebanon. Israel sends its oranges over without customs duty, and we are forced into the absurd position of an occupied country which is being forced to eat the products of the occupying power. They have destroyed our citrus groves. They want to reduce us to hunger. When a man is poor, he cannot react but only obey and submit."

The resistance in south Lebanon is fed by the fear that this piece of land, too, could end up like the West Bank, that is, that Israel, once it would guarantee its security, will proceed to gradually colonise it with its settlement building policy. □

## STATEMENT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

# Imperialists out of Lebanon!

[The following statement was issued February 16 by the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

\* \* \*

The recent events in Lebanon have demonstrated, if any further proof were necessary, that the great majority of the Lebanese population are opposed to the Phalangist regime of Amin Gemayel that the multi-imperialist so-called Multi-National Force was sent in to prop up.

Under the hammer blows of the armed masses, Gemayel's state, which was laboriously rebuilt after October 1982 with the support of the imperialist troops and under their supervision, has crumbled, leaving the true state of affairs starkly exposed: The troops of the "legal" army are as Phalangist as the militias fighting alongside them.

In view of the scope of the defeat suffered by their protégé and the pressure of their own public opinion, some of the powers involved in the multi-imperialist force are pulling out their troops. Great Britain and Italy have done this. The Reagan administration has also found it-

self compelled to announce the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanese soil. But it is continuing to intervene by means of its naval artillery, savagely pounding the anti-Gemayel positions in the Lebanese mountains.

As for the French government, it is trying to extricate itself from the affair without losing face, asking that the multi-imperialist force be relieved by a UN one, in which French troops might participate and which would try to succeed where the Multi-National Force failed, that is, in consolidating the bourgeois order in Lebanon. Such a UN force could also favor the partitionist schemes of the Phalangist far right.

The victorious offensive of the Lebanese opposition calls for anti-imperialist forces throughout the world to redouble their efforts to mobilize opposition to imperialist policy in Lebanon under the following slogans:

- All imperialist forces out of Lebanon, including its offshore waters!
- Zionist troops out of Lebanon!
- No UN intervention!
- Solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian masses in struggle!



# Canada: role of union bureaucracy

## Part II of political report to RWL convention

[The following is the second of three installments of the political report presented by Steve Penner at the Dec. 27-31, 1983, convention of the Revolutionary Workers League/Ligue Ouvrière Révolutionnaire (RWL), the pan-Canadian section of the Fourth International, held in Montreal, Quebec. The report, presented on behalf of the Political Committee of the RWL, was adopted unanimously.]

[The first part of the report, published in our last issue, covered the Canadian ruling class's offensive against the working class and the developing workers' resistance, focusing in particular on two major labor struggles: that of the Quebec unions organized in the Common Front in 1982-83 and of the British Columbia unions organized in Operation Solidarity in 1983.]

[The footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press.*]

\* \* \*

In both the Quebec Common Front and in British Columbia (B.C.) labor's Operation Solidarity, the bureaucratic union misleaderships were able to prevent the struggles from being transformed from defensive into offensive battles for political power. A clear understanding of the role of this reformist leadership and its relationship to the ranks is essential if this obstacle is to be overcome.

Under the pressure of the ruling class, the leadership of the unions and of the New Democratic Party (NDP, Canada's labor party), has been pushed further and further to the right. With the exception of a few key issues, they have generally supported the major policies of the bourgeoisie and its governments.

- The reformists, while opposing some aspects of imperialist foreign policy, such as the testing of the cruise missile and the current U.S. intervention in Central America, support the war drive by Canada and the other imperialist powers against the workers states and the oppressed nations of the world.

For example the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has carried articles in its journal backing imperialism's anticommunist campaign against Cuba and, until very recently, against Nicaragua as well. The only international resolution at the recent convention of the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) called for a demonstration at the Soviet consulate over the situation in Poland.

- The NDP leadership backed Ottawa's attack against Quebec both during the 1980 referendum and during the constitution fight.<sup>5</sup>

5. In the May 1980 referendum, Quebec voters turned down a request by the Parti Québécois provincial government for approval to negotiate with

- In Quebec the union leadership has supported most of the reactionary policies of the Parti Québécois (PQ), with the partial exception of its direct attacks on the unions and the most severe social service cutbacks.

- Above all the union and NDP leaderships refuse to wage a mass struggle for working class political power. Even in English Canada, the union leadership mobilizes the ranks behind the NDP half-heartedly at best and in a totally reformist and electoralist framework.

### Openings for working class

Of course, there have been real limits on the bureaucracy's capacity to consistently and openly promote class-collaborationist policies. The NDP leadership has been under enormous pressure to speak out in defense of Nicaragua, Grenada, and El Salvador. More recently the CLC brass has also been unable to escape the heat.

Individual leaders or components of the leadership may take more progressive stands on some important issues under the pressure of the working class radicalization, for example the Ontario Federation of Labour's active support of women's struggles. Operation Solidarity and the Quebec Common Front also show that from time to time the bureaucracy can be forced to lead major mobilizations against the government — at least up to a certain point.

The adoption of progressive positions by one or another wing of the union bureaucracy or NDP leadership provides an important opening for the working class, which we must welcome and utilize for all it is worth. But we should never lose sight of the fact that this in no way alters the fundamental direction of motion of the reformist leadership, which is to the right.

When a layer of the top union leadership is forced to mobilize the ranks in defense of their interests, it is not basically the result of the existence of a more progressive wing of the bureaucracy, but is rather a response to intense pressure from the union base.

### Bureaucrats' 'cocktail circuit'

The roots of the class collaborationist politics and rightward evolution of the bureaucracy are material, not ideological. Most of the individuals in the top layers of the bureaucracy have never worked in a factory in their lives — the rest have generally not worked there for years. Though they produce nothing of value,

Canada for Quebec's political sovereignty. The leadership of the NDP in English Canada joined the Liberal and Conservative parties and major capitalists in calling for a "no" vote, in opposition to the stance of the Quebec Federation of Labor.

their salaries are much higher than those of the most privileged layers of the working class, and many times higher than the wages of the most oppressed and exploited workers.

Lower layers of the bureaucracy are most susceptible to direct pressure from the ranks and in some cases earn only a little more than the most skilled, highly paid workers. Yet even they operate in qualitatively different working conditions and have a different lifestyle and social milieu than any layer of the working class.

CLC President Dennis McDermott recently explained this rather well. In order to justify his collaboration with the Business Council on National Issues in working out plans for how to run the government-sponsored National Productivity Center, he explained that a more "cooperative" rather than a "confrontationist" approach is needed to clean up labor's bad "image."

"I get onto the cocktail circuit and am asked what I do," explained McDermott. "I say I'm a trade unionist and they say 'Oh ho, is that so?'"

McDermott may find the anti-union pressures in his drinking circles quite unbearable, but they are certainly not pressures coming from the working class!

The president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, Art Kube, made the same point in a recent television interview that focused on his life.

"I find it very strange," he explained, "that although I was raised by a single parent mother in poverty and worked [from the time I was 13], it wasn't until the development of the Solidarity movement that I realized how far from my own background I had come. Then I realized that the leadership of the trade union movement enjoys middle-class incomes, lives in middle-class houses in middle-class neighborhoods. And then we start to think this way.

"I am glad," Kube concluded, "that the Solidarity movement has shown us how the working class really lives and what it is. And I, for one, don't ever again intend to forget it."

Art Kube's admissions aside, the problem is not the failure of the bureaucracy to remember its class origins, but the fact that it has left them behind. It is no longer part of the working class, but is rather a petty-bourgeois social caste with different class interests. Its interests lie in preserving social stability and in defending the profit system and the capitalist state. In that way the union bureaucrats preserve their privileges and maintain their control of the union apparatus. They can hope to rise even higher by getting a seat on a board of directors

or becoming a government minister.

Instead of looking to the ranks and fighting for radical social change, all wings of the bureaucracy seek to win a few crumbs from the bosses and their government in exchange for their loyalty to the capitalist system and its state.

Labor staffer Ed Finn wrote a very revealing article in the November 1983 issue of the Canadian Union of Public Employees' magazine *Facts*. Finn warned of the danger of governments being unduly influenced by the capitalist class and pleaded with them to return to closer collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy. The subtitle of this section of his article was "Humanizing Capitalism."

### Labor aristocracy

Finn expressed considerable concern over what he called the vanishing "middle class," the "foundation of social stability." He was primarily talking about a thin, privileged layer of the labor movement: the most skilled, highly paid workers with the greatest job security. The Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin called this layer the labor aristocracy. The bureaucracy by and large originates from this layer and rests upon it for support.

The labor leadership seeks to convince these workers that their interests lie in supporting wide wage differentials; in maintaining the subordinate status of women, Québécois, immigrants, and youth; in collaborating with "our" boss, "our" government, and "our" country; even, when necessary, in going to war to defend Canada's so-called "national security."

But, as Ed Finn pointed out, this layer of the proletariat is not only becoming narrower, but is under attack. Unlike the union bureaucrats, even the most privileged workers are part of the working class and have a common class interest in uniting with the most oppressed and exploited in a common struggle.

### Uneven impact of capitalist crisis

The capitalist crisis, the political and economic offensive of the bosses, has uneven and contradictory effects on the bureaucracy, on the labor aristocracy, and on workers as a whole.

On the other hand, as capitalism grows less and less able to grant concessions to any significant layer of the proletariat, workers radicalize. Some layers radicalize more rapidly than others, particularly the most oppressed: Québécois, women, immigrant workers, and youth. But this process can also include some sectors of the labor aristocracy, who are less inclined than before to think of themselves as part of Finn's so-called "middle class."

Caught between the growing combativity and radicalization of the ranks and the relentless ruling-class offensive, some individuals in the bureaucracy — or an entire layer — can be pulled more in the direction of expressing the ranks' concerns, leading important struggles. They can also help lead a political fight within the labor movement against the most reaction-



Women took the lead in the strike of 9,000 garment workers in Montreal, Quebec, in August 1983. They fought employers drive to reduce wages and lengthen hours.

ary policies of the bureaucracy.

At the same time, as we have already seen, the overall impact of the ruling-class offensive is to push the bureaucracy to the right. But this process is not confined to the bureaucracy; sectors of the working class also move to the right. This is particularly true among the most privileged layers of the working class — though broader layers are also affected, if only temporarily.

Thus along with a deepening *radicalization* of the working class, there is also growing differentiation or *polarization* within the class under the impact of the ruling-class offensive. That is what we saw in the plants at the time of the Grenada invasion. Many workers were confused and influenced, especially in the first days, by the imperialist disinformation campaign. A much smaller layer went on an anti-communist offensive. Another small, but politically significant, layer opposed the invasion from the outset and drew far-reaching conclusions from the experience.

At the General Motors plant in Scarborough (a suburb of Toronto) some workers who had been reading *Socialist Voice* decided not to renew their subscriptions. At the same time, a number of Black workers began buying the paper for the first time.

This battle of ideas is fundamentally a struggle over which class's political line will win out in the labor movement: that of the bourgeoisie, aided by its labor lieutenants, or the program of the proletariat and its communist vanguard.

### Elections in steel

With the death of Lloyd McBride, midterm

elections for president of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) have been called for March 1984. The election campaign opens the possibility of a major discussion within the union on how to defeat the bosses' attacks. It also provides an important opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of how to advance our strategy and program for the transformation of the unions.

Three candidates — Lynn Williams, Frank McKee and Ron Weisen — have put themselves forward. While none of these candidates presents a class-struggle perspective, there are important differences among them.

Williams defends the class collaborationist policies of the Steelworkers establishment down the line — just as he did when he was the director of District 6 in Ontario.

McKee, while also part of the McBride team, has now come out in opposition to aspects of the leadership's reactionary policies — its support for concessions and opposition to the U.S. member's right to vote on contracts in basic steel.

Weisen (who as a local president in Homestead, Pennsylvania, is closer to the ranks) has opposed concessions and supported the right of the members to ratify contracts all along. He has also come out against the U.S. policy in El Salvador.

While it is much too early to say how far this differentiation will develop, it could open a major discussion in the ranks on the way forward in the fight against the bosses' offensive. It might also provide a framework for a broader layer of radicalizing workers to organize around whichever candidate has the best possibility of taking the union forward.



Despite our principled differences with all three candidates, it is perfectly legitimate for us to support and fully involve ourselves in such campaigns if they can help to advance the union even a few small steps. That is why we are not at all indifferent to the outcome of union elections.

Our steel fraction, in collaboration with the Political Committee and the steel fraction of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, is presently discussing the tactic of supporting one of the candidates. What is most important, however, is not the specific tactical choice, but the political framework within which it is made.

#### Promote discussion among ranks

The transformation of the unions will take the conscious action of the ranks. Workers cannot depend on individual leaders to do it for them, however radical they may seem to or actually be. We do not place our confidence in the capacity of an individual — *any individual* — to lead the union, but in the ranks themselves.

But union election campaigns can provide an opportunity to discuss the major challenges confronting the union and the working class as a whole, and to advance the fight to transform the union. That was true, for example, of Ed Sadlowski's campaign for international president of the USWA in 1977 and Dave Patterson's campaign for director of District 6 in 1981. It was on that basis that we aggressively supported both campaigns (while at the same time continuing to advance our own program).

Our task in this campaign will be to help promote the discussion on how best to strengthen the union and the overall fight to defend and advance workers' interests: through our press, our discussions with fellow workers and perhaps through support for one of the candidates.

We will center our propaganda on the most fundamental issues facing our class: our programmatic alternative to unemployment, concessions, and protectionism, including those immediate demands that can best promote labor's fightback. The need for workers in English Canada to defend Quebec's national rights and to forge a fighting alliance against the federal government. The importance of a fight for working-class policies inside the NDP in English Canada and for the construction of a labor party in Quebec. The urgency for labor to mobilize against imperialism's war in Central America. The fight for women's rights.

We will need to work out how to most effectively explain these ideas in the context of the fight by steelworkers to defeat the bosses' attacks and overcome the crisis in their union. But we will not accept a narrow trade unionist framework for our campaign.

There are no specific steelworker answers to the bosses' attacks. Their offensive, rooted in the crisis of the capitalist system, is directed against the entire working class and can only be defeated by the united mobilization of the working class and its allies.

Within this framework, of course, workers



Operation Solidarity protest in British Columbia, July 1983.

in each union and sector must organize the strongest possible resistance to the bosses' attacks in order to establish the basis for the broader political fight that is needed.

#### Political evolution of Dave Patterson

Our approach to the Steelworkers' elections is basically the same one we took when we decided to support Dave Patterson's campaign for director of the Ontario district in 1981. While Patterson's campaign did not propose an overall class-struggle perspective to transform the union, it did represent a major challenge to the established bureaucracy. Workers identified with Patterson as a young rank-and-file leader who had headed the eight-month-long Inco strike in 1978-79 despite the attempted sabotage by the District 6 leadership.

Patterson campaigned against bureaucratic and undemocratic misleadership, for more union solidarity, for women's rights, and for greater union involvement in the NDP. Equally important, his campaign attracted a broad layer of young rank-and-file militants determined to use the campaign to push the union forward. Based on these factors, we decided to support Patterson and aggressively build his campaign.

Patterson's election campaign and subsequent victory provided a big opening for the ranks. It led to a major shake-up in the Ontario Steelworkers and had a big impact in the labor movement as a whole. A layer of young militant fighters became much more active in the union. District 6 conferences have had a much higher proportion of young militant delegates than those of almost any other major union in the country. The reactionary leadership that had run a number of locals for years was swept aside. As a result, the union will never be the same as it was in the days when the district was totally under the thumb of the bureaucratic ap-

paratus of Lynn Williams and his successor, Stu Cooke.

Patterson's own evolution has been a different story. He has taken several positive initiatives, incurring the wrath of the established apparatus. But he has carried through on very few of his election promises. Rather than continuing to mobilize the ranks to fight the bosses' attacks and transform the union, Patterson has basically tried to maneuver within the bureaucracy.

That has discouraged many of Patterson's supporters, but it should not be too surprising to us. While Patterson initially put forward much more militant proposals than his predecessors, he never advanced a class-struggle strategy for the labor movement or a working-class alternative to capitalism. Lacking any fundamental programmatic differences with the existing bureaucracy, he has increasingly adapted to its class-collaborationist policies.

He supported McBride's concession contract last year and, along with the International's leadership, backed the right wing's attack on the leadership of Local 1005 at Stelco in Hamilton, which opposed concessions, both locally and in the U.S. basic steel contract.

At the last international Steelworker's convention, U.S. Democratic presidential hopeful Walter Mondale attacked the Quebec government for helping Bombardier in Montreal win a New York City contract to build subway cars, thus supposedly "stealing jobs" from U.S. steelworkers. Many delegates from Canada and Quebec walked out in response to this chauvinist attack. Patterson remained, and later attacked those who had walked out for acting "irresponsibly."

Patterson more and more openly promotes Canadian nationalism. He has dropped his earlier support for abortion rights. He supports the Ontario NDP's anticommunist campaign to expel members of the RWL from the party. He opposed having a membership election to choose McBride's replacement on the grounds that it would be too costly and disruptive.

There is no way that we can present ourselves as partisans of Patterson as we correctly did during his 1981 election campaign.

At the same time, we need to take into account the reactionary campaign against Patterson by right-wing USWA staffers. (International staff members are appointed by the International headquarters in Pittsburgh and cannot be fired by the district director. As a result, the Williams-Cooke apparatus remains in place despite Patterson's election victory.)

It is not really Patterson they are worried about, but rather the substantial layer of young militants who continue to identify with him — less because of what he stands for now, than because of his earlier progressive role.

We will continue to defend Patterson against right-wing attacks and we will support every progressive step he takes — just as we do with any other bureaucrat. But we have an obligation to these young fighters, many of whom have begun to question Patterson's role, to explain his politics and his evolution. □

# Socialist steelworkers hold meeting

*Discuss strengthening union in Canada, U.S.*

## By Margaret Manwaring

[The following article is reprinted from the February 13 issue of *Socialist Voice*, published biweekly in Montreal.]

\* \* \*

TORONTO — Socialist workers who are members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in Quebec, Ontario, and the United States met here January 28. Most were members of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL — Canadian section of the Fourth International) and its youth committees. Also present were union activists who work closely with the RWL and members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the RWL's sister organization in the United States.

1984 is a collective bargaining year for steelworkers in the mines and steel plants of Quebec and Ontario. Stelco has already demanded a wage freeze from its employees.

In the United States, industry giant U.S. Steel is demanding that the union agree to reopen the takeback contract signed last year. When union members forced the Steelworkers' leadership to refuse the company's demands, U.S. Steel proceeded to shut down four major plants, throwing 15,400 workers out of their jobs.

At the same time as the USWA is facing these unprecedented challenges, a March 29 election has been called to fill the position of USWA president left vacant recently by the death of Lloyd McBride. The election offers the possibility of a broad discussion on how the USWA can meet these challenges.

The reports given to the Toronto meeting stepped back from the immediate situation to

evaluate the employers' offensive during the last few years of economic recession and to discuss some of the landmark struggles that have helped to shape the union.

Particular attention was given to the role that workers from oppressed nations like Quebec and oppressed nationalities like the Blacks and Latinos in the United States play in strengthening the unions.

In her opening report, Katy LeRougetel, a USWA member at Coleco's Montreal plant, explained that the bosses and their governments are conducting a two-sided war. "First, they are accelerating the war against the peoples of Central America and the Middle East," she explained. "At the same time, they are driving forward against North American workers with plant closings, takeback contracts, and social service cutbacks."

### Attacks on Quebec workers

A report on USWA District 5 in Quebec and the Maritime provinces was presented by Annette Kouri. She also works at Coleco's Montreal plant. "The Steelworkers represent 40,000 Quebec workers," she said. "In the Montreal area, they work in steel plants, foundries, and manufacturing plants. Outside Montreal, they work as iron ore miners on Quebec's North Shore, copper miners in the Gaspé, and asbestos miners at Thetford Mines. There are whole cities organized by the Steelworkers. They are at the heart of the economy.

"They work for the huge multi-nationals — Iron Ore, Noranda Mines, Alcan, Hawker Siddeley, for example — whose owners speak English. These companies have no respect for

their workers' rights as Québécois. Thus, each of the Steelworkers' struggles in Quebec takes on aspects of Quebec's struggles as an oppressed nation."

Thus, in 1972, the Quebec Steelworkers union took a position in favor of a sovereign Quebec. Union committees in plants and mines were active supporters of the "Yes" position in the 1980 referendum on Quebec sovereignty. The union remains at the heart of the Quebec nationalist movement.

Today's economic crisis, she continued, means that Canadian imperialism and the bosses have to take on and defeat the industrial working class. They strike out hardest against those workers who are in the vanguard. The heaviest blows have been delivered against the Quebec nation.

[Prime Minister Pierre] Trudeau's constitutional attack on Quebec's national rights, the offensive against French language rights, and the defeat suffered by Quebec's Common Front of public sector unions are some of the elements of this offensive, argued Kouri. On the economic level, "Steelworkers have really been hit hard. Half of the 10,000 workers on the North Shore are laid off. Tory leader Brian Mulroney closed down the city of Schefferville when he was president of Iron Ore Co. At Dominion Bridge, a Montreal steel works, only 300 out of 900 Steelworkers are working. The list is long."

Geoff Mirelowitz, a former Steelworker laid off by Bethlehem Steel in Maryland and a coordinator of the SWP's union work, also dealt with the role of nationally oppressed workers. "Blacks and Latinos play the same vanguard role in the USWA in the United States as Quebec workers do in Canada," he said. Copper miners in Arizona are currently fighting a long, fierce strike against the companies, government, scabs, police, and even the National Guard. Chicanos and Latinos are leading that strike.

"When Blacks and Latinos fight for their rights, their struggles help to transform our union as a whole and advance all our struggles," he continued. "That was a lesson of the big victory won in the 1970s in the fight to organize shipyard workers at Newport News, Virginia. It's now the biggest steel local in North America. The 18,000 Black and white workers there showed that workers' solidarity will be forged in coming battles. They overcame racism because unity was absolutely critical to win."

Gary Watson, a member of USWA Local 8341 in Toronto, described a similar development with Steelworkers in English Canada and Quebec. During the 1981 strike against Stelco,



Hamilton, Ontario steelworkers on strike in 1981.

Tarnopol/Militant



workers in Hamilton refused to return to work until Stelco had signed a contract acceptable to its employees in Montreal.

Faced with a worsening economic situation for USWA members, a split has opened up in the USWA top leadership going into the March 29 election. USWA Secretary Lynn Williams, who is also acting president, is running against USWA Treasurer Frank McKee.

Both Williams and McKee represent wings of the union apparatus. Instead of indentifying with the struggles and aspirations of Blacks, Latinos, and Québécois, they, along with the rest of the union establishment, identify with the aggressive nationalism and austerity policies of the bosses. According to these leaders, workers should tie their fate to that of the companies; they should work with the employers to strengthen the profit system. They claim that concessions and takeback contracts will protect jobs.

Moreover, the top leadership proposes "protectionism" as a means to defend jobs. The restrictions they want the U.S. government to adopt could even block imports from Canada, and this despite the fact that Steelworkers on both sides of the border are in the same union and often have the same employer.

A third candidate is also running for the union's top post. Ron Weisen, president of the USWA local at U.S. Steel's Homestead Works near Pittsburgh, is campaigning against some of the policies of the union establishment.\*

At the Toronto meeting, socialist Steelworkers discussed the need to use the opening offered by the Weisen campaign to push for militant fightback policies to meet the bosses' offensive.

They decided to coordinate their efforts in English Canada, Quebec, and the United States in order to present an alternative way forward during the presidential election.

Grand Elgaard, a member of USWA Local 2900 at Inglis in Toronto, explained what issues socialists will take up as they get involved in the Weisen campaign. "Our starting point is the need to transform our union into a class struggle force, a fighting union," he said.

It's not a question of electing this or that good individual to a union post, he continued, but understanding that "it's the struggles undertaken by the union ranks themselves that can bring about historic changes in the union. It's in mass struggles that their awareness of the political tasks before them can go forward."

This process will forge the leadership necessary to confront the bosses' offensive. "Deepening the discussion on the program necessary to do this is our central task in this election," he declared.

Key elements of such a program are:

- No concessions or takeback contracts.

\* On February 8 the USWA top leadership ruled that Weisen had failed to receive the nomination of at least 111 union locals, as required to qualify for the March 29 ballot. Weisen supporters claim he received 135 such nominations. He is challenging this ruling. — IP

Workers didn't create the crisis. They shouldn't pay for it.

- For a democratic union controlled by its members. For the members' right to vote on all contracts (a right which many U.S. Steelworkers do not have).

- The economy should function to meet the needs of working people and not the needs of a tiny minority of bankers and wealthy owners. To create jobs, the workweek should be shortened with no loss in pay. Open the company books to union-appointed committees.

- Unity and solidarity between workers in English Canada and Quebec. A solid basis for unity can only be provided by the English-Canadian labor movement supporting Quebec's right to self-determination.

- Unity and solidarity between women and men workers. The USWA should support the measures such as equal pay, affirmative action, and abortion rights needed to counter the discrimination women face.

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## Australia

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# Work brigade to Cuba returns

## *Gets cool reception from customs officials*

By David Deutschmann

MELBOURNE — When the first Australian work brigade to Cuba returned home on February 12, customs officials at Sydney airport confiscated 56 Cuban books from brigade member Bruce Johnson. Johnson, a professor of zoology at the University of Tasmania, had intended to give the books as gifts to libraries.

The brigade included 66 trade union officials and activists, academics, political activists, and Labor Party members.

In seizing the books, customs officials were "acting on" a recent amendment to the Customs Act which bans publications that "promote, incite or encourage terrorism." Most of the books were in Spanish and could not be read by customs officials, but were seized as a "precautionary measure."

Among the books taken by the officials were Cuban President Fidel Castro's 1953 speech "History Will Absolve Me," statements by the Cuban leader on the overturn of the Grenadian revolutionary government and the invasion by U.S. forces, and the newly published (in English) *Revolutionary Cuba* by U.S. writer Terrance Cannon. Most of the titles seized are already available in a number of radical bookshops in Australia.

The day after the books were confiscated, Senator Gareth Evans, attorney general in the federal Labor government, ordered that the books be returned to Johnson. Evans explained that there were some "teething troubles" with the new law. Controller of customs in Sydney, Frank Kelly, said the customs officials responsible were "just doing their job."

Johnson, however, was angered by the sei-

- Workers should rely on their own organizations. In Quebec, the unions must launch a labor party. Unions in English Canada must build the New Democratic Party (NDP) as a fighting tool for political struggle. Together, the labor movement in English Canada and Quebec should fight to replace the Trudeau government with an NDP-Quebec labor government that will challenge the power of the capitalists.

Solidarity work with revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean is also a priority for RWL and socialist youth committee members in the USWA. Participation by USWA members in the international work brigades for Nicaragua opens up new possibilities for doing solidarity work.

*Socialist Voice* and its French-language sister publication *Lutte Ouvrière* will be reporting on developments in the upcoming USWA presidential contest in this and future issues. □

zure, which was widely publicized by the news media. "I think the officers . . . displayed a political lack of sophistication in equating the Cuban revolution with terrorism . . . it was a mistaken, sad connection," he said in a report in the *Melbourne Age* newspaper February 14.

Despite this incident, the work brigade was a big success. Brigade members spent two weeks working on construction and farm projects, and another two weeks touring Cuba. The brigade was organized by the Australia-Cuba Friendship Societies (ACFS) and adopted as its symbol a design specially prepared by the Cubans — a kangaroo pulling a Cuban flag from its pouch.

The ACFS has now been established in Australia's major cities. Its aims are "to promote and encourage friendship, understanding, cultural, trade, and other exchanges between the peoples of Australia and Cuba." The committees, which have been growing in the last couple of years, held an important and successful national conference in Sydney in November 1983. The ACFS conference, which discussed the work brigades, was attended by Francisco Tosco, head of the Asian Bureau of the Cuban Committee in Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

The election of a federal Labor government in 1983 has increased the openings to develop stronger ties between Cuba and the labor movement in Australia. The success of the first work brigade to Cuba can only increase understanding of and support for the Cuban revolution in Australia. And it can lay the basis for organizing further brigades like this. □

# Workers hit with austerity measures

*Interview with Revolutionary Communist League leaders*

**By Doug Jenness**

REYKJAVIK — As in Western Europe and North America, the capitalist class of Iceland has launched a major offensive against working people. This drive was stepped up following the April 1983 elections when the two principal capitalist parties, the right-wing Independence Party (IP) and the middle-of-the-road Progressive Party (PP), won a substantial majority in the Althing (parliament) and established a coalition government. This government is continuing the austerity drive begun by the previous government, a coalition that included the PP, a split-off from the IP, and the People's Alliance, one of the two workers' parties represented in the Althing.

The new government, under the guise of "equality of sacrifice," immediately announced a series of new, severe austerity measures aimed at squeezing more profits out of the working class.

These measures included:

- A 14.6 percent devaluation of the krona, making imported goods much more expensive. The devaluation came on top of previous devaluations over the last four and a half years.
- A freeze on all wages until Feb. 1, 1984. Through 1984 the target is to keep wage increases to only 4-6 percent.
- Abolition of all indexation of wages (escalator clauses) until mid-1985.
- Suspension of collective bargaining rights.
- Cutbacks in social services.

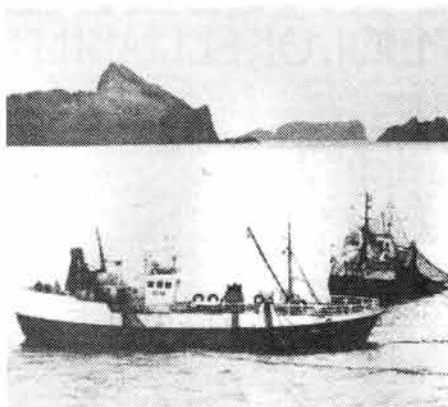
In an interview with *Intercontinental Press* in mid-December, Már Gudmundsson and Pétur Tyrfinngsson, two leaders of the Revolutionary Communist League (FBK — Fylking Byltingarsinnadra Kommúnista), described the significance of these measures and the working class response to them.

Gudmundsson explained that these actions add up to "one of the biggest cuts in real wages ever experienced by the working class in Iceland. Wages at the end of 1984 will be 30 percent lower than in 1982, and that wasn't a peak year."

## Reprivatization of industry

Another attack on working people, he said, is the government's preparation for reprivatizing some state-owned enterprises, including the Icelandic Steamship Corporation, the woolen goods firm Alafoss, and government-run hospital meals and laundry services.

"One way they will do this," Gudmundsson noted, "is for the Finance Ministry to sell shares to private capitalists. They grant loans at very low interest and with easy terms. So it's almost like giving these shares to the



Icelandic fishing vessels.

capitalists."

Tyrfinngsson, a dock worker and active unionist, said that the government's measures "stunned the workers at first. And the union leaders appeared to be caught by surprise. They condemned the measures and held meetings in the unions to discuss them. But there were no big protests or strikes. Yet, as workers realize that there is not going to be any equal sacrifice, they are beginning to express more discontent. There is a change in thinking taking place."

He indicated that a petition was circulated in the unions calling on the government to repeal the suspension of collective bargaining rights. Thirty-four thousand signatures were collected, an impressive number in a country of 235,000 people. They were presented to Prime Minister Steingrímur Hermannsson when the Althing convened on October 10. A crowd of 5,000 protesters was on hand when the petitions were submitted.

"There is a great deal of distrust," Tyrfinngsson explained, "in the two major working class parties, the People's Alliance and the Social Democratic Party. The People's Alliance was in the last government and has a record of supporting legislation that reduced indexation."

He said a key problem in mobilizing a counteroffensive is the strategy of the union officialdom. "The officials want to get friendly representatives in government," he pointed out, "but they don't want to mobilize the workers. They put all their hopes in getting the right legislation and in parliamentary maneuvers, but no hopes in the members. This has led to a weakening of the unions and a decline in the life of the unions. The general problem we face is class collaborationism."

I asked what the FBK proposes.

"We don't start by telling the workers, 'We

told you so' about the People's Alliance leaders and the union officials," Tyrfinngsson replied. "We start by explaining what should be done to fight the government. What we think is needed is a united front of all workers' organizations — both the unions and parties — to fight the government's austerity measures."

"We think that economic gains can be won by independent political action by the workers," he continued. "We say that if the People's Alliance and Social Democrats were to join together in such a fight, they could form a government that would advance the struggle and change the relationship of forces in the struggle against the capitalists."

## Nationalize fishing industry

"What would you propose such a government do?" I asked.

"It should nationalize the fishing industry and the import companies," Tyrfinngsson answered. "Fishing is Iceland's biggest industry and accounts for more than 75 percent of all exports and employs 15 percent of the labor force."

Gudmundsson explained the importance of demanding that the fishing industry be nationalized. "Many workers," he said, "are saying that there are too many fishing trawlers. They say that instead of making workers sacrifice, the government subsidies to fishermen should be stopped, and if some can't make it, let them go bankrupt."

"This isn't the answer, but it shows the frustration that many workers feel," he explained.

"The fact is that there is a crisis in the fishing industry. There has been overinvestment in trawlers at the same time that there has been a decline in the stocks of some kinds of fish."

I asked how the industry is organized.

"In many small towns there are usually one or two trawlers owned by private capitalists, who often own a freezing plant, a dried fish plant, and so on," he said. "Fishermen with smaller boats sell their fish to them. In other towns the processing plants are owned by cooperatives. In the large towns like Reykjavik and Keflavik two or three big owners dominate the processing industry. "So the ownership of trawlers and processing nationally is somewhat dispersed," Gudmundsson indicated. "What is concentrated is not production and processing, but distribution. Two big companies dominate the export trade."

Gudmundsson then went on to explain that the fishing industry also faces a marketing problem. "The United States," he said, "is the biggest market for fresh frozen fish. This market opened up after World War II when Iceland



got favorable treatment for fish exports in exchange for allowing the United States to have a big military base in Keflavík. This has given the highest prices of any market, and two exporting companies have set up several processing plants in the United States."

#### Competition from Canada

"But in the last few years Iceland has faced increasing competition from Canada," Gunnmundsson pointed out. "Icelandic fish has generally been of higher quality than Canadian due to better processing techniques. This has meant higher prices. But Canadian fish is improving in quality, so Icelandic fish is not getting as much of the market as it used to. Also the Canadian government is giving big subsidies to this industry.

"So there is a debate on what to do about this crisis in the fishing industry, among the capitalists here," he said. "Some think that there should be a cutback in the bigger towns where laid-off workers would have more opportunity to find jobs, but not in the small towns which would be hardest hit. Others, especially trawler owners and processors in the bigger towns, express different views.

"Our answer is that the industry should not be allowed to cut back anarchistically," Gunnmundsson said. "This will lead to big unemployment and dislocations. Many small towns are dependent on one trawler; if it goes under, the whole town can go bankrupt.

"That's why we call for nationalizing the industry and developing an adjustment plan in the interests of the workers. By nationalizing the industry a more rational policy also can be developed to deal with the problem of over-fishing."

Tyrfingsson explained that the import companies employ as many people as the fishing industry.

"This country is a small island. Many things have to be imported such as oil, flour, and so on. Several companies handle each of these commodities which is totally irrational," he said. "It's wasteful and makes the prices higher to the consumers. So we propose nationalizing them too."

Tyrfingsson added that the general public pays higher rates for electricity in order to make it possible to charge lower rates to private industry and encourage investment here. "We say that if such private companies like Swiss Aluminum won't pay higher rates they should be nationalized," he said.

He pointed out that if a People's Alliance-Social Democrat government were formed it should give workers back the right to strike and make contracts.

"We also call for a national referendum on getting Iceland out of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," he said.

Both Gudmundsson and Tyrfingsson indicated that the latest round of employer attacks is increasing openings for class-conscious workers to get a hearing in the unions and in the workers parties, especially among younger workers. □

## France

# Auto workers say: 'Zero layoffs'

*LCR leader describes impact of strike at Talbot*

[The following interview with François Ollivier, a leader of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International, was conducted in Paris February 1 by Joan Campana for *Lutte Ouvrière*, a socialist fortnightly published in Montreal. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*].

\* \* \*

*Question. Can you provide some background information on the struggle at Talbot, information about such things as the factory itself and the composition of the workforce?*

*Answer.* There are 17,000 workers in this factory, which is a huge industrial concentration, one of the biggest factories in the Paris region. The factory manufactures and assembles automobiles.

The plant itself is very old, and therefore the employers felt a need to modernize and restructure it.

A majority of the work force is made up of immigrant workers, and the immense majority of the less skilled labor are immigrants. The skilled workers are French.

*Q. Are there women working there?*

A. Women work in the offices, but not in production.

*Q. What sorts of jobs do the immigrant workers fill?*

A. They are the ones who work on the assembly line. The great bulk are Moroccans, although there are also Africans and Algerians.

Up until May 10, 1981, when the Socialist Party was elected, this factory was marked by the terror of employer-controlled thugs. There was no independent union, no free workers union. The workers were totally terrorized by the dictatorship of the thugs from the company union, the Confederation of Free Unions (CSL).

When the Socialist government came into office, this unleashed the energies of a number of workers who demanded freedom, democracy, the organization of a union, and so on.

In June 1982, there was a strike at Talbot around these goals. For the first time, the CSL was physically driven out and there were union elections. Once the workers had freedom to organize in unions, they joined the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) in massive numbers, and some joined the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT).

In the 1982 elections more than 50 percent voted for the CGT and more than 10 percent for the CFDT. People chose the CGT because it had previously fought hardest against the

CSL.

*Q. What caused the situation to explode this time?*

A. It was the plan for layoffs. In July 1983 the bosses came in with a demand for 2,905 layoffs. After that, little by little, people began mobilizing to reject the layoff plan.

This was a massive, hard-fought strike, a very violent confrontation between the workers and the management methods of Talbot's owners, the Peugeot group, which is the second largest French automaker, after Renault.

The strike began in early December and continued for five weeks, ending January 6.

Preparations for the strike had been underway for a long time among a whole series of trade-union activists in the factory, and as soon as the layoff plans were made known rank-and-file union leaders called for a strike.

When the strike began a few thousand workers took part. Very soon they blocked the whole factory and nothing functioned.

Inside the factory there were regular general assemblies, and there were numerous demonstrations by workers. The workers first went to see the factory management, and then they went to see the government, calling on it to reject the layoffs.

*Q. How many layoffs were there?*

A. Management first demanded 2,905. The agreement between the government and management ended up at 1,905, and that's how many layoffs there were.

*Q. What were the demands of the workers?*

A. The demand was for no layoffs, or "zero layoffs," as they put it. Certain sectors were also calling for a reduction in the workweek to 35 hours.

Unity developed around "no layoffs," which was where there was the greatest, most massive unity.

*Q. I know the immigrant workers played a big role in the strike, and I saw an announcement for a demonstration in support of the strike, a demonstration organized by immigrants. Can you tell us about the role the immigrant workers played in the strike? It seems to me that they played a vanguard role.*

A. That is absolutely true in terms of combativity. They played a vanguard role in the sense that this strike is the first battle in the war over restructuring industry, and they were the ones who played that role.

But today the rest of the working class does not look at the Talbot struggle as a struggle of

immigrant workers. It is seen as a broader struggle.

Today there is a great deal of confusion in the political consciousness of the immigrant workers. There is very little clarity in terms of the big political questions facing the country, or the world.

*Q. Were they among the first hit by the layoffs?*

A. Yes. About 80 percent of those laid off were immigrant workers, and 20 percent were French workers. With regard to that, very few French workers on the assembly line were in the movement, very few. A segment of the skilled workers were with the immigrant workers, but the big majority were hesitant or hostile.

Regarding the demonstrations, there are two things to note. On December 3, before the strike began, there was a very big march on Paris by young people against racism.

*Q. This was the march that began in Marseille?*

A. Right. The immigrant workers organized a march of more than a month and a half through all the cities in France, ending up in an enormous demonstration in Paris of 80,000 people. This had an impact on the consciousness of certain leaders of the strike. They had the feeling that they can struggle, that they have some real strength.

*Q. What were the demands of that demonstration?*

A. Equal rights and opposition to racism.

*Q. What provoked the march?*

A. Last year nearly 50 young immigrants were murdered in racist incidents. This demonstration was in reaction to that.

*Q. And the march arrived in Paris just before the Talbot strike?*

A. Yes, just before the strike. And this demonstration passed right in front of the factory. So this had some impact on the thinking of some of the workers, not on the mass of them because the demonstration itself was a demonstration of young people, not of older workers.

This demonstration was made up of young people who want to live in France. The workers at Talbot are not young. These are workers in the 35 to 40 range who were brought over from Morocco.

But the demonstration showed a certain relationship of forces, and this had an impact on some of the leaders, some of the immigrant workers, giving them the confidence to launch the struggle in the factory.

*Q. And during the strike wasn't there a demonstration in solidarity with the strikers, organized by immigrants?*

A. There was a demonstration, but it was

narrower, smaller. It was made up largely of groupings of young people from Paris who had taken part in the big march and Talbot workers. There was movement toward fusion between a segment of the leadership of the Talbot strike and these groupings of young people. The demonstration was small, but this was significant.

*Q. Were there other solidarity activities organized by other groups?*

A. No.

*Q. So apart from this one march it was isolated?*

A. Yes. It was a very hard-fought struggle. The workers were on strike for more than a month, all alone in the country. They were tragically alone.

*Q. What kinds of solidarity, of support, was there?*

A. There are two things. Concrete, material solidarity was limited. On the other hand, politically, people saw the importance of the fight. There is a very important political understanding of this strike. People are beginning to think about the strength of the strike, its importance, the fact that this strike said "no layoffs," and so



Talbot workers sit in.

on.

*Q. Why was there this weakness in terms of solidarity?*

A. First of all the union leaders did absolutely nothing. The union leaders broke up any kind of solidarity.

Then too, there are the political obstacles that exist in the country because of the government's policies. People say, "this government is shit, but there is still no alternative."

So they wait. That is the kind of process we see in the country today.

*Q. People are waiting to see if this government, made up of the Socialist and Communist parties, is going to aid them before engaging in all-out struggle themselves?*

A. Absolutely. That is the sentiment. For example, the workers regularly tell representatives of the government, "You're there to carry out the policy of the workers, so do it."

There are illusions, expectations, that is for sure. This is the beginning of the struggle. When the government said, "no, we'll apply the bosses' plan," people began to turn away from the government and also began to turn away from those people in the factory who were linked with the government. And they turned toward the people who were independent of the government.

*Q. What is the economic situation facing the workers in France?*

A. Today in France there are nearly 2.15 million unemployed. Wage increases are limited to 5 percent in the coming year, while prices are expected to rise by about 8.9 percent.

The government has a policy of wage austerity, so there is a drop in the purchasing power of the workers. And this has created social tensions that are growing and are beginning to be expressed in a small way politically.

*Q. It is expected that there will be many more layoffs throughout industry, not just in the automobile industry, right?*

A. 100,000 layoffs. This is something that is now part of everyday reality, something people watch on television and read in the newspapers, and it makes people very nervous. And in the face of this, Talbot was revealing.

*Q. And these policies are being applied by a government made up of the Socialist and Communist parties.*

A. That is part of a more general problem. The capitalists have very major plans for restructuring. In 1984 they must eliminate 100,000 jobs in industry alone. They have to do it. So this is not the ideal government for the bourgeoisie. The best government for the French bourgeoisie would be a government of Jacques Chirac and former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing — which would be very



tough with the workers.

The fact that there is a government of the left parties is a problem. But this government, as a reformist government, a class-collaborationist government, is going to apply all the plans of the capitalists.

*Q. Is a discussion about changing these policies developing among the members of these parties or among people who follow these parties?*

A. Indeed there is. There are not yet left currents in the Communist Party and Socialist Party. But a number of workers who voted for these two parties are telling themselves: "We did not vote for austerity, we voted for change. We don't see ourselves reflected in the policy of these parties." The workers don't feel that the right-wing government was better. All the election victories the right has won recently are the result of abstentions on the left.

*Q. People don't see any alternative?*

A. That's right. They don't want to put the right back in. But without an alternative on the left, people end up abstaining, not taking a position.

*Q. Did the government's policy, its collaboration with the Talbot management, divide the struggle?*

A. Yes. At a certain point in the struggle the government signed an agreement allowing the company management to lay off 1,905 workers. This divided the unions. The CGT, which is led by the Communist Party, accepted the agreement. The CFDT, which in the Talbot plant is led by class-struggle elements — and we have some comrades in the union leadership — rejected the agreement.

The CFDT leadership had been pushed out of the negotiations and the accord was directly between the government and the CGT.

This divided the movement because from then on, in the meetings in the factory, in the assemblies, the CGT would argue that it was necessary to end the strike. And the CFDT, along with the workers, said: "No, we must continue." That's where the division was.

*Q. Did the workers try to overcome this division?*

A. The workers overcame the division in the following way. First, in this factory the union movement is organized in a special way. There are union delegates representing the workers as a whole and also a system of direct delegates from the assembly line. Each of these delegates represents 10, 20, 30, or 50 workers in a certain sector. Because the immigrant workers have very strong ties among themselves, these assembly-line delegates were very close to the ranks. So these assembly-line delegates, in the CGT as well as the CFDT, were united, which was very important.

Later there was even a second phase in which there were meetings of CFDT line dele-

gates with CGT line delegates. People called them CGT "dissidents."

Later, in a second phase, a strike committee was organized, composed of 400 workers who had signed up. But this strike committee was not able to function because the day after it was established there were the confrontations with the bosses' fascist commandos, and the factory was closed.

*Q. Weren't there also confrontations with the police?*

A. Yes, and then the strike ended on January 6.

*Q. Can you tell us more about this layer that was willing to fight to the end?*

A. I think that the important thing in these struggles now is that we are beginning to see, in a limited and partial form, the appearance of elements of an alternative leadership to the old leaders.

Who were these elements of an alternative leadership in this particular factory? There was the CFDT section, which had only a minority of the workers. There were the 40 or 50 activists who fought from the start on the line of "no to layoffs." And they won the confidence of the workers against the Stalinist [CGT] leaders. There were revolutionary militants in the CFDT section. And in the CGT section there were what were called the dissidents, who turned in unity toward the CFDT activists. There was unity among these elements.

After the strike, for example, quite a few of these CGT dissidents and these assembly line delegates joined the CFDT. They had demanded a democratic congress in the CGT, it was refused, and they went over to the CFDT.

The third point is that workers came forward in this strike who were the product of the struggle itself, who took part in the strike committee, militant workers.

In our view it is very important that three elements came together in this strike: militant workers; activists involved in the class-struggle opposition in the CFDT or in a class-struggle opposition to the reformist bureaucracy; and revolutionaries who intervened with a line that developed a broad anticapitalist alternative calling for zero layoffs, a 35-hour week, nationalization of Peugeot, and expropriation of the Peugeot family by the government if they continued to block the workers' demands.

*Q. What is the road forward?*

A. There are several things. We in the LCR took up Guevara's slogan: "two, three, many Talbots." That's the first thing for strikes yet to come. The second point is to create a general movement of all the workers against the layoffs. If you proceed factory by factory, you'll have defeat after defeat. So it has to be everyone together.

There should be a march, a central demonstration in Paris of all the sectors for jobs and against layoffs.

The third thing is to continue the opposition

union work in the big trade-union federations. To put forward another road. To stand up as the defenders of Talbot against the policy of the national leaders of the CGT and CFDT.

And the fourth thing is to move forward toward an anticapitalist political alternative and the construction of a revolutionary party within that framework.

In particular, we are putting forward an initiative in Paris in May for a big united gathering of workers against austerity and against capitalist Europe.

*Q. Do you have anything you want to add?*

A. Regarding the role of the LCR, we think that the key battles are going to be fought in this sector. Therefore, in general, the LCR's work must be increasingly focused and centered on this sector. In Talbot we have members and sympathizers in the factory. They distributed leaflets regularly, three times a week, during the whole strike. A cell is being set up in the factory now, and the whole organization is being prepared to respond positively to the battles that are coming. □

## French CP supports Chad intervention

[The following article appeared in the February 17-23 issue of *Rouge*, weekly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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Claude Poperen, a member of the political bureau of the French Communist Party, stated on Sunday, February 12, on a local radio station in Versailles, that his party's position on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is the same as on the French intervention in Chad.

"In both cases," he said, "the two countries were called on to send troops by governments that are in place, governments put in place under conditions that one could discuss, but that are recognized internationally." So Poperen comes right to the point. But what are we to make of this curious comparison? Does he want to justify the Soviet intervention by making reference to the obvious legitimacy of the French intervention in Chad. Or does he want to justify the Chad intervention by lending the Soviet invasion an exemplary and universal character?

In any case we are further and further from the slightest anti-imperialist position by the CP on the Chad question. We are even quite far from its initial "misgivings." Will we one day hear a CP leader claim that France has as much right to do in Africa what the United States does in Latin America and the Caribbean? After all, there too there are "legitimate" governments "recognized internationally." □

# Left unity and 'Sendero Luminoso'

## Interview with PRT leader Hugo Blanco

[The following interview with Hugo Blanco, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Peruvian section of the Fourth International, was obtained Dec. 27, 1983, by a U.S. socialist during a visit to Peru. The interview was conducted in Spanish; the translation and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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*Question.* The U.S. news media has recently carried quite a number of reports about the armed group known as "Sendero Luminoso." What can you tell us about this group and its actions?

*Answer.* The fundamental reason for the emergence of Sendero Luminoso — whose full name is Partido Comunista del Perú — Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru — Shining Path) — is the desperate poverty in the mountains of Peru.

Sendero Luminoso operates primarily in the provinces of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac. This is the poorest region of the country. It has also been sporadically active in other areas, including the province of Junín and the cities of Lima, Cuzco, and Arequipa, but these are not the main arena of its activities.

It is the desperate poverty of the peasants in Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac — along with the failure of the rest of the left to present an alternative to the present conditions — that provides the base for Sendero's support. Its leadership is largely made up of intellectuals, teachers, and students.

*Q.* What about its ranks?

*A.* The ranks are students as well as some peasants. Thus far there have been very few working-class elements in Sendero Luminoso.

The workers they have attracted have come largely from among the unemployed, who make up a big, and growing, percentage of the population. Many of these we could describe as subproletarians — peddlers and the like who are semiemployed and earn much less than workers.

*Q.* How would you characterize Sendero Luminoso in political terms?

*A.* Many people here have described them as "Pol Potists," because their behavior is very similar to that of Pol Pot's forces in Kampuchea.

Sendero exhibits many of the most negative aspects of Maoism in its most sectarian period.

Today, however, the organization is completely opposed to the present government of China, which they describe as totally reaction-

ary. They are also against the Nicaraguan government, the Cuban government, the Albanian government, and the Soviet government.

For them, Comrade Gonzalo, their leader, is right up in the same league as Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao. Sendero members act very much like members of a religious sect. This has both positive and negative sides to it. The positive side is that they are very firm in their convictions and will not yield even when tortured or facing death.

Sendero's ultrasectarianism is not unique. Up until a few years ago, the left in Peru was characterized by groups, mainly based in the universities, that were very sectarian and viewed other left groups as the main enemy. Even among the Maoist groups like Sendero Luminoso, the attitude was that the other Maoist groups were the main enemy.

Fortunately most of the Peruvian left is overcoming this. But Sendero remains fixed on an ultrasectarian course.

*Q.* How does this sectarianism manifest itself?

*A.* In two ways. First, the group pays no attention to public opinion in its activities. Secondly, it is completely hostile to other sectors of the left, treating them as enemies.

Sendero Luminoso's attitude toward the population in general is sectarian because there

is no attempt to apply what we Trotskyists call a transitional approach — one that assesses the level of consciousness and combativity of the people and determines what things can and cannot be done, what slogans can and cannot be raised.

Sendero does not even let the population know *why* it carries out its acts. Even groups like the ETA in the Basque country and the Baader-Meinhoff group in West Germany issue communiqués. But Sendero does not inform the people because it is uninterested in public opinion.

As a result, the population has no idea of what Sendero is doing and what it is *not* doing. The people have no idea which acts are in fact carried out by the repressive apparatus but blamed on Sendero. The repressive apparatus spreads terrible slanders about Sendero, but since Sendero never denies any of these slanders, many people take them for good coin. Sendero also has published very little written material, and what has appeared is extremely general in character.

Sendero does not even give consideration to the level of consciousness of those sectors among whom it is working most closely. There are peasant areas, for example, where it has forbidden peasants to produce more than they can consume themselves. Sendero claims this is to sabotage the Belaúnde government. But considering the minuscule percentage of the gross domestic product that these harvests make up, obviously this has no effect on the regime.

It has a terrible effect, however, on the peasants themselves. When they are unable to sell part of their crop, they cannot buy matches or any other commodity they need but do not produce themselves. The result is they are being forced down to a bare subsistence level.

Sendero's disdain for public opinion is also seen in the trials they organize. Their so-called People's Tribunals are made up of Sendero Luminoso members, who decide who should be punished or even executed.

Sometimes they try people who really are rich landowners or repressive authorities who abuse the population. But at other times they put on trial small shopkeepers who, while living somewhat more comfortably than the rest of the population, cannot in any way be categorized as exploiters and are not viewed as such by the local population.

Sometimes they have even tried peasant leaders elected by the masses themselves — some of these leaders have been executed by Sendero.

At times when Sendero Luminoso wants to





hold a mass meeting, it goes out with weapons in hand and rounds up peasants to bring to the plaza where the meeting will take place.

These things are not taken from the bourgeois press — which does contain huge doses of slander against Sendero Luminoso. I have heard these things directly from the peasants.

Take the example of the community of San José de Azangaro, in Puno Province, where the community had elected a mayor. Sendero threatened him and ransacked his store. They also took food that was being stored by the Municipal Council and was to be used to feed peasants while they worked on public works projects. Sendero stole that food and then told the people to come and take it. Some did, but others said "this is already ours." Sendero then set fire to whatever had not been taken.

Sendero also set fire to the plastic tubing that was to be used to bring irrigation water to the peasants' fields.

They have also attacked the offices of some cooperatives run by the SAIS [Social Interest Agricultural Association]. It is true that bureaucrats often head these cooperatives, as is also the case with trade unions. But the property belongs to the peasants, and we are struggling only to oust the bureaucrats and replace them with a democratic leadership elected by the peasants themselves.

Sendero, however, treats the cooperatives as though they were enemy organizations. Often, by ransacking the cooperative offices, they have unwittingly helped the bureaucrats. Some of the bureaucrats have been under fire for theft and have been unable to cover their tracks. When Sendero comes in and burns all the records and ransacks the cooperative, it becomes impossible for an elected peasant leadership to prove that the bureaucrat was stealing.

*Q. Could you describe Sendero Luminoso's attitude toward other organizations of the left?*

A. Sendero is far more sectarian toward the rest of the left than other groups that have taken a similar course. For instance, groups like the Tupamaros in Uruguay and the Revolutionary People's Army (ERP) and the Montoneros in Argentina also described the rest of the left as reformist and opportunist. But they never carried out armed attacks against other left organizations. And when they could make use of the rest of the left, they would.

The Tupamaros, for example, felt that other groups were made up of cowards who were afraid to take up the armed struggle. But they also held that there was a division of labor in which other groups could contribute by fighting for the release of Tupamaro prisoners and so on.

But Sendero Luminoso does not even try to use other groups for its own ends. More than once we have gone to visit the Sendero prisoners to bring them aid. All we have gotten from them in return is insults.

*Q. How does the rest of the left view Sen-*



Fred Murphy/IP

HUGO BLANCO

*dero Luminoso?*

A. There are various opinions. Some groups are sharply critical of Sendero, and go so far as to make a common front with right-wing forces to crush it.

We consider Sendero to be revolutionaries, even though we do not agree with their methods. We try to defend their rights.

Of course, we understand that the people will have to respond to violence with violence. But this must be the product of mass consciousness, not of paternalistic actions by a group that appoints itself the representative of all the peasants.

The peasants themselves must decide what they must or must not do. It is up to the people in any given sector to make that decision. That is why we so deeply disagree with Sendero's methods.

Some sectors of the left are sympathetic to Sendero but critical of certain nonessential aspects of its methods. This attitude flows from frustration with the generally reformist course the left has taken and its inability to project an alternative.

These sectors criticize Sendero Luminoso's sectarianism toward the other sectors of the left, its actions preventing peasants from selling their produce, and the like. But they feel everything would be fine if only Sendero acted like the Tupamaros did.

*Q. Does Sendero Luminoso have a base in the countryside?*

A. The fact that they have not been destroyed shows they do have some popular support. I believe that this is due to the miserable living conditions and the despair that exist among our people, and to the fact that the left has not been able to provide a real alternative.

In some areas of the countryside people really have been caught in the middle. Sendero comes in and threatens the informers. Then the

police come and kill many innocent people, who have never given any support to Sendero or sheltered anyone. Then Sendero comes back, and if the *Sinchis* [special counterinsurgency police units] were billeted in your house, you are attacked as an informer.

Many people simply flee to escape this situation. There are areas in the mountains that are being depopulated.

In some areas in the provinces of Tayacaja and Huancavelica, former hacienda owners whose land was taken under the agrarian reform of the early 1970s are using the situation to make a comeback. The easiest way to get back land that had been turned over to peasants is to accuse the peasants, or their village leaders, of being supporters of Sendero Luminoso. Then the repressive forces come in and take care of them.

A few days ago, in my capacity as human rights secretary of the Peasant Federation of Peru [CCP], I visited jailed peasant leaders in Huancayo. These are members of the CCP, so what I say comes from direct sources. Although these peasants are not connected with Sendero Luminoso, they have been imprisoned as Senderistas.

Another of our comrades has told me that because of a personal dispute, enemies of her family accused them all of being Senderistas. As a result, the *Sinchis* came and demolished everything, not just their house but the houses of the neighbors too. Now there are children out on the barren high plateaus without their parents, and no one knows where they are. These people are totally terrorized.

*Q. We would also like to hear your opinion of the United Left (IU),<sup>1</sup> whose candidate was just elected mayor of Lima.*

A. Our party, the Revolutionary Workers Party [PRT], has made a series of errors regarding the IU.

There are two key things we have to look at. One is the question of unity and of the united front, which is central to the revolution. The other is the question of political line, of clarity about upholding working-class political independence.

The essential question is how to combine these two things in the concrete situation we face. We now feel that we underestimated the need for unity and the sentiment in favor of unity among the masses and that we overemphasized, or even fetishized, our own doctrinal purity.

As a result of this, we did not fight energetically.

1. The United Left is made up of most of Peru's working-class political parties, as well as independents such as recently elected Lima Mayor Alfonso Barrantes. The IU's candidates in the Nov. 13, 1983, municipal elections received 26 percent of the vote countrywide, running second to the bourgeois opposition party known as the American People's Revolutionary Alliance (APRA).

After the elections, the PRT reassessed its position toward the IU and formally requested to join the coalition. See *Intercontinental Press*, January 23, p.13.

ically enough to unify the FOCEP and the UDP, which were two powerful fronts that arose in the period when the Morales Bermúdez government was coming to an end.<sup>2</sup>

Later, we were unable to consolidate and maintain the ARI as a left front led by revolutionaries.<sup>3</sup> And we did not join the United Left when it was formed. As a result, we have now been pushed to the sidelines in the consciousness of the masses.

We made a big error. We should have paid more attention to concrete actions and deeds than to formal declarations and nit-picking over words. Such an attitude led us into a kind of sectarianism that isolated us.

We started out from the position that if any bourgeois current is in the united front we cannot take part. And we said that the Revolutionary Socialist Party [PSR]<sup>4</sup> was a bourgeois force. Clearly the PSR was formed by the heirs of Velasco, whose regime was bourgeois. But origin cannot be the sole determinant of class character. And in any event, the PSR is an insignificant group with no power.

We also acted with excessive scruples toward the participation of a group like Socialist Political Action, which had only four members! But if they were included in a front, we would not participate. Such sectarian scruples have done us great harm.

And the fact is that the force that really gives the reformist edge to the leadership of the United Left is not some tiny bourgeois group-let, but the Communist Party, which *is* a workers party.

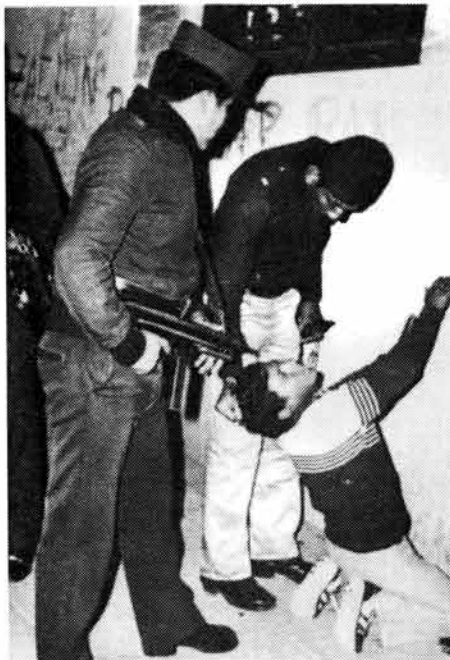
We hope to correct and overcome these sectarian errors. Of course we have already lost very valuable time, but the story has not yet been played out. The country has entered a new and important stage with the municipal elections, one in which we feel that the government and the bourgeoisie will try to make life very difficult for the left in order to prevent a left victory in the countrywide elections in 1985.

2. FOCEP — Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front. A coalition of leftist groups, including three that were later to join in founding the PRT, the FOCEP presented candidates in the May 1978 Constituent Assembly elections. Hugo Blanco was a leading candidate on its slate, which received 11.5 percent of the vote and outpolled all other currents on the left.

UDP — Democratic People's Unity, another bloc of leftist groups that presented candidates in 1978, receiving 4.2 percent of the vote. Two of the Trotskyist groups that later participated in founding the PRT were originally part of the UDP. Today the UDP is part of the United Left.

3. ARI — Revolutionary Left Alliance, a short-lived electoral bloc formed in January 1980 among the PRT, UDP, and various other Maoist and Trotskyist currents. Hugo Blanco was to have been the ARI's candidate for president in the May 1980 general elections, but the bloc fell apart less than two months after its founding.

4. The PSR was originally founded by prominent figures, including military officers, from the 1968–75 populist military government headed by Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado.



Security forces interrogate suspect.

And if they are unable to block the left's victory in those elections, there will be a coup either before, during, or after the voting.

We must try to prepare the masses to counter this coup, and the closer we are to the masses the better. That is why we want to be inside the United Left, even though the leadership does not accept our views.

We feel that the character of the United Left has not yet been decided. It can become a revolutionary front that leads the Peruvian masses to power, or it could turn into a reformist front that holds them back.

There are leaders of the United Left, like Javier Diez Canseco and Agustín Haya, who are saying the same things I am about how the right will refuse to let the left take power through elections. These leaders have not been prevented from expressing their views. They have not been silenced by the United Left, as happened in Chile during the Popular Unity period.

Of course there are also reformist sectors and elements in the United Left who are saying the exact opposite. They share the same hopes that Allende had in Chile: the hope that if they are nice to the bourgeoisie, to the imperialists, to the armed forces, they will be able to get into power.

So we want to be inside the United Left in order to help determine whether it becomes a reformist front that holds back the mass movement or a revolutionary front that pushes the process forward.

We would not, of course, accept the proposition that to join the United Left we have to keep quiet about some of these truths. But we don't think that they will make this a condition for our entry into the United Left.

Some say that since we are not vote-grabbers, we should wait until after the 1985 elec-

tions before coming in. The problem is that the class struggle does not wait. To set the minds of these comrades at ease, we are ready to sign an agreement guaranteeing that we will not contest a single post in the Chamber of Deputies or Senate and stipulating that we want to enter the IU in order to work among the ranks to resist the possible coup and bourgeois sabotage in 1985.

*Q. How can the left use the gains it made in the recent municipal elections to strengthen its position?*

A. We think that if the left-controlled municipal governments are based on people's assemblies and open town meetings, on the organization of the masses, they will be strong enough to resist any attack by the bourgeoisie, which wants to discredit the left by sabotaging its officeholders.

Already some mayors from the United Left — although still few in number — have begun to do this. For example, the mayor of the Comas district in Lima sent a circular around to all the leaders of the organized neighborhoods, to the precincts in the northern zone of Lima, calling on each sector to elect a delegate responsible for clean drinking water, for electricity, a delegate for sanitation, one for education, and so on. He called on these delegates to form a body to oversee these problems so that it is not only the mayor and the district council members who are looking into them.

The mayor of Cuzco has called for the formation of an ongoing organization that could serve as a channel through which "people's power" — as it was called in Chile — can develop.

Strengthening the local governments in this way will help build a bulwark against the right's attempts to sabotage and discredit the left-controlled municipalities. It will also help prepare against the possibility of a coup.

*Q. What other kinds of things do you think should be done to prepare to resist a coup?*

A. The results of the November 13 elections showed the right wing that it can no longer place its confidence in People's Action (AP) or in the Christian People's Party (PPC), because they are now discredited among the masses.<sup>5</sup> Although they will continue to use the AP and PPC, if they hope to hold back the left they will have to play their APRA card.<sup>6</sup>

If they can convince the masses to vote for

5. The AP is the party of Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry; it rules with the support of the PPC, a rightist party. In the municipal elections, the AP came in last with 10 percent and the PPC received 23 percent of the vote.

6. The APRA is a bourgeois-nationalist party that has long had wide support among the Peruvian masses. On occasion it has won elections but has always been blocked from taking office by military coups. In the 1960s and 1970s the APRA was outspokenly anticommunist, but in recent years its leadership has sought to give the party a "social democratic" image and has made overtures to the left.



APRA, this will solve the bourgeoisie's problem. But if the masses don't vote for APRA, there is a coup waiting in the wings.

We have to use this period to strengthen ourselves against a possible coup. One of the things we can use is the Peruvian constitution and other laws. The Peruvian constitution contains a clause on the right of insurgency against illegitimate authority. We feel this right exists even before a coup takes place. The right of insurgency does not mean the right of Pinochet's victims to rise from their graves. It means we have the right to *prevent* the development of something that goes against constitutional authority, such as preparations for a coup d'état.

Just as the right to vote is not simply the right to deposit your ballot but involves the right to prepare oneself and make a considered choice, so too the right of insurgency also involves the right to *prevent* a coup from taking place.

No government in Peru elected by the people has finished its term of office since 1945. So we have the full right to prepare for the eventuality of another coup attempt. We believe the cornerstone of this preparation must be the unification of the mass movement into a single workers federation and a single peasant federation. We have the example of the Bolivian Workers Federation [COB], which has blocked a series of coups and has thrown out several governments that have arisen from coups. Unification of the workers and peasants movement is one of the steps that must be taken here.

We must also, as I said, convert the left-controlled municipal governments into vehicles for the installation of people's power of the Chilean type, so that such people's power bodies can resist a coup.

We also have to begin propagandizing among the ranks of the armed forces — something that is completely protected by the constitution. We should explain to the soldiers and non-commissioned officers that their principal obligation is to the Peruvian people, that their principal loyalty must be to the Peruvian people, and that insubordination against civilian authority is a crime punishable under the constitution.

Therefore the soldiers have no obligation to comply with an illegal order, an anticonstitutional order, such as an order to carry out a coup.

There will be some who begin foaming at the mouth, saying that we are calling for insurrection. But we can point to the bourgeoisie Peruvian constitution.

We are entering a critical period in the class struggle today. The sooner the left groups unite and the more they overcome their sectarianism, the better will be our chances. □

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## Brazil

# Huge rallies for direct election

### *Opposition calls for dismantling electoral college*

**By Will Reissner**

Brazil's military dictatorship, which has been in power since 1964, is reaching the end of its rope. Faced with a mounting economic and political crisis, the ruling generals have agreed to turn the presidency over to a civilian in 1985.

But the military insists that this transition to civilian rule take place within extremely narrow limits. Rather than allow a popular vote on the next president, the military intends to maintain a rigged electoral-college system that has always guaranteed the installation of the generals' handpicked candidates.

This plan, however, has generated a storm of opposition. With public opinion polls indicating that more than 80 percent of the voters want a direct presidential election (the last one took place in 1960), opposition parties have been mounting rallies on an almost daily basis throughout Brazil in recent weeks to demand the dismantling of the electoral college, which is dominated by the pro-military Democratic Social Party (PDS).

The rallies reached their highest point in the city of São Paulo, where more than 300,000 people gathered in the center of town on January 25. The throng was addressed by the governors of Brazil's three most populous states — São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro — which account for more than 40 percent of the country's population.

The rally was also addressed by the popular trade-union leader Luís Inácio da Silva, generally known as "Lula." A leader of the metalworkers union in São Paulo's industrial belt and head of the Workers Party (PT), Lula stressed that the military rulers must be punished for their misdeeds.

"We do not want vengeance for its own sake," Lula told the rally, "but we do want justice. Those who have killed and stolen will have to pay for their crimes."

He added that the pro-military PDS "knows that only through indirect elections will it be possible to maintain the process of corruption."

Lula also stressed that the rallies must be concerned with more than the right to vote. "We need," he emphasized, "to change this arbitrary regime that has been implanted in the country. . . . Those in power will never hand it over lightly and we must be prepared to seize it."

In Olinda, in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, an estimated 60,000 people turned out to demand direct elections. In Curitiba, in the state of Parana in the south, the crowd was more than 50,000 strong.

The campaign for direct election faces an April 15 deadline. By that date congress must

vote on a proposal to amend the constitution to change the electoral system. Although the PDS, which won a disproportionate number of seats in congress under the present electoral rules, could easily block any constitutional change, the opposition parties hope the groundswell of public pressure will force some PDS members to break with their party on this question in order to save their future political careers.

The military regime and its backers, however, are stepping up their pressures against direct election. They fear that a victory by a non-PDS candidate for president would result in their being called to account for their misrule over the past two decades. That is what is happening now in neighboring Argentina since the election of Raúl Alfonsín as president on Oct. 30, 1983.

The military will have to answer not only for the political repression, but also for the shambles of the Brazilian economy.

Final economic indicators for 1983 reveal the worst performance since at least 1908. The foreign debt has grown to more than \$103 billion (some sources put the figure as high as \$113 billion). Prices rose 211 percent during 1983.

The gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by at least 3.9 percent according to government figures, and by as much as 5 percent according to the National Confederation of Industry (CNI). The per capita GDP dropped even more: 6.3 percent according to the government, and 8 percent according to the CNI.

This was the third consecutive year in which output slumped. Industrial production has now dropped to 1977 levels. Agricultural production for the domestic market has also plummeted, with the production of rice down 20 percent and beans down 45 percent. These two products are the main staples of the Brazilian diet.

All this adds up to growing destitution and desperation among Brazil's workers and farmers. In recent months there have been numerous instances of crowds breaking into supermarkets to get food for their families. □

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# 'Maurice Bishop Speaks'

*The best record of the Grenada revolution*

By Steve Craine

For four and a half years the Grenadian workers and farmers government, led by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, inspired millions throughout the world. Its opponents, however, from former dictator Eric Gairy to the Reagan administration in Washington, did their best to discredit and undermine the revolution and confuse its supporters.

The best source for the truth about what the revolution achieved and the course it was on are the statements of its most prominent leader, Bishop, who was murdered on Oct. 19, 1983.

*Maurice Bishop Speaks, the Grenada Revolution 1979-83*, published in December 1983 by Pathfinder Press, brings together Bishop's ideas in the most complete form available. It is a timely book and also one that will continue to be valuable for years to come.

In 27 speeches and interviews, the specific challenges and accomplishments are well

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*Maurice Bishop Speaks, the Grenada Revolution 1979-83*. Edited by Bruce Marcus and Michael Taber. Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10014. 400 pp. \$6.95.

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documented. Equally important is the insight they give to the process of the Grenada revolution.

The murder of the central leadership of the revolution by a secret faction led by Finance Minister Bernard Coard marked the overthrow of the workers and farmers government and paved the way for the U.S. invasion and occupation. The gains of the revolution are now being rapidly reversed in occupied Grenada, giving added urgency to preserving the ideas of the New Jewel Movement for the education of revolutionaries all over the world.

A significant portion of the speeches in *Maurice Bishop Speaks* deals with the many objective obstacles to developing and revolutionizing Grenadian society. These include: the falling prices of export commodities on the capitalist-controlled world market; the credit squeeze placed on all underdeveloped countries, especially those that refuse to toe the line for imperialism; the lack of economic infrastructure such as roads to get goods to market; and the legacy of illiteracy and inadequate health care.

Bishop explained, however, that these hurdles should never deter revolutionary workers and farmers from taking power and charting a course toward socialism as part of the international class struggle.

These speeches vividly recount the achieve-

ments of the revolution in the areas of health care, education, home improvements, agricultural and industrial development, and others. They reveal a shift of priorities toward the needs of the people: subsidies for staple foods; assistance to farmers for fertilizers and seed; and loans to workers for home repairs.

The revolution, Bishop explained, was interested in extending rights, not taking them away.

The very first decree of the People's Revolutionary Government was to outlaw sexual victimization of women. Bishop explained, on the first anniversary of the revolution, that "among women over 70 percent were unemployed, and those few who did eventually manage to get a job, many of them in return had to sell their bodies before they could get the job. And with the ending once and for all in our country of the sexual exploitation and victimization of our women, we say a real democratic basis for the participation of our women has been laid."

Participation by all the people in the revolution was repeatedly cited by Bishop as "the single most important achievement."

"Our national budget will be debated and shaped not by a handful of men sitting in an exclusive 'parliament,' but by our organized people in their thousands, in their community groups, their zonal councils, their parish councils. . . . In Grenada the people do not only listen passively to their leaders, they talk back."

Bishop contrasted Grenadian revolutionary democracy to the phony democracy imperialism demanded the country adopt: "There are those . . . who believe that you cannot have a democracy unless there is a situation where every five years . . . a people are allowed to put an 'X' next to some candidate's name . . . and for the remainder of the time, four years and 364 days, they return to being nonpeople with-

## Great interest shown in Bishop book

A high level of interest in *Maurice Bishop Speaks* is being shown by supporters of the Grenada revolution around the world.

In Grenada itself, 125 copies are being distributed by the Maurice Bishop and Martyrs of Oct. 19, 1983 Foundation. Mohammed Oliver, a reporter for the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant*, while en route to Grenada on a recent trip, took orders from several bookstores in Barbados.

In Windsor, Canada, 300 people from Canada and the United States attended a February 16 meeting to hear Don Rojas, Bishop's former press secretary. The meeting raised \$400 for the Foundation. Six copies of *Maurice Bishop Speaks* and 20 copies of the

out any right to say anything to their government, without any right to be involved in running their country."

In a 1981 speech to a conference on development in small island states, Bishop explained, "the real problem is not the question of smallness per se, but the real problem is the question of imperialism. . . . We come up against an international system that is organized and geared towards ensuring the continuing exploitation, domination, and rape of our economies, our countries, and our peoples. That, to us, is the fundamental problem."

In many of the speeches in this book, Bishop warned about the threat of U.S. invasion. He explained why the imperialists needed to crush the example of Grenada and how they were preparing politically and militarily to do it.

But the New Jewel Movement was organizing politically both at home and abroad to counter such moves. Bishop was optimistic about the eventual outcome of the struggle against imperialism. "We can also fight back effectively," he told the 1981 conference on development, "if, instead of having to face Grenada, a small country of just over 100,000 people, the imperialists are made to face a force 3 billion strong."

*Maurice Bishop Speaks* contains, in addition to the speeches themselves, two sections that help explain what happened since the overthrow of the revolution. An appendix reproduces three major statements from the Cuban Communist Party and Fidel Castro concerning the counterrevolution and invasion in Grenada, including Castro's speech of November 14. They document the true relationship between Cuban and Grenadian revolutionaries.

Also, Steve Clark's introduction to the book brings together, from a number of sources, a clear picture of the events of October 1983 and the political lessons to be drawn from them.

While the workers and farmers of Grenada still held power there, Maurice Bishop often called on people from around the world to "come to Grenada and see the revolution for yourselves." Now that this is no longer possible, the best way to see the revolution is through Bishop's speeches. □

pamphlet "Maurice Bishop Speaks to U.S. Workers" were sold.

Socialists in the United States have found an excellent response to the book whenever they take it to meetings on Grenada. At a February 26 meeting in Brooklyn, New York, for Kenrick Radix, former attorney general in the People's Revolutionary Government, over 20 copies — all that were available — were sold.

Pathfinder Press distributors in several countries have placed substantial orders for the book, reflecting plans of socialists to get it into the hands of the many people who are seriously considering the lessons of the Grenada revolution. Already, 375 books have been shipped to Great Britain, 275 to Canada, and 50 each to Australia and New Zealand. □



# Reagan's regional intervention

*Guns, 'advisers' for proimperialist regimes*

By Ernest Harsch

Largely hidden from public view, the U.S. invasion of Grenada is gradually being extended to other islands in the Caribbean.

U.S. military personnel are fanning out, particularly to the smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean, with the aim of deepening Washington's military intervention in the region as a whole. Their purpose is to help build up new local military and police forces to strengthen the various proimperialist regimes in power in those countries and to further coordinate the U.S.-Caribbean preparations to crush any struggles that threaten imperialism's domination over the region.

While stopping in Grenada on February 7, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz declared, "It is clear that it is difficult for small islands to form their own security forces, and it makes sense, what you can't do alone, you can do on a collective basis."

A series of special programs has been directed at bolstering the Caribbean regimes that took part in the Grenada invasion. Since then, Washington has spent \$15 million on arms and training for the armed forces of those regimes.

According to a report in the February 19 *New York Times* eight-man teams of the U.S. Army Special Forces are now in Jamaica, St. Christopher-Nevis, Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. They are training a total of 250 troops, who are slated to replace the Caribbean troops currently in Grenada. Others are receiving training in Grenada itself

and will go through new courses when they return to their countries.

In addition, separate groups of U.S. Coast Guard officers are scheduled to go to St. Lucia, Antigua, and Dominica to begin the training of crews for three patrol vessels to be provided by Washington.

As a political cover for their closer military ties with Washington, most of these governments have initiated major propaganda campaigns aimed at red-baiting domestic opposition groups. In doing so, they have taken advantage of the overthrow of Grenada's People's Revolutionary Government by a clique led by Finance Minister Bernard Coard, an event that opened the way for the U.S. invasion of Grenada. Groups in other Caribbean islands that supported the Grenada revolution are now branded "Coardites" in an effort to discredit them.

What these governments — and Washington — really fear is the example of the Grenada revolution and the workers and farmers government led by murdered Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. Although that government has now been overthrown, its political legacy remains.

In fact, Washington's moves to strengthen the military capabilities of its allies in the region began within months of the March 1979 insurrection that brought Bishop's New Jewel Movement to power in Grenada. That same year, the first proposals were raised for the establishment of a joint military force composed

of troops from various Caribbean islands near Grenada.

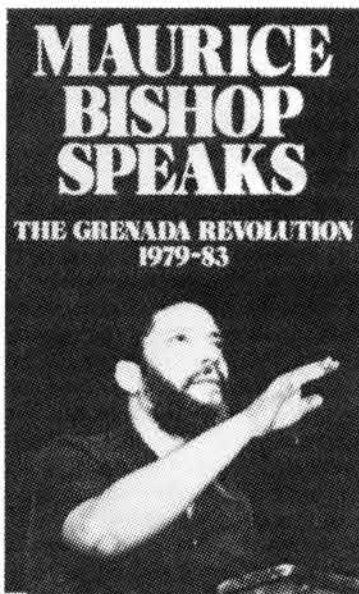
Special police from Antigua, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Dominica were given counterinsurgency and other training by U.S. forces in Puerto Rico and Panama.

The Barbados government of Prime Minister Tom Adams — which played a key role in the subsequent invasion of Grenada — received special attention from Washington. In 1981, when a section of the army in Dominica attempted a coup, Washington financed an airlift of Barbadian troops to Dominica to help put down the revolt.

Later, opposition figures in Barbados charged that the Barbados Defence Force was being trained by CIA personnel. Adams' only response was, "So far as I know, the Central Intelligence Agency is not a military organisation." He at the same time revealed that troops from Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Bermuda, and the U.S.-ruled Virgin Islands were being given "regular" military training in Puerto Rico.

In October 1982, the governments of Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia, Antigua, and St. Vincent signed a secret military cooperation pact, as part of Washington's preparations for the invasion of Grenada.

In the wake of the Grenada invasion, Washington's latest arms shipments and training programs have aroused alarm and opposition by left groups in the countries involved. For example, the Dec. 16, 1983 issue of *Justice*, the newspaper of the United People's Movement of St. Vincent, declared, "The arrival of the arms represents another stage in the militarisation of the Caribbean by the Reagan administration and its puppets in the region. . . . The Reagan administration has shown that its solutions to the problems of the Caribbean people are military ones, not economic or social ones." □



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## International support needed

*Mexican-born socialist fights deportation threat*

By Holbrook Mahn

The Political Rights Defense Fund (PRDF) has issued an appeal for international support in an emergency campaign to stop the U.S. government's attempt to deport Héctor Marroquín, a Mexican-born socialist. Marroquín's six-year fight for political asylum is in its final and most critical stage.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule any day on his petition for asylum. Should the court rule against Marroquín, he will have 48 hours to leave the United States voluntarily or face deportation to Mexico.

Marroquín fled to the United States in 1974 after being framed up by the Mexican government because of his political activity. Marroquín and three other student activists, in a trumped-up charge, were accused of murdering a school librarian. Two of the accused were later murdered in cold blood by the police, and the third was kidnapped and "disappeared."

Soon after arriving in the United States, Marroquín became politically active again, helping to organize a local of the Teamsters Union at the plant where he worked in Texas. Later he joined and became a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance. He has been an outspoken opponent of U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean and of the government's attacks on working people. This is why the U.S. government is denying him political asylum.

The prosecuting attorney in Marroquín's in-

itial deportation hearing put this in the bluntest terms. "Marroquín," he said, "has admitted from his own mouth that he is a Marxist. The U.S. does not grant asylum to Marxists."

As the U.S. government escalates the war in Central America and the Caribbean it is creating thousands of new refugees, many of whom are seeking jobs or asylum in the United States. Simultaneously it is attacking democratic rights in the United States, especially those of the foreign-born. Its aim is to divide U.S. workers and to make it as difficult as possible to organize the growing numbers who are opposed to U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

One way the government uses immigration policy to try to prevent American workers from hearing the truth about U.S. foreign policy is to bar speakers from entering the country. In the last year alone, Nicaraguan government official Tomás Borge, Rubén Zamora of the FDR-FMLN in El Salvador, and Irish leader Bernadette Devlin McAliskey have all been denied visas by the U.S. State Department.

By explaining Marroquín's case as a part of the fight against U.S. aggression in Central America and the fight against Reagan's austerity drive, his supporters have won significant assistance from the labor movement, Black and Latino organizations, and leaders of the women's movement. Leaders and members of unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), which include large numbers of immigrant workers, have been particularly supportive of Marroquín's fight.

A victory for Marroquín would set a precedent for thousands of refugees fleeing from the U.S.-directed war in Central America and from brutal dictatorships backed by Washington.

Marroquín has already won significant support in Canada. Telegrams demanding political asylum for Marroquín have been sent to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) by International Affairs Director John Harker on behalf of the 2 million-member Canadian Labour Congress; Cliff Pilkey, president of the 700,000-member Ontario Federation of Labour; Robert White, Canadian director of the United Auto Workers; Ed Broadbent, leader of the New Democratic Party; and a number of members of parliament.

PRDF is asking supporters to send telegrams or letters demanding Marroquín be granted political asylum and that the INS approve his application for permanent residence. Marroquín is married to a U.S. citizen, and according to U.S. law this is a basis for obtaining status as a permanent resident.



Charles Ostrofsky/Militant

HECTOR MARROQUIN

The messages should be sent to Alan Nelson, Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C. 20536. Copies should be sent to: Political Rights Defense Fund, Box 649, New York, N.Y. 10003. Brochures in English, Spanish, and French on Marroquín's case are available from PRDF. □

### 14 million foreign-born in United States

The 1980 U.S. Census reported 14,080,000 foreign-born people in the United States. This does not include tens of thousands of undocumented persons.

In 1910, during the heyday of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, according to the March issue of *Harpers*, a monthly magazine published in New York, the comparable figure was 13,515,886. The immigrants of 1910 arrived from 45 countries, the largest group from Italy. By 1983, there were immigrants from 183 countries, the largest group from Mexico.

The United States allowed 531,000 immigrants into the country in 1983, granted political asylum (in fiscal year 1982) to 2,479 refugees, refused political asylum to 7,319, and arrested 970,246 for crossing the borders without documents.

"The latest available reckoning," *Harpers* states, "indicates there are 121 self-proclaimed 'ancestry groups' living in the United States and speaking 385 languages and dialects." □

### Benn returns to Parliament

Tony Benn, a leader of the British Labour Party's left wing, regained a seat in Parliament in a special election March 1. He was elected to represent Chesterfield, a mining town in north-central England. In last June's nationwide election Benn lost his seat from Bristol, which he had held for 30 years.

The Chesterfield election was held as a result of the retirement of Labour Party Member of Parliament Eric Varley.

Benn won 24,633 votes, 46 percent of the ballots cast. The candidate of the Social Democratic-Liberal Alliance was second with 18,369 votes, or 35 percent. The candidate from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party placed third with 8,028 votes, or 15 percent. The remaining 4 percent of the votes were split among 14 candidates.

The general committee of the Labour Party in Chesterfield chose Benn to be its candidate in mid-January. This decision was made over the opposition of Neil Kinnock, the new national leader of the Labour Party, who is attempting to steer the party in a more moderate direction. Benn won the nomination with the backing of the miners' union, one of the most radical in Britain. □