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Nicaragua Mobilizes Against U.S. Military Provocations



Barricada

Sandinista government places troops, civilian population on state of alert in response to escalating U.S. threats.

Burkina

**Mass Upheaval Targets
Imperialist Domination**

India

**Gandhi's Death
Bares Instability**

Reagan victory no mandate for Central America war

By Doug Jenness

President Reagan has declared that his landslide victory over Democratic contender Walter Mondale on November 6 means that he has been given a mandate to pursue his policies at home and abroad. But no matter how vigorously he argues this notion, the fact is that the majority of the U.S. workers who voted for him did not give him a mandate to invade Central America.

Working people in the United States do not want another Vietnam-type war in which U.S. men are drafted and sent off to Central America only to be returned in caskets. That's not why Reagan carried 59 percent of the vote and 49 of the 50 states.

In fact, on the issue of the war in Central America and the Caribbean, there was no clear line distinguishing the positions of Reagan from former vice-president Mondale.

Mondale demonstratively endorsed Reagan's invasion and occupation of Grenada and the imposition of a U.S.-dominated government there.

Expressing the view of all leading Democratic politicians, Mondale supports Reagan's threat to carry out a military strike against Nicaragua if it exercises its sovereign right to acquire Soviet-built MIG jet fighters to defend itself against the superior air power of Washington and its allies.

If the Nicaraguan government should obtain such aircraft, Mondale declared during the election campaign, "it would be intolerable. . . . What it means [is] that the Soviets have to get out of there and it means we have to take such steps as to bring about that result."

While Washington's latest threats against the Nicaraguan revolution coincided with the end of the U.S. elections, they are not a result of Reagan's landslide victory.

The tiny handful of capitalist ruling families in the United States make and carry out their decisions on such questions with little if any regard for which Democrat or Republican is elected.

Big-business profiteers in the United States cannot permit the revolutionary overturn of capitalist rule in Nicaragua and its example to working people in the rest of Central America to go unchallenged. They do not want another Cuba, and are waging an aggressive struggle to crush the Nicaraguan revolution.

They first attempted to accomplish this objective by organizing, arming, and financing counterrevolutionaries to enter Nicaragua, establish a stable beachhead, and raise the flag of a "provisional government" that Washington could rush to aid. But this scheme has been set back by the effective and determined action of

the Nicaraguan defense forces.

It was this defeat on the battlefields in Nicaragua, not what happened November 6 in the voting booths in the United States, that determined the next steps the U.S. rulers would take in their war against Nicaragua's working people.

The capitalist rulers are now laying the groundwork for using direct U.S. military forces, including air and naval attacks and combat troops, to reinforce the work of the mercenary forces.

They are exerting more and more political, economic, and military pressure on the Nicaraguan government, trying to wear it down as they probe for openings to use U.S. forces. At the same time Washington, in order to win support at home for an invasion, is attempting to convince U.S. working people that there is a Soviet arms build-up in Nicaragua.

A direct U.S. invasion of Nicaragua, however, will not be as easy as it was in Grenada, where Washington was able to take advantage of the overturn of the workers and farmers government headed by Maurice Bishop. The Nicaraguan workers and farmers government has armed the working people and is organizing them to defend their revolution and the social gains it has brought.

As Washington learned in Vietnam, the use of U.S. combat forces does not necessarily guarantee victory. And when U.S. casualties begin to mount, massive opposition will emerge in the United States. Reagan will learn then that his "mandate" does not run very deep.

Why Reagan won

The big victory registered by Reagan meant that he won not only a large part of the middle-class vote, but a significant section of the working class. Most workers in the United States do not yet approach political issues from a class standpoint, but rather from the narrower vantage point of how things are going in their plant or industry. Many workers, especially those who are relatively better off than other workers, perceive that they have personally done all right during the Reagan years. This, along with the fact that the election coincided with an economic upturn, led many workers to vote for Reagan and to his landslide victory.

Although Reagan's policies were not responsible for the upturn he took credit for it. The centerpiece of his entire election campaign was built around this theme.

One sector of the working class that did not vote for Reagan in significant numbers was Blacks. He received less than 10 percent of the

Black vote. This reflected rejection of the openly reactionary character of the Reagan campaign's propaganda, which attracted to the Republican banner many of the most openly chauvinist, racist, and anti-Semitic groups in the country. Reagan also has a well-known record of waging attacks on affirmative action and school desegregation.

The rejection of the reactionary stench surrounding Reagan's campaign was also shown by the relatively low vote the president received from Jewish voters. While anti-Semitism was not an open theme of the Reagan campaign, the anti-Semitic views of "Moral Majority" leader Jerry Falwell and others of his ilk who supported Reagan are no secret.

Mondale promises tax boost

Mondale had nothing attractive to offer working people who believed they were doing all right under the Reagan administration.

To the contrary, Mondale was marked by his promise to raise taxes in order to decrease the federal budget deficit. Mondale's tax increase proposal was his main campaign issue. He claimed that by being "honest" about austerity measures that are needed he would win respect and votes.

Most workers had no trouble believing that "honest Mondale" would raise taxes; but they are not interested in having money taken out of their pockets to bail out the government's deficit. They are more concerned about the deficits in their own family budgets.

Mondale's highly-publicized austerity proposals represented a dramatic turnaround from the promises of increasing federal programs through deficit financing that have been the traditional stance of Democratic politicians since the New Deal inaugurated by President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s.

During the 1930s, when the industrial union movement burst onto the scene, the Democratic Party took credit for progressive measures won through struggle by millions of workers. It adopted the image of a party with a "social vision" in order to derail this new social movement from an independent political course and to channel it into the capitalist party framework. The Democrats were able to continue this image during the massive civil rights movement that led to an end to legalized racial segregation in the United States in the mid-1960s.

Today no similar social movement exists, and Mondale's occasional efforts to lift the old banner of Roosevelt's "New Deal" and Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" rang hollow. In fact, it was muffled by the main themes of his campaign, which sounded more like what the Republicans often advocate.

Bipartisan domestic policy

This reflects the growing *bipartisan* character of domestic social and economic policies — a bipartisanship that has been the hallmark of U.S. foreign policy since World War II.

This bipartisanship results from the needs of the capitalist ruling families. Faced with stiff-

ening competition from imperialists rivals, they are trying to squeeze more profits out of working people. They have launched a major offensive to drive down wages, intensify speedup on the job, relax safety standards, and weaken and bust unions.

In order to maintain the level of profits they want, the employers must qualitatively alter — in their favor — the relationship of forces between them and the workers. Both the capitalist parties are instruments for driving through this attack. The ruling-class offensive will continue in President Reagan's second term with the aid of Democrats in Congress, just as it would have under a Mondale administration.

AFL-CIO officials, civil rights figures, women's liberation leaders, and virtually all left organizations asserted that working people could impose *their* will on the issues of peace, jobs, equal rights, etc., by voting. And most particularly by voting Reagan out of office and placing Mondale in the White House.

But working people have never made advances through voting. Street demonstrations, like those of the civil rights and antiwar movements, powerful strikes like those that built the unions in the 1930s — these are the methods that have brought working people social progress regardless of which Democrat or Republican is in office.

Urging workers to count on elections and to continue operating in the framework of the two capitalist parties is a dead end. This was most clearly illustrated by the debacle of Rev. Jesse Jackson's "Rainbow Coalition." Jackson claimed that his Democratic Party election campaign would give Blacks some political clout. But the Democratic Party convention in July rejected all the major proposals of Jackson's supporters. Following the convention, the "Rainbow Coalition" faded into the Mondale campaign.

Independent political course

The Socialist Workers Party campaign stood alone in putting forward the idea that working people need to chart their own independent course. The SWP candidates explained that massive struggles will emerge as a result of the hammer blows the capitalist rulers are dealing to working people at home and the wars of aggression they are preparing abroad.

Out of these battles, workers will forge their own mass independent political party — a labor party based on the unions. Such a party will advance the interests of working people by helping to lead the struggles of the exploited and oppressed on all fronts.

Blacks, whose militancy and radicalization is greater than that of the working class as a whole, may take the step of forming an independent Black party before a labor party is formed. Such a development would give a tremendous boost to the formation of a labor party.

The SWP's presidential ticket and 56 state and congressional candidates reached hun-

dreds of thousands of workers and farmers with these proposals. On the ballot in 23 states and Washington, D.C., they campaigned in mines, factories, fields, high schools, and college campuses throughout the country. They won new adherents to revolutionary socialism and pointed the way forward for the working class and its allies as the attacks by the government and the employers bear down ever harder on them.

They utilized the opportunities afforded by the election campaign to tell the truth about the

Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenada revolutions and the social gains achieved by working people there. They explained that these advances were made at the expense of the profit-hungry corporations, and that is why Washington invaded Grenada and why both the Democrats and Republicans support the U.S. war against Nicaragua. The SWP candidates urged solidarity with working people in Central America and the Caribbean and called for the total withdrawal of all U.S. military forces and aid from the area. □

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U.S. steps up military provocations

Sandinista government organizes massive defense efforts

By José G. Pérez

MANAGUA — Nicaragua's revolutionary government is calling on this country's people, beginning with the youth, to defend the gains of the revolution and Nicaragua's existence as a sovereign nation, in the face of growing U.S. military provocations.

In a widely publicized speech on November 8, Commander of the Revolution Jaime Wheelock announced that "in the following days every young person and the entire people of Managua will receive a rifle to defend the homeland."

At the beginning of October, government coordinator Daniel Ortega warned, in a speech at the United Nations, that Nicaragua was facing a major escalation of the U.S. war of aggression in the weeks leading up to and following the Nicaraguan and U.S. elections, which were held November 4 and 6 respectively.

The first phase of this escalation was to be a major offensive by CIA-backed counter-revolutionaries (*contras*) based in Honduras and Costa Rica. Thousands of these mercenaries crossed the border into Nicaragua with the aim of attacking Estelí, an important city in northern Nicaragua, and disrupting the balloting. However, the Sandinista People's Army and militias in the north frustrated these plans. Substantial contra units of hundreds of troops were successfully defeated and broken up, to such a degree that the *contras* announced a "truce" for the November 4 election, in what Sandinista commanders called proof of the mercenaries' "military impotence."

Explaining these events to reporters November 5, government coordinator Daniel Ortega said that the U.S. government's contra war "has failed on the military terrain, since the counterrevolution has not achieved any substantial advances. The military instrument of the counterrevolution is tending to disintegrate."

In recent months there have been growing numbers of desertions from the ranks of the counterrevolution, as well as growing frictions and clashes between various mercenary leaders.

Sandinista forces score gains

At the same time Sandinista forces have scored some gains. On November 5, an entire column of 76 counterrevolutionaries was wiped out, the first time a unit of such size has been annihilated in a single engagement. Furthermore, the Reagan administration and the *contras* were unable to sabotage the elections on November 4. Three-fourths of Nicaragua's voters cast ballots, and the FSLN won more than two-thirds of the vote.

In addition, the Reagan administration has paid a political price for its so-called covert war against Nicaragua. In his November 5 news conference, Ortega pointed to signs of this, such as the scandal over the CIA terrorist manual and the World Court injunction against U.S. mining of Nicaragua's harbors.

The U.S. government began escalating its direct military threats and provocations against Nicaragua before the U.S. elections. On October 31, a U.S. Air Force SR-71 spy plane flew across the breadth of Nicaragua, causing justified alarm in much of the country due to the unfamiliar and powerful sonic boom caused by the supersonic aircraft.

In a November 1 speech to 300,000 people at the Sandinista National Liberation Front's (FSLN) wind-up campaign rally in Managua, Commander Daniel Ortega devoted much of his remarks to the war, warning that "we must prepare to confront a direct intervention by the United States." Ortega appealed to the people "to hurry, in the full sense of the word, to prepare the defense of Managua, to prepare the defense of all our cities."

The situation turned more ominous November 6, when news of Reagan's reelection was accompanied by Pentagon-leaked reports of the supposed imminent arrival of modern MIG airplanes in Nicaragua.

This was followed on November 7 by a major military provocation, when a U.S. warship invaded Nicaraguan territorial waters in pursuit of a Soviet freighter preparing to enter the port of Corinto. The U.S. frigate also carried out menacing maneuvers against a Nicaraguan coast guard vessel that had come to guide the Soviet freighter into the harbor channel.

In the following days U.S. SR-71 spy planes continued to fly across the breadth of Nicaragua, announcing their presence with loud booms. At the same time, there have been reports that the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions of the U.S. Army have been mobilized; that two naval task forces with a combined total of 40 ships will be staging maneuvers near Nicaragua's Atlantic and Pacific coasts; and that other U.S. warships are constantly patrolling up and down both coasts of Nicaragua.

Emergency appeal issued

In the predawn hours of November 7, even before the string of imperialist provocations of the following days, the Nicaraguan government issued an emergency appeal saying that everything indicated that a direct military attack "has already been put in motion by the U.S. government against Nicaragua."

"The government of Nicaragua," the state-

ment said, "places the people of Nicaragua on alert to be ready to follow the call which the Government of the Republic will issue to carry out the necessary mobilization for the defense of the homeland, given the extreme gravity of these events."

The U.S. military provocations have been accompanied by an unceasing propaganda barrage by the Reagan administration about the supposed presence or imminent arrival of MIG-21 combat planes in Nicaragua. In its November 7 statement, the Nicaraguan government denied such reports "categorically," pointing out that they are designed to "prepare the climate for direct military attacks against our territory and the conditions for an aggression with the participation of U.S. troops."

At the same time that they deny that they already have such planes, however, Nicaragua's leaders have insisted for a long time that they need fast combat planes for self-defense. CIA mercenaries using U.S. supply planes have repeatedly attacked Nicaraguan towns — most recently on October 31, using the first flight of the SR-71 as cover — and contra forces within Nicaragua are often resupplied by air drops.

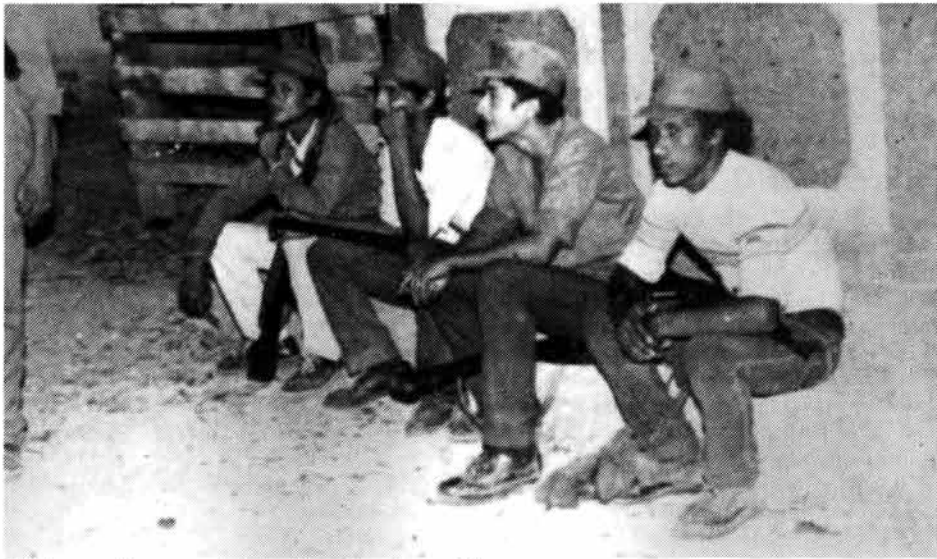
Nicaraguan pilots and crews are being trained to fly modern combat craft, and a new military airport under construction near Managua is expected to be ready next year.

In his November 8 speech, Jaime Wheelock explained that "the Reagan administration does not want there to be sovereignty or national dignity, either in Nicaragua or in any other country of the world." He reiterated that "we can never renounce any armament that would be effective for the defense of the homeland." Wheelock announced that thousands of students who had volunteered to pick the coffee crop must instead stay in Managua to prepare the capital's defenses.

The decision to reorient the work of the Student Production Battalions to defense was not made lightly, Wheelock explained. He said that the FSLN National Directorate and the governing junta had been in almost continuous session for several days "to respond to the dangers that hang over our homeland."

Originally, the 20,000 members of the Managua Student Production Battalions had volunteered to harvest the coffee crop, including in dangerous war zones in the north of the country where CIA terrorist bands have been active.

Wheelock appealed especially to residents of coffee producing zones, to city dwellers not qualified for military duty, and to government office employees — especially technicians and administrators — to take the place of the students.



Militia members on duty in San Francisco, Nicaragua.

In addition to moving to prepare its defenses, Nicaragua has also moved on the diplomatic front to alert world public opinion and try to slow down the U.S. war drive. At a November 8 news conference immediately following Wheelock's speech, to which foreign ambassadors were also invited, Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto announced that Nicaragua had called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

In his comments to reporters, D'Escoto emphasized that Nicaragua considered the situation to be "extremely grave," and denounced the U.S. government as "an international outlaw," repeating the phrase twice, once in Spanish and once in English. He said Nicaragua believed the efforts of the Contadora group to negotiate a peaceful solution to the Central American crisis had been "mortally wounded" when the Reagan administration torpedoed the plan drafted by Contadora nations after extensive negotiations.

He pointed out that the Reagan administration had refused to obey a World Court decision demanding an end to the secret war against Nicaragua and that bilateral U.S.-Nicaraguan talks being held in Manzanillo, Mexico, are stalemated. Thus the Nicaraguan government has no recourse but "the mobilization and arming of our people."

Working people rally to defense

Within Nicaragua, working people responded to appeals by their government.

Among the first organizations to respond was the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), which organizes industrial workers. In a November 7 statement, the CST alerted workers "to be ready to respond to the call of our National Directorate and Government Junta of National Reconstruction to the military mobilization of the defense of the homeland against the threats of a direct aggression by Yankee marines."

The statement called for "all resources to be used for the defense of the revolution" and

urged workers in all factories to update civil defense plans, revitalize workplace militias, and strengthen revolutionary vigilance.

The statement concluded with the slogans "Everything for defense! Everything for victory!"

This proclamation was plastered on factory walls of Managua's industrial sectors on November 9, following Wheelock's speech.

"It is a patriotic duty to respond to the call of the National Directorate of the FSLN to defend the conquests of the working class," said José Hernández Dávila of the MAYCO factory. Jaime Baltodano, of the same factory, said Managua "is the heart of our economic conquests, and that is why we have to defend it as such."

"Managua is the soul and nerve of Nicaragua," said Rodolfo Cuhendies, who heads the Sandinista People's Militia at the SANDAK shoe factory.

"We are going to defend our jobs and our lives, and we will do it by any means necessary," said Marvin Moreno, another SANDAK worker.

The block-by-block Sandinista Defense Committees (CDSs) have begun refurbishing and digging new air-raid shelters, as well as making plans for redoubling vigilance around strategic points, such as factories, bridges, and health-care centers.

The Nicaraguan women's organization, AMNLAE, held an emergency leadership meeting on the morning of November 9, at which they made plans to incorporate women as fully as possible in the country's defense. "We women are ready to defend our conquests," said AMNLAE leader Glenda Monterrey, adding that they were appealing to the revolutionary government to give a rifle to every woman who wants one.

Meanwhile the top leaders of the high school students federation, university students federation, and the July 19 Sandinista Youth, who together make up the general staff of the Student Production Battalions, announced

November 9 that all members of the battalions and all students who wanted to join them should meet at their schools on the morning of November 10 to discuss their tasks in the defense of the capital.

In a special appeal to North American youth, Carlos Carrión, general secretary of the Sandinista Youth, asked them not to be taken in by "the macabre deception" prepared by the Reagan administration.

"Let the youth of the United States listen to our appeal. There is no reason why we should be taken to a war between us," Carrión said.

"North American youth do not represent a danger to us," Carrión added, "but if they come with their rifles pointed . . . we will give no quarter in the defense of the homeland."

Alma Nubia Baltodano, head of the high school students federation, explained that "in defending the country, students are defending their own revolutionary gains." She said that before the revolution there were 98,000 high school students. Today there are 186,000. The number of teachers has tripled, from 2,000 to 6,000. The education budget has grown six times over.

In Corinto, residents responded to the threat posed by U.S. warships by redoubling their vigilance. Special patrols have been dispatched to the beaches.

Despite the great dangers hanging over the country, the atmosphere among Nicaragua's working people is calm. There is no panic, only a commitment to struggle to the death, if necessary, to defend the gains of the revolution, and confidence that, even against the powerful U.S. armed forces, the Nicaraguan revolution will be victorious. □

Thousands at Bonn rally protest U.S. war in Nicaragua

Thirty thousand people rallied in Bonn, West Germany, November 3 to protest U.S. aggression against Nicaragua and to demand an end to German government aid to dictatorships in Central America.

The rally, sponsored by the West German peace movement, came only two weeks after the same group had organized actions involving 150,000 people against the placement of U.S. missiles in West Germany.

The major rally speakers were the Nicaraguan ambassador to West Germany; Ana Guadalupe Martínez, representing El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front; and German Social Democratic Party leader Willy Brandt.

The call for the action included demands that the U.S. government withdraw all its military forces from Central America, stop its aggression against Nicaragua, and stop the war against the people of El Salvador and Guatemala. It also called on the West German government to honor its promise of development aid for Nicaragua and to end all military and economic aid to the present governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. □

Nicaraguan unions vow to defend revolution

Assembly resolves to give 'everything for the war fronts'

[Leaders of the Nicaraguan unions led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) held the Third National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente in Managua September 8–9. The majority of delegates came from the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), Nicaragua's largest labor federation. More than 600 union leaders and 100 invited guests were present.

[In addition to 345 CST delegates, there were 55 delegates from the Rural Workers Association (ATC), the farm workers union; 80 from the National Union of Employees (UNE), the government workers union; 80 from the Health Workers Federation (FETSALUD); 28 from the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN); and 30 from the Nicaraguan Journalists Union (UPN).

[Guests attended from government ministries, the FSLN, the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG), and the Organization of Professionals (CONAPRO).

[The assembly took up the escalating U.S. war and the severe impact this aggression is having on Nicaragua's economy. During the discussion, a delegate from the farm workers union in the Matagalpa-Jinotega region explained the severity of the war there, noting that women and children are maintaining production on farms while most of the men are engaged in the military. He appealed for unity between workers in the cities and in the countryside: "We're at war in these zones and we're counting on you."

[Delegates focused on the central role the Sandinista labor movement must play in the twin tasks of mobilizing the nation for military defense and increasing production in the plants to strengthen the economy.

[CST leaders agreed that raising productivity is key to ameliorating the economic problems workers face. In an interview in *Barricada*, CST General Secretary Lucío Jiménez explained, "The truth is that it is not realistic to aspire to more than we have now until we succeed in raising production and productivity, although we know that the main thing to blame (for the economic difficulties) is imperialism." Jiménez said that no matter how much wages were increased, shortages and price gouging will continue unless there is more production.

[The assembly also voted to press for rapid completion of the new system of wage scales being implemented by the revolutionary government. This system, which is being applied nationally, is aimed at establishing equal pay scales for all workers performing the same kind of job, by setting uniform wages for each occupation and raising the wages of the lowest-paid workers.

[In the context of Nicaragua's economic difficulties and of the U.S. aggression, the assembly took up the question of use of the strike weapon. It adopted a resolution for resolving all labor disputes without work stoppages. Just a few weeks earlier, in late August, workers at two Managua plants organized by the CST had gone on strike briefly. At the Victoria brewery, the issue was wage increases. At the METASA plant, metal workers struck demanding immediate collection of the bonuses usually paid to employees when they leave the plant for another job. About 700 workers were involved in each strike. National leaders of the CST and government officials held discussions with the strikers and convinced the workers at both plants to return to their jobs while negotiations proceeded on their demands.

[According to CST leader Jiménez, the as-

sembly "opened the possibility of strengthening ourselves ideologically" to confront the military, economic, and political situation facing Nicaraguan working people. "This assembly was the beginning of an offensive throughout the whole length and breadth of the country to make sure we all understand that it is necessary to work more, even if with fewer economic demands than we had before, and in addition, to be ready to confront the invasion."

[The following are two documents from the assembly. The first, the "Base Document of the National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente," was drafted prior to the assembly by the CST national leadership and circulated to union delegates to prepare the discussion. The second contains the preamble and 10 resolutions adopted by the assembly. The translations are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

'Base Document'

I. Introduction

Barely four years after the First Assembly of Trade-Union Federations and Organizations for the Unity of the Workers, which was held in Managua Nov. 15 and 16, 1980, the revolutionary working class of Nicaragua — the foundation and motor-force of the whole process of economic, social, and political transformations in our country — confronts new situations and larger and more serious problems that require of us high levels of consciousness and organization, greater united efforts, and a more active, dynamic, and combative presence of the unions.

In that historic assembly, all the union federations shared a basic concern: to economically revive the country, to achieve traditional levels of production in the shortest possible time, to push forward a powerful development of the productive forces, and to lay the foundations for a truly national economy that serves the toiling majority.

In the five commissions that were created at that assembly, important aspects such as the following were analyzed and discussed in depth, starting from the proposition that "The economy was the main problem of the Revolution" (conclusions).

1. Increase production and productivity.
2. Improve the working conditions and social services and increase wages in line with Nicaragua's economic situation.
3. Maintain strict revolutionary discipline in the work centers.
4. Settle labor conflicts without halting production.

To a great extent these proposals retain their validity, and to some degree the proposals and conclusions of that First Assembly have set the guidelines for our trade-union and labor activity in the four years since then, along with the policies implemented by the Revolutionary Government. In a summary and descriptive analysis we can point to some advances in the road traveled since then.

1. In many places, even having sufficient inputs and parts, we still have not reached the historic levels of production and productivity.

2. From 1981 to the middle of 1983, our working conditions and social services underwent important growth, which is now being pushed backward due to the aggression.

3. Our union forces have not actively closed ranks around labor discipline.

4. Despite our commitment to resolve labor conflicts without halting production, it is true that strikes have persisted, including in centers that are very vital to defense.

II. Principal achievements and difficulties of the revolution

The fundamental achievement of the Revolution is the maintenance and defense of Revolutionary Power.

The policy of agroindustrial development of the country is the basis of the transformations in economic activity, expressed in the Agrarian Reform.

A total of 1.6 million manzanas [1 manzana = 1.73 acres] of land have been turned over to cooperatives and individual producers, benefiting more than 30,000 families. This has re-

duced the latifundist sector, typical of the backward and dependent economy of Latin America, from 41 percent to 11 percent, and led to setting up a cooperative movement with more than 3,000 cooperatives covering 10 percent of the land.

Accompanying the transformation in landholding has been technical assistance, rural credit, and cancellation of peasant debts in the amount of 328 million córdobas [1 córdoba = US\$0.10].

Agroindustrial and infrastructural projects are moving forward and are at various stages of completion:

- The Tipitapa-Malacatoya sugar mill, with advanced technology, which will mean jobs for 5,000 workers when fully completed.
- Chiltepe Project, aimed at increasing cattle production, based on advanced techniques and obtaining purebred cattle.
- The African Palm Project, in Cuckra Hill and El Castillo and exploitation of coconuts and rubber.
- An increase in "Burley" tobacco production and completion of the Sébaco Valley Agro-Industrial Complex.
- Regarding infrastructure and energy development, in addition to finishing the first unit of the Patricio Argüello Geothermal Project, the second unit is moving ahead, as are the Mojolca-Copalar, Asturias, and Larreynaga hydroelectric projects. Some 2,260 kilometers of electrical powerlines have been installed.

- The MASA project, with the construction and expansion of storage depots for basic grains, to facilitate their distribution.

The total investment planned for 1984 reaches the sum of 6.65 billion córdobas, of which 73.9 percent is destined for infrastructure and the productive sector, and the remaining 26.1 percent for the social sector.

Regarding the volume of agricultural exports, while it is true that there will be a slight growth in nearly all the products, this will not meet the requirements in hard currencies we need in order to survive. As a result of the fall in the price of exports and the rise in price of imported products, between 1980 and 1983 Nicaragua lost a total of US\$764 million, putting our trade balance in deficit and raising the foreign debt.

Regarding manufacturing production, the on-going problem has been the lack of foreign currency for imports of raw materials and parts.

Regarding social improvements — housing, health, education, existing social security, and all policies aimed at benefiting the workers — the economic budgetary limitations mean that their effects do not reach everyone nor do we reach the levels desired.

Nonetheless, due to the war, we are going through an ever more critical situation that strikes at the aspirations of the working population for a better material and spiritual life.

- The relative reduction in the supply of products resulting from increased demand, the shortage of hard currency, and inflation have



Nicaraguan sugar mill workers.

led to a rise in the prices of basic and non-basic products, hitting at the wages of workers.

- The commissaries in the companies and work centers and the Rural Supply Centers (CAR) no longer guarantee a practical and efficient supply of goods. But they have not been replaced by the network of local outlets and grocery stores organized on a territorial basis. This network displays organizational weaknesses and shortcomings and does not even guarantee the availability of basic necessities.

- The lack of medicines is negatively affecting the population, despite the achievements in preventive medicine, the extension of health services into the countryside, etc.

- Transit systems, both within and between cities, and freight transportation cause problems for the riders and in supplying the population.

- The lack of spare parts, inputs, and raw materials makes it difficult and sometimes almost impossible to meet goals and sometimes jeopardizes jobs.

III. We are at war

Today more than ever, above and beyond the problems of the economy is the problem of the imperialist war. The main problem facing the Revolution is not the economy, as was the case in 1980.

We are waging a war to the death in defense of our Sovereignty and Independence, to safeguard our gains and revolutionary power.

This aggression is being waged by a great economic and military power against a small country that must make extraordinary efforts to

repel it and survive. We are forced to pay a big price in blood and sacrifice in order to maintain our dignity and national honor, and we pay a big price in the material resources we are forced to invest above and beyond our economic possibilities.

The aggression goes beyond financial and commercial strangulation. It uses ideological campaigns of defamation and disinformation. It makes use of national and international reactionary political forces, sabotage, and destruction of economic and social objectives. All this has the aim of breaking up the revolutionary power, weakening our defensive capabilities, and creating the conditions for a direct military invasion by the United States.

In addition to the high defense expenditures used to confront the aggression, we have suffered losses of \$1.04 billion through the destruction of productive centers, the mined ports, the sabotage, etc. This is \$200 million more than the value of exports in the years 1982 and 1983 taken together. In a period of world crisis and recession, this drain is hard for any country's economy to withstand.

The human losses, counting combatants and civilians, are approximately 9,000 dead. At the same time hundreds of Nicaraguans, especially Miskito Indians, have been kidnapped and forced to join the counterrevolutionary ranks. Many others have been displaced and forced to leave their homes and fields to be resettled in more secure zones, thereby affecting production. In two years the area harvested has declined by 11.6 percent, and perspectives are not good.

The aggression will not stop, with or without elections, nor will the Contadora or Manzanillo negotiations stop it. However, the solidarity of the peoples of Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, and within the Americas the support of the Contadora countries, will serve as a containment wall against the warlike policy of U.S. imperialism. At this very moment the United States has laid down all the logistical and infrastructural preconditions for a direct invasion of El Salvador or Nicaragua, which could take place at any time, even before the U.S. presidential elections.

The revolutionary forces and the working class must marshal all their energies and be prepared to fight and produce in line with defense needs without sparing efforts, risks, or sacrifices. All this makes our economy an economy of resistance in order to survive and triumph. An economy subjected to ever greater tensions.

In the face of the sharpening problems, the working class, the organized laboring people must fundamentally utilize resources of a moral and ideological type. In the face of the impossibility of satisfying material needs, their convictions are put to the test. Today the working class of Nicaragua, the unions, have before them the following challenges:

1. Strengthen and consolidate the military defense forces ranging from the Sandinista People's Army to the Revolutionary Vigilance.

2. Work for the approval in all work centers of norms of production that would allow us to reach the historic output, guarantee the achievement of the planned goals, and make up for the compañeros mobilized at the battle-front.

3. Resolve labor problems and conflicts through negotiations without halting production.

4. Seeing the possibility of pockets of hunger as a result of scarcity and the escalating

war, we support distribution on a territorial basis, insuring a correct distribution of existing supplies.

5. We ask the Revolutionary Government to finalize the application of the first subsystem of the National System for the Organization of Work and Wages and to begin immediately the revision of the wage scales.

For the building of socialism . . .

We go forward with the Front!

Resolutions of assembly

The fundamental step taken by Nicaraguan workers to carry out the transformation of the political, economic, and social structures [of Nicaragua] and to build a new society free of all exploitation was taken on July 19, 1979, with the conquest of political power.

The desire to build a new society inevitably leads us into antagonistic contradictions with imperialism, whose lifeblood is *exploitation*.

This has meant that step by step as we advance in reaffirming our national sovereignty, self-determination, and economic independence, imperialism increases its aggressive actions, trying to return us to a past of domination.

This means that our people had to pay and continue to pay a huge price in blood and sacrifices.

This imperialist aggression has forced us to turn our economy of reconstruction into a war economy, because all our efforts in production must be directed toward supporting military defense.

Economic production becomes the rear guard of the battle fronts, placing all the nation's resources at the disposal of the war effort. This demands of us workers a greater degree of discipline, spirit of sacrifice, and willingness to fight than we needed to overthrow the Somozaist dictatorship.

We must not forget that our productive efforts can be carried out in such a way that we achieve increases in production, raising productivity to the highest level; that our efforts can make it possible to obtain more products, which would allow us to meet the needs of the people and gradually improve our standard of living.

On the basis of this analysis, the Nicaraguan workers, meeting in the National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente have committed ourselves to a process of assemblies with all the workers to discuss the following resolutions:

1. To strengthen and consolidate the military defense forces, from the SMP [Patriotic Military Service] to VR [revolutionary vigilance].

Defense of our power means our involvement in all forms of defense.

Those who have the greatest obligation to defend the power of the workers are the workers themselves, because we defend not only the right to organize ourselves, but also the

right to health, to housing, to work, to life itself, as well as the right to our future and that of our children.

We workers are ready to become a firm rear guard of the battle front in order to defeat the imperialist aggression and prevail over it.

2. To struggle so that in all workplaces norms of production are worked out that permit us to achieve the highest possible productivity per worker, in line with the productive experience of each workplace.

We workers must raise the levels of production and productivity to bolster the war fronts and to maintain our people's levels of subsistence, as well as to strengthen our economy through strategic investments. This is not possible without the development of a conscious discipline to make maximum use of the working day. Through this we will gain the moral authority needed to criticize administrative shortcomings and to push forward, together with the state, policies to correct them.

3. To resolve labor problems and conflicts by means of negotiations, without halting production.

We workers must be conscious that every work stoppage means a weakening of our economy and would facilitate imperialist pretexts for an invasion.

The strike is a form of struggle utilized by the workers against their class enemy, the capitalist exploiter. This form of struggle has no place in Nicaragua, because *power* is in the hands of the workers.

4. To support distribution on a territorial basis, making sure that there is a correct distribution of stocks of goods.

We believe that territorial distribution is the fairest way to equitably share the few resources we have and thereby guarantee our subsistence.

In face of the possibility of pockets of hunger as a result of the sharpening war, we workers must push forward family and institutional gardens.

We are in favor of improving strict control over production, and we demand effective application of the Consumer Law [against hoarding and speculation].

At the same time, in the Regional Supply Commissions (CRA) we will propose that in periods when trucks in our workplaces are underutilized they be used to help bring in basic

products. These trucks are resources that can help the Ministry of Internal Trade to bring products from the production areas and to deliver them to local outlets.

5. To ask the Revolutionary Government to finalize the application of the first subsystem of the National System for the Organization of Work and Wages, dealing with categorization [of jobs], and that the government immediately begin the revision of wage scales.

We workers must be conscious that the National System for the Organization of Work and Wages has yet to be applied to various sectors of workers and that it is necessary to conclude this stage in order to enter the stage of revision.

Also, we request that the Revolutionary Government put a stop to the incorrect practice of some administrators and directors who encourage wage anarchy by not applying the provisions of the National System for the Organization of Work and Wages.

6. To review the purchase at cost of goods produced in our work centers.

We workers must review the allotments of goods produced in our factories that are set aside for each of us. This practice is an obstacle to the rational distribution of our resources and encourages speculation; therefore we call for reducing assigned allotments.

7. To organize Sandinista *emulation* in the work centers.

We workers must promote an attitude of emulation, of imitating the best worker or group of workers, with the goal of raising production and labor productivity, providing moral and material incentives to the best workers.

8. To recognize international solidarity.

We recognize the solidarity of the workers of the world in condemning the imperialist aggression that the Nicaraguan people suffer, and we encourage them to continue demonstrating their effective solidarity by means of material aid through shipments of inputs, medicines, spare parts, and agricultural tools in line with their abilities.

9. Absolute support for the FSLN Plan of Struggle.

With firmness and conviction we support the FSLN Plan of Struggle, which is the Plan of Struggle of the Nicaraguan workers and of all our people.

10. To fulfill these great challenges, the leaders participating in the National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente commit ourselves to maintain close ties with our rank and file, to constantly explain the main problems no matter how hard they are, and to overcome organizational failings and deficiencies in order to meet this historic challenge.

More productivity!

More discipline!

More organization!

Greater production!

Everything for the war fronts . . .

Everything for the fighters!

Long live the Sandinista People's Revolution!

Protests over priest's slaying

Police charged in political assassination

By Ernest Harsch

The October 19 kidnapping and murder of Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko by members of the secret police was a blow aimed at the entire Polish workers movement. Whether officially sanctioned or not, it was an act of political repression designed to intimidate and silence those who oppose the government's anti-working-class policies.

But instead, its effect has been to galvanize public protest and renewed expressions of support for the outlawed Solidarity union movement.

Popieluszko had been popular because of his open support for Solidarity. In close contact with the workers of the giant Huta Warszawa steelworks north of Warsaw, he gave regular monthly sermons that criticized violations of democratic rights and that often drew 10,000 or more workers.

Because of his outspokenness, Popieluszko ran into some opposition from the church hierarchy. He was also a target of criticisms in the government-run news media.

Popieluszko's murder was thus widely viewed as a politically motivated act by particularly virulent opponents of Solidarity within the police apparatus.

On November 3, Popieluszko's funeral turned into one of the largest political demonstrations in Poland in more than two years. More than a quarter of a million Poles filled the streets surrounding the church in the northern Warsaw suburb where Popieluszko was buried.

Solidarity flags and banners were carried by workers' delegations from factories, mines, and ports throughout the country. One of those who delivered a eulogy was Lech Walesa, Solidarity's national chairman, who vowed that "we shall never bow to oppression." When he declared, "Solidarity is alive," he was answered by chants of "Solidarity! Solidarity!" and a sea of hands raised in V-for-victory signs.

Some Solidarity figures, such as Andrzej Gwiazda, have called for further protest demonstrations, as well as strikes. Others, including Walesa, have appealed for calm, stating that such actions could bring new police attacks. "We won't let anybody pull us into brawls in which we will lose," Walesa said.

The government of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, fearful of the mass outcry over Popieluszko's murder, has sought to dodge blame. It launched a prompt investigation and portrayed the killing as an isolated event, carried out by "a few criminals, provocateurs."

Even before Popieluszko's body had been found, three officers of the Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, were arrested. Ac-

ording to the government, they admitted kidnapping Popieluszko outside of Torun and throwing his body into a reservoir. One of the three, Capt. Grzegorz Piotrowski, reportedly said they were motivated by what they viewed as the government's lenient treatment of Solidarity supporters.

Shortly after, another officer was arrested, and Gen. Zenon Platek of the Interior Ministry was suspended for "lack of supervision" in the affair. The government has hinted that other officials may be implicated as well.

Jaruzelski has sought to present the murder as an effort by factional opponents within the governing Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) to discredit his government and policies.

There is a wing of the PUWP leadership that has been critical of Jaruzelski's approach of sweetening the antiworker repression with some modest concessions. It opposed the amnesty proclaimed in July, under which all but several dozen Solidarity activists were released from prison. In general, it has counseled greater reliance on force.

But it is the policies of the PUWP leadership as a whole that have set the stage for terrorist attacks like the one against Popieluszko. As a privileged bureaucratic caste that feeds off the

Polish workers state, it opposes any efforts by working people or their supporters to fight for their rights or decide on the country's affairs. And it is prepared to use any methods — even the most brutal — to maintain its control. That is why Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law in December 1981, sent the cops against striking workers, and outlawed the 10-million-member union.

This overall policy of repression, officially sanctioned by the top government and party leadership, has provided the framework in which "unofficial" police reprisals against Solidarity supporters take place. Popieluszko was not the first fatality. According to accounts in the underground Solidarity press, as many as 50 people have been killed since December 1981 in police beatings or under suspicious circumstances pointing to police involvement. The government's refusal to punish those responsible has further encouraged such attacks.

The murder of Popieluszko — the most prominent victim thus far — has spurred democratic rights activists to propose the creation of public committees to investigate cases of police brutality.

Government spokesperson Jerzy Urban reacted sharply to this, accusing Solidarity figures of seeking to "politically prey" on the priest's death and stating that the authorities would not allow such committees to arise.

While the bureaucracy may be forced to punish a few scapegoats in the killing, it is determined that the police not come under any form of public supervision. Repression is a central weapon in its arsenal of political control, and it wants no fetters on its ability to use it. □

Solidarity: 'Not an isolated incident'

[The following declaration was issued in Poland on October 22, following the first reports of Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko's kidnapping, but before his body had been found. It was signed by Solidarity Chairman Lech Walesa and by the members of Solidarity's underground Provisional Coordinating Committee (TKK): Bogdan Borusewicz, Zbigniew Bujak, Marek Muszynski, Eugeniusz Szumiejko, as well as anonymous representatives of the Krakow and Upper Silesia regions.

[The text has been taken from the October 31 issue of *Solidarnosc Biuletyn Informacyjny* (Solidarity Information Bulletin), published in Paris. The translation from the Polish is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

The abduction of Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko has shocked Polish society. One of the most self-sacrificing workers' priests has been taken, one who gained the unquestioned moral authority and sympathy of millions of Poles because of his courageous struggle for the dignity and rights of working people.

This kidnapping is not an isolated incident.

Since Dec. 13, 1981, similar acts have taken place in the country; their victims were Solidarity activists and supporters. To those victims of the state of war — killed or subjected to repression by supposed defenders of the rule of law during strikes, during peaceful demonstrations, and in churches — there has now been added a priest, abducted by "unknown perpetrators."

This testifies to the introduction of individual terror and blackmail as an ongoing method of political struggle. In a state in which the rule of law is universally violated, in which the security forces serve only the interests of the authorities and are not subject to any social control, every such instance can lead to incalculable consequences.

We express the hope that Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko will happily return to his parish. At the same time, we state that the responsibility for the outcome of the current situation rests with the authorities. Once again, it has been shown that the breaking of the agreement [signed in August 1980 by the government and striking workers] has set into motion the dangerous practice of using force to resolve all social problems. □

Gandhi's death exposes instability

Imperialists, Indian rulers fear weakening of capitalist state

By Steve Craine

The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi exposes the instability of capitalist rule in India today. Sharp class and national antagonisms there and throughout the Indian sub-continent threaten to weaken the system of imperialist domination of the region.

The fact that Gandhi's assassins were members of the Sikh religious minority was seized on by right-wingers, mainly led by Hindu chauvinists, to foment attacks on Sikhs and their property in many parts of India. Within a week, more than 1,000 people were killed in the capital, New Delhi, and many hundreds more in the rest of the country.

In Trilokpuri, a suburb of New Delhi, an entire neighborhood, housing about 1,000 Sikhs, was burned to the ground. The government reported only 95 bodies had been found in the area, but local residents told reporters of seeing truckloads of bodies taken out at night. Sikhs were dragged from trains and buses, beaten, and often killed by mobs.

Police did little or nothing to stop these attacks. In many areas the attacks were not spontaneous outbursts but were carried out by well-organized bands of thugs who arrived and departed from the scene of their attacks in trucks. Still, the big-business news media in the United States have portrayed all the violence as the result of interreligious conflict, often passing it off as simply an unavoidable aspect of Indian life.

But this outburst of killing actually reflects the more fundamental problems facing the country — frustrations caused by conditions of extreme poverty, exploitation, and oppression forced on India by its status as a semicolonial of U.S. and European imperialism.

With a per capita income of only \$260 a year, India is the 11th poorest nation in the world today. Two-fifths of the people live on less than \$7.50 a month, and life expectancy is only 54 years. Although the literacy rate has been growing somewhat, it has not kept pace with the growth of the population. So the absolute numbers of adults who cannot read or write grew from 288 million shortly after independence was won in 1947 to 386 million in 1971.

As in other semicolonial countries, the fundamental conflicts are between the exploited workers, peasants, and unemployed on the one hand and the landowners, capitalist bosses, and owners of foreign corporations on the other. But this class conflict often seems to be hidden or distorted by a complex of other divisions between religions, language groups, regions, and nationalities.

Both the imperialists and the Indian capitalists who benefit from the exploitation of the Indian working people, need to keep these conflicts under control. The Congress Party under Indira Gandhi's control had long played the key role in doing this. Without her firm hand, it is questionable whether the Congress Party or any other bourgeois party in India can put together a stable regime.

This is why her assassination is cause for alarm in Washington, London, and other imperialist capitals.

Sikhs

The Sikhs, the victims of last week's terror, make up only 2 percent of the population of India and are concentrated in the northern state of Punjab. Most Sikhs have been in opposition to the Gandhi government, especially since earlier this year. In June Gandhi ordered the Indian army to attack and occupy the Sikhs' most holy site, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The temple had become the rallying point for a rebellion of militant Sikhs. They demanded recognition of Sikhism as an official religion, not just as a variety of Hinduism, and greater autonomy for the majority-Sikh state of Punjab.

In crushing the rebellion, Gandhi's troops massacred more than 1,000 rebels at the Golden Temple. Martial law was declared in Punjab in an attempt to reassert the authority of the central government. Troops continued to occupy the Golden Temple until late September. More importantly, military rule over Punjab beat back the movement for religious and political autonomy and for social and economic demands as well.

The Sikh movement was initiated by rich farmers and other Sikh capitalists. They were mainly interested in strengthening their position in relation to the mainly Hindu manufacturing capitalists who dominate India economically and politically. But in early 1984 the Sikh movement was becoming more militant through the participation of poor peasants, landless agricultural workers, and urban workers and students. These were the forces that pushed aside the traditional Sikh leadership and occupied the Golden Temple in June in protest against the Gandhi government.

Punjab is known as one of the most prosperous of the Indian states and the breadbasket of the country. But while a few capitalist farmers, both Sikhs and Hindus, have grown rich from the much-touted "green revolution," which spurred the development of large-scale agriculture through the introduction of new technology, the majority have not benefited. In fact,

the green revolution forced more and more small peasants, mainly Sikhs, off their land, sharpening the division between rich and poor in the state.

'Outside agitators'

Gandhi had claimed the Sikh rebellion was fomented by "outside agitators" and "terrorists," charging (without any evidence) that the rebels were being directed from Pakistan. Using a time-tested technique, her government emphasized the religious aspect of the revolt, attempting to obscure the real class divisions it was based on.

The murderous government assault on the Golden Temple was designed to be a warning to all those in India who might be tempted to challenge the authority of the government, from workers fighting for higher wages and the right to organize unions, to peasants defending their land and livelihood, to activists demanding political freedoms and groups struggling against national or religious oppression.

By casting the Punjab conflict in exclusively religious terms, the regime set the stage for the anti-Sikh attacks that followed Gandhi's assassination.

Within hours of the prime minister's death, the Central Committee of the ruling Congress Party selected her only surviving son, Rajiv, to be her successor. His appointment was unanimously ratified two days later by the Congress Party's parliamentary caucus.

Congress Party

The Congress Party has been in power for 34 of India's 37 years of independence. And for 32 of those years it was led by Gandhi or her father, Jawaharlal Nehru. This capitalist party emerged from the long struggle against British colonial rule. Its authority stems in large part from its identification with that struggle and with such figures as Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi, the central leader of the independence fight.

The Congress Party also built its support on promises of social reform including limited nationalizations of banking and industry and an anti-imperialist stance on some international issues. Nehru helped found the Movement of Nonaligned Countries, and India has long had friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

The fact that the Indian capitalists face no immediate challenge to their rule has allowed the Congress Party to tolerate parliamentary democracy and to a certain extent democratic rights. But at the same time, this democracy has always been subject to limitations. Whole

sections of the population are periodically terrorized by racist and chauvinist organizations like those now attacking the Sikhs. Military campaigns have been used to wipe out opposition movements. And elected local governments have been removed by decree of the New Delhi government.

The most serious break in the facade of democracy came in 1975 when Gandhi imposed a dictatorial state of emergency after she was convicted of election fraud. Hundreds of thousands of political opponents were jailed. When the state of emergency was lifted and elections held again in 1977, the Congress Party suffered the only defeat in its history. But the rival bourgeois parties soon discredited themselves, and the Congress Party was returned to office again three years later.

The authority of the Congress Party, and of the central government as a whole, has continued to erode since 1980. More and more, Indira Gandhi personally dominated the party and government. After the 1980 election she boasted that the party won "entirely on my name."

Indira Gandhi

Ever since she took over the leadership of the party after her father's death, Gandhi had been preparing to keep the power in the family dynasty. For several years she had groomed her younger son, Sanjay, to be her successor. When he was killed in a plane crash in 1980, she persuaded Rajiv, who had not been involved in politics before, to run for parliament. She saw to it that he rose quickly through the Congress Party ranks.

The selection of another Gandhi reflects the weakness of the Congress Party. It may have been the only way to hold the party together in the short term. Parliamentary elections are supposed to be held before Jan. 20, 1985. Some doubts have been expressed in the Congress Party whether the new prime minister can hold the party together until then.

The Congress Party and the Indian capitalists it represents are not the only ones who are nervous about this dilemma. The loss of Indira Gandhi, the strongest centralizing political force on the scene, is a major concern of imperialism. There were frequent clashes between Washington and Gandhi over her leading role in the Nonaligned Movement and her friendly relations with Moscow. But more important to the imperialists than these differences was Gandhi's role in maintaining a strong capitalist state in India.

As the *Wall Street Journal* put it in an editorial November 1, "This newspaper had its differences with Mrs. Gandhi. In particular, we thought her support for left-wing liberation movements and her close ties with the Soviet Union were naive. But there's no denying that Mrs. Gandhi was a skillful politician who somehow managed to keep fractious India united over two turbulent decades."

Unidentified members of the Reagan administration told the press of their concern that Rajiv Gandhi may not have the strength to lead



Rightists seized on Gandhi assassination to organize pogroms against Sikhs.

India. "The Congress-I party has a very weak political base," the *New York Times* quoted one administration specialist, "because Mrs. Gandhi so dominated the party. She did not put strong people into leadership positions. And Rajiv has no personal political base of his own."

The Paris daily *Le Monde* commented, "One can believe that the elimination of the strong personality will open up an era of dangerous instability, not only in India itself, but also in the entire Indian subcontinent."

The regional impact of a significant weakening of the New Delhi government, pointed to by *Le Monde*, is especially worrisome for the imperialists. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka all face similar problems and growing struggles by the oppressed and exploited masses.

The four countries share a common history of direct colonial rule by British imperialism. In fact, the British created India (which then included Pakistan and Bangladesh) as a political unit in the 19th century. Diverse peoples were forcibly unified by the colonizers to serve their interests, not the interests of the people of the subcontinent. The British colonialists, in order to hold their creation together, perfected the technique of divide and rule, fostering divisions between religious, linguistic, and national groups.

The divide-and-rule policy was continued after independence to maintain the political power of the dominant sectors of the capitalist class in each of the former colonies. But this domination is being challenged in all four countries. In Sri Lanka, resistance by the oppressed Tamil minority is increasing. In Bangladesh more than a million people demonstrated against martial law on October 14.

Waning political authority

In India there have been many challenges to the authority of New Delhi. In 1982 a massive strike wave of hundreds of thousands of textile workers hit the most important industrial area of the country, in and around Bombay. Since then, the Congress Party has encouraged Hindu-chauvinist organizations to step up their attacks on Muslim workers, culminating in the bloody attacks around Bombay last May.

Whipping up reactionary actions like these was necessary for the rulers to break up the solidarity of workers who were coming together in their class interests through the textile strikes.

There have been other indications of the waning political authority of the New Delhi government in recent months. In the past year Gandhi attempted to intervene in several state governments to depose elected governments and install people more willing to follow her dictates. In one case the deposed official mobilized so much support that Gandhi was forced to back down.

Indira Gandhi attempted to build a strong capitalist state to serve the needs of the Indian capitalist class. But the heritage of colonialism and the continuing exploitation of the country by imperialism make it impossible to solve the real problems of India without a social revolution.

In the framework of being a semicolon, India cannot develop economically. Nor can it resolve the conflicts among regions and religions. Only by breaking out of imperialism's grip and establishing a government of the workers and peasants can India or any other semicolonial country advance toward meeting the needs of its people.

The Indian capitalists and their Congress Party could not challenge imperialist domination without calling into question their own role in exploiting Indian workers and peasants. Instead they often had to rely on repression and the divide-and-rule approach they learned from the British colonial administration to keep the masses in check. This earned Gandhi the hatred of many segments of the country's people.

But as much as she was hated, her removal from office — whether by assassination or by the election of a rival capitalist politician — does not advance the interests of the working people or the oppressed nationalities of India. The leadership necessary to unite the exploited workers and peasants of all nationalities in a revolutionary movement against imperialist oppression and capitalist exploitation does not yet exist. But what has the imperialists worried is that the weakening of capitalist rule in India will provide more of an opening for such a leadership by the working people to emerge. □

Regime boosts international ties

Seeks expanded political, economic relations

By Will Reissner

In late September the demilitarized zone separating the workers state in North Korea and capitalist South Korea was breached for the first time since the Korean War ended in 1953.

On September 29 and 30, hundreds of North Korean trucks and 12 North Korean freighters delivered relief supplies to flood-ravaged South Korea, where some 200 people were killed and 200,000 left homeless.

The North Korean relief effort included 100,000 tons of cement, 550,000 yards of cloth, 7,200 tons of rice, and 759 cases of medicines.

South Korean authorities had turned down previous relief offers from the north in 1956, 1957, and 1961.

The relief operation was only the most dramatic in a series of North Korean attempts to reduce tensions on a number of fronts.

One week after the relief effort was completed, North and South Korea took a second step toward easing tensions by agreeing to maintain a direct telephone hot line between their respective Red Cross offices. There had been no direct link between the two countries since a previous hot line arrangement was terminated in 1976.

And a week after the hotline agreement, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north proposed talks with the military dictatorship in the south on trade and economic cooperation between the two parts of the Korean peninsula.

This offer was accepted by the regime in Seoul, and talks are scheduled to take place on November 15 in the village of Panmunjom, where the 1953 armistice ending the Korean war was signed.

Military stand-off

Easing military threats is a key goal of the DPRK regime. Hundreds of thousands of South Korean and U.S. troops are poised on the border dividing the 60 million Korean people. The DPRK government must spend as much as 24 percent of its gross national product on military defense.

During this year's Team Spirit '84 military maneuvers, more than 200,000 U.S. and South Korean troops practiced air, land, and sea invasions of North Korea, leading to a mobilization of northern forces.

"Observers" from the "Self-Defense Forces" of Japan, Korea's former colonial ruler, attended the exercises.

Washington has been hard at work building a three-way alliance with South Korea and

Japan aimed directly against the DPRK government.

Moreover, the 39,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea are believed to have 1,000 nuclear weapons in their arsenal, in direct violation of the 1953 armistice agreement between the DPRK and the United States.

DPRK officials also fear that the Pentagon plans to deploy Pershing 2 and Tomahawk nuclear-armed missiles on South Korean soil, minutes away from the northern capital, Pyongyang.

Three-way talks proposed

In hopes of easing the ongoing military threat from imperialism and its ally in Seoul, Pyongyang has called for improved relations with Washington and Tokyo.

While in New York for the United Nations General Assembly meeting in October, North Korea's foreign minister, Kim Yong Nam, stressed Pyongyang's proposal for more normal relations with Washington.

For more than a year DPRK officials have been calling for talks between the two governments. On October 8, 1983, Pyongyang proposed three-way talks with Washington and Seoul to lead to a nonaggression pact between North and South Korea and a peace treaty to supplant the 31-year-old armistice agreement between North Korea and the United States.

This North Korean proposal was ignored by the Reagan administration at the time. But in April 1984, Secretary of State George Shultz sent a message to the North Korean government calling for "confidence-building" measures such as prior notification of military maneuvers and mutual exchanges of observers during exercises.

Ronald Reagan reiterated that proposal in his September 24 speech to the UN General Assembly.

The DPRK's foreign minister quickly responded with an offer to discuss the measures proposed by Reagan. The Pyongyang diplomat stressed his willingness to talk with U.S. officials "in any forum at any time and in any place."

Pyongyang has also taken initiatives to improve relations with the Japanese government. In September, Japan Socialist Party chairman Masashi Ishibashi had five hours of talks with North Korean President Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang.

When Ishibashi returned to Japan, he brought with him Kim's offer to restart negotiations on a new North Korea-Japan fishing agreement. This was to replace one that had lapsed in June 1982 when the North Korean delegation that was to sign the renewal was de-

nied entry into Japan.

On October 15 a new two-year fishing agreement was in fact signed. It allows Japanese vessels to again fish within North Korea's 200-mile maritime boundary.

In the same month, the French and North Korean governments, which have no formal diplomatic relations, agreed to cultural, scientific, and technological exchanges.

Mending fences with Moscow

The North Korean government has also moved to improve its relations with the Soviet Union, the Eastern European workers states, and Vietnam.

In 1975, the Kim Il Sung regime dropped its previous equidistant position in the dispute between the Soviet Union and China, and aligned its policies more closely with those of Peking.

As a result, Pyongyang was an active collaborator with Peking's counterrevolutionary campaign to "punish" Vietnam.

North Korean pilots, for example, formed the backbone of the air force of the Peking-backed Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea, at a time when Pol Pot's dictatorship was carrying out military attacks against Vietnam.

After the Pol Pot regime was overthrown by Kampuchean insurgents and Vietnamese troops in 1979, Pyongyang joined with Peking in aiding the remnants of Pol Pot's forces, who continue to attack Kampuchea from bases along the border with Thailand.

Prince Sihanouk, who is allied with Pol Pot, was given a palatial residence in Pyongyang.

But Pyongyang's close alignment with Peking's reactionary foreign policy has not been without problems. As the Chinese government developed closer relations with Washington and Tokyo and encouraged the two imperialist powers to expand their military presence in the North Pacific, the North Korean regime felt increasingly isolated and threatened.

When Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang visited Japan in November 1983, for example, he raised no objections to the ongoing build-up in Japanese military strength.

Nor did Peking object to the huge Team Spirit '84 war games in South Korea, with its practice invasions of the north.

Fearing it could be left out on a limb by China's pursuit of closer ties with Washington and Tokyo, the DPRK government is trying to improve its relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In May 1984, DPRK leader Kim Il Sung made his first visit to Moscow in 17 years. From there he traveled to Poland, East Ger-

many, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia.

The North Korean regime has also distanced itself from Pol Pot's forces, which has led to improved relations with Vietnam.

Although Vietnam and North Korea continued to maintain embassies in each other's capitals during the four years that Pol Pot ruled Kampuchea, relations between Pyongyang and Hanoi were frigid, and neither embassy was headed by an ambassador. Since the shift in DPRK's orientation, ambassadors have again been exchanged.

North Korea is also attempting to expand its economic relations with the rest of the world.

In January, with the end of North Korea's current seven-year economic plan approaching, Prime Minister Kang Song San told the Supreme People's Assembly that the government hopes to expand its economic relations with all countries, whether or not those countries have diplomatic relations with Pyongyang.

When the Korean War ended, most of North Korea was in ruins, its cities having been pounded into rubble by U.S. bombers.

Since then, the Pyongyang regime has achieved tremendous economic progress on the basis of the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a planned economy.

John Burgess noted in the September 11 *Washington Post* that "thirty years after the Korean War devastated its cities and industries, the North has built a standard of living that some foreign visitors have likened to Eastern Europe's."

Mike Tharp wrote in the February 2 *Far Eastern Economic Review* that "the ordinary North Korean citizen has seen his standard of living climb far beyond that of people in many other developing countries. The provision of essentials — food, clothing and housing — is at least as good in the North as in the South."

And Hikaru Kerns wrote in the same magazine: "North Korea probably outpaced the South in the race to develop their economies to a level exemplified by iron and steel, cement, truck, and hydroelectric plants."

But with the growing sophistication and complexity of the North Korean economy, Pyongyang is beginning to loosen its traditional emphasis on "*juche*" (self-reliant) development and seeks broader economic exchanges.

On September 8, North Korea passed a law authorizing joint ventures between foreign companies and North Korean state enterprises in industry, construction, technology, and tourism.

The law's 26 articles offer protection for foreign investments and profits, and allow profits and foreign employees' salaries to be sent abroad after payment of taxes.

In late October, Pyongyang announced that the first such joint venture had been finalized. A French company will build a 1,000-room hotel in the North Korean capital and will hold a 50 percent stake in the hotel after its completion.

Pyongyang officials also report that joint ventures are in the offing with West German companies and Chinese state enterprises.

The biggest barrier to increased North Korean trade with capitalist countries is that the latter have insisted that trade be on a "cash and carry" basis. This demand was imposed in the late 1970s when the DPRK suspended payments on its foreign debt.

The Japan External Trade Organization estimates that North Korea's total foreign debt is between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion. This is a pittance compared with South Korea's \$41 bil-

lion foreign debt.

This year Pyongyang resumed foreign-debt payments to several West European countries, and those countries have in turn shown renewed interest in increasing their trade with North Korea.

At the September 26 celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of North Korea's Foreign Trade Bank, bankers from capitalist institutions in Britain, France, West Germany, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Austria, and Japan were among the celebrants in Pyongyang. □

Britain

Branch of Grenada party formed

'There will be many more Maurice Bishops'

By Rich Palser

LONDON — October 20 saw the public launching of the United Kingdom branch of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM) at a rally of 70 people in London's Black ghetto of Brixton.

Joe Charter, formerly representative of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Grenada in Libya, explained the platform of the MBPM and how it arose following the October 1983 overthrow of the government of Maurice Bishop and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Grenada.

He charged the group of conspirators around Bernard Coard with seven crimes: plotting to place the blame for the problems of the revolution on Bishop; using the organs of state to place the leader of the revolution under house arrest; turning the guns of the revolution against the people; assassinating the leadership of the revolution; lying to the people with the claim that Bishop was killed in a crossfire; introducing a four-day curfew; and abandoning the troops and militia resistance when the U.S. invasion occurred.

"These facts point to a combination of two factors," Charter said, "a desire to satisfy personal ambitions and the presence of ultralefts who were fanatical and ready to commit any crime in order to seize control of the revolution."

The formation of the MBPM, which was launched in Grenada in May, was a step toward overcoming the confusion these events had created in the minds of Grenadians, Charter explained. "Since the invasion the people have undergone a severe trauma," he said. "When I visited there again in July, I detected that they were slowly beginning to come out of the trouble. As human beings we all have different recovery rates, so we must be patient with those who are still in a state of trauma and highly confused."

He finished by pointing to the slogan adopted by the MBPM: "Forward on our feet,

not on our knees."

A representative of the African National Congress of South Africa said the ANC and the MBPM face the common enemy of imperialism. "We are chopping off the arms and legs of imperialism, and the British people must chop off its head." Referring to the British coal miners' strike, he was applauded when he compared the use of horses and dogs against pickets to the repression now taking place against Black miners in South Africa.

Peter Geddes of the New Communist Party pledged his party's unequivocal support to the MBPM. He attacked others on the left in Britain who failed to do likewise, arguing that they were out of line with the stance of communists and progressives throughout the world. Cuba's stance has been made clear, he said, and the Soviet Union's newspaper, *Pravda*, reprinted the whole of Fidel Castro's speech that "pointed the finger" at those to blame for the overthrow of the PRG. By failing to back the MBPM, Geddes said, some British socialists were "allowing Reagan to start to divide us."

Ambassador Herero of the Cuban embassy greeted the rally and explained that the Cuban government and party considered the program of the PRG correct in Grenada's situation. He said he felt the choice of name by the MBPM was a good one. He expressed confidence that the Grenadian people would find a way to unite the progressive forces.

Winding up the rally, Peter Small of the MBPM said he was very pleased with the turnout. "Regardless of whether you get two or 200 people, it means you are thinking collectively," he said. "Each one teach one is a basic rudiment of struggle." Tracing the struggle back to the Caribs and Arawaks, the original inhabitants of Grenada, and to the transportation of Black Africans to Grenada as slaves, Small pointed to the new leaders who had emerged to take up the struggle after each setback. "Don't be disheartened," he said, "there will be many more Maurice Bishops." □

Tough battles ahead for miners

Courts, bonuses used to try to break strike

By Doreen Wepler

LONDON — Cheering, chanting, and thunderous applause echoed through a packed miners' support rally held in Edinburgh's massive Usher Hall on November 6. The rally was one of five called by a special national delegate conference of the striking coal miners union.

The rallies are aimed at winning the rank and file of the labor movement to industrial action in support of the miners' battle for jobs.

This decision to rally the labor movement will help to counteract the most sustained ruling-class campaign to break the strike seen to date. With the onset of winter and with coal stocks at power stations dropping to crisis levels, the class lines in this eight-month battle are drawn more sharply.

- The National Coal Board (NCB) is trying to bribe miners back to work with promises of £1,400 (£1 = US\$1.20) tax-free earnings by Christmas if they cross the picket lines. Miners who return to work by the second week of November will also receive a special Christmas bonus.

- The High Court has joined in the ruling-class drive to break the miners union by finding the union in contempt of court. Despite a £200,000 fine, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) continues to insist that the miners' strike is official, contrary to the court's ruling.

- The High Court then moved to sequester the union's funds and has already frozen £2.8 million discovered in an Irish bank. A worldwide search is under way for further assets of the NUM.

- Funds controlled by the union's area structures are also being frozen. The South Wales Area has already seen more than £700,000 of its funds sequestered.

- In North Derbyshire the courts have ruled that in the next week the NUM area's funds cannot be used to "further the strike." This injunction will undoubtedly be renewed.

- Legal action has been initiated to take the Yorkshire Area out of the control of its elected officers. If successful, this could lead to a ruling involving sequestering of funds, the appointment of a receiver, and even imprisonment for officers involved.

- Injunctions have extended to other industries where workers have taken solidarity actions. Dockers in Cardiff have refused to handle the trucks of two firms whose court suit led to the sequestering of South Wales Area NUM funds. Now their shop stewards and national officers have been instructed to lift the boycott or face contempt charges themselves.

This extensive use of the courts is a gamble

for the ruling class and one that has backfired in the past, notably when imprisoned dockers were released by industry-wide strike action in 1972.

Courts not impartial

Already press commentators are reporting that the decision to use the courts has hardened the resolve of the ranks in the auto unions.

Thousands of miners have come to see that the courts and the law are powerful weapons of the rich. They think NUM President Arthur Scargill is right when he says that the only law worthy of strict adherence is the law of working-class solidarity and of the picket line. Other workers are now going through the same experiences.

The barrage of legal moves against the miners union is matched by a campaign to divide union leaders from the rank and file. New heights were reached with a recent ferocious press campaign charging the strike is surviving on financial support from Libyan Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, who is portrayed as an arch-terrorist.

The press was filled with photographs of the body of policewoman Yvonne Fletcher, who was shot during a gun-battle at the Libyan embassy in London earlier this year. Despite repeated denials from the Libyan government, Britain's rulers continue to insist Libya was behind the embassy attack.

NUM leader Arthur Scargill hit back at this press campaign, insisting that "our union welcomes any financial contribution from trade unions anywhere in the world . . . who want to alleviate the severe hardship in British mining communities."

Dennis Skinner, a Labour member of Parliament, also defended the miners union. He slammed the hypocrisy of the big business press, which has been strangely silent about British bankers' extensive financial relations with Libya.

The Tory campaign died down when Tony Benn, a left-wing Labour member of Parliament, exposed the fact that the National Coal Board itself has financial contracts in Libya.

The miners' defense against this vitriolic campaign was weakened when both Neal Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, and Norman Willis, secretary-general of the Trades Union Council, joined in with the hysteria and criticized Scargill for having relations with the Libyan government, which they characterized as a "vile regime."

Kinnock again hit the front pages when he refused to speak at any of the five rallies called by the special conference of the miners union, claiming he was "unable to break longstanding

engagements."

The bosses' media seized on this as further "proof" that Scargill is isolated from the labor movement.

The NUM special conference in Sheffield gave the lie to these supposed divisions. Delegates there gave full support to the union negotiators.

Government sabotages settlement

As the hardship of this eight-month-old strike bites, the ruling class has portrayed Scargill as someone who is lightmindedly and irrationally refusing to settle. Scargill, however, pointed out that the government "effectively sabotaged" any attempts to reach an early settlement of the dispute.

The miners' fight was set back by the October 24 decision of the mine supervisors' union, NACODS, to sign a separate deal with the coal board despite an overwhelming membership vote in favor of strike action. The agreement fails to include the withdrawal of the NCB's program to close mines.

Mick McGahey, vice-president of the NUM, stated: "The calling off of this strike is a demonstration of weakness by the NACODS executive, which the NCB under [Ian] MacGregor will capitalize on in the future, and at the expense of NACODS members."

If the NACODS strike had gone ahead, every single pit would have been shut down, including those kept open by scab labor.

Despite the retreat of NACODS, the strikers' determination remains firm. Coal production by scabs is at its lowest point since the strike began. At the end of October, only 23.7 percent of normal output was being mined, compared with 28.3 percent a month earlier.

On November 9, one of the country's biggest coal-fired power stations, at Thurrock in the southeast of England, was closed down.

Try to demoralize miners

In hopes of demoralizing the NUM membership, the coal board claimed that almost 2,000 miners returned to work in the week leading up to the Christmas-bonus bribe deadline, bringing the number of working miners to 54,000. Yet last July cabinet ministers claimed 60,000 miners were working.

This discrepancy bolsters the NUM claim that the coal board figures are doctored and that the strike remains firm at about 80 percent of NUM members.

The ruling class is making every effort to present itself as united and firm against the miners. Sir James Cleminson, president of the Confederation of British Industry, declared at

the CBI's national conference in early November, "No Government and no business in a democracy could surrender to the tactic witnessed over the past seven months." He warned that if the miners won the strike, it would "set an example to extremists in other sectors."

Despite Cleminson's rhetoric, divisions do exist in the ruling class, and they are evident in the National Coal Board itself.

At the end of October, the coal board appointed Michael Eaton as its new press spokesperson to provide the NCB with a "human face" and to undo the damage done by MacGregor's poor image.

Yet Eaton quickly disappeared from view, and MacGregor again took over press relations.

Then the public relations director for the NCB, Geoff Kirk, was fired. Kirk held a press conference at the time of his "resignation" on

November 6 and exposed differences within the coal board over the handling of the strike. He contradicted the government's denial of interference in the strike when he revealed that direct links have been maintained between MacGregor and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's advisers.

The ruling class has tried to avoid other groups of workers taking industrial action at the same time as the miners. But now 35,000 auto workers are on strike in pursuit of a living wage. Trade unions representing 40,500 Ford workers are involved in negotiations over a 14 percent across-the-board wage raise and a shorter working week.

Jaguar workers, who came out on strike November 1, won concessions from the employers on their claim for a £25 per week raise and a yearly agreement.

The solid response of the Jaguar workers surprised Britain's car bosses. Just two months

ago, motor manufacturers boasted that the days lost per employee in strikes had fallen from an average of 6.7 in 1979 to 1.8 in 1983.

During that time the trade union leaders allowed a massive increase in productivity. The work force has been drastically cut throughout the industry. At Ford, the number of workers dropped by 24 percent between 1979 and today. At British Leyland there has been a 48 percent drop; at Vauxhall, 39 percent; and Talbot, 77 percent.

The number of cars produced per worker has increased dramatically. At Austin Rover, for example, each worker produces three times as many cars today as in 1979.

These workers are now reading about the massive profits of the car companies and think some of this should come their way.

The miners' strike has given car workers more confidence to pressure their union leaders into action. □

Solidarity meeting held for NUM

Miners, wives, international guests discuss strike support

By Steve Roberts

BOLD, Lancashire — Miners and miners' wives from all over the British coalfields gathered for an international solidarity meeting here in northwest England on October 20.

Among the 300 people who attended the meeting, organized by *Socialist Action* newspaper, were trade unionists and socialists from Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, France, and the United States.

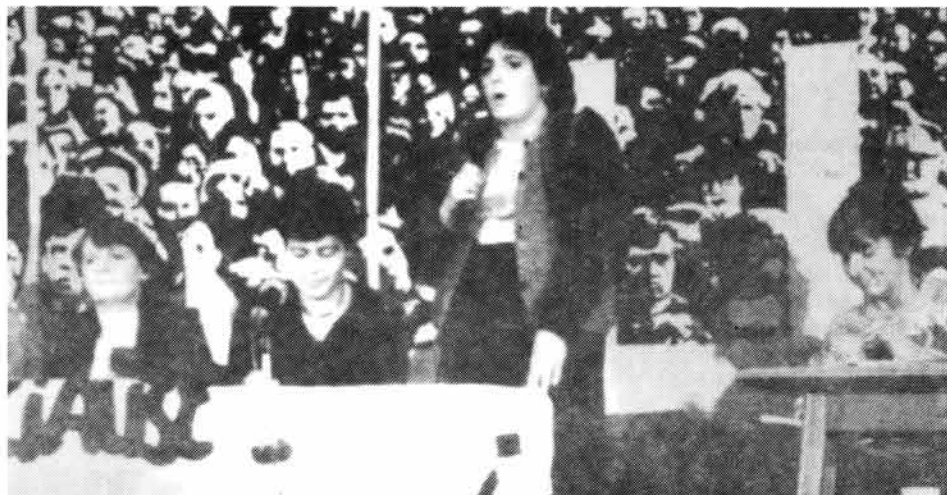
Eighty miners and 30 members of miners' wives support committees registered for the meeting. They came from all the major coalfields including Scotland, South Wales, Lancashire, Kent, South Nottingham, South Yorkshire, South Staffordshire, and Leicester.

In addition there was a contingent of miners and wives from Bold colliery, who were hosting the meeting in their miners' institute. Colin Lenton, a member of the Bold National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) committee explained in his welcoming speech why the branch had extended its facilities for the meeting.

"We feel that it's the least we can do. Without *Socialist Action* and the organizations in France, Belgium, Holland, and other countries we wouldn't have come through the strike in the way we have."

Miners' wives movement

The meeting opened with a discussion on the development of the miners' wives movement. Valerie Coultas, chairing the session for *Socialist Action*, said that the British labor movement was witnessing the rise of a new women's movement centered on the miners' wives and the fight of the Greenham Common women against the placing of cruise missiles. The action of the miners' wives was not only changing the consciousness of men in the min-



Mike Wongsam/Socialist Action

Ann Jones, of South Wales Women Against Pit Closures.

ers union but throughout the whole labor movement.

Sue Bence from the Kent Miners Wives Action Committee of Aylesham explained how her group had been formed.

"We formed a group before in the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes. But at that time it was mainly to collect and distribute food.

"But this time, on day two of the strike, 80 women met and decided we would organize a peaceful demonstration in Nottingham, because we were incensed by the media-supported 'back-to-work' campaign being organized by the so-called petticoat pickets.

"We were stopped from getting to Nottingham because of police roadblocks, but this made us all the more determined, and eventually we succeeded in holding our demonstra-

tion in Coalville in Leicester, another area where the 'back-to-work' movement was strong."

Bence's account was backed up by Ann Jones from South Wales Women Against Pit Closures, and by Lorraine Johnson from Bold.

Johnson said that the miners' wives had proved more effective in gaining support than the male members of the NUM. Jones said the miners' wives movement had shown that "there was more than one determined woman in this country," referring to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Judith Woodward, of the Women's Action Committee in the Labour Party, spoke of the way in which miners' wives were joining the Labour Party and the role of the NUM in backing increased women's representation in the

Labour Party.

There was loud applause for the speech by Anita Grey, a supporter of the Greenham Common peace women. She said that the Greenham women were fully behind the women and the men in the dispute. In particular she saw the fight against nuclear power as a strong link between the peace movement and the miners.

U.S. woman miner

The final speech was that of Kipp Dawson, a woman member of the United Mine Workers of America and of the Socialist Workers Party.

She said that militant workers in the United States were increasingly looking to two places for inspiration. The first was the miners' strike in Britain. The second was the struggle of the Nicaraguan people.

"If and when intervention in Nicaragua comes we will not stand idly by. Like the sisters of Greenham Common we will fight to oppose our government."

The session ended with Jones explaining that the miners' wives were now organized nationally.

The second session of the meeting was on perspectives for winning the strike. Pat Hickey, the industrial correspondent of *Socialist Action*, opened the discussion by drawing attention to the desperate measures that the Thatcher Conservative Party government was preparing against the miners through the courts.

Phillip Sutcliffe, a member of the Kent miners executive, received laughter and applause when he introduced himself as "Kay Sutcliffe's husband." (She is a leading member of the miners' wives movement.)

He explained the £200,000 (approximately \$240,000) fine against the union and the threatened sequestration of the NUM's assets was part of a move by the state to crush working people, "which in the first place means the miners."

He explained, too, the process of politicization among the miners. Like him most had not read Marx, Engels, or Lenin. "We are not philosophers. We are miners proud of our class, fighting to understand the role of our class in the fight for socialism and peace."

Railway workers solidarity

Among the other trade unionists attending the meeting who spoke in the session was Roy Butlin of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) from the Coalville Freight Depot in Leicestershire. He explained that in Coalville, the main mining town of the area, out of 2,500 miners only 30 were on strike. The rest were producing 135,000 tons of coal which was not being moved by the 150 members of his union branch to power stations.

As a result the British Rail management has sacked [fired] three NUR members on spurious charges.

He finished with an appeal to the miners present. "I know that 330 miners have been sacked in the dispute so far and that you will not

go back until they have been reinstated. But I want you to add three railworkers to that number — sacked for solidarity with the miners."

Three striking miners from Leicestershire, South Staffordshire, and Nottingham then spoke to thunderous applause from the participants. In all these areas striking miners are in a small minority. All spoke of the daily harassment and violence suffered by the strikers which goes unreported in the press.

The area strike coordinator from South Staffordshire NUM spoke bitterly of the failure of the trade union movement's leadership to deliver on the promises made at the 1984 Trades Union Congress. Other miners called for Neil Kinnock, the leader of the Labour Party, to get off the fence and start supporting the miners in the same way that Thatcher was supporting the employers.

Huw Edwardes, the chairperson of Tower Lodge in South Wales, promised active support to the embattled striking miners, particularly those in Leicester.

John Ross, the editor of *Socialist Action*, spoke of the political developments in the strike, particularly how the miners had moved to support other groups under attack from the Tories [Conservatives] — including women, Blacks, and gay people — on the principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all."

He said that this was also the principle being used by the underground members of Solidarność in the mines in Poland, who had sent messages of support to the British miners and condemned the strike-breaking role played by the Polish regime of Wojciech Jaruzelski.

International solidarity

This growing internationalist consciousness was reflected in the final session on international solidarity. Dennis Pennington, from Bold NUM, spoke of the way in which his ideas had changed during the strike. He had toured West Germany and Belgium raising support for the strike as the guest of the International Marxist Group (IGM) of West Germany and the Socialist Workers Party (POS/SAP) of Belgium. "Before I used to think of myself as a miner — and a Lancashire miner at that, not even a British miner. But now I see myself as a worker, part of the international working class."

Finn Jensen, a member of the miners solidarity movement in Denmark, spoke next, explaining that not only had they raised nearly £100,000 (approximately \$140,000) for the miners, but they had been able, through dockers' action, to stop the shipment of Polish coal from the port of Århus.

Anneka Meijssan, an electro-mechanical worker and shop steward from the Rotterdam support committee, spoke of the work of her committee and of her party, the Socialist Workers Party (SAP). She saw the main job of her committee as countering the lies put out by the progovernment media in Holland. The miners' strike was very important because of the way in which the Ruud Lubbers govern-

ment identified with the Thatcher project.

They were also exploring all possible ways of preventing the shipment of coal from Rotterdam to Britain, and she said she would be discussing with the miners present the best way of going about it.

A pledge to stop the coal from Antwerp in Belgium, "even if we have to shovel it into the water," came from a car worker active in the miners solidarity campaign and a member of the POS/SAP. He was one of the three Belgian trade unionists present at the meeting.

Brian Phelan of the Irish organization People's Democracy spoke from the platform to describe the solidarity activities and sentiments for the NUM strike that existed throughout Ireland. He finished his speech by telling miners that the only thing Irish workers wanted in return was for the NUM to demand British withdrawal from Ireland.

One miner who already supported the "troops-out" position was Wayne Frost, a miner from Armthorpe colliery who had been present at the Belfast Irish republican demonstration where Sean Downes was killed as a result of being hit with a plastic bullet. Frost said the way in which police were being used in the miners' strike was more and more similar to the way they were used in the north of Ireland.

Nigel Bevan, a young South Wales miner, said that he had joined *Socialist Action's* fight in the Labour Party because through the strike he saw the need for internationalism in practice.

Representative of LCR

The international session finished with a rousing speech from Alain Krivine of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) of France. Krivine said that the miners' strike was of central importance to all European workers. It was the highest point so far of the new wave of workers struggle that had developed against the austerity and militarist policies of the Western European governments in 1980-81. The miners' victory would be a victory for all workers, like those in West Germany who had fought for the 35-hour week and the Italian workers who had fought for defense of the sliding scale of wages.

In France too, it would be considered a victory by workers who are fighting against betrayal of the left parties in 1981. The LCR had already organized one tour for British miners and had supported the solidarity campaign of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) in France. Now they were organizing a second tour.

Amid laughter he described how many French people have regarded British police as wonderful. However, he said, when the stakes are high "every policeman is revealed as the guard dog of the bosses."

The meeting finished with the singing of the "Internationale." All the participants were then invited to a special social organized by the miners of Bold. Over 900 people attended the social and £1,000 was raised through collection and auctions. □

Textile union in key struggle

Demands recognition, rehiring of fired members

By Barry Fatland

MONTEVIDEO — Workers at the Alparbatas textile factory, the largest in Uruguay, have been on strike since October 2 in an attempt to force the company to recognize their union, an affiliate of the Textile Workers Congress (COT). They are also demanding the reinstatement of five unionists who have been fired already in the course of the struggle.

Strikers occupied the plant for two days before being evicted by the police. Several days later, however, they returned to occupy the company's administrative offices briefly, until the cops again forced them out.

The demands of the strikers, unanimously adopted at a meeting of more than 850, included: immediate reinstatement of the five fired unionists; recognition of the union; back pay for days lost in the strike; a wage increase; and a cost-of-living adjustment to be made every four months to help keep up with rampant inflation.

Earlier this year workers were able to force the Textile Industries Association and the Ministry of Labor to recognize the COT throughout the textile industry. This concession was granted after the firing of Mabel López for her union activity precipitated a work slowdown and overtime ban at Alparbatas. The victory set the stage for the current struggle for recognition of the local and the economic demands, even though the union was unable to win reinstatement for López.

Workers I spoke with during the fourth week of the strike explained that their protest actions began again in early September when another worker was fired. Since September 3, when the bosses dismissed Aníbal Campos because they said they had "lost confidence in him," the workers had been refusing overtime and had been working strictly by the rules in protest.

On October 1 the factory managers fired four more union activists, whom they accused of harassing procompany workers. These firings touched off the strike and occupations.

Alparbatas workers have been reaching out to other unions and working people throughout Montevideo with marches, leafleting, and press interviews to tell the truth about their struggle. They have not been alone. Workers in three other textile plants in the city — Fibratex, Glencur, and La Mundial — are also on strike around similar demands and employing similar tactics.

When I interviewed activists from Alparbatas at the union's offices on October 25, they were making final preparations for support actions to be held the following day. These included a 24-hour industry-wide strike and a march on the Chamber of Commerce head-

quarters.

The Alparbatas plant, with nearly 1,300 workers, is the largest of about 40 textile mills in Uruguay. The outcome of this strike, therefore, will be important to all the country's 11,000 textile workers, almost three-quarters of whom are organized by affiliates of the COT. The majority of Alparbatas workers are women, and the unionists I spoke to pointed out that the textile industry is one of the few in Uruguay in which the unions had been able to win equal pay for women.

Although the plant was originally organized

'The prisoners cannot wait!'

By Barry Fatland

MONTEVIDEO — More than 300 people marched through the working-class neighborhood of La Teja October 25 with torches, banners, and posters demanding general, unrestricted amnesty for the 566 political prisoners still being held by Uruguay's military rulers. They had turned out for the protest despite the fact that it had been officially postponed until the following week due to bad weather.

The action was organized by the local committee of relatives of political prisoners, exiles, and the disappeared. Family members of victims of the military regime's repression led the march.

Flags and banners representing the Broad Front (FA), Independent Democratic Left (IDI), Party for the Victory of the People (PVP), and the Socialist Workers Party of Uruguay (PST) were the most prominent. Striking workers from the Alparbatas textile factory leafleted the crowd.

People along the march route, young and old, joined in the rhythmic chants calling for freeing all the political prisoners and punishing the military officials responsible for the jailings and deaths.

The demonstration was part of a campaign that has seen regular actions, some as large as 100,000 since early August, when the government agreed to a partial amnesty. The demonstrators in La Teja vowed to redouble their efforts to build the following week's march.

Earlier in the day I had stopped by the Casa del Liberado (House of the Freed Political Prisoner).

The Casa del Liberado was founded in June to provide a place for the mothers and other relatives of political prisoners to come together to help break down the feeling of isolation many of them experience. It fulfills many important tasks, not the least of which is the distribution of much-needed clothing to former

in 1952, since the U.S.-backed military coup of June 1973 all unions in the country have been destroyed or driven underground. Only last year had union activists begun to rebuild the COT from the ground up, factory by factory.

Each organized factory now has its own factory commission, and a general assembly of workers at each plant decides major policy questions of the union.

Strikers told me that their average wage is now only about 33 cents an hour, or \$55 per month before taxes. Rent for an average apartment for a family of four in Montevideo is at least \$55 a month. From 1968 to 1984 Uruguayan workers have suffered a 70 percent drop in their real wages.

Alparbatas is part of a large multinational operation, with plants in Brazil and Argentina, as well as Uruguay. □

political prisoners who are unable to find work.

Many of the women are in their fifties or sixties. Some have lost one or more of their loved ones. Others have a son or daughter still in prison. The most fortunate have had their loved ones freed.

On October 14 a prisoner at the Punta de Rieles women's prison was beaten with sticks by prison guards in full view of her children, who had come to visit her. Others have been denied visitation rights. More than a dozen of the 60 women political prisoners at Punta de Rieles have had all their rights taken away for six to seven weeks for no apparent reason.

Others are in more imminent danger.

Adolfo Wassen Alaniz, a former leader of the National Liberation Movement (MLN — Tupamaros) is dying of cancer. His jailers are deliberately denying him adequate medical attention. The same is the case for Nérida Fontora, also of the MLN.

Jorge Walter Frutos is one of six PST members still held prisoner. His health is rapidly deteriorating, and adequate medical care is being denied. His wife, Mariela, was threatened when she attempted to visit him at the military hospital in mid-October.

Due to the Uruguayan people's overwhelming opposition to the military junta, the 11-year-old dictatorship was forced in August to call elections for November 25 and to promise to turn over the government to elected civilians on March 1, 1985. But many people fear that the discredited and hated military officials will continue to torture and kill the remaining political prisoners unless the maximum pressure is mobilized in Uruguay and throughout the world.

As the new socialist newspaper *La Unidad*, which was sold for the first time at the October 25 demonstration, put it, "The political prisoners cannot wait!" □

Mass upheaval hits imperialist domination

Militia formed to defend country from French, U.S. aggression

By Ernest Harsch

Enjoying considerable popular support, on Aug. 4, 1983, a group of radical junior officers and left-wing political activists seized power in the West African country of Burkina, then known as Upper Volta.

The new government, its leaders declared, would pursue a "revolutionary course" to mobilize the population to both fight imperialist domination and carry through a progressive social transformation of the country.

According to Capt. Thomas Sankara, the chairman of the National Council of the Revolution (CNR) and the new president, the strug-

This is the first of two background articles on the revolutionary upsurge in Burkina. The second will look at the political mobilizations and social programs initiated under the National Council of the Revolution.

gle in Burkina aims toward constructing "a new society free of social injustice, free of the century-old domination and exploitation of international imperialism." Aug. 4, 1983, he said, was a victory over imperialism and the "reactionary social forces" within Burkina that are allied with it.

The CNR's anti-imperialist stance has won it widespread support among the masses of Burkinabè (as the people are now called).

Legacy of French domination

Since the late 19th century, the peoples of Upper Volta were under the yoke of French colonial rule. Although they won their formal independence in 1960, the country was governed by a succession of neocolonial regimes that remained subservient to Paris.

According to Sankara, there came to power "a bourgeoisie that delighted in protecting its meager acquisitions" and that sought to simply take the place of the white colonial authorities "both in political practice and in life-style." The political personalities of the time all had the same basic interests and were "intimately tied up with the political and financial dealings of the comprador, bureaucratic, and political bourgeoisies and by their role as intermediaries for some large foreign enterprises."

Upper Volta was part of the so-called French Community, with its currency tied to the French franc and its economy dependent on French trade, credit, and investments.

As a result of this imperialist oppression and exploitation, the 7 million people of Upper Volta were kept impoverished, and the country remained economically underdeveloped. Its

per capita income is one of the lowest in the world. Average life expectancy is just 40 years. More than 92 percent of the people are illiterate. The infant mortality rate is a staggering 180 for every 1,000 live births — the world's highest.

Famine is recurrent, not only because the country is arid and has suffered from severe drought over the past decade, but also because the French-imposed system of cotton production has reduced the acreage devoted to food crops.

Radical stirrings

In reaction to this desperate situation, the working people of Upper Volta repeatedly mobilized in opposition to the policies of the neocolonial regimes. General strikes, demonstrations, student protests, and other actions were common and led to the downfall of several governments.

To keep this unrest under control, the military hierarchy frequently displaced the civilian politicians and assumed direct governmental power, often employing dictatorial methods and growing fat from corruption. In one form or another, the top officer corps governed the country since 1966.

But radical political ideas spread within the unions and student organizations. Left-wing political groups were formed and won adherents. This ferment eventually found an echo within the ranks of the army itself, including among a layer of young junior officers.

One such officer was Thomas Sankara. He established clandestine contacts with trade unionists and opposed various corrupt practices of the senior officer corps. In 1981, after serving several months as minister of information in the military regime headed by Col. Saye Zerbo, he was dismissed for publicly condemning censorship of the press.

In late 1982, Zerbo was overthrown in a coup spearheaded by noncommissioned officers and rank-and-file soldiers. A new military governing body, the People's Salvation Council (CSP), was set up, and Maj. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo became president.

The CSP was an uneasy coalition of pro-imperialist senior officers and more radical-minded junior officers. The latter wielded considerable influence within the CSP and succeeded in naming Commander Jean-Baptiste Lingani, a close colleague of Sankara's, as secretary-general of the CSP. In January 1983, Sankara himself was appointed prime minister.

Sankara used his position to organize mass rallies throughout the country. He denounced the "internal enemies of the people" and prom-

ised to support the struggles of the trade unions. Above all, he urged the Voltaic people to fight against imperialist domination. He publicly expressed admiration for the radical nationalist governments of Libya and neighboring Ghana, solidarized with various liberation movements, and condemned U.S. imperialism's counterrevolutionary interventions in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The French imperialists and their allies within the country became alarmed. They quickly acted to eliminate Sankara and stifle the rising anti-imperialist sentiment that was expressed in the mass rallies, some of which drew tens of thousands of participants.

An intervention that backfired

On May 17, 1983, rightist officers in the CSP carried out a palace coup. Sankara and Lingani were deposed and arrested, as were several other junior officers, government officials, trade unionists, and political activists. Ouédraogo stayed on as a figurehead president.

This coup was backed by Paris and the proimperialist regime of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in neighboring Ivory Coast. It took place just one day after French President François Mitterrand's adviser on African affairs, Guy Penne, arrived in the Voltaic capital, Ouagadougou. Shortly afterward, the French government rushed a shipment of arms to the new regime.

This coup sparked a massive popular upsurge. Within days, thousands of students took to the streets, chanting, "Down with imperialism!" and stoning the French embassy. Capt. Blaise Compaoré, another colleague of Sankara's, managed to evade arrest and led the army garrison in Pô, near the border with Ghana, into open rebellion. Activists of various left-wing groups established contact with the mutineers in Pô and were given military training; they also distributed leaflets and organized resistance to the coup in Ouagadougou and other towns.

Fearing a major military assault against Pô, possibly involving French troops, Sankara's supporters struck. On August 4, the troops and activists in Pô, joined by other units, marched on Ouagadougou and overthrew the Ouédraogo regime.

Sankara was freed and assumed leadership of the CNR. That same day, he appealed over the radio for the population to come out onto the streets and form popularly-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). The response was immediate. By the early morning hours of August 5, thousands were



Demonstration in solidarity with Namibian independence struggle, held in Ouagadougou in October 1983.

demonstrating in Ouagadougou in support of the CNR, and the first CDRs were being established in poor neighborhoods of the capital, such as Tedpalogho. Within days, support demonstrations of workers, students, and others swept Bobo Dioulasso, Ouahigouya, Banfora, Boromo, and other towns.

Thanks to this massive backing, the CNR succeeded in overcoming the last armed resistance to the August 4 takeover. Less than a week later, Col. Yorian Somé and Maj. Fidel Guebré (the main figures in the May 17 coup) were killed while trying to stage a comeback.

Denying that August 4 was just another military coup, Sankara characterized it as "a genuine popular insurrection: it was not only a small group of armed soldiers, but the entire population of Ouagadougou, that poured into the streets."

The civilian participation in the upsurge was reflected in the composition of the government named by the CNR. Among its 21 members were five military figures, while 10 ministers belonged to two left-wing parties, the Patriotic League for Development (Lipad) and the Union of Communist Struggle (ULC).

In the weeks and months that followed, the CNR and government encouraged numerous mass mobilizations and initiated a number of progressive measures: the construction of new schools, health clinics, and workers' housing; an adult literacy program; steps toward agrarian reform; public trials of corrupt officials and army officers, as well as a drastic purge of the officer corps; the formation of a popular militia; moves to reduce sexual discrimination; limitation of the powers of the traditional tribal chiefs; and an expansion of workers' rights.

Foreign policy shift

The new government adopted a foreign policy that was strikingly different from that of the previous regimes. Rather than putting forward positions dictated by Paris, it has expressed stands that are in direct conflict with those of imperialism on a wide range of issues.

The government of Burkina — as the country was renamed on the first anniversary of the 1983 seizure of power — has expressed its sol-

idarity with the liberation movements of southern Africa, in particular the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa and the South West Africa People's Organisation of Namibia.

In April 1984, Sankara became the first head of state to visit the areas of Western Sahara controlled by the Polisario Front, which is fighting for independence from the Moroccan monarchy. The Burkinabè leaders have opposed the French-backed regime of Hissène Habré in Chad.

Support for the Palestine Liberation Organization and the struggle it leads have featured prominently in Burkinabè foreign policy statements. The PLO has opened an embassy in Ouagadougou.

The Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (Fretilin), which is fighting against Indonesian rule, has also named an ambassador to Burkina.

Speaking before the United Nations on October 4, Sankara again blasted the U.S. war against Nicaragua's revolutionary government and condemned the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

While emphasizing the struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America against imperialist domination, the Burkinabè leaders have also expressed solidarity with struggles of working people within the imperialist countries themselves.

Old relations and new

Though the new leaders of Burkina now condemn imperialist policies, the country remains dependent on the world capitalist market and is in great need of foreign investment and economic assistance. The government has thus sought to maintain its trade links with the imperialist powers and its access to credit and financial aid.

France remains the biggest source of Burkina's imports, and is the second largest foreign market for Burkinabè goods. However, the Burkinabè authorities are seeking to renegotiate the earlier trade and aid agreements with France, which they consider unfair.

Meanwhile, the government is attempting, with some success, to diversify its foreign eco-

nomical relations. Since coming to power, the CNR has concluded agreements with Japan, Canada, the European Economic Community, and other countries and financial institutions.

A particular emphasis has been to establish closer ties with other African countries. Because of Upper Volta's past neocolonial links with France, such relations had often been minimal.

Even before the CNR took power, Sankara had close political ties with the radical nationalist government of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, which borders Burkina on the south. During a mass rally in Bobo Dioulasso in February 1984 to welcome Rawlings, Sankara revealed that the Ghanaian leader had secretly provided military and other assistance to Sankara's supporters after he was deposed in the proimperialist coup of May 1983. After the August 1983 upsurge, other ties were forged as well. Joint military maneuvers of the armed forces of the two countries were held along their common border in November 1983.

Various economic agreements have been concluded with Angola, Congo, Algeria, and other African countries.

Initially, particularly extensive relations were established with Libya, though these have since tapered off somewhat. While Sankara has expressed support for Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in his government's conflicts with imperialism, he has also stated that "we have differences." Two differences involve the CNR's support for the PLO (whose central leadership Qaddafi has been seeking to undermine) and for the Polisario fighters in Western Sahara (to whom Qaddafi has cut off aid).

Some neighboring governments have been hostile to the advent of the CNR. Chief among them has been the regime of Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast (to which more than a million Burkinabè citizens have migrated in search of jobs).

Sankara has attributed such reactions among the more directly proimperialist regimes of West Africa to their fear of the upsurge in Burkina. "There are some people who are afraid — afraid that the revolution might engage an immediate proceeding involving them," Sankara has noted. While stating that the CNR did not aim to stir up unrest in neighboring countries, Sankara has also pointed out that conditions similar to those that led to the August events in Burkina exist elsewhere as well. Borders are "mere administrative divisions," he said, and "the wind of freedom, dignity, self-reliance, independence, and anti-imperialist struggle blows southward and northward and over the boundaries."

Aid from workers states

One of the most dramatic changes in Burkina's foreign relations since the CNR came to power has been the rapid growth of political, economic, and other relations with various workers states.

The Chinese government helped build a \$14 million stadium in Ouagadougou and has provided other assistance as well. The Vietnamese

and Albanian governments have opened embassies in Burkina. Sankara has visited Yugoslavia, and other officials have gone to North Korea.

Commander Lingani, the defense minister, has visited the Soviet Union for discussions on military affairs. Moscow has provided Burkina with some agricultural equipment, and in September 1984 a score of Soviet technical assistants arrived in Ouagadougou.

Meanwhile, the CNR has expressed some criticisms of Soviet policy, such as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. After Moscow offered 500 tons of cereals over a six-month period in response to the famine conditions in several areas of Burkina, the CNR turned it down. "We feel that is a derisory amount compared to our needs," Sankara explained. "We are refusing also in order that there is no confusion. It is not because of Soviet aid that we sometimes share common positions, but because of our mutual respect for certain values."

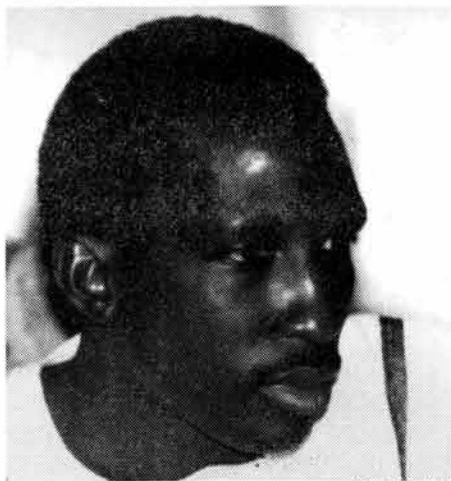
In an interview in early 1984, Sankara stated, "We think that the revolutionary USSR must accept criticism as a natural act of every revolutionary. We are thus fully prepared to receive criticisms from Moscow when they are made. But we do not confuse things. We cannot draw a parallel between the socialist countries and those that continue to consider Africa as their game preserve, their backyard, their market, where they can dump any kind of shoddy goods and can exploit our minerals."

In his October 4 United Nations speech, Sankara voiced his admiration for the Russian revolution, stating, "The great revolution of October 1917 transformed the world and made possible the victory of the proletariat, shook the foundations of capitalism and made possible the dreams of justice of the Paris Commune."

The Burkinabè government has also established numerous ties with revolutionary Cuba.

In December 1983, the two governments signed an economic, scientific, and technical cooperation agreement. Since then, Cuba has sent nearly two dozen medical personnel to Burkina, as well as experts in economic planning, agriculture, stockbreeding, and other fields. In addition, Cuban assistance has been given in transportation, education, commerce, and dam construction. Cuba has provided aid for the rehabilitation of the Bobo Dioulasso airport and is studying plans to build a railway between Bobo Dioulasso and Accra, Ghana, engage in various mining ventures, construct a prefabricated housing plant, and develop sugar plantations.

In April, the government radio station in Ouagadougou featured a program on the anniversary of Washington's 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The program concluded, "The imperialist aggression at the Bay of Pigs is to a large extent a lesson for struggling peoples who must be inspired by the rich experience of the struggle of the Cuban people. . . . Our destinies have been linked, and thanks to our internationalist solidarity, our two peoples are now fighting the common



THOMAS SANKARA

enemy — imperialism."

In connection with his trip to the United Nations in early October, Sankara stopped in Cuba twice, both on his way to New York and on his way back home.

On the return stop, Sankara was awarded Cuba's Order of José Martí. While noting some of the difficulties facing the people of Burkina in their efforts to change their country, Sankara stated in his acceptance speech, "But there are the positive examples such as yours to raise the morale of the less determined; to strengthen the revolutionary convictions of others; and to spur people on to struggle against hunger, disease, and ignorance in our country. . . . In this struggle we know we can count on the firm support of the revolutionary people of Cuba and all those who uphold the ideals of José Martí."

Coup plots, sabotage, assassination

The major imperialist powers, which look unkindly on any efforts by former colonial countries to assert their independence or promote progressive social changes, have reacted with hostility to the Sankara government. This has been expressed both through direct pressures and threats and through covert backing to domestic opponents of the CNR.

Although the French imperialists failed in their first attempts to get rid of Sankara and his colleagues, they have not given up. Mitterrand's Socialist Party government has been the chief agent of this policy.

In September 1983, just a month after the CNR seized power, Jacques Huntzinger, the head of the French Socialist Party's Foreign Relations Department, visited Ouagadougou. He demanded that Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo, a prominent political figure living in self-imposed exile, be included in the government. Ki-Zerbo, whose Voltaic Progressive Front (FPV) is a member of the Socialist International, had been a major figure behind Col. Saye Zerbo's military junta. The CNR rejected Huntzinger's demand.

That same month, Colonel Zerbo himself was arrested amid reports that a group of mili-

tary officers in Ouagadougou had attempted to stage a rightist coup against the CNR.

Other acts of opposition followed:

- In late October 1983, an unidentified plane crashed near Pô, during what was thought to have been an abortive attempt to bomb the military garrison there.

- On Nov. 2, 1983, a white male was shot to death near the CNR headquarters, during curfew hours. On his body were fraudulent French identity papers.

- On March 20–21, 1984, the reactionary leadership of the National Union of African Teachers of Upper Volta called a strike after three of its leaders were arrested on charges of carrying out "subversive activities in liaison with foreign groups, notably French, Belgian and Israeli." Ki-Zerbo's FPV backed the strike financially.

- In late March and early April, two government grain warehouses were damaged in arson attacks.

- On May 26 and 27, a number of military officers and others were arrested for involvement in a coup plot scheduled to take place May 28. According to the authorities' investigation, the plotters had acted in collusion with several prominent exiles, including Ki-Zerbo, and had sought or obtained assistance from several neighboring regimes, as well as from Israel. Some had visited the French and U.S. embassies in Ouagadougou.

Of those arrested, seven were executed, including the head of security at the Ouagadougou airport, several officers previously dismissed from the armed forces, a businessman, and a former mayor of Ouagadougou.

The French authorities reacted sharply to the executions. When Compaoré visited Paris shortly afterward, the Socialist Party leadership refused to meet with him, while Minister of Cooperation and Development Christian Nucci said he was "disturbed" by the executions and "irritated" by the accusations of French involvement.

Compaoré replied, "We have a right to be wary of the French authorities. If people say they are loyal to Ki-Zerbo, they are also capable of supporting him. The man was implicated body and soul in the recent attempted coup."

Sankara commented that the election of Mitterrand in May 1981 had done nothing to change French relations with African countries. "France today is no different than it was yesterday," he said.

- In late July, Maj. Amadou Sawadogo, the army deputy chief of staff and a key aide to Lingani, was shot in Ouagadougou by unknown assailants. He subsequently died.

- U.S. pressures have also mounted. When the Burkinabè leaders appealed to Washington for aid to artificially induce rainfall, the U.S. authorities refused. During Sankara's visit to the United Nations, he was threatened by the U.S. ambassador to the UN with a cutoff in all U.S. economic assistance unless the Bur-

kinabè government voted in line with U.S. policy.

On October 11, the official daily, *Sidwaya*, indirectly accused the U.S. ambassador, Leonard Neher, of "subversive activities." These included making "unusual" contact with former officers and troops who had been purged from the army, for the purpose of "seeking, contacting and recruiting agents." It called on the government to "give him short shrift."

'Our defense is our people'

In response to the imperialist threats and acts of aggression, the government has sought to organize and arm large sections of the population.

"Upper Volta will not be a Chile," Sankara vowed just a few months after the August 1983 takeover. At another point he stressed, "our best means of defense is our people, their mobilization, their continual education, their permanent vigilance, which will allow them at any time to identify their true enemies."

Besides frequent political mobilizations, this has also involved major changes in the

way the country's military defense is organized.

Large sections of the old officer corps have been purged, eliminating from positions of power many of those who were tied to the old bourgeois parties, the corrupt administrative apparatus, the imperialist corporations, and the reactionary tribal chiefs. What was left of the old armed forces has been reorganized, including efforts to eliminate the traditional privileges that went with a uniform, the engagement of soldiers in productive labor, and the carrying out of literacy classes and political education among the troops. "A soldier without political training," Sankara has frequently stated, "is a criminal in power."

Alongside the standing armed forces, the CNR has also encouraged the formation of a mass-based militia.

This militia began to emerge within the first months of the new government. It grew out of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, which were formed in neighborhoods, towns, and villages to support and carry through the various social programs and to begin to draw broader sectors of the population

into the political life of the country. The CDRs — to which virtually anyone can belong — selected cadres for military training. These then formed Popular Vigilance Brigades (BPVs), which are armed militia units based in local communities.

By the time of the first anniversary of the CNR's seizure of power, the strength of the country's total armed forces — both regular troops and militia members — had grown to some 60,000. This dwarfed the size of the previous army, which was composed of just 4,000 troops.

The anniversary celebrations in Ouagadougou gave the Burkinabè leadership an opportunity to display the country's new defense capabilities. Before the eyes of large crowds of Burkinabè and foreign observers — including French and U.S. officials — helicopters, transport aircraft, and new MIG-17 jet fighters swooped overhead, heralding the formation of a new, small air force.

Among the mass processions, thousands of militia members marched. They carried both Kalashnikov automatic weapons and shovels, to symbolize their twin tasks of defense and production. □

Philippines

Textile workers discuss struggle

Low wages, unsafe conditions force long strike at Manila factory

By Deb Shnookal

MANILA — While the coal miners in Britain have been waging their historic struggle, another equally determined and hard-fought battle is under way on the other side of the world — on the picket line at Artex, a textile factory in Manila. When I visited the picket line at Artex in September, the workers there were full of questions about the British strike, which had given them hope and encouragement.

The Artex strike is part of a strike wave that has hit the Philippines this year under the pressure of the mounting economic crisis, exacerbated by the country's \$25 billion foreign debt. Shortly after the strike began on April 24, the Filipino labor movement showed its growing strength in a May Day rally of 60,000 people. Then, on May 28, a general strike took place in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) or "free trade zone" in Bataan. The 24-hour general strike involved 16,000 workers from 19 companies and was held in response to the violent repression of a strike at Inter Asia Container Industrial Corporation and union-busting by bosses at several other factories in the area. The strikers demanded decent wages and an end to harassment by the police and military.

President Ferdinand Marcos' government has increased its repression to meet the rise of the workers movement. Two striking workers

were shot dead on the picket line at Foamtex, a rubber factory, in April. Six leaders of the free trade union coalition, May First Movement (KMU), were arrested June 22, and several other union leaders, including Crispin Beltran, secretary general of the KMU, have been detained since a general police round-up of unionists in August 1982.

The strike at Artex has had a national impact because of the number of workers involved and because it has lasted so long. With a work force of more than 2,000, the factory is large by Philippine standards.

In December 1983, Artex's contract with the company union expired. So the Artex workers decided to form their own union, United Artex Workers (SAMAR) and to affiliate to the KMU.

As we sat in a cramped little house with a dirt floor near the factory, some of the workers explained to me how the strike began.

"Before the strike," said Lando, "it had become very difficult. The management kept giving us higher and higher production quotas. The salary was very low — only 23 pesos [1 peso = US\$0.06] a day — including the cost-of-living allowance. Moreover, the management dismissed four of our union officers. So we went on strike. We wanted the government's wage decrees imposed."

The minimum wage as decreed by President

Marcos is 35 pesos a day, plus a 14-peso Emergency Cost-of-Living allowance.

Artex Development Corporation, the Taiwanese-Filipino company that owns the factory, has applied for exemption from the wage order, but this has been denied. Nevertheless, it continues to pay its workers only half the mandated minimum wage.

The working conditions in the textile factory are also appalling. "There is no ventilation inside," said Lando. "In the weaving department they are putting in watershowers to protect the yarn. But for us there are only a few blowers. They don't issue us masks, aprons, or gloves, and there is a lot of dust."

Teddi, a yarn controller, added, "It is very hot inside the factory. There are also problems with chemicals. Many chemicals are used to strengthen the yarn. They make breathing difficult and cause itching skin."

Artex has a policy of only hiring younger workers. A notice on the front gate announces that only workers under 25 years of age need apply for employment. The company has also increasingly been using "apprentices" to undermine wages and conditions. These workers are only paid 14.40 pesos a day and are prohibited from joining the union.

Only single women are hired, and women make up about half the work force. Noni told me that women face big problems in getting

their maternity pay. "Here we say that the baby will be grown up by the time the mother gets her maternity leave!" she said. "No consideration is given to women — even when we are pregnant," she said. At the same time, women face serious problems of sexual harassment, according to Noni. "The supervisors always go into the special department for the newly hired apprentices to look at the young women," she said.

Later when I spoke with KMU public relations officer Lolita Guzam, she told me that harassment against women is a big problem on the job. They even have a special name for it: "laid off, or laid down."

Housing is another problem at Artex. The company provides some housing within the factory compound, but the foremen hold the contracts and sub-let the apartments, reaping significant profits for themselves, while the housing is overcrowded.

Those workers living in the surrounding area of the northern Manila suburb of Malabon fare no better. Every year in the rainy season, the area floods. People have to stay in their homes, keeping their chickens and other animals on their roofs, as they have nowhere else to go. The children swim around in the putrid water. Disease is rife.

Most strikers from rural areas

As they spoke about conditions at Artex, the workers revealed their shattered expectations. Most had come from the provinces, from peasant families. Teddi, 32, had come from the sugar-producing island of Negros. His first job in Manila was in a cement factory, "but my body couldn't take the dust," he said. Then he worked as a waiter where "the management treated me like a slave," he said. He started at Artex 14 years ago on a wage of four pesos a day.

"We came here expecting to earn more money," explained another worker. "But this was wrong. Now it's too late. We can't go back. Before, I was a farmer and a fisherman," he said, "but that wasn't sufficient to earn the daily necessities of life."

Now, while on strike, many of the Artex workers have had to send their families back home to the provinces, to ensure they get enough to eat. This adds to the strain on the strikers. "The separation is very, very hard," said Teddi. "Two months ago I went home to my province because I was very lonely. My son and daughter were crying because they wanted to come back to Manila with me."

There have been brutal clashes between the police and the strikers. The worst confrontation was on July 9. About 1,000 soldiers and cops were mobilized with rifles, truncheons, and firehoses. They attacked the picket line under the pretext of enforcing the so-called "Anti-scab and Peaceful Picketing Law." This law, passed in 1981, protects the entry and exit of products and non-striking workers.

On that day, the pickets were given 20 minutes to disperse, but they refused. "It was mostly women on the picket line," related



Strikers from Artex textile plant in Manila.

Felipe. "The women in the front line were singing nationalistic songs. Then the cops used rubber truncheons, shields, guns, and water cannon."

"We fought back with stones," said Teddi. "The local community supported us. The workers didn't start it. We had to defend ourselves, so we fought back. They [the police] retreated. When they realized they couldn't force us to retreat they used their guns — Armalite rifles."

The police set up checkpoints in the surrounding area to prevent other workers from coming to the aid of the Artex strikers. But the local residents joined the pickets. Then the military went on a rampage through the community in their search for strikers, breaking down doors, smashing windows, and riddling walls with bullets. Scores of people were injured, several seriously, including local residents, and 23 people were arrested.

Despite the police success in breaking the picket line July 9, the pickets were reestablished the very next day.

I asked whether such violent repression deterred workers from taking strike action. "The workers are learning from their experiences," replied Teddi. "They are not afraid. We think it is better to die fighting for our legitimate rights than to die for nothing."

The Artex strikers see themselves as taking

a stand for all Filipino workers. "If we win," said Lando, "workers in other factories will demand more. That is why Artex is fighting so hard against us."

"The problems of the Artex workers are the problems of the workers in other companies," said Teddi. "And the workers' problems are the same as the urban poor. In every sector of this country, there is one problem: imperialism. In my opinion Nicaragua is a second Vietnam. Nicaragua and the Philippines both suffer from U.S. imperialism, and we are both semicolonial, semifeudal countries. Imperialism owns all the vital industries. You can start from the bubble gum, chiclets, up to the gasoline. Who is the owner of these things? Not the Filipinos."

"The Filipino workers are not angry with the people of the imperialist countries," Teddi continued. "We don't hate the Australian people, but we hate the imperialists. The same goes for the United States, Britain, and Canada. We must unite with all the workers of the world because they also suffer the exploitation of the capitalists. This is the message of the Artex workers and the workers of the Philippines."

Messages of support and donations to the striking Artex workers can be sent to the KMU, Room 332, Regina Building, Escolta, Manila, Philippines. □

Interview with Rolando Olalia

KMU chairman on progress of independent unions

[Attorney Rolando Olalia is the chairman of the May First Movement (KMU), an independent coalition of 12 labor federations and more than 100 individual unions. He also heads one of its component federations, the National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU), and the National Coalition of Workers Against Poverty (PKMK).

[Olalia is the son of the founder and former chairman of the KMU, Felixberto Olalia, who died in December 1983 after his health had

been seriously undermined by nine months in detention.

[The following interview was conducted by *Intercontinental Press* correspondent Deb Shnookal in September at the KMU offices in Manila.]

* * *

Question. How was the KMU formed?

Answer. The KMU was officially organized on May 1, 1980. It started with about

100,000 members. It now includes around 400,000 to 500,000 workers from the garment, textile, mining, steel, food, and hotel industries. Its organization extends all over the Philippines.

Q. Can you function quite openly?

A. Definitely yes, because it is a legal organization. Although the military of course claims it is a front of the CPP [Communist Party of the Philippines] and the NPA [New People's Army] or that it is a "subversive" organization.

It was because of the continuing repression of the trade union movement that the KMU was organized. This repression started with the declaration of martial law in September 1972.

Q. How strong is the trade union movement today?

A. At present there are only two trade union centers in the Philippines. There is the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), which is recognized by the government, and the KMU.

The TUCP is controlled by the government. It has about 600,000 members. We admit that the TUCP is bigger than the KMU. But in terms of sympathizers, the KMU is much bigger, because it is supported by all sectors. The TUCP is a company union. Practically all its officers are government officials.

Q. What are wages and work conditions like in the Philippines?

A. The minimum wage is 35 pesos a day. There is an emergency cost-of-living allowance of 14 pesos, which brings the wages to 49 pesos. Workers outside of Manila receive less. These wages are below the poverty level.

The rate of inflation is about 50 percent per year. This makes the ordinary factory worker even more impoverished. Even the government statistics indicate an ordinary worker needs 75 pesos a day to support a family of three.

Q. What is behind the struggle of the Artex textile workers, who have been on strike since April?

A. The reason the Artex workers went on strike was that the company did not want to comply with labor standards concerning the minimum wage law. In fact the Artex workers are receiving only 23 pesos a day, including the allowances. You can imagine, if 49 pesos a day is below the poverty level and you can hardly exist, how much worse it is on a wage of 23 pesos.

Of course the owner of Artex and his brother are very close to Marcos. When I met with the minister of labor, I asked him why the government can't enforce its own labor laws.

The primary reason there are strikes in the Philippines is that there are violations of the labor laws on minimum wages and allowances and so on.



ROLANDO OLALIA

Deb Shnooka/IP

Q. Does the KMU organize agricultural workers?

A. The biggest organization of sugar workers in the south, the National Federation of Sugar Workers, is an affiliate of KMU. Its membership is about 120,000. The sugar workers are among the most oppressed and exploited.

Q. I understand machinery is being introduced from Australia that will eliminate thousands of jobs.

A. This is true. It will increase unemployment. Mechanization may mean up to 50 percent of the workers, maybe 100,000, will be permanently laid off.

The Philippines cannot solve unemployment because it has no industrialization program. It is concentrating on agribusiness, which is controlled by Marcos' cronies.

The sugar workers' wages are below the minimum wage. The working conditions are those typical of the feudal system where the landlord controls the movement of the workers. The sugar workers can't protest, because most of the sugar owners in the south have their own armies. Imelda [Marcos, the wife of the president], comes from a wealthy sugar family. But the sugar workers union is very militant.

Q. How many trade unionists are presently in jail?

A. There are presently five KMU leaders still under detention from the six who were arrested on July 22 this year. Then there are a number of others who have been detained since the crackdown in August 1982 when my father was arrested. Crispin Beltran [secretary-general of the KMU] was arrested at this time. They were charged with subversion and economic sabotage.

The minister of labor, Blas Ople, has endorsed the temporary release of Beltran. But Melacañang [Marcos' presidential palace] refused. Under the Preventative Detention Act you can be arrested at any time, without any evidence against you. And you cannot be released until the president orders it. Beltran is a victim of this procedure.

Q. What are the main demands of the union movement today?

A. The major demands are the scrapping or repeal of several repressive laws and executive orders.

The "New Strike Law" enacted in 1981 restricts the right to strike. Management is given the power to lock out or dismiss workers; the president or labor minister can assume control over any dispute; strikes "adversely affecting the national interest" are banned; strikes must be voted for by a two-thirds majority; union officers or members can be dismissed for participating in an "illegal" strike; and so on.

The "Anti-scab and Peaceful Picketing Law" of 1981 allows the ingress and egress of nonstriking workers. Two other laws prohibit strikes in the export-oriented industries. This is perfect protection for the foreign investors, particularly in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs). Strikes are prohibited there, but there have been strikes because the people are so oppressed and exploited by the multinational corporations. They call the EPZs the "concentration camps of cheap labor."

Q. Are unions banned in these EPZs?

A. No, they are not banned, but they are banned from striking. Nevertheless we have had three general strikes in the EPZ in Bataan. The first was in June 1982 and was one of the reasons for the arrest of my father and the others. The issues of this strike were low wages, the dismissal of union officials, and union-busting tactics of the management. It lasted for three days.

Q. The comparison has been made between Nicaragua before the fall of Somoza and the Philippines today. Do you think this is accurate?

A. It is accurate because Somoza, the shah of Iran, and Marcos are all the same. The political repression, the salvaging of people, the arrest and detention of people for no reason whatsoever, the government's cronies flourishing in business — there are many similarities.

The primary comparison is the support of the U.S. to Marcos and the others.

Q. What message do you have to the workers of countries that have big investments in the Philippines?

A. Our message is to forge stronger solidarity and to counteract and fight any repressive intentions of the multinational companies in exploiting and oppressing the workers of the world. □

Labour's first three months in office

Capitalists pleased with government's antiworker policies

By Andy Jarvis

[The following article appeared in the October 19 issue of *Socialist Action*, a fortnightly newspaper published in Auckland, New Zealand, that reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, New Zealand section of the Fourth International. Footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

The election of the new Labour government on July 14 was welcomed by the majority of working people. In working class communities and factories there was widespread jubilation at Labour's victory.

For eight and a half years under the National Party government, working people were subjected to deep-going attacks on their rights and living standards. They looked to the elections and the Labour Party as the means to turn this situation around.

Labour's election campaign promised full employment, economic growth, and a "fair distribution" of national wealth. It promised to introduce greater "democracy" and to restore social welfare services. And it pledged to bring about justice for women, Maoris, Pacific Islanders, and youth, and to advance the cause of "world peace."

Parliamentary Labour leader David Lange declared in a national television address during the campaign, "we are the friends of the unions" and "the friends of the hundreds of thousands of responsible New Zealand workers."

Trade union leaders organised support for the Labour candidates during the election, and enthusiastically welcomed the election outcome.

Federation of Labour (FOL) president Jim Knox, for example, in an interview in the August *FOL Bulletin*, is reported as saying that "the change of government would benefit not only the workers of the country and the Federation of Labour but all the people of New Zealand."

Labour victory

Canterbury Trades Council secretary Gordon Walker stated in the September issue of the left-wing magazine *Monthly Review* that we could "look forward to a united New Zealand where the working person's voice is heard, understood, and positively acted on by Government."

The Socialist Unity Party (SUP) paper *Tribune*, which reflects the outlook of a significant layer of leading trade union officials, goes a step further. It says that the elections represented "the successful overthrow of the

forces of big business" and their replacement by the workers' "own government."

In their own way, the leaders of the "peace movement," many feminists, anti-racist activists, and other opponents of the policies of the previous Muldoon government, have similarly expressed enthusiastic endorsement of the new Labour government.

Socialist Action also welcomed the election of the Labour government. We described it as a "step forward for working people." We said that it put "trade unions and the oppressed in a potentially stronger position to push forward the struggles that began to emerge under Muldoon." And we said that it changed "the framework of politics in New Zealand to the advantage of working people."

David Lange's government has just completed its first three months in office. Does the balance sheet of this period justify any of the views expressed above? Has there been any fundamental political change to the advantage of workers, working farmers, and the oppressed, as a result of electing a majority of Labour MPs to the benches of parliament?

Many prominent ruling class representatives and the big business news media have been full of praise for the course followed by the new Labour government.

An editorial in the October 8 *Auckland Star*, for example, says that Labour "can be well pleased" with its first three months in office, which the *Star* labels a "transition from Muldoonism to middle-of-the-road rule," and as representing "a move to the right, not the left."

Labour's course

New Zealand's capitalist rulers have every reason to be pleased with David Lange's government. During the course of the past three months the bosses have been able to use this government to push forward their anti-worker austerity and pro-war offensive without any significant opposition.

For example, the 20 percent devaluation of the dollar and the lifting of interest rate controls have meant a jump in prices and a further erosion of living standards for working people throughout New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Over the past three months inflation has doubled, and is now heading back into double figures.

Wage freeze

The wage freeze has been extended into its third year. At the government's instigation, FOL leaders have accepted a new wage-fixing accord with the employers which institutionalises permanent wage controls based

on the sacrifice of working people's incomes to the profit needs of capitalism.

Unemployment remains over 100,000, and is predicted to begin rising again. The government is pushing ahead with measures aimed at speeding up the "restructuring" of New Zealand industry, which will mean more lay-offs and factory closures.

'Lower expectations'

Labour leaders have openly declared that their goal is to "lower the expectations" of working people. And Minister of Finance Roger Douglas is proudly boasting that Labour's November 8 budget is going to be "tough" on working people. "All the soft options have gone," he says.

At the same time, the recent period has seen the profits of big monopolies like Fletcher Challenge, Watties, and NZ Forest Products soar to record heights.

The new government has thrown the resources of the state into aiding New Zealand big business through the promotion of major overseas export drives.

"It is our turn to take the world by storm," Minister of Overseas Trade and Marketing Mike Moore told the annual convention of the Export Institute in Rotorua on August 13. "Let us . . . act as New Zealand Incorporated and win back our markets," he said.

The perspective put forward by the Labour leadership is that the economic crisis confronting New Zealand capitalism can be "overcome" by "beating" competition from other imperialist countries in the quest for markets and by intensifying the exploitation by New Zealand big business of workers and farmers in the semi-colonial countries of the Pacific Islands and South East Asia.

This view says that while right now working people in New Zealand must be prepared to make major sacrifices, in the longer run the economic and social problems confronting them can be "solved" at the expense of working people in the rest of the world.

War drive

Labour's imperialist trade policy is also inevitably a war policy.

The government's and employers' export campaign has been accompanied by racist appeals to national chauvinism and patriotism, as reflected, for example, by the "Keep New Zealand First" campaign being promoted in television advertisements.

It has been accompanied by strong government reaffirmation of New Zealand's commit-

ment to Anzus¹ and to other military pacts with its imperialist partners in the "Western alliance."

During his visit to the recent Anzus-sponsored Triad military exercise, David Lange stated his commitment to modernising and strengthening New Zealand's armed forces in order to improve their preparedness for participation in conventional wars. The government has pledged to maintain New Zealand's military base in Singapore and its armed forces presence in the Middle East and the Pacific.

Labour's leaders, like their National predecessors, continue to refer to the Pacific Islands as "our own backyard."

The political course of the new Labour government represents no fundamental break whatsoever with the political goals of New Zealand's capitalist ruling class, or with those of the previous National Party government.

'Progressive' changes

This is the political framework in which it is necessary to assess those policy stands of Labour which are being trumpeted as "progressive" changes, and on which attention has been focused by the media — from the capitalist dailies and state-controlled television, through to the majority of publications claiming to be radical or communist.

Labour's "anti-nuclear" foreign policy is being used to disguise the face that New Zealand's armed forces are an integral and active part of the imperialist nuclear-military network and a partner in imperialism's war against oppressed people in the Third World.

Its professed concern for the plight of "low-paid" families is being used to help justify the bosses' drive against the wages and incomes of workers and working farmers.

Labour leaders' expressed "sympathies" for the interests of women, Maoris, and Pacific Islanders remain at the level of words and are being used to help draw attention away from the deepening racism and sexism that inevitably goes hand in hand with the bosses' anti-worker, pro-war offensive.

Similarly, Labour's commitment to "consultation" and "consensus" — far from representing some form of "greater democracy" for working people and the oppressed — has proved to be a facade to help hide the fact that the present government, like the previous government, is a tool of the ruling class and the capitalist state in pushing forward this anti-worker offensive.

At the same time, by portraying the new government as representing a radical change, the ruling class has been successful in co-opting leaders of the trade unions and protest movements, and tying them more firmly to the coat-tails of New Zealand imperialism.

Leaders co-opted

For example, leaders of the mass "peace movement" are hailing Labour's statements

1. The imperialist military alliance of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.



New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange.

against nuclear-armed warships entering New Zealand ports as a genuine step towards peace, while leaving unchallenged Lange's commitment to maintaining New Zealand's armed forces as an imperialist cop in South East Asia and the Pacific.

In the name of helping the "low-paid" and upholding "consensus" with the employers, the leaders of the trade unions are surrendering the right of workers to maintain their living standards through industrial action.

Through the government's upcoming women's, Maori, and unemployment summits, the bosses are hoping to draw middle-class representatives of these layers more firmly into this process as well.

This political approach is being actively promoted by Labour Party trade union leaders — both those regarded as "right wing" and "left wing" alike.

For example, the SUP paper *Tribune* asserts that the focus of trade union activities today must be on building support for and helping strengthen the Labour government, and this means rejecting working class struggle directed against it.

In line with this perspective *Tribune* declares its support for the "consensus" reached with the employers at the recent Economic Summit, saying the summit succeeded in tying the bosses to "pro-worker" decisions. "Let's actively support the pro-worker conclusions of the Summit," it declares.

Reject struggle

In a similar vein a recent press statement by the Auckland Trades Council's Unemployed Workers Union states, "We do not favour confrontational situations with the Labour government" by the unemployed. Rather, "All of our

activities should be aimed at strengthening the Labour government."

Numerous similar examples could be quoted.

The logic of this approach is that working and oppressed people must forego the right to struggle for their needs and place themselves at the total mercy of the bosses and the state.

The experience of the last three months indicates that not only is the political course of the new Labour government a continuation of that followed by Muldoon, but that the Labour government has been, at least to date, a more compliant instrument of the ruling class for carrying out its policies. And it has been considerably more successful at promoting support for these policies, especially among the trade union officialdom and other middle class layers.

In light of these facts, what is the balance sheet that should be drawn of the July 14 snap election?

Politics in New Zealand during the first six months of 1984, leading up to the election, were characterised by an escalating ruling class offensive.

This had been the trend since 1982 when New Zealand's capitalist economy went into a new and deep recession. Workers and their organisations were coming under greater attack from the capitalist courts, the cops, and the Muldoon government, and the employers directly. The most oppressed layers — working women, Maoris, Pacific Island immigrants, and unemployed youth — were among those being hardest hit by this anti-worker offensive.

The bosses' military war drive was also deepening. At each step in the escalation of imperialist war — Britain's war against Argentina, Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the U.S. invasion of Grenada — New Zealand's rulers became more directly integrated into this war drive against the colonial revolution and the workers states.

Social polarisation

In face of this ruling class offensive, polarisation in New Zealand began to deepen and come more to the surface. This was reflected by a shift to the right in capitalist politics — not only on the part of leading capitalist politicians, but also of the labour bureaucracy and many middle class radicals and "leftists."

David Lange and Roger Douglas assumed leadership of the parliamentary Labour Party, adopting a more openly pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist policy stance, and shifting the whole of the party to the right in their wake.

The trade union officialdom, in contrast to the preceding period, retreated from any perspective of workers taking action against the bosses' attacks, and more openly pledged its commitment to class collaboration. Trade union leaders openly stated their fear of any action that could be construed as the unions "taking on the government." Instead, they sought to direct workers' hopes towards the tripartite wage talks with the employers and Muldoon, and towards phoney economic "reforms" like

protectionist import controls, which pit workers and farmers against each other and against workers and farmers in other countries.

Many leaders of the peace movement, the women's movement, and other movements began to express more openly a political stance of reliance on the capitalist state to achieve their goals — supporting "anti-nuclear" candidates in local body and national elections, calling for more cops to "combat rape," etc.

Wealthy gain

The primary base of this rightward shift, however, is not to be found in the working class or among the oppressed. Rather, its social base is among the parasitic upper income layers of the population — like the nine per cent who holiday abroad each year, the 22,000 families who live in houses worth \$250,000 or more, and who eat out regularly at licenced restaurants.

For this layer of the population — landlords, lawyers, speculators, businessmen, etc. — unlike for most workers and working farmers, the past 10 years of recession have been boom times. They do stand to benefit from a "more market" economy, from "voluntary" unionism and frozen wages. Many from this layer were among the "greedies" who flocked to Bob Jones' New Zealand Party.

What was new during the first six months of 1984 was that the other side of this social polarisation began to reflect itself — an emerging working class response, in action, to the attacks of the bosses.

Workers' fightback

The start of the year saw thousands of Maori workers and working farmers join Eva Rickard on the Kotahitanga hikoi to Waitangi.²

Militant union struggles began to develop — like the Wellington cleaners' strike and the strike at Union Carbide in South Auckland. Often it was the most oppressed layers of the working class who were predominant in these actions and began to put their stamp on them.

These struggles were beginning to develop a momentum of their own outside the strict control of the union officialdom.

This process culminated in the showdown between the bosses and the 3,000-strong workforce at the Marsden Point oil refinery expansion site, which immediately preceded the calling of the snap election. For the first time since the successful three-month strike in 1980 at the Kinleith pulp and paper mill, a struggle was threatening to develop into a test of strength between a key section of the working class and the government.

However, unlike at Kinleith, where the FOL leaders stood with the union ranks, this time militant workers ran up against the union officialdom, who sought to back down before the government, demobilise the workers, and force them back to work.

2. The 10-day peace walk (*hikoi*) sponsored by the newly formed Maori rights organization *Te Kotahitanga* (Unity Movement) in January and February.

The calling of the July 14 snap election put an end to this emerging working class combativity.

Rather than being a vehicle for workers and the oppressed to advance their struggles, the election campaign acted to take working class and antiwar actions off the street and picket lines and shift the focus onto the electoral process itself.

Rather than the real political questions finding their expression in the elections, and the class roots of the economic crisis and the war drive being clarified, the election campaign served to hide the real character of politics and reduce it to the question of vote-catching.

The political stands of Muldoon and Lange alike were determined quite simply by what statements and actions — within a strictly pro-capitalist framework — could win them the most votes and thereby the privileges of government office.

While broad layers of working people mobilised to help ensure a Labour victory at the polls and defeat Muldoon, Labour's campaign also found sympathy with the ruling class.

Ruling class support

Under the right-wing leadership of David Lange and Roger Douglas, Labour appeared to significant sections of the ruling class as a better vehicle at this time than Muldoon to lower workers' sights and to open the way to the implementation of the bosses' "more market" economic programme.

The bosses' willingness to cooperate in a Labour election victory was given greater confidence by the example of the Hawke Labour government in Australia, which has had considerable success in drawing the union bureaucracy behind its imperialist course.

The role played by the trade union bureaucracy in the election campaign helped to rein-

force the efforts of the ruling class to deflect independent working class struggle and obscure the real political issues.

With the announcement of the election, union officials sought to put an end to union actions, claiming these would "harm" Labour's election chances. For example, the Picton shunters were pressured to end their dispute. The Union Carbide workers were pressured to call off their strike against the wage freeze. And the Marsden Point workers were pressured to remain at work, despite continuing attacks and victimisation by their employers.

To date there has been no revival of the union combativity that marked the first half of 1984. A layer of workers, who put considerable energies into organising action against the Muldoon government and employers, have been demoralised and disoriented by the experience of the election and subsequent events.

Trade union campaign

Trade union leaders mobilised during the election campaign on a scale not seen for many years, to organise union support for a Labour victory. However, they did not use this campaign as an opportunity to bring even the most immediate demands of the trade unions into the election discussions. Rather, they subordinated the interests of the working class to the electioneering of the Labour parliamentarians.

The focus of the union's election campaign was organising workers behind the Lange leadership of the Labour Party and its pro-capitalist programme.

This was, for example, the line of the Socialist Unity Party paper *Tribune* in its election campaign issues.

Tribune told workers that "What they must do is become convinced that the only way Muldoon can be defeated is by electing Labour. *There is no alternative!*"

A "change of direction depends entirely on



Maori activist Eva Rickard.

defeating the National Party and electing a Labour government," it said.

Tribune called on workers to vote Labour because a Labour government would implement "progressive" policies that would create jobs, peace, and a "more democratic New Zealand." Voting Labour was the "only way" workers could achieve these goals, it said.

Lesser evil

Almost identical views to those in *Tribune* were expressed in *Unity*, the paper of the Workers Communist League, which, like the SUP, includes a number of prominent union officials in its membership and leadership.

For example, *Unity's* election campaign issue declared that a Labour election victory "will break National's reign of repression," and provide "an important breathing space" for the working class.

"Labour's position is to improve the conditions of the poor and oppressed," *Unity* asserted, and therefore the implementation of Labour's policies would "bring some improvements for working people."

Like *Tribune*, *Unity* called for workers to vote Labour on the grounds that Lange's "progressive" policies were the "only" alternative, and lesser evil, to Muldoon's "oppressive" policies.

Similar views to those put forward in these two publications were expressed by many left-wing union officials and Labour Party activists, who declared that only a Labour victory could offer "any hope" for working people.

Revolutionary ideas

Socialist Action's view of the elections was the polar opposite of these. We saw the election campaign as an opportunity to get out revolutionary ideas to working people.

We sought to explain the need to actively oppose the war drive of New Zealand's imperialist rulers and to build solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the Pacific and South East Asia. In particular, we sought to explain the need to build an antiwar movement in opposition to the mounting imperialist military intervention against the workers and farmers revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean.

We sought to explain the need for the labour movement to champion the cause of the most oppressed — women, Maoris, Pacific Islanders — and to seek to forge a common alliance with working farmers against big business.

We sought to explain the socialist solutions needed to overcome the capitalist economic crisis.

Above all, we sought to explain the need for working people to fight to establish their own government based on their own organised power — a workers and farmers government — that could disarm New Zealand's imperialist rulers and put an end to capitalist rule.

Explain programme

In seeking to explain these ideas we sought to relate them to the current struggles, level of

combativity, and consciousness of working people in New Zealand — to counterpose a class struggle programme for the labour movement to the pro-capitalist programme of Lange and the Labour Party leadership.

In doing this, however, *Socialist Action's* leading election campaign articles tended to give credence to the idea that the most pressing issue confronting the workers' movement was simply to turn out a big vote for Labour in the elections.

"By acting decisively in these elections to put a Labour government in office, the working class can help to strengthen its position for all the struggles that lie ahead," we wrote, and said that "A big victory for Labour" would be a "setback for big business."

As this article has already explained, events over the past three months since Labour's election win do not bear out these assertions.

Class vote

Why did *Socialist Action* call on workers to vote for the Labour Party in the July 14 election?

The right to vote was won by the workers' movement through hard-fought struggle. Workers should not loosely reject participation in elections where the opportunity exists to do so.

The fact that the Labour Party exists as a mass electoral party of the trade unions means that workers can cast a *class vote* for this party in opposition to National and the other bosses' parties.

As long as the Labour Party continues to dominate the workers' movement as a mass party, workers will inevitably go through the experience of seeking to advance their interests through this party.

By successfully voting their Labour candidates into parliament, workers are in a better position to come to understand that the Labour Party as it is today — a parliamentary electoral machine dominated by a layer of pro-imperialist, middle class, professional politicians and bureaucrats — is in fact a barrier to working people advancing their struggles.

They will more readily be able to come to see that parliament and capitalist elections are not vehicles by which the working class can bring about political change in the interests of working people. What is needed is a revolutionary struggle by working people in their majority, which aims at demolishing the police and military apparatus of the capitalist state and installing a workers and farmers government in power.

Lacked clarity

However, *Socialist Action* failed to explain these factors sufficiently in our election propaganda and so help to cut through the deep-seated electoralist illusions that are held even by many of the most combative and politically conscious workers.

We did not clearly explain that the working class "acting decisively" in the elections to

help advance its struggles required more than simply voting.

We also misestimated the election campaign effort organised by the union officialdom, which acted to dampen not help deepen working class struggles. The union officials' campaign reinforced the pro-capitalist campaign of David Lange, and pointed working people in the direction of reliance on the capitalist state and the government.

The real focus of working class politics is outside of parliament — on the streets and in the factories. Reforms are won by the working class, not through elections, but by strengthening the solidarity, organisation, and class consciousness of workers in struggle.

Road forward

The road forward for workers lies in seeking to have their unions mobilise working people in action on behalf of the needs of all the exploited and oppressed, against the bosses and the state.

As part of this struggle, the unions need to take the lead in organising a fight to transform the Labour Party into a fighting party that champions working-class struggle and to remove Labour's pro-capitalist misleaders standing in the way of this struggle.

Such a perspective has nothing in common with the political manoeuvres of middle class radicals and union officials inside the party today — including those who claim to be socialists — who put forward the perspective of "reforming" the Labour Party's programme and making MPs accountable to the membership, while continuing to focus on parliamentary electoral politics as the arena for political change.

The starting point for strengthening the working class movement is to seek to establish political clarity on how to move forward. That means explaining the class roots of the capitalist economic crisis and the imperialist war drive. And it means explaining how the labour movement needs to wage a revolutionary struggle to establish a workers and farmers government in order to end exploitation and oppression.

Parliamentary elections provide a platform for explaining these revolutionary ideas to thinking workers. But, outside election periods as well, explaining this class struggle road forward remains the central obligation of all those who would speak and act as the political vanguard of the working class.

This task is made easier today by the living examples of the workers and farmers governments in Nicaragua and Cuba, which are demonstrating in practice how working people can take power into their own hands and begin to reorganise society in their own interests.

By way of negative contrast, workers' experiences under the Lange Labour government in this country will also assist those who want to fight back against the bosses' pro-war austerity drive to begin to draw the necessary political conclusions about how to advance this working class struggle. □

Balance sheet on 35-hour week fight

Settlement falls short of goals; workers gain valuable experience

By Peter Bartelheimer

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Hans Mayr, chairperson of the Executive Board of IG Metall, talked about a "brilliant historic achievement" by his union. "The door leading to the 35-hour week has been broken down." Wolfram Thiele, president of the Engineering Industry Association (Gesamtmittel) was quick to contradict him: "No, this agreement is not the gateway to the 35-hour week but the exit from a general shortening of the workweek."

Heiner Geissler, a minister in the ruling right-wing coalition of liberals and Christian Democrats, rushed to back up his industrialist friend, summing up the result of the struggle for the unions as "barren and harmful." Along with showing satisfaction that their right-wing comrade, Georg Leber, was able to end the strike with his compromise proposal, Social Democratic Party (SPD) politicians have also let it be known that they hope that, despite mass unemployment and a reactionary austerity policy, it will be possible to achieve a new and lasting understanding between unions and the bosses in the tradition of West German "social partnership."

The section of the "left," that did not want to know about this struggle, and when it did get underway, contrary to expectations, saw it as "predestined" for failure, now consider that their dire predictions have been confirmed. For example, the former factory-council member, who belonged to the "Plakat" group at Daimler Benz in Stuttgart, which was expelled from the IG Metall, Willy Hoss, who now sits in the national parliament as a deputy for the Greens, said: "The strike produced zero result. The workers were called upon to make a lot of useless sacrifices."

What is the real balance sheet of the strikes for the 35-hour week? There is no simple answer. Unquestionably, the West German unions have risen out of the torpor in which they seemed to have sunk in recent years. But all of their weaknesses were also highlighted. To be sure, the unions managed to force the bosses and the government to retreat, to accept a reduction of the workweek below forty hours (38 hours in the steel industry). Nonetheless, the bosses are satisfied with the compromise proposal made by the former chairperson of the building workers union (Industriegewerkschaft Bau, Steine, Erden), Georg

Leber. In fact, it puts an end to a regular workday and workweek for all and transfers a part of the unions' negotiating power to the factory councils, which work within narrow legal limits and which in many big concerns are involved in "loyal collaboration" with the management, more concerned about the welfare of the factory as such than the objectives of the union.

There is no question but that the strike action waged by the IG Metall and the IG Druck und Papier (IG Dru-Pa, the printers' union) for a shorter workweek was the most important official strike action in West Germany since the 1950s. It was the first big strike in general since the steelworkers' strike for the 35-hour week in the winter of 1978-79. Throughout the country, it involved a million and a half persons if you add up the number of strikers, workers locked out, and workers laid off because of plant shutdowns. Lasting more than six weeks (13 weeks in the printing industry), it was the longest strike since the 114-day-long defensive strike by IG Metall in Schleswig-Holstein in 1956-57.

For the first time, IG Metall conducted a strike in two districts simultaneously. For the first time, two member organizations of the German Confederation of Unions (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) fought a concerted struggle for a common goal and were supported by other industrial unions. For the first time since the end of 1982, when the right coalition that ousted the Social Democrats from government proclaimed a social and political "Turn" modelled on the policies of Reagan and Thatcher, the unions have put up a fight against this government, which in the conflict intervened directly on the side of the bosses.

In the course of the strike, two clearly distinct phases can be distinguished, which were separated by the biggest political mobilization of this struggle, the demonstration of 200,000 workers in Bonn on May 28. In the first phase, as a result of the confrontation course of the bosses and the government, the struggle was extended and sharpened day by day. In the second phase, the union leaderships' attempts to limit the conflict threatened to push the unions into a dangerous defeat. This peril was avoided, but the chance for a solid and clear victory was also lost.

In March, the bosses and the government were still certain that the IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa leaderships had overreached themselves in raising the demand for a 35-hour week with no cut in pay. These unions were believed to have been much too weakened by more than ten years of unemployment running into the millions and an open split in the DGB

to undertake a strike for such a goal.

The capitalists and their political friends relied on the results of an opinion poll they carried out, which showed that a majority of union members considered the 35-hour week as an unrealistic goal. This determined the way they dealt with the union representatives. "Not a minute less than forty hours," was the shout that came from Gesamtmittel. This was immediately echoed by the cabinet. "Absurd, crazy, stupid," was Chancellor Kohl's comment on the demand. "It would make even a chicken laugh," sneered the economics minister at the time, Count Lambsdorff.

On March 12, warning strikes began in the engineering industry throughout the country. Nearly 300,000 engineering workers took part in the April 5 and 6 days of action in northern and southern Germany. While the IG Metall leadership dragged out the warning strikes, waiting for two sterile central discussions with Gesamtmittel to produce something (in the engineering industry as in most others, the real negotiations are conducted regionally), the small IG Dru-Pa, with 140,000 members, took the leadership of the movement. On April 12, it began one-day strikes, holding strike referenda at the same time in the individual plants.

(In the fall of 1983, the IG Dru-Pa Congress changed the union statutes enabling the individual factory organizations to call strikes, even without a strike vote, and to hold strike votes just in the shops concerned, rather than having to do it in all the shops in the industry at the same time.) The printers' union upset the expectations of the capitalists that there would not be a strike. Up to May 3, IG Dru-Pa members in nearly 200 shops voted overall by 81 percent for a strike.

A 'flexible strike tactic'

In the following weeks, the IG Dru-Pa leadership applied a "flexible strike tactic." Every day, new printing plants went on one-day strikes, and later for longer periods. This was designed to prevent a countrywide lockout by the bosses, of the type that pushed the union to the brink of bankruptcy in the last printers' strikes in 1976 and 1978. In fact, the West German unions are obliged by their statutes to pay strike pay equivalent to 70 percent of net wages to striking and locked-out workers. And the small and weak IG Dru-Pa could not manage a general strike. Indeed, even the biggest and richest union, IG Metall, with its 2.5 million members, could only pay the cost of a general strike for one week.

At the beginning of May, the leadership of



Union members demonstrate for 35-hour week in Hagen.

IG Metall held strike votes in two bargaining districts — Nordwürttemberg/Nordbaden (Stuttgart region) and Hessen (Frankfurt region). In both districts, more than 80 percent of the membership voted to strike. The IG Metall also opted for a strike tactic that involved only a small number of its members in the struggle, but in ways designed to have the maximum economic effect.

On May 14, in the Stuttgart area, around 13,000 workers in 14 plants downed tools. Strikes focused on stopping production of important parts for the auto industry. When IG Dru-Pa was calling 10,000 workers out on strike every day, at first without the agreement of the IG Metall leadership, the Daimler Benz main plant in Sindelfingen near Stuttgart went on strike May 16. On May 21, for the first time in 33 years, there was a strike in the Hessen engineering industry, including the Ruesselsheimer works of the Opel concern. On May 23, the DGB in Baden Württemberg called on all the membership to stage a solidarity strike for a few hours. The specter of a general strike began to be invoked in the pages of the press.

While the solidarity strike in the Stuttgart area got only weak support because of lack of preparation, the bosses and the government were trying to make the regional selective strikes by the IG Metall into a countrywide general strike. To this end, they used the weapon of the lockout, which nowhere else has been so massively employed as in West

Germany, where it was used in a new and unprecedented way.

Officially, Gesamtmetall locked out workers only in the struck regions, and even there "only" 90,000 workers (and no white-collar workers), in plants with 2,000 personnel. At the same time, however, in an action that had been clearly planned in advance, all the auto plants in the Federal Republic and most of the parts plants announced shutdowns. The management explained that the IG Metall strike in the Stuttgart area had made it economically unviable to keep their personnel at work.

At the direction of the federal government, the president of the Unemployment Insurance, Franke, announced that the local Labor Offices could not pay the workers concerned the benefits provided for such cases, because the Unemployment Insurance system had to remain "neutral" with respect to the indirect effects of the strike.

The IG Metall suddenly found itself trapped by its own strike tactic. On the first day of the strikes, the Springer combine's *Bild Zeitung* already ran the headline, "Another 500,000 Unemployed Soon? Germany Without Cars!" As the strikes progressed, there came to be 65,000 strikers, as against 120,000 officially locked-out workers and nearly 375,000 laid off by "cold lockouts." According to the union statutes, the victims of the plant shutdowns had no claim for compensation from the union, but the Labor Offices did not pay either.

The bosses hoped that these workers would direct their anger and anxiety about being able to survive against their own organization and thereby force the IG Metall to its knees. At the same time, the engineering industrialists gained the initiative. They decided in what plants and in what divisions work would go on and where production would be brought to a halt.

Thus, for example, in the auto industry, and often with the agreement of the IG Metall factory councillors, work on the new fall models was continued day and night in the research and development divisions. Profitable and particularly sensitive divisions, such as sales, marketing, and administration also continued working.

In July, under the pressure of the workers, the IG Dru-Pa widened the action, insofar as its strike tactic allowed. But at the same time, in July, IG Metall was not able to come up with an answer to the lockout. The strike became stalled. After this, the relationship of forces did not shift decisively in favor of the union.

It was not the strike front in the factories that was responsible for this impasse. On this front at the end of May and during June the struggle took more and more effective and more and more radical forms. In many plants, the factory councils and workers tried to put up effective resistance to the lockout.

An example is in the plant that makes filters

for the auto industry, Filter-Knecht in Lorch (Wuerttemberg). There, as soon as it became clear that the management intended to send 80 percent of the workers home on May 28, the factory council worked out a 20-point plan for continuing production. On Monday morning, the workers marched determinedly into the plant and tried to begin work. The management shut off the machines. The workers declared the plant occupied.

Two days later, the Filter-Knecht workers were preparing an enthusiastic reception for two representatives of striking British miners. The next week, the occupation in Lorch was ended after a long weekend, because the IG Metall leadership made it clear that they disapproved of the action. In a whole series of factories, especially in the Stuttgart area, locked out workers went into their factories, demonstrated on the shop floor, and "visited" their workplaces.

When Gesamtmetall announced further lockouts for June 18, occupations were in the air. The predominantly Turkish and Kurdish work force at the Esslinger works of the SEL electrical goods company got the jump on the lockout by going on strike spontaneously on June 15 without the approval of the strike leadership.

Factory occupations

The work force at Werner & Pfleiderer in Dinkelsbuehl near Stuttgart went into work on June 18 with blankets and mattresses and prepared for a long stay. Their action was a thundering success. Out of fear of a factory occupation, the management backed off its decision to stage a lockout that very day. In many other factories, the local union officials prepared for occupations that did not come off only because of the negative attitude of the Frankfurt IG Metall tops. At the same time, union members and officials in other districts, especially Nordrhein-Westfalen and Hamburg, were demanding that the IG Metall leadership hold strike votes, so that they could respond to the factory shutdowns with their own forms of struggle.

After the success of the march on Bonn, which was IG Metall's attempt on May 28 to respond to the government's support for Gesamtmetall's lockout tactic, the conditions for extending the strike were more favorable than ever. In the Bonner Hofgarten, 200,000 workers at the biggest union demonstration in the history of West Germany demanded at the top of their lungs that Chancellor Kohl himself accept early retirement, which was what the regime was offering the workers as an alternative to the 35-hour week. (According to a law passed shortly before the start of the strike, the government was to give financial backing to a plan for retirement at age 58 with 65 percent of the last gross wage.)

To general enthusiasm, the DGB chairperson, Ernst Breit, declared in Bonn that a countrywide solidarity strike was possible. The initiative of the workers in the engineering industry showed the way for an effective fight-back against the lockout — holding strike re-

ferenda in all regions hit by shutdowns, striking partially shutdown plants, factory occupations.

However, in this phase of the struggle, the IG Metall leadership dug its heels in against any such actions. Even the strike in the Sindelfingen Daimler Benz works ran up against the disapproval of the leadership. Further "spontaneous" action was forbidden.

While Gesamtmetall was threatening to break off all negotiations and the threat loomed of a "breakdown of collective bargaining" in the engineering industry, the IG Metall chairperson, Hans Mayr, was preparing a compromise solution behind the scenes. He called the SPD politician Georg Leber back from his vacation in Italy and proposed him as a political mediator.

The deal that Leber made was accepted by the IG Metall, and at the beginning of July also applied to the printing industry. It called for a 38.5-hour week with "flexible work hours." Despite indignation among the strikers, more than 50 percent of the IG Metall membership voted in the referendum for accepting this settlement. On July 3 in Stuttgart, and a few days later in Frankfurt, the strikers went back to work.

The result is far less favorable for the unions than might appear at first glance. It is positive that after March 1, 1985, the workweek will be lowered below forty hours and that at that time also all workers will get a compensatory wage increase of 3.9 percent. On the negative side, the IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa have to make do with a wage increase of 3.3 percent on July 1, 1984, and a further 2 percent raise on March 1, 1985.

Particularly negative was the acceptance of the principle that henceforth in the engineering industry the workweek is to be reckoned as an average. As long as the average workweek for

the work force in a factory is 38.5 hours, a part of the workers might work 37 hours, another part 40 hours, and others somewhere in between. This divisive rule was avoided in the printing industry.

Moreover, the work time of the individual workers can be apportioned irregularly over days and weeks. The limits of this "flexibility" are still a bone of contention between the unions and the bosses. The rule is only that the individual work time has to average out to the official workweek over two months. The bosses interpret this as meaning that a worker might work 32 hours for two weeks, 36 hours for two weeks more and then 41 to 45 hours, depending on the rhythm of production. Overtime and the extension of shift work were not limited by the contract.

Another negative feature is that no restrictions were placed on part-time work, which mainly involves women but also men in increasing numbers. In the future, more and more workers will be consigned to these insecure working conditions.

Finally, the reduction of working hours is to be implemented plant by plant on the basis of free-wheeling negotiations between the factory councils and the managements. It is left to each plant to decide whether the workday will be reduced by 18 minutes, as a lot of plants have already suggested, whether the workday is to be reduced to seven hours on Friday and every second Thursday, as a lot of active trade unionists propose, or whether the workers will get additional days off, or whether the workweek will be cut across the board to 38.5 hours for everyone with no distinctions, as the union demands.

Thus, it will depend on how the reduction is implemented in the plants whether the goal of the 35-hour week by the end of 1986, when the present contract runs out, will be a credible one and a live issue in the factories.

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"Solidarity is our strength."

Above all, the settlement of a 38.5-hour average workweek failed to achieve the declared goal of the struggle, to create new jobs by a drastic reduction of the workweek and thereby to reduce the pressure of unemployment on the unions. And this is despite the fact that if the strike had been widened as late as June, the bosses and the government could have been forced to accept at least a plan for introducing the 35-hour week in stages. In this respect, the leaderships of IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier proved to be trapped by their own logic, in that they measured the union's fighting strength not by the mobilization of its members but by its strike fund.

Above all, however, the decision not to widen the struggle was a political one. The IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa leaderships showed that, while they were ready for a fight, they were not prepared to challenge the political and economic relationship of forces. Because extending the struggle involved the risk of a general confrontation with capital and a governmental crisis. And all the leading union officials shrank from this.

Moreover, looking at the material results is not sufficient to answer the question of whether the strike was "worth it." The material results show a defeat in the fight for the 35-hour week but a partial success for the union movement. In 1984, a year of important struggles for the workers movement in Western Europe, IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier were the first unions to take up the fight for an offensive — in essence anticapitalist — demand, and they won a partial success in a direct confrontation with a reactionary government directly tied to capital. Above all, this fight was not "in vain" and did not result in a "defeat" because it set the entire West German union movement in motion, because it posed a question for thousands and tens of thousands of activists that will be decisive for the coming struggles, and because the experience of struggle achieved in this campaign favors a militant turn in trade-union policy.

A political strike

The strike has shown that it is primarily the split in the ranks of the workers themselves and the lack of experience in waging trade-union and political battles that enabled the bosses and

the government to pursue their austerity policy and their anti-union offensive. The DGB, as an umbrella organization, is split. A section of its member unions accepted the offer by the bosses and the government of early retirement at age 58. And at the very time that IG Metall and IG Dru-Pa were striking, they reaffirmed the 40-hour week up till 1988.

Indeed, even in the engineering and printing industries a lot of union members still have to be convinced through further actions and struggles of the justification for offensive demands incompatible with the market economy, such as a radical reduction of the workweek.

The use of the means of trade-union struggle against the government is no longer taboo. This was a political strike, and it was understood by those who took part in it in the factories as a struggle against the Kohl cabinet. The government was forced to retreat and proved to be weak. It faced a series of defeats throughout May and June. On May 24, in the face of general protest, it had to withdraw a bill that would have given immunity to politicians and big businesses involved in illegal contributions to political parties and tax fraud.

On June 6, Chancellor Kohl suddenly declared that shortening the workweek should not be a taboo. And at the same time, his minister of labor, Norbert Blum, convinced Gesamtmetall not to go ahead with the extension of the lockout to districts where there were no strikes that it had already decided on. At the end of July, Count Lambsdorff, who as minister of the economy had steered the course toward confrontation with the unions, had to resign, because he was charged with corruption in office.

At the end of June, under the pressure of prouunion court rulings, the government went back on the decision that the Unemployment Insurance Office would not pay benefits to workers affected by shutdowns. And at the beginning of July, Labor Minister Blum got the recalcitrant printing bosses to accept the compromise proposal made by the Social Democrat Georg Leber for their industry as well.

More recently again the government had backed away from its initial confrontation course with the unions. While it had been declaring since the start of the year it would not grant public workers either higher wages or

shorter working hours in 1984 and 1985, on September 25, at the beginning of bargaining with the public workers union, it has already shown itself prepared to negotiate in limited areas. (The unions are demanding 5 percent more in wages and 10 more days off per year as a "bridge" to the 35-hour week.*

In this situation, it was above all the restraint of the union leaders and of both parliamentary opposition parties — the SPD and the Greens — that saved the government from a bigger defeat. Both parties had declared solidarity with the unions' fight. But they behaved in practice as if this were an entirely nonpolitical conflict.

In the negotiations between the SPD and the Greens over support for an SPD minority government in the Hessen state parliament, the questions of the strike, lockout, and shorter working hours played no role. Behind the scenes, the SPD pressed the unions to end the strike before the European elections, because it was afraid that its position of support for the strikers would cost it votes.

In Hessen and Hamburg, the SPD state governments refused to take legal measures against the lockout (which is forbidden in the constitutions of these states). And in the states and towns ruled by the SPD, the party was as hostile to granting the 35-hour week to public employees as the bourgeois parties. So, the demand that the SPD and the Greens commit themselves to introduce jointly a law introducing the 35-hour week as the foundation of red-green parliamentary majorities in the towns, states, and later also in the national parliament is assuming a greater importance.

The experience achieved in this struggle has convinced a broad layer of active members and officials of the unions of the need for fundamental changes in the way of functioning of the unions. Such changes are seen to be necessary especially in the forms of struggle, the question of the strike funds, and the attitude of union members and the shop stewards they elect to the factory councils.

Before the strike, factory occupations were not generally discussed in IG Metall. Relevant experience was limited to a few work forces that in recent years tried to use this method to prevent the closing down of their plants. Today, more and more workers are convinced that lockouts can be combated most effectively

* In the public workers unions a dispute has been going on for a year whether the demand for the 35-hour week or one for early retirement should be put in the contract negotiations. The biggest public workers union, the OeTV, has been and remains split on this question. In April, at a conference of this union on work time, the 35-hour week was given preference. But at the union congress in June, no clear position was taken. The demand for 10 more days off that was raised after the end of the strike in the printing and engineering industries represents a compromise in the union. It amounts to a 38.5-hour week in the industry, and is presented as a bridge to the 35-hour week. But it does not mean any shortening of the workday, and thus leaves the question of the orientation of further struggle for cutting work time open. The discussion in the OeTV has had no influence on the policy of IG Metall.

by occupations. A court decision that ruled that it was legal for workers locked out during a strike to make their way onto the shop floor should favor further discussion on this subject. Under discussion also is the demand that in the event of a lockout the strike should be continued until the bosses agree to pay back wages.

In the printing industry, where thanks to strike breakers and the most modern layout and printing techniques a lot of newspapers could be printed despite the strike and delivered under police guard despite massive blockades at the doors, today active trade unionists are discussing the need to stay in the plant during strikes or to make the machines inoperable.

The problem of strike pay

Under the impact of the strike of the British miners, who have held out for more than a half year without union strike pay, a lot of activists are challenging the previous practice of paying workers involved in struggles out of the union coffers. "You have to get out of this strike-pay trap," Joe Holmes, representative of the British NUM advised at a conference of militant trade unionists that met in Frankfurt on September 28 to draw a common balance sheet of the struggle. "Strike pay kills any movement. Without strike pay, there is more autonomy in the districts and regions for independent actions and less bureaucratic control."

Without the obligation to compensate locked-out workers for lost wages, the unions could have held up against even mass lockouts without being forced to their knees. Instead of handing out strike pay in the previous amounts, the unions' local and central fighting funds should support striking and locked-out workers in accordance with their needs and rely on the solidarity of all union members and the public. Unless they change their statutes accordingly, the unions will not be in a position in the future to wage countrywide strikes. The unions have a future only as fighting organizations, not as societies for insuring against the effects of strikes.

The need to implement the new worktime settlement at the plant level brings the conflict between active union members and the social-partnership-minded factory councils to a head. Already at the start of this year, many factory councils had refused to campaign for the union's demand of a 35-hour week. During the strike, the factory councils in many big plants either stood aside or stabbed their union in the back. Instead of fighting against the plant shut-downs that were carried out as a result of the strike, they often made a deal with management to take the time that production was halted out of yearly vacations.

The factory council chairperson in Munich, Golda, called on the IG Metall to which he belongs in letters sent to all the workers during the strike to end the struggle. Moreover, he arbitrarily reduced contributions to the union to three German marks a month. In the wake of the strike, when the auto companies were trying to make up for the lost production, the fac-

tory councils at Daimler Benz, Porsche, and other works agreed to massive overtime and special shifts up to Christmas, so that the immediate result of the strike for a lot of workers was not a 35-hour week but a 50-hour one. (Everywhere that the factory councils acted in accordance with the IG Metall's demand to refuse overtime or to accept it only in return for additional time off, the companies have had to hire more workers after the strike.)

Democratization of the unions and a reinforcement of their fighting strength in the factories can only be achieved if regular membership meetings are held in the plants and if the shop stewards elected by the membership are able to exercise effective control over the union's representatives on the factory councils and the local and central union leadership.

In the struggle for the 35-hour week, trade-union activists supporting the most various political currents came closer together. In neighborhood initiative committees and local work clubs, they worked closely together both before and during the strike — engineering workers, printers and public workers. Many of them remained together after the strike as well. They are organizing solidarity for the British miners and for the public workers who are now bargaining with the government on their wage and worktime demands.

About 140 of these activists from all over the country met on September 22–23 in Frankfurt, at the invitation of the information bulletin *Info 35*, to exchange experiences and work out a common strategy for getting the

new contracts applied at the plant level. This was already the fourth such countrywide conference of active trade-union members. But it was broader than all the previous gatherings. Jakob Moneta, former editor in chief of the engineering union's magazine *Metall* and a leading member of the International Marxist Group (GIM, West German section of the Fourth International) caught the mood when he said: "We need organized collaboration, a work group for fighting unions."

In fact, under the blows of massive unemployment and the austerity policy, the broad masses of union members cannot be led into battle by "spontaneous" initiatives of some active officials. Only if the union as a whole can be transformed into a fighting organization, only if socialist consciousness penetrates into the union leaderships, will it be possible to wage victorious struggles in 1986 for the 35-hour week, for the nationalization of key industries, and for forms of workers' control.

The GIM went into this strike as the only countrywide organization that fought in an effective and determined way for the 35-hour week and for widening the struggle. Its newspaper, *Was Tun*, published 12 weekly editions with a circulation running between 12,000 and 20,000 copies. It was read by many active officials and discussed in the workplaces. The trade-union activists of the GIM stand today in the first ranks of the workers who are together drawing the lessons of this struggle and who will advance militant positions in the discussions within the unions. □

Quebec strikers want 35-hour week

Some 1,050 shipyard workers at Marine Industries in Sorel, Quebec, have been on strike since August 7 for a 35-hour workweek with no cut in pay in order to create more jobs. More than 2,000 jobs at Marine Industries have been eliminated since 1979.

The struggle at Marine Industries could have major repercussions throughout English Canada and Quebec, where two million workers are without jobs.

The demand for a shorter workweek has broad support in the labor movement in Canada. In May the Canadian Labour Congress convention endorsed a campaign for a shorter workweek. In Quebec the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) and the Quebec Teachers Federation (CEQ) have come out for reduced work time.

Montreal transit workers and Canadian postal workers are also demanding a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay.

The Marine Industries strikers have taken a number of steps to strengthen their struggle. To keep strikers informed of latest developments in the struggle, weekly assemblies have been held.

The strikers have systematically sought support in the community and throughout the labor movement.

A wives committee has been set up, and the strikers have sought and received support from unemployed youth, from farmers, and from the labor movement in other countries, including the West German metalworkers union that waged its own struggle for a shorter workweek.

The wives committee was established to involve family members, inform them of the reasons for the strike, and give moral support to families of strikers.

Audette Lemoyne, president of the wives committee, told the Canadian fortnightly *Socialist Voice*: "Housewives alone at home think that they are the only ones in their situation. We didn't want our strike to lead to a lot of divorces. When the whole family is up-to-date on what's going on, it reduces the strain. We don't want to leave the families out of this fight. We need their participation," she stated.

Jean-Claude Parrot, president of the 24,000-member Canadian Union of Postal Workers wrote to the Marine Industries strikers that their struggle is important not only "for themselves, their families, and the whole community of Sorel-Tracy. It's also, without a shadow of doubt, a very important struggle for the entire labor movement." □