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Poland

Political Debates and Disorientation in Workers Movement



Britain

1984: Year of Bitter Struggle for Miners Union

Left: Miners' leader Arthur Scargill
confronts police on picket line.

Speech by Thomas Sankara

**Burkina's 'Democratic,
Popular Revolution'**

Nicaragua

**Farmers Group Building
Support for Revolution**

Rajiv Gandhi bolsters reign

By Ernest Harsch

By the end of 1984, the earlier alarm among Indian ruling-class circles and the major imperialist governments over India's political instability had abated somewhat.

Those fears had been expressed most sharply in the wake of the June 1984 Indian army assault on Sikh rebels in Punjab — in which more than 1,000 were killed — and in the immediate aftermath of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31. To many bourgeois commentators, it appeared at the time that the political control of the Congress Party — the country's main capitalist party — was weakening to such an extent that the future of capitalist rule in India was threatened.

The Congress Party continues to face serious problems: virtual rebellions in some states, strikes by workers, peasant unrest, outrage over the thousands killed by the Union Carbide gas leak in Bhopal, and a more generalized discontent fueled by massive poverty, misery, hunger, and imperialist oppression.

But for the time being at least, the Congress Party has succeeded in reasserting its dominance and control.

In this, it has greatly benefited from the fact that the working people lack a revolutionary leadership that can fight for and advance their class interests.

It has also used its control over the police, army, courts, and other institutions of the capitalist state to repress popular struggles.

And with the weakness and disarray of most of the bourgeois opposition parties — many of which exist only in particular regions — the Congress Party remains the single, dominant capitalist party on a countrywide level.

All this was reflected in the results of the December 24–28 general elections to the Lok Sabha, the governing house of parliament. Winning by its largest margin since it first came to power in 1947 with India's independence from British rule, the Congress Party took 401 of the 508 contested seats, with 49 percent of the popular vote.

In every state except Andhra Pradesh, where a strong regional bourgeois party trounced the Congress Party, the bourgeois opposition parties were either swept out of the new parliament or reduced to a few seats.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) — a Stalinist party that had held the largest number of opposition seats in the previous parliament — also saw its parliamentary strength diminished (though it still defeated the Congress Party by wide margins in both West Bengal and Tripura).

To an extent, the Congress Party was able to use Indira Gandhi's assassination to boost its electoral fortunes, which had been slipping in

the months before her death. "While relying heavily on the idea of a sympathy vote," an article in the December 13 *Far Eastern Economic Review* observed, "the ruling party is taking no chances. It has advanced the election date by a couple of weeks to cash in on the shock of the assassination."

As in previous elections, the Congress Party's control of the electoral machinery, large amounts of cash, and gangs of club-wielding "campaign workers" also gave it a further edge. In many rural constituencies, capitalist landlords who look to the Congress Party routinely ensure that entire blocs of votes are cast for it.

During the course of the campaign, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi also sought to stir up chauvinist sentiments among India's dominant nationality, the Hindus, by attacking the demands of the Sikhs for greater regional autonomy. Similar statements by Congress Party leaders earlier in the year helped encourage organized right-wing, anti-Sikh pogroms by chauvinist gangs in the immediate wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination; several thousand Sikhs were butchered. Remembering those massacres, tens of thousands of Sikhs fled to Punjab (where they are a majority) during the election campaign.

In both Punjab and Assam, the central government did not feel confident enough to even hold elections.

Following the Congress Party's electoral victory, Rajiv Gandhi claimed that he had been given a mandate to "swiftly take India forward." The election results, he maintained,

Corporate murder in India

By Steve Craine

The worst industrial disaster in history. More than 2,000 killed within hours by a deadly cloud of gas in Bhopal, India. Was this the inevitable "price of progress," as several big-business papers have claimed? Who was responsible? What can be done to prevent its repetition?

Shortly after midnight on Dec. 3, 1984, at least five tons of methyl isocyanate gas escaped into the atmosphere from an overloaded storage tank at Union Carbide's Bhopal pesticide plant. The gas is so lethal that concentrations of more than two parts in 100 million are dangerous.

About a quarter of the city's 900,000 people were affected by the gas, tens of thousands of them permanently injured. The lasting effects are still unknown, as water, land, and livestock in an area 25 miles square were poisoned too.

Numerous unions and political organiza-

showed that voters "wanted something new, they wanted change."

While hundreds of millions of Indians undoubtedly long for a change from their impoverished and wretched living conditions, the Congress Party will not bring it. In the more than three decades that it has governed the country, it has done nothing to end the exploitation of the workers and peasants or the oppression that the country as a whole suffers from imperialism.

The imperialists also seek some change in Indian government policy. An editorial in the December 22 London *Economist* opined that Rajiv Gandhi's ascension brought "the hope of an easier relationship between India and the west, because the 40-year-old Mr Gandhi does not inherit in 1985 so many of his mother's mid-century anti-imperialist prickles."

While much of the previous government's "anti-imperialism" was demagoguery, it did reflect some real strains between world imperialism and the Indian capitalist class, which is one of the strongest in any semicolonial country and has its own interests to defend. The Indian government's "nonaligned" stance and its opposition to aspects of U.S. policy (such as the arming of its chief regional rival, the Pakistani regime) mirrors these interests.

So far, Rajiv Gandhi has indicated no significant changes in Indian foreign policy, stating in a news conference after the elections that it would "very substantially be the same" as that of his mother's administration.

Whatever reservations they may have about aspects of Indian policy, the imperialist news media has generally hailed the results of the elections and the Congress Party's reinforced position.

But the momentary stability of capitalist rule in India remains extremely fragile. Rajiv Gandhi's claimed electoral "mandate" cannot prevent the class struggle from erupting anew. □

tions in India have expressed their outrage over this disaster. (For example, see statement on p. 19.)

While Bhopal was by far the worst single industrial disaster, it is by no means unique. In fact it has been estimated that in 1982 alone there were more than 375,000 cases of chemical poisonings in the oppressed semicolonial countries. Ten thousand of these resulted in deaths. In those countries, workers and farmers do not have many of the minimal protections that working people in the industrialized countries have been able to win through years of struggles.

In just the past year, two other catastrophes drew attention to the lack of industrial safety in the semicolonial world. Gas explosions and fires in densely populated areas in Brazil in February and Mexico in November each left about 500 dead.

Why do companies like Union Carbide, one

of the 40 largest industrial corporations in the United States, set up dangerous operations in the semicolonial countries? David Bull, chief of the Environmental Liaison Center in Nairobi, Kenya, told the December 17 *Time* magazine, "There is a growing tendency for the larger multinational chemical concerns to locate their more hazardous factories in developing countries to escape the stringent safety regulations which they must follow at home."

For example, the Indian government does not require even the most dangerous industries to buy insurance for its employees or to cover the risk of injury to the public. Union Carbide has taken advantage of this and other Indian laws to establish 14 plants in India. It also operates factories in 30 other countries. The company's history in Bhopal is a case study of how even those local regulations that do exist are flouted by the giant imperialist corporations.

Union Carbide's plans to build a pesticide plant on the outskirts of Bhopal in 1975 were clearly in violation of a law requiring dangerous factories to be at least 15 miles from population centers. But after the company donated \$2,500 to the city, the one local official who had attempted to apply the law was transferred to another job and construction went ahead on the original site.

Since 1980 there have been seven accidents at the Bhopal facility. In 1981 a worker died from a leak of phosgene gas, and two weeks later two dozen people became sick from another leak. A government investigation cited the company for inadequate safety measures, but no action was taken.

A 1982 inspection of the plant by Union Carbide's own engineers revealed 50 safety problems. Two of these coincide with the probable cause of the December 3 leak. The company asserts that "most" of the 50 problems had been corrected before December 3.

The union representing workers at the plant pointed to the "total apathy and negligence" of both the company and the government as the cause of the disaster.

In fact, methyl isocyanate is not even necessary for the manufacture of the pesticides made at Bhopal. It only makes the process cheaper — just as it is cheaper for corporations to set up where they can keep wages low and avoid safety regulations. All contribute to corporate profit levels. In the case of Union Carbide, this has meant an average net profit in the past five years of about \$450 million.

The superprofits available to U.S. companies from investments in the semicolonial countries are behind their vociferous opposition to additional safety regulations. Jack Early, president of the National Agricultural Chemicals Association in the United States, has called efforts to apply U.S. safety standards in other countries "regulatory imperialism." This view was echoed by the *Wall Street Journal* in a December 17 editorial entitled "Environmental Imperialism." It described as "arrogant" proposals to force overseas operations of U.S. companies to comply

with U.S. laws. "Poor countries themselves must determine how strict — or lax — their industrial regulation should be," the editors of the *Journal* concluded.

The U.S. government has consistently supported this business viewpoint. Two weeks after the Bhopal disaster, U.S. representatives in the United Nations cast the only negative vote on a resolution calling for the compilation of a complete list of all consumer goods, pesticides, drugs, and industrial chemicals that have been banned in any country. In 1982 U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that a proposal to prohibit the export of hazardous products without the knowledge and consent of the recipient country was an undesirable restraint on "free trade."

Since the Bhopal disaster, some governments, such as France and Brazil, have turned back shipments of methyl isocyanate. Union Carbide may eventually be forced to pay some compensation to the victims of its negligence. Already damage suits totalling nearly \$100 billion have been filed in the United States, and the Indian government is pressing charges

through the Indian courts as well.

But such measures will do little to prevent future Bhopals. As long as the profit-greedy corporations of the imperialist countries are able to exploit the peoples and resources of the rest of the world, more disasters and long-term ecological damage will occur.

Before the overthrow of the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979, a chlorine and caustic soda plant, 40 percent owned by a U.S. corporation, was responsible for a major outbreak of mercury poisoning among workers and the virtual extinction of life in Lake Managua, which had been an important source of fish. In 1978 the board of directors of the Nicaraguan subsidiary approved a \$3 million dividend but refused to install a \$650,000 pollution control system.

The workers and farmers government of Nicaragua is now working to reverse the ecological damage done by imperialist investment. More importantly, the Nicaraguan revolution provides an example of how to break the grip of imperialist domination, which is responsible for both the Bhopals and the Somozas around the world. □

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1984: Miners' year of determined struggle

Greater solidarity needed to overcome Tory onslaught

By Celia Pugh

LONDON — Striking British coal miners and their families had a Christmas they will never forget in 1984. An avalanche of gifts, food, money, and clothing descended on their communities from the labor movement at home and abroad.

Hundreds of children's parties shook the walls of miners' clubs and welfare centers around the country. Miners and their wives proved through their festivities that 10 months of hardship had not dulled their determination, or their ability to have a good time.

In communities where a minority of miners are on strike, the holiday from picketing and meetings was a quieter affair. But even in those communities, free turkeys and gifts for the children were distributed from the National Christmas Appeal, launched by well-known figures in the music, art, sports, and political worlds.

In the space of three weeks, the appeal had raised over £350,000 [£1 = US\$1.16]. Delegations from workplaces and nonmining areas visited mining communities to bring greetings and join in the fun.

These celebrations of a courageous battle brought no good tidings for the bosses of the National Coal Board (NCB), which runs the nationalized mining industry, or the Thatcher government. On November 18, Michael Eaton, press relations chief for the NCB, had predicted, "It is very likely that by Christmas we shall have half the work force back at work."

Since the beginning of the strike, the Conservative government has tried every trick in

the book to demoralize and break the spirit of the miners. With the solidarity of working people around the world, miners and their families were able to dash these hopes. The much heralded "drift back to work" petered out in the week before Christmas, leaving three-quarters of the miners still on strike.

Even the pickets caught the mood of this festival of the oppressed. On the picket line in South Celynen colliery in South Wales, miners dressed as Santa Claus decked themselves in tinsel and balloons and covered their picket van with Christmas trees.

But there was no peace across the trenches with the police. When the bus carrying 27 scabs appeared on the horizon, there was a strong push on the police lines. Santa Claus later distributed gifts to the police for their efforts — little green plastic pigs. The gifts were not gratefully received.

A year of change

As the miners and their wives look back on 1984, many could not believe how quickly their lives had changed. Nineteen eighty-four was the year of open class warfare on the picket lines. More than 7,000 miners were arrested, thousands more were injured, and seven were killed. Invasion squads of riot police brutalized communities, conjuring up analogies with Northern Ireland. The courts exposed themselves as instruments of the bosses and not the neutral temples described in school textbooks. Law-and-order and the democracy of the ballot were revealed as tools of the enemy of the working class. Black and Asian people became friends in solidarity, ex-

ploding myths about an alien threat.

Nineteen eighty-four was also a year in which the confidence and organization of women in the mining communities burst forward. Thousands have joined picket lines and have spoken at meetings for the first time. Their kitchens and food distribution have been a vital challenge to government efforts to demoralize the miners. This was evident with the smooth running of the Christmas festivities — none of which would have been possible without the phenomenal organization of these women.

Another lasting lesson of 1984 was that solidarity has no national boundaries. The French General Confederation of Labor (CGT) alone sent 300,000 Christmas gifts for miners' children. This followed the dramatic action earlier in the month by French miners, who dumped coal destined for Britain onto the streets of Avignon in southern France.

Since the beginning of the strike, French dockers at the northern ports of Calais and Dunkerque have refused to handle coal for Britain.

In the week before Christmas, reports came through of £115,000 collected from Soviet workers in the Ukraine. The Soviet news agency TASS reported that 15 meetings of miners in the Donets coal basin drew 100,000 miners in a show of solidarity with their British brothers and sisters.

Danish seafarers and dockers donated their labor to fill a ship with Christmas presents. The ship had been hired by their union, and its contents were paid for by contributions from union members.

A special Christmas solidarity greeting was brought from Black South African miners by a striking North Staffordshire miner. The financial donation from the South African brothers was particularly well received when he explained that these miners only earn £25 per week and had just finished their own brutal strike where many miners lost their lives.

So 1984 was a year for realizing who are the friends and who are the enemies of working people. The Thatcher government had set a course for total confrontation and defeat of the miners. In the week before Christmas, Energy Secretary Peter Walker confirmed that the government would hold no further talks with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) until the union was prepared to give up its opposition to mine closures.

The government's uncompromising aim is to crush the union, which for decades has been at the forefront of working-class battles to de-



Ron Richardson/IP

Police in mining village of Armthorpe, South Yorkshire.

fend living standards and democratic rights. If they can destroy the NUM, the Tories hope to pull the ruling class out of economic crisis by an unchallenged assault on the entire working class and its organizations.

Their job has been made easier by trade union and Labour Party leaders who have refused to throw their weight behind the miners, who prefer instead to play things by the bosses' rules of law, order, and social peace.

Two of these traitors were rewarded by Thatcher in her New Year's honors list. Len Murray, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leader who retired in the middle of the miners' strike rather than face its consequences, became a lord. So too did Frank Chapple, recently retired leader of the electricians' union, who led moves to openly scab on the strike by refusing solidarity.

At a pre-Christmas miners' rally in Edinburgh, Scotland, NUM Vice-president Mick McGahey raised a storm of claps and whistles when he stated that international solidarity with the miners had "put some trade union leaders in Britain to shame."

McGahey urged Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock to launch a national campaign of active solidarity.

These are sentiments shared by striking mining communities across the country. They recognize that the stakes in the dispute are so high that they cannot win alone. The courts have removed NUM funds for essential tasks of running the strike, including the money needed to finance pickets at mines, power stations, and ports. These pickets are vital for the participation, mobilization, and defense of striking miners.

Areas like South Wales, where the NUM's funds were seized by the courts in the early months of the strike, have been severely hit and pickets withdrawn.

'Time to mobilize'

But more than money is needed. Solidarity action by other industrial unions is decisive to take the strike forward. The Tories are set on a grinding war of attrition, to isolate the NUM and demoralize the miners back to work. The latest tactic in the first week of 1985 is a series of newspaper advertisements explaining that striking miners will get £1,000 tax concessions if they go back to work.

The government hopes through this campaign to lure over 50 percent of the miners to break the strike. The NUM is confident that this will go the same way as other failed attempts to encourage a "drift back to work." But they also realize that to win the strike the union must do more than just stand its ground.

Power station workers have to refuse to handle coal, and other workers need to take industrial action in solidarity and to defend their own jobs and conditions. This means a full implementation of the September TUC congress decision. The headline of the NUM newspaper *The Miner* at the end of 1984 spelled it out — "Time to Mobilize."

"The NUM has been placed in the very front



Clive Turnbull/IP

Women have played a key role in backing the strike.

line of the attack," *The Miner* explained. "It is time for the whole movement to wake up and respond with maximum efforts. There can be no bystanders any longer. The NUM is winning this dispute and gaining strength and support by the week. But the rest of the movement can give a mighty boost to that groundswell by mobilizing all forms of industrial action on a massive scale. The whole establishment — police, courts, government, media — has thrown its weight against the NUM. Let the whole labour movement now pick up the gauntlet and throw it straight back in their teeth."

This is where the miners face their biggest obstacle. The TUC General Council is terrified that the miners' strike could spark a political and industrial battle out of the council's control, a battle that would shake the foundations of their cozy coexistence with the employers.

While making statements of "total support for the miners," TUC leaders have refused to endorse action that might run afoul of the contempt of court laws. So they have failed to mobilize the movement in defense of the NUM against the courts. Little action has been taken to organize for workers in transport depots and power stations to carry out the decision of the TUC congress not to handle coal.

Open scabbing

In the case of electricians' union leader Eric Hammond and steel union leader Bill Sirs, there has been open scabbing as they encourage members to handle coal and cross picket lines. These union leaders are playing on the divisions and fears stirred up by the bosses. They peddle the myth that if workers deliver the goods, with high productivity and no disputes, then they will be saved from the ranks of the unemployed. If that means trampling on other workers, then so be it. Defense of the company in a tough world of competition is the

guarantee to individual security, they maintain, even if that means taking a cut in pay.

These are the same divisions that in NUM areas like Nottingham have turned miners against the strike. The Nottingham area council of the NUM has just voted for local rules that take precedence over those of the national union. This is considered by many as the first step to a separate union from the NUM, following in the footsteps of the scab union set up after Nottingham miners were the first to break the 1926 strike. Others see this as an attempt by Nottingham leaders to take over the NUM, backed by the funds of big business.

In 1985, the main problems facing the miners are these divisions and the obstacles placed in their path by the labor and trade union leaders. The miners know that they can win. The strike is biting into the economy and causing rifts in the enemy camp.

There is much noise in the press that power cuts are unlikely this winter. Although this now appears to be so, cuts cannot be totally ruled out as the weather turns colder and pressure builds to block supplies to power stations.

The giant Fiddlers Ferry power station in northwest England is already down to 10 percent of capacity, and there have been voltage reductions and general warnings of cuts in the last month.

Economy shaken

But even without the power cuts, the economy has been shaken, and with it Thatcher's plans. The strike has cost £5 billion and has cut by half the 1984 projected growth in the economy. The year ended with a massive balance of trade deficit and speculation that the value of the pound could soon drop to only one dollar.

The Bank of England reported that workers' earnings increased by 7.5 percent in the last pay rise, the first time in four years that wage

settlements had "failed to decline significantly" against a background of unemployment.

The miners' strike has given other workers the confidence to press for more, and the government has had to encourage employers to buy them off to avoid a general wave of strikes.

Divisions over these policies are beginning to show in the Tory party and much bloodletting has occurred in the National Coal Board. In December, the NCB's top industrial relations person, Ned Smith, resigned. This followed the decision of propaganda chief Geoff Kirk to quit over differences on the handling of the strike.

The miners are determined to push for victory. This means a fight for the labor movement to turn paper resolutions into action. In many places, workers on the ground are taking a lead. The rail workers at Coalville in Leicestershire have been refusing to handle coal since the beginning of the strike, despite management's harassment, loss of earnings, and the reticence of their union leaders to extend the action.

On December 19, 43 Texaco drivers refused to cross a miners' picket placed outside their oil depot at Dagenham, East London.

The NUM had proof that the oil was destined for power stations. When the employers laid off the drivers, 200 workers from a neighboring depot walked off the job, and the action looked likely to spread to other oil companies. The bosses soon retreated, closed the Dagenham depot, and redeployed the drivers to other jobs.

Actions like this will have to be generalized in the months to come and pressure heaped on the TUC and Labour Party leaders to support and extend them. Mobilization for a proposed Labour Party demonstration in the new year could become the focus for renewed efforts in workplaces and unions to get across the case for active solidarity with the NUM.

But whatever the outcome of this next stage of the battle, miners and their families will never be the same again. Many political lessons have been learned, and new, young leaders have been educated in the best school of all — the picket line.

The bosses and the bureaucrats are well aware of the dangers and have stepped up an ideological offensive, arguing for the sanctity of law and order and warning of "enemies within," "gold from Moscow and Libya," and "Marxist infiltration."

Many miners and their families no longer take anything at face value from these sources. The bosses' arguments have sparked discussions about such political issues. Many miners are not so bothered about opposing Thatcher's system and want to know what Marxists really stand for.

Supporters of the newspaper *Socialist Action* have already held two solidarity events with miners and their wives to explore these discussions — one in Bold in Lancashire and another in East London. A third is planned for South Wales in early February. □

U.S. miner tours coalfields

Socialist discusses with strikers and supporters

By Kipp Dawson

For three weeks in late October and early November, I toured the British coalfields on a trip organized by *Socialist Action*, a revolutionary socialist weekly published in London.

During my three weeks I traveled to 17 towns in 7 coalmining areas; participated in several pickets; spoke at 13 strike support rallies, meetings of miners, miners' wives meetings, rail workers meetings, and *Socialist Action* forums; interviewed dozens of miners, miners' wives, and Black activists; was interviewed by newspaper and television reporters; and spent many good hours in miners' welfare and social clubs and pubs talking with strikers and supporters. I seldom spent more than a day or two in the same area, staying at the homes of miners, rail workers, and other strike supporters.

I spoke as a recently laid-off coal miner and revolutionary socialist from the U.S. Socialist Workers Party; as an activist in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the Coal Mining Women's Support Team/Coal Employment Project; as a supporter of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) strike in Britain; and as a campaigner in defense of the Nicaraguan revolution. Throughout the British coalfields I was given an enthusiastic welcome by leaders and activists in the NUM, miners' wives, and strike supporters. And I was given a crash course in the class struggle.

I saw a union on the front lines, fighting against the same capitalist offensive that has taken the jobs of many of my brothers and sisters laid off from the coal mines at home.

I met determined men and women who told me, as Brian Jones did in Hirwaun, South Wales, "Of course we're going to win." Or as Ann Jones, a leader of a women's support group in South Wales put it, "We'll last one week longer than [Prime Minister] Margaret Thatcher and Ian MacGregor [head of the National Coal Board]." Or as Lyn Francis, chairperson of the Kent miners' wives group, put it, "We will never back down. After all this we have nothing to lose."

The miners were then in their eighth month of strike, with no end in sight. They are fighting with one demand: no pit closures, no job losses.

Test of strength

The strike has become a gigantic test of strength between a section of the organized labor movement and the British capitalist class. As the NUM put it in the banner headline in the October 12 issue of their newspaper, *The Miner*, "It's War." "War has been declared on the whole trade union movement. That is the meaning of the £200,000 [£1 = US\$1.16] fine against the NUM," they wrote. The fine was levied by the courts based on their ruling that the NUM was carrying on

an "illegal" strike.

While the miners have won impressive and absolutely essential support from some British unions and unions in 50 other countries, they still stand alone in actually taking on the capitalist antiunion offensive through direct, concerted action.

The British ruling class, led by Thatcher, increasingly has unleashed state forces against the miners during the strike. The courts find the union guilty of "illegal" striking and sequester its funds, jail members and leaders left and right, and restrict unionists' rights to travel and picket.

Everywhere I went, miners and their wives told stories of horrendous police attacks on picket lines, pit villages, and miners' homes.

The National Coal Board has attempted, and succeeded to some extent, to divide miners against the union through bribes and privileges. From the beginning, 30,000 of the NUM's 180,000 members refused to join the strike. Chief among them were miners in Nottinghamshire who were receiving substantial bonuses and were told they were immune from the threatened pit closures.

The ruling class has used the media to attempt to scandalize the NUM and divide it from its supporters. Stories abound of "picket violence." Arthur Scargill, president of the NUM, who continues to win the respect of the strikers as, in his words, a "leader who stands up and fights," has come under nearly daily attack by the media as irresponsible, power-hungry, and dictatorial.

While I was in Britain the story broke of the NUM receiving aid from Libyan trade unionists. It seemed a typical media ploy. Scandalize the NUM. Draw a link between Scargill and Libyan "terrorism." The headlines screamed of the Scargill-Qaddafi connection. Officials of the Labour Party and of other unions who are always on the lookout for some way to get out of supporting the fighting NUM jumped on this incident and rushed to the media to disassociate themselves from Scargill. But when the miners held firm behind their union, and a meeting of the NUM executive unanimously voted confidence in Scargill, this attack, like those before it, died down, and the strike went on.

The pressures of the long strike are heavy on the miners and their wives. Winter cold and bleak Christmases promise increasing pressures, as does the prospect of continually escalating cop and government attacks. Some strikers have bent to these pressures and turned their backs on the strike.

But my travels in Britain convinced me that thousands of strikers are determined to keep fighting because they know they are right and they need these jobs. And the adversities they face are pushing hundreds of miners and wives forward into leading battles they never

dreamed they could lead, and learning new things about their world, and themselves, which have now become basic to their lives.

Importance of international solidarity

Brian Todd, a striking miner from Nottinghamshire, told a *Socialist Action*-sponsored international solidarity rally in Bold on October 20, "The solidarity we've gotten makes me know we will win. I was always proud I'm a miner. Now I am proud I'm working class."

This battle has pushed miners to look for allies, and they have turned to people they never before thought they had anything in common with, forging important new links.

More than 100 miners and their wives attended the Bold rally, and many I talked with there and later during my trip, spoke of it as Brian Jones did two weeks later in South Wales:

"I only wish that other miners could have heard what we did at Bold, the support that we got. Christ, it was a bloody booster, that was!" When I asked what most impressed him about that meeting, he answered, "The solidarity we got in other countries. The support, from Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, oh, it was out of this world." (See *Intercontinental Press*, November 26.)

For Brian, like many other miners I spoke with, workers in other countries, who they once believed were enemies, are now new-found friends. "I served in the army in Northern Ireland," he told me. "The way the police are now — the brutality of the police today — I can well understand what the people of Northern Ireland are going through. When I was on the other side of the fence, I didn't think much about it, but now I'm with the miners and I can see what is happening, I feel for the people of Northern Ireland."

On October 25, striking miner Steve Howells showed the pro-Irish Republican video, "The Patriot Game," to strikers returning from pickets and picking up food parcels at Agcroft strike headquarters. He had been won to the Republican cause during the strike through meeting Sinn Féin leaders in Northern Ireland.

I often received applause when I called for support to the Nicaraguan workers and farmers fighting to defend their government against U.S. attacks. On November 20 a local strike leader wrote to me, "My heart beats as one with yours, indeed the war against Nicaragua must be stopped and I will do all I can to help and support the fine comrades in Nicaragua. . . . Keep up the fight, especially to stop the war in Nicaragua."

Links with Black community

New links are being forged between the NUM and activists in Britain's Black community. On October 23 I met with four leaders of the Black Delegation to the Mining Communities, a group formed in June to win support for the NUM among Blacks. They were planning a November 25 solidarity visit to striking miners in Nottinghamshire, similar to their first activity, which took them to Kent



KIPP DAWSON

mining villages.

The Black delegation helped Black miners put together a highly effective presence in the traditional carnival in the Notting Hill area of London in August. Here the more than one quarter million participants gave a warm welcome to the miners' booths, literature, and NUM float, which featured a Black band and a party of miners.

Later a miner wrote in the *Notts Miner* about how Blacks and miners learned from one another there: "Many people told us of the riots in Brixton and Notting Hill, frustrations, of high unemployment, and constant, daily harassment and intimidation, and watching their civil liberties disappearing. It sounded all too familiar.

"Many people we talked to understood the media's attempt to suppress our struggle and the police's constant harassment of our families regardless of color. They understood our stand to save jobs and safeguard our communities. We enjoyed the carnival, not as Blacks and whites, but as people, brought together through prejudice and harassment, aiming for the same goals — the right to work."

Miners' wives have stepped into the forefront of the battle in a way that not only strengthens the strike, but has challenged all sorts of prejudices and assumptions about "women's role." This was evident everywhere I went, as I visited soup kitchens and canteens where wives provided food and drink to miners and their families; as I heard wives who had never before stood in front of a group give speeches appealing for support to the strike; as I spoke individually with dozens of wives, each of whom had many stories to tell; and as miners, at every support rally I attended, praised the women as, in the words of the September *Yorkshire Miner*, "the strike's backbone."

When I talked with Lynn Dennett, a leader of the Women's Action Group from Church Warsop, at her group's soup kitchen, she explained, "I'm not saying we're the be all and end all, but our group is one of the factors that build up to why we are still out on strike.

"We've found a lot of women who weren't for the strike, sitting here and talking to us, and cooling off, change their views. And we also look at it as a place where women, that aren't active in anything, if they want can come down here and have a talk and get some things off their chests. Because we all get to a stage at some point where we want to scream and shout, and it's helpful if you can go somewhere, especially where there's women."

Women's involvement as strike support leaders, pickets, and organizers has raised questions for many of them, and many men, about their roles in society as a whole. For example, for decades, no women have worked in British mines. And most miners and wives with whom I spoke consider it a victory that women were freed from pit jobs through long union struggles.

But many of these activists feel as Lynn Dennett does now. Through activities in the strike, she said, "you've been enlightened to another life you know is there. You realize there's more to life than kids. And for women who work, I find that exciting. I couldn't see me being a little housewife sitting at home forever."

For some women this desire to hold jobs has meant, for the first time, rethinking the question of whether women should be allowed to work in the pits if they so choose. For many, and for many men, it has meant a sense of solidarity with women who do work in coal mines in the United States.

This was brought home to me in Cardiff, South Wales, where I addressed a November 1 meeting of 300 miners' wives.

I walked to the front of the room wearing my UMWA cap. I took the mike, turned and faced the group, and said, "Thank you, sisters. My name is Kipp Dawson. I'm an underground miner from the United States."

All of a sudden all 300 women were on their feet, yelling and waving and cheering. It was not only me as a miner who is female, as a supporter of the strike from the United States, that they were applauding, but also their own newly found potential as women capable of doing many things they had never before dreamed of.

Throughout my travels in Britain I found women and men whose experiences in the strike had led them to conclude that capitalism is at the root of their problems, and that only under socialism could the working class win a secure future. Many of them are thinking through how to move toward that perspective.

In several cities, miners and their wives grabbed at my invitation to link up with their class internationally, to join the world socialist movement through which they could fight for a future. □

Political disorientation of workers movement

Solidarity leaders express illusions in imperialist governments

By Ernest Harsch

Today there is a resurgence of discussion and debate among supporters of the Solidarity union movement in Poland about broader political perspectives. This has been spurred, in part, by the severe defeat that Solidarity suffered with Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski's December 1981 declaration of martial law and with the union's subsequent outlawing. Solidarity supporters are seeking to understand the reasons for that defeat.

Political manifestos, programs, and declarations are becoming much more common in the pages of the numerous underground newspapers and bulletins. From within the framework of the Solidarity movement and from outside of it, various political groups and currents have announced their existence.

Yet no group or recognized leader has thus far outlined a political course that is capable of effectively advancing the interests of the

This is the second of two articles on the political situation in Poland today. The previous one appeared in the December 24 issue, the last one in 1984. It reviewed the state of the Solidarity movement three years after the imposition of martial law and the extent of continued workers' resistance to the policies of the bureaucracy.

Polish workers and farmers — one consciously aimed at defending and deepening the socialist revolution within Poland and aiding its extension internationally.

That does not mean that the struggle of the Polish workers is headed in an "antisocialist" direction, as Jaruzelski and the other bureaucrats so frequently claim. Identifying their own privileges and political control with the workers state itself, they routinely brand any opposition to their rule as antisocialist.

The fact is that the Polish workers do not want to return to the previous system of capitalist exploitation and landlordism. They stand on the conquests of the socialist revolution that took place in Poland in the late 1940s: the expropriation of the capitalist ruling class, the nationalization of industry, the smashing of landlordism, and the institution of economic planning. The demands that Solidarity raised were essentially aimed at safeguarding those revolutionary gains, by removing the bureaucratic fetters that today prevent the Polish working people from overcoming the deep inequalities that exist in Polish society and taking part in the administration of their workers state.

At the same time, however, working people

in Poland have been politically miseducated by the very policies of the governing bureaucracy.

Poland's party officials, generals, factory managers, and administrators place their own narrow interests as a materially privileged caste above the need to advance the world socialist revolution. They follow a Stalinist policy of class-collaboration toward the imperialist governments. Without an internationalist perspective themselves, they have not educated the Polish working people to see the conquest of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat in Poland as part of an international struggle against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation.

Educating Polish workers and farmers to clearly see the tasks necessary to defend and extend their conquests would require establishing full democratic rights for the toilers. It would require a leadership that relies on the masses, mobilizes them, and encourages them to openly discuss and decide on the most important questions of the day. Only in that way could the workers' self-confidence be strengthened and their political consciousness advanced. Instead, the bureaucracy, which fears the masses, has established a repressive, totalitarian regime that seeks to keep the workers from using their workers state to advance and defend their interests.

Political miseducation

The bureaucracy's miseducation of the Polish working people has been all the more serious given the break in the political continuity of the revolutionary workers movement. From before the turn of the century, revolutionary Marxism had deep roots in Poland. But the Stalinist leadership that has dominated the Polish government since the workers state was established has obscured that legacy. Given the censorship and the distortions of Marxism purveyed by the bureaucrats, many Polish workers are unaware of the genuine traditions of Marxism and of the Communist International launched by the Bolsheviks following the Russian revolution of October 1917.

In fact, because the bureaucracy, the party hierarchy, and even the hated secret police use Marxist-sounding language to justify their repressive policies, many Polish workers are initially inclined to find such words and slogans distasteful and to look elsewhere for political inspiration.

When Solidarity arose, it inevitably reflected this miseducation. The vast bulk of its nearly 10 million members had never been politically active before and were only begin-

ning to think through broader political and social questions.

If a leadership had existed that consciously based itself on a revolutionary Marxist perspective, these workers could have been led toward a clearer understanding of the political course necessary to advance their struggle.

But such a leadership did not exist, nor did one emerge from the struggle. Many Solidarity leaders were themselves new to politics, having been thrown up in the course of the massive strike wave. Others had greater political experience, however. A few were generally familiar with the true traditions of the Marxist movement. They either rejected those traditions or did not see the lack of a consciously socialist, Marxist world outlook as a problem.

These weaknesses also marked a certain shift from worker and student struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, when leading figures openly presented themselves as Marxist.

One example of this shift has been the political evolution of Jacek Kuron. Although not an elected Solidarity leader, his views have had a certain influence on the union's program and policies.

In 1965, Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, student activists at the University of Warsaw, considered themselves Marxists. They issued a detailed analysis of Polish society and a program for working-class struggle against the bureaucracy.¹ But when asked in a 1981 interview how his views had subsequently changed, Kuron replied, "Since then I have ceased to be a Marxist."

During Solidarity's 16 months of legal functioning, there were some occasional expressions of support for socialism. "Progressive socialism, yes! Distortions, no!" proclaimed striking workers at the Warski Shipyard in Szczecin. *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, the union's main weekly newspaper, affirmed, "The basic means of production . . . are not privately owned by capitalists and there is no one who would want to return this national property to the capitalists. . . . Workers want their factories to be more socialist, genuinely socialist."

Yet such statements remained vague — and rare. Above all, they were divorced from an internationalist perspective.

A fundamental political weakness in the leadership's outlook — including of those who considered themselves socialists, and even Marxists — was their failure to distinguish between the bureaucratic caste and the workers

1. The letter is available in English in *Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972).



Solidarity supporters march past police van.

state on which it rests. This made it harder to see that the struggle against the bureaucracy, the workers' most visible and immediate enemy, was part of a broader struggle to defend and strengthen the workers state, a struggle that cannot be conducted within Poland's borders alone. In fact, the very existence of the bureaucracy as an entrenched, parasitic caste is a reflection of the pressures bearing down on the workers state from world imperialism.

The failure to see this in turn opened the door to illusions among some Solidarity leaders in the roles of the imperialist governments, as well as of the proimperialist trade union bureaucracies of Western Europe and North America. Because of the imperialists' hostility toward the Polish government, some concluded that they were allies of the Polish workers' struggle. But the imperialists' hostility is in fact directed toward the Polish workers state — a state where the capitalists are no longer the ruling class. They are opposed to the bureaucracy only insofar as it serves as an obstacle to their efforts to undermine — and ultimately overthrow — the workers state.

Throughout the period of Solidarity's legal existence, such illusions were generally not openly expressed. In fact, the union as a whole avoided expressing its solidarity with workers and oppressed nations fighting against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression throughout the world. There were a few exceptions: a declaration of support for workers' struggles in the rest of Eastern Europe and several statements by individual leaders in solidarity with working people elsewhere.

But the overall reluctance to see their own fight as part of the worldwide struggle against imperialism and for advancing the socialist revolution was the result of a conscious decision. The leaders feared that raising any international issues would shatter the appearance of unity that they sought to project.

However, with the breakup of Solidarity as a centrally organized force under the blows of martial law, these differing political views

have begun to surface and unfold in a clearer way. They reveal the deep contradictions that have existed within Solidarity from the beginning and that are now sharpening even more in the wake of the union's defeat.

Chile, Britain, and the AFL-CIO

Since the imposition of martial law, there have been a few more statements than before in support of workers' struggles in other countries, including in capitalist countries.

On Sept. 8, 1983, Bogdan Lis issued an open letter on behalf of the union's underground Provisional Coordinating Committee (TKK) in solidarity with the struggles of the Chilean workers against the Pinochet dictatorship. Lis wrote:

We are convinced that the road to a genuinely social system leads through the realization of democratic principles, and that there is no democracy without the right to free trade union activity and without human and civil rights. That is why we are supporting your struggle. . . .

Our faith is strengthened by all those throughout the world who reject social injustice, by all nations that do not allow their own dignity and sovereignty to be trampled on, by societies that refuse to let their basic rights be taken away. We share with you our belief and hope in a better future. We wish you a speedy and final victory.

A few months earlier, prominent dissident Adam Michnik had smuggled a statement out of his prison cell protesting the Pinochet regime's arrest of protesting workers and students.

In an interview in the Nov. 24, 1983, issue of the Warsaw underground weekly *Tygodnik Mazowski*, TKK member Zbigniew Bujak also referred favorably to the upsurge in Chile. "It is well known," he said, "that demonstrations are a basic tool of social struggle in totalitarian systems, as we see in Chile today."

When former Solidarity chairman Lech Walesa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in late 1983, he symbolically invited Rodolfo Seguel, the Chilean miners' leader, to join him

for the Nobel ceremonies in Oslo, Norway.

Although Walesa himself was unable to attend the ceremonies, he declared in a speech that a representative read for him in Oslo that he was linked in solidarity with "all those who are struggling throughout the world for workers' and union rights, for the dignity of the working man, for human rights."

On several occasions, local Solidarity bodies have declared support for the British miners in their hard-fought battle against the Conservative government's efforts to close down "unprofitable" mines.

Solidarity's Miners' Provisional Coordinating Committee (TKKG) issued a statement that was broadcast by an underground radio station in Upper Silesia, a key Polish mining region, on June 17, 1984. The TKKG sent the British miners "fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work. We know from our own experience what it means to lose a job. For this reason we will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action." The TKKG also protested the Polish government's continued sale of coal to the British authorities.

A little more than a week later, on June 26, 1984, the Solidarity Interfactory Workers Committee (MRKS), a grouping of Solidarity activists in major factories in the Warsaw region, adopted a resolution assuring the British miners that "you may be certain that as you have supported and are supporting our struggle, so we are in solidarity with you. We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for their rights and interests."

These few exceptions, however, do not alter the fact that none of the currents or leaders of Solidarity have put forward a proletarian internationalist course. Usually, when Solidarity leaders pay some attention to the labor movement abroad, it is largely aimed at winning support from the right-wing trade union bureaucracies in the imperialist countries. These bureaucrats' campaigns of "solidarity with Solidarity" have often involved the crudest anticommunist propaganda against the Polish workers state. The leadership of the AFL-CIO union federation in the United States, for example, has even accused the Reagan administration of not taking stringent enough measures against Poland.

On the same day that Bogdan Lis wrote his letter to the Chilean miners, he sent another one, also signed on behalf of the TKK, to the AFL-CIO's 15th National Convention, held in Florida. Lis wrote:

As before, our motto is the international solidarity of working people, and within that framework contacts and collaboration with free trade unions around the world, including the AFL-CIO. . . .

One of the elements of our struggle is utilizing the experiences of the period in which the world's trade union movement was formed. Those experiences taught us solidarity with workers' struggles throughout the world. They taught us to act to strengthen that movement. That is why we support and will continue to support workers' struggles in countries governed by dictatorships. That is one of the found-

ing ideological principles of our movement.

The 15th convention of the AFL-CIO is taking place in a period filled with tension in the international arena. You also have your problems. In the name of the members of Solidarity, we hope that you will be able to find suitable solutions to those problems and that after the convention you will be united and stronger. We hope that a wealth of common experiences will emerge from this. This will also be a gain for the world union movement.

'Reagan is with us'

Such political illusions in the roles of the pro-imperialist trade union bureaucracies in Western Europe and North America are closely connected with illusions in the imperialist governments themselves.

If anything, these illusions in the "democratic West" have deepened even more since the imposition of martial law.

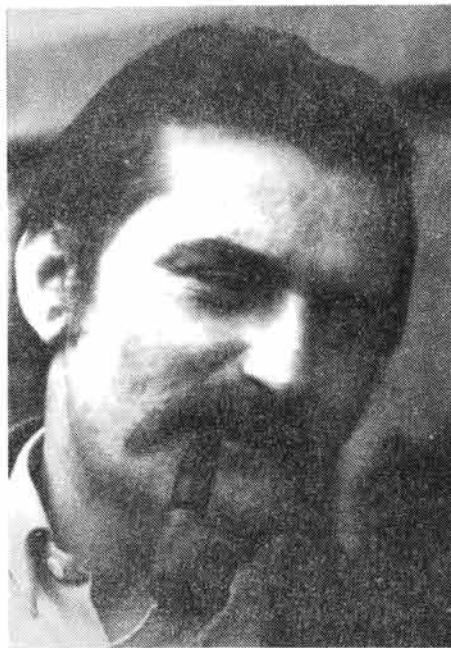
Jan Wolny, a member of Freedom, Justice, Independence (WSN), a political group initiated by supporters of Jacek Kuron's views, wrote an article in the April 1983 underground monthly *Przegląd Polityczny* reviewing the political positions of many of the currents that have recently emerged. He observed, "Sympathy for Western democracy is a widespread phenomenon. It focuses especially on its civilization and culture and its capacity to build stable and self-reforming political systems. But this sympathy is not blind. Finally, a political and military alliance and economic cooperation with the Western countries and with the U.S.A. would not encounter much opposition."

The June 6, 1984, issue of the Paris Polish-language fortnightly *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, which is published by the Solidarity Coordinating Bureau Abroad (the union's official representative body outside Poland), also ran an article reviewing the positions expressed in the opposition press within Poland. "The United States enjoys clear sympathy," the article observed. It noted that the slogan, "Reagan is with us," has appeared on the walls of the Nowa Huta steelworks in Krakow, a workplace that has long been a stronghold of support for Solidarity.

Some prominent Solidarity leaders have aired such views. TKK member Zbigniew Bujak, who is also a key union leader in the Warsaw region, stated in an interview in the Dec. 19, 1983, *New York Times* that while the Soviet Union is "a totalitarian state ruled by oppression" the United States has a government that "is democratically elected."

Bujak took the U.S. government's false and hypocritical expressions of support for Solidarity for good coin, and considered the imperialist governments' pressures on the Polish workers state as a help to the Polish workers. "As long as the decisive policy of Western governments is maintained, the policy based on respect for human rights," Bujak said, "we can cherish hopes our efforts will not go to waste."

In a similar vein, Adam Michnik, a close colleague of Kuron's, declared in an interview in the Nov. 13, 1984, Paris daily *Le Monde*:



LECH WALESA

Ernest Harsch IP

I would not want to give advice to the Western governments. That would be ridiculous. All that I can say is that in my view, never in the past century and a half has the West and its public opinion had such a loyal and wise attitude toward Poland. Poland suffers from a betrayal complex. Poles believe that they will always be betrayed by the West. This belief has some historical basis. But in December 1981 they were not betrayed.

Before Dec. 13, 1981, no sensible Pole would have believed that the West would aid us in the event of a catastrophe. In any case, I did not believe that it would. What has happened since December 13 has surprised me. What a broad, what a superb movement of solidarity with Solidarity, what a tide of support!

Differences on sanctions

The idea that the imperialist governments can be an ally of the Polish workers has been reflected most sharply in the stance of some Solidarity leaders and opposition groups toward the imperialist economic sanctions that were imposed against Poland following the declaration of martial law. While some have opposed the sanctions, others have supported them.

The U.S. sanctions involved a freeze on trade credits, the denial of "most-favored-nation" trading status to Poland, restrictions on some Polish flights to the United States, and a ban on Polish fishing in U.S. waters. Other imperialist governments, particularly in Western Europe, also imposed some sanctions. Most of these sanctions have since been lifted in the wake of the Polish government's decision to end martial law and release most of Poland's political prisoners. But other imperialist pressures remain in force.

Though the U.S. government and the AFL-CIO tops tried to portray the sanctions as a blow for workers' rights in Poland, they were in fact directed against the Polish workers state

itself. They brought additional suffering to Polish working people. The restrictions on trade and credit, as well as Washington's freeze on the rescheduling of Poland's large debt to the imperialist governments, cut Poland off from much-needed financial assistance and trading opportunities. Production in some industries dropped even further. Because of the cut-off of U.S. credits for grain purchases, poultry production plunged by 74 percent after the imposition of the sanctions.

Initially, no recognized Solidarity leaders clearly repudiated the sanctions or the accompanying anticommunist propaganda. They tended, in fact, to justify the sanctions.

On Nov. 26, 1983, the TKK issued a lengthy document assessing the economic situation in Poland. It included a generally positive reference to the sanctions:

The stance of the Western countries toward Poland is a consequence of the [Polish] government's rejection of reform and social agreement. These countries criticized the violations of human rights in Poland, they imposed economic sanctions, and refrained from giving us economic aid. The government's massive propaganda has sought to convince society that the continuing [economic] crisis is the result of the Western sanctions. This is obviously a lie. The crisis continues because reform has been blocked and because the government is incompetent and does not enjoy the support of society. The sanctions have a symbolic significance, while the lack of aid from the Western countries has a major importance.

Lech Walesa, at a Dec. 5, 1983, news conference in Gdansk, took a strikingly different stance toward the sanctions. He stressed the serious damage to Poland's economy that they had caused, and declared, "Sanctions should be ended because what Poland needs at the moment is not losses of millions of dollars but aid of billions of dollars."

The next day, in a telephone conversation with an exiled Solidarity figure, Walesa emphasized that the standard of living in Poland had fallen by 30 percent over the two years that sanctions had been in effect. His appeal for international economic assistance to Poland was again echoed in the Dec. 11, 1983, speech presented on his behalf at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies.

A month later, the Reagan administration decided to lift two of the less-stringent sanctions, the bans on Polish flights to the United States and on Polish fishing in U.S. waters. Walesa welcomed this move, but added, "I was in favor of lifting all the sanctions against Poland, of financial assistance and things like that."

On Aug. 5, 1984, Walesa returned to this question once more. "As a Pole I think all the sanctions should be lifted because this could benefit ordinary people." He added, however, "As a trade unionist, I see that society still has no control over the management of the country. Without society being allowed to take some responsibility for its management, the benefits derived from the lifting of sanctions will be wasted."

Unlike Walesa, none of the TKK members

issued a similar appeal for lifting the sanctions.

In fact, in the interview that Zbigniew Bujak granted to the *New York Times* — around the same time as Walesa's first public appeals for an end to the sanctions — Bujak implied that the sanctions should be maintained. He stated that if the "decisive policy of the Western governments will be replaced by a policy of concessions and the closing of eyes to what is happening in our country, this will threaten us with the danger of a breakdown of resistance."

Adam Michnik, in his Nov. 13, 1984, *Le Monde* interview, was more direct: "As for the sanctions, I would like to say this: the propaganda of the party and the leaders of the Polish government, including General Jaruzelski, have condemned them many times and have attributed all the failures of their economic policy to the sanctions. I cannot confirm to what extent that is true. Nevertheless, if the sanctions have penalized Poland, as the official press affirms, the responsibility falls on the Polish government. From the point of view of Polish public opinion, things are simple: the sanctions have been interpreted as an expression of solidarity with the Polish people."

When asked directly if he thought that the sanctions should be maintained, Michnik's only reply was, "It seems to me that the fact that we can meet and that I find myself at home and not in prison is, among other things, a result of the sanctions policy."

At least one political group has attacked Walesa directly for his position in favor of lifting the sanctions. Called Independence, it is a right-wing group organized around the underground monthly journal *Niepodleglosc* (Independence). It does not claim to be part of the Solidarity movement.

An article in the February 1984 *Niepodleglosc*, signed by the editors, began, "We should like to take issue with Walesa's appeal to Western governments and especially to the U.S. administration to repeal the economic sanctions imposed on the Polish People's Republic after the declaration of the state of war [martial law]. We do so especially considering that Walesa's statements have coincided with a hysterical communist propaganda campaign that demands that sanctions be lifted and that imaginary losses supposedly sustained because of them be compensated for."

Niepodleglosc argued that Walesa's proposal, if adopted, "would only enable the governing bureaucracy and the army to tighten their control over the people."

Who threatens war?

When the U.S. government, in conjunction with its NATO allies, announced that new cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles were being stationed in Western Europe — targeted at the Soviet Union and the other workers states of Eastern Europe — there were no clear condemnations of this from the ranks of the Solidarity leadership. There were no forthright expressions of support for the massive anti-NATO protest demonstrations that swept many Western European cities.



ADAM MICHNIK

Instead, there have been attacks by some figures and groups on those demonstrations.

These attacks flow from a failure to see that it is imperialism that is the source of military aggression and war — not the Soviet Union and the other workers states. In defense of their profits and domination over much of the world, the imperialists — led by Washington — have repeatedly launched aggressive wars against peoples fighting for their freedom, from Algeria and Vietnam to Angola and Grenada. Washington is today carrying out a brutal war against the heroic people of Nicaragua.

The imperialists also remain hostile to the existing workers states, including the Soviet Union and Poland. Their long-range goal is to overturn the collective property forms in those countries and reintroduce capitalist relations. The vast nuclear arsenal of Washington, London, and Paris is directed against these workers states, and is a constant threat to the social achievements — and lives — of their millions of workers and farmers.

In response to this imperialist military buildup, the workers states have been forced to increase their own arms spending and military defenses. It is in the interests of the working people of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Vietnam that they do so. If these states did not have the armaments that they do — including the nuclear weapons in Moscow's arsenal — they would have been overthrown by imperialism long ago.

Maintaining a strong military defense is essential, despite the fact that the bureaucracy, which now controls the use of these arms, at times turns them against the workers themselves. This is also true despite the fact that the bureaucracy's counterrevolutionary political policies undermine support for the socialist revolution, and thus undermine the defense of

the workers state. But because it rests on that state, the bureaucracy is compelled, in its own way, to defend it against attacks by imperialism.

However much the bureaucracy may misuse these military resources, they are vital to the defense of the working people's gains. Would a revolutionary Marxist leadership in power in Warsaw or Moscow not use them? Would it end military conscription? Would it dismantle the armed forces of the workers state? To the contrary, in face of the continued imperialist threats and provocations, it would build them up as much as necessary — and it would follow a revolutionary political course aimed at mobilizing the masses of working people to defend their conquests.

Few of those in Poland who have expressed views on this question have done so in such terms. At best, they have placed an equals sign between Washington and Moscow, between the military policies of the imperialist governments and those of the workers states.

Just before his release from detention, Jacek Kuron issued an open letter to "supporters of peace" in Western Europe and the United States, published in the June 7, 1984, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*.

Kuron began by describing the Polish government's brutal crackdown on Solidarity. The conflict between the Polish workers and the authorities, Kuron said, "gives rise to the threat of Soviet intervention, which would result for us in a national catastrophe and which could escalate into a world catastrophe." He then went on:

Worldwide peace movements are departing from their principles if they leave Poles to themselves in their fight. Peace cannot be attained in a situation when the armies of the Warsaw Pact are in constant readiness to engage in war with their own societies.

It is for this reason that the demilitarization of Central Europe, including West and East Germany and Poland, is necessary. . . .

The struggle for peace cannot be waged exclusively in front of NATO military bases where Pershing and cruise missiles are currently being deployed.

The world's peace movements have a moral duty to support antiwar movements that are being formed in Eastern Europe and to support the peaceful struggle of Polish society with the military dictatorship in Poland, waged since Dec. 13, 1981.

One current that has issued numerous statements is the Social Resistance Committee (KOS), an underground formation that came out of the Solidarity movement.

In a May 9, 1983, open letter to "participants in the peace and antinuclear movements" of Western Europe, the KOS criticized the frequent demand of those movements for unilateral nuclear disarmament by the NATO powers. "We think," the letter said, "that the demand for halting the buildup of the defense system of the countries belonging to NATO without at the same time demanding a reduction in the military potential of the Warsaw Pact does not serve the cause of peace."

It accused these movements of being "manipulated by Moscow," which seeks "to exploit the peace movements in the Western countries

for its aggressive activities and aims, based on force."

A few weeks later, on May 20, 1983, the KOS issued another declaration. It affirmed that "states ruled by totalitarian political systems are a threat to world peace" and that "the form of totalitarianism that is now the greatest threat to world peace is the totalitarian communist system." Moscow, it said, has launched "a hypocritical 'peace offensive' to camouflage its intensified arms buildup and to serve as a cover for its political destabilization of the democratic societies."

The KOS, however, has also criticized U.S. military policy in Latin America. Following the U.S. invasion of Grenada, Dawid Warszawski, a prominent KOS spokesperson, wrote in the fortnightly *KOS* that "the invasion of Grenada by the army of the United States, a country that had tried to do so much in defense of our struggle for freedom, is a blow inflicted against that very freedom. . . . Considering the political face of Latin America as its own strategic home front, Washington did the same thing ten years ago in Chile, through the Chilean army, and in many other instances. This is precisely the same thing that the Soviet Union did in Czechoslovakia 15 years ago."

The right-wing Independence group, in an article in the January 1984 *Niepodleglosc*, also commented on the Grenada invasion. "The occupation of Grenada by the U.S. marines, with the aid of symbolic forces from six Caribbean states, is reminiscent of the Soviet invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Afghanistan," it began.

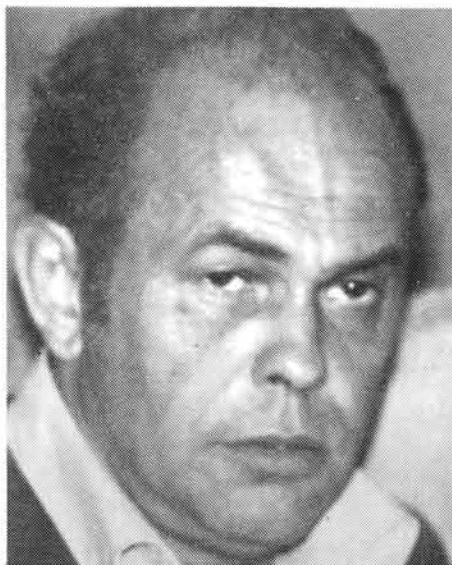
But *Niepodleglosc* then went on to ask whether the invasion of Grenada was really so bad after all. The previous government of Maurice Bishop, it claimed, had come to power through a coup d'état, had voted in the United Nations "in support of the USSR and Poland over such issues as the invasion of Afghanistan and the declaration of martial law in Poland," and had flooded Grenada with Cubans "posing as advisers and construction workers."

The group that overthrew Bishop, *Niepodleglosc* maintained, "announced a further tightening of bonds with the Soviet bloc. This proved too much for Grenada's neighbors, who asked the United States to intervene." During the invasion, it claimed, "casualties were slight," and "the majority of those killed were Cubans, who were more eager than the island's citizens to defend socialism in Grenada."

The *Niepodleglosc* article concluded, "We are given to understand that here in Poland there are also those who are not quite clear about the difference between the U.S. action and the Soviet action in Afghanistan. For these people . . . we have one question: Which country will be the first to have free elections, Grenada or Afghanistan?"

Ideological debate

As international issues have come to be raised more frequently in the pages of the opposition press, so too have different ideologi-



JACEK KURON

Ernest Harsch/P

cal viewpoints.

A few figures have continued, on occasion, to speak of their adherence to socialism, though none define it in revolutionary Marxist terms.

The most prominent among them has been Walesa. On several occasions since his release from detention in late 1982, he has spoken in favor of socialism and has criticized the Polish government's socialist pretensions.

On Aug. 25, 1983, Deputy Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski, at a meeting at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, attacked Solidarity as an organization "aimed at the destruction of socialism in Poland."

Walesa, who had regained his job at the shipyard and was in the audience, took the floor to answer Rakowski's accusations. "We do not want to ruin socialism," he stated. But he went on, "In 1980, we said yes to socialism, no to its distortions. Today we declare: yes to socialism, no to the methods that lead to *this* socialism."

In a Dec. 16, 1983, declaration that was circulated in the underground press, Walesa noted that the government was carrying out its repressive policies "in the name of building socialism." He then asked, "Is it possible to build socialism without the workers, and against them?"

One organized group that has identified itself as part of the "left" is Freedom, Justice, Independence (WSN).

In a founding declaration issued in May 1983, the WSN stated, "A politically strong Poland will only be comprised of organized and conscious workers, farmers, and intellectuals, together with other social layers. The workers of the large factories are the motor force of our modern history."

While rejecting "liberal" (that is, capitalist) economic relations in Poland, the WSN also rejected "the system of state monopoly [over the economy] that has for some time been the goal of some left groups." It called for an economy with different forms of ownership of the

means of production, including "self-managed, cooperative, private, and state ownership. . . . The big enterprises should be run by workers' self-management bodies."

The WSN explicitly draws its political lineage from the pre-war Polish Socialist Party (PPS). In this, the WSN supporters are similar to other former Solidarity leaders and "advisers" who have been influenced by Social Democratic views.

The WSN, in its stress on "self-managed" property as opposed to state property, also reflects the influence of anarcho-syndicalist conceptions, which have been evident among Solidarity leaders since the inception of the movement, particularly among those who consider themselves on the left.

Because they tended not to distinguish between the bureaucracy, which is an obstacle to advancing workers' interests, and the workers state, which is a conquest of working people, many Solidarity leaders, as well as advisers like Kuron, viewed the "state" as an inevitably hostile force, from which working people have to defend themselves.

For instance, at a meeting of Solidarity's National Coordinating Committee on July 25, 1981, Kuron stated that "in all previous revolutions, when the revolutionary organization seized power, then the society, the people, the masses were rendered defenseless, they had no one to defend them, they lost their own organization, which became the government. We have an organization that will defend society before any government." Kuron rejected building "a Leninist party of a new type . . . that imitates the state and that seizes power." Instead, he said, "a new governing organization needs to be built. It cannot be a party. It must be the self-management movement, organized to manage the economy, the enterprises, and the regions."

Though they acknowledged the need for at least a degree of centralized economic planning, these union leaders and advisers belittled the importance of state property — one of the fundamental conquests of the workers state, which places ownership of the major means of production in the hands of the working people as a whole, administered through their state. Instead, they spoke of the need to transform it into "social property." This is a utopian conception that — in today's world — would only weaken the foundations of the workers state. The society of associated producers that Marx spoke of is still a long way off, and can be realized only when the profit system has been abolished on a world scale and a world system of planned economies has been set up, economies producing enough food, goods, and services for everyone.

Such utopian views were often expressed in the "self-management" movement inspired by Solidarity. To a great extent, the Workers Councils that were set up in many factories reflected the immediate struggle of workers for workers' control and their desire for a greater say in the administration of their factories. Winning those demands would have been an

important step in advancing the workers' struggle. But some Solidarity leaders also saw the Workers Councils as organs that would administer the factories as "social property." A few saw them as new governing organs that would gradually replace the state, or part of it.

In addition to the WSN, another group today, Fighting Solidarity, also reflects the continued influence of such ideas. It has advanced the notion of building a new kind of society, based on what it calls "solidarism."

Fighting Solidarity was originally formed in mid-1982 in Wroclaw by Solidarity activists who were critical of the TKK's efforts to press the authorities to negotiate with Solidarity. It now claims several hundred active supporters and puts out *Solidarnosc Walczaca* and other publications in Wroclaw, Lodz, Poznan, Katowice, Konin, and Czestochowa. It also operates an underground radio station.

In its political program, Fighting Solidarity stated:

The star of solidarity is rising above the world. It is rising in the form of revolutionary ideas for a new social system that would act to the detriment of the forces of power and money, to the detriment of totalitarianism and private property. Capitalism reflects common interests as the sum of individual interests. Communism reflects the interests of the party and the state above individual interests. Solidarism is that social order which protects the interests of individuals and fosters their fulfillment along with the interests of society. . . .

This requires: a parliamentary form of government determined through the free election of candidates of competing parties and political programs; a market economy that precludes, however, large private ownership of the means of production and that is based on workers' self-management as the basic form of enterprise management; freedom of speech and assembly; territorial self-governing bodies elected by and responsible to the citizens of a given region; an independent judiciary.

This program, Fighting Solidarity said, "must be proclaimed in both East and West" and would lead to the collapse of both "the red and gold thrones."

It emphasized, "We believe that we can make the lives of people and nations somewhat better and more humane than under Western capitalism, and a hundred times better and more varied than under Eastern communism. Here in Poland, the struggle for the realization of this dream is simultaneously a struggle for national and social liberation. It is a struggle for the liberation of people from under the Communist yoke."

This perspective fails to distinguish between the necessity of overthrowing the capitalists where they still rule and defending, extending, and democratizing the dictatorship of the proletariat where it has been established.

While the Social Resistance Committee (KOS) generally avoids calling itself socialist, it has nevertheless placed itself on the "left" in some of the debates among the various groups and currents.

KOS spokesperson Dawid Warszawski, in an article in the journal *KOS*, polemicized with a document issued in the name of some work-

ers of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk that appealed to the "Western governments" and charged the Russian people with bearing responsibility for the crackdown on Solidarity. While arguing that the Soviet government, not the Russian people, bore the responsibility, Warszawski also revealed which political currents in the Soviet Union he identified with: "From the 19th century conspiracies through the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917, the civil war, the long tradition of anti-Communist guerrilla warfare (lasting in some regions up to the 1950s) prove, if any proof were needed, that these people are no less attached to the 'distinctively Polish and Western' traditions of democracy and republicanism than any other nation."

On May 31, 1984, representatives of the KOS and Fighting Solidarity met and decided that the two groups would cooperate closely.

In addition to these groups, there are several smaller ones that also consider themselves on the left within the spectrum of political viewpoints expressed within Poland today.

Members of the Solidarity Interfactory Workers Committee (MRKS) in Warsaw publish a journal, called *Robotnik*, that labels itself socialist. In an article in the Jan. 23, 1984, issue, *Robotnik* called for a reconstitution of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which it identified as the "humanist, liberal, and democratic current of Polish socialism."

Another group, the Union of Workers Councils—National Resistance Movement (ZRP-PRO), based in Silesia, calls itself revolutionary socialist. An article in the July 1984 issue of its bulletin, *Wolny Robotnik*, criticized the proposal of the *Robotnik* group for a reconstitution of the Social Democratic PPS, pointing to the role of the Social Democratic parties in Western Europe as among the "biggest obstacles" to revolutionary changes in those countries. It called instead for the formation of a "broad tendency that declares its support for a revolutionary solution to the Polish crisis," and in support of this call quoted from a major article that appeared in *Inprekor*, a Polish-language magazine published in Paris that presents itself as a journal of the Fourth International.²

A 'market economy'?

A number of organizations and groupings identify, to one extent or another, with various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist currents that existed in Poland before the socialist revolution of the late 1940s. Most of them use anticommunist language, extol the role of the Catholic church hierarchy, glorify the "independent" (and capitalist) Polish state that existed between the wars, and project a similar kind of state for the future.

Two of these groups predate Solidarity. The

2. The quoted article, entitled "For an Agreement of the Revolutionary Left," appeared in the December 1983–January 1984 issue (No. 13) of the Polish-language *Inprekor*. For an English translation, see the Oct. 29 and Nov. 12, 1984, issues of *Intercontinental Press*.

Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) was a small rightward-leaning organization that remained outside of the union movement. Members of the Young Poland Movement (RMP), however, joined Solidarity, and some of its activists had a certain influence within it, particularly in Gdansk.

Aleksander Hall, an RMP member, became a member of Solidarity's Regional Coordinating Committee (RKK) in Gdansk after the imposition of martial law. On Jan. 6, 1984, however, he announced his resignation from the RKK in an open letter. In his view, it was now necessary to leave behind Solidarity's program, and to chart a course toward an "independent, democratic republic." The Catholic church, he said, had an important role to play in that regard.

The Congress for a Nation of Solidarity (KSN), which was formed after the imposition of martial law and is not part of the union movement, stated in an April 1983 declaration that it stood on the legacy of Polish independence struggles from the 18th century through the Camp of Fighting Poland, a small anticommunist guerrilla formation during World War II that had ties with an anti-Semitic, bourgeois nationalist current. "Our activity in Polish life is based on the fundamental values of the church, Solidarity, and independence," the KSN said. Its goal was "to disseminate Christian values and ethics within the life of the community."

Two other formations, grouped around the journals *Glos* and *Polityka Polska*, have presented a similar stance. Both put forward "Christian principles" in opposition to communist ideas.

Several groups have advanced explicitly procapitalist proposals for reorganizing Poland's economy. The formation around *Polityka Polska* calls for the establishment of a "free market economy." The Independence group has stated that "a genuine improvement in the nation's well-being can only come about through reorienting the Polish economy toward a market economy, with full autonomy and strictly defined limits of government intervention."

Another group, formed around the Krakow journal *I3*, identifies with the economic views of Milton Friedman, a conservative U.S. economist. It has openly attacked Solidarity's leadership, accusing it of favoring socialist economic goals. Instead, this group calls for "individual initiative and private economic activity."

In addition, the Catholic church hierarchy has expanded its reactionary political influence, through such groups, as well as among those activists who continue to look to Solidarity.

Various opposition activities are now organized under the church's auspices. A student strike in March and April 1984 to demand that crucifixes be kept up in the classrooms was supported by a number of Solidarity figures, including Walesa. Many Solidarity leaders assessed the pope's June 1983 tour of Poland, in

which he extolled the virtues of the "free" capitalist West against "totalitarian" communism, as a positive development. Zbigniew Bujak said that the pope's homilies provided the "principal sign-posts for our activity."

Need for Marxist leadership

The development of a revolutionary Marxist political leadership remains a major challenge for the Polish workers movement. This is necessary to provide a clear perspective forward for Poland's workers and farmers and to combat the politically confused and erroneous views, which are a danger to the future of the Polish workers' struggle.

Without a clear understanding that the fight against the parasitic bureaucracy in Poland is part of the worldwide struggle against capitalism and for socialism, the Polish workers will not be able to achieve their goals within Poland itself — the construction of a society led and run by the working people themselves, through their own organizations. Without an internationalist perspective, they will be unable to effectively tap the potential support that exists among the most oppressed and exploited sectors of the working class internationally. And without a clear view that the imperialist

governments are an intractable enemy of the Polish workers state, the door will be left open to the further growth in influence of pro-capitalist and proimperialist currents.

That is not why nearly 10 million Polish workers rallied to the banner of Solidarity. That is not why so many of them are continuing to resist the bureaucracy's brutal police methods and anti-working-class policies.

What they need above all else is a political leadership — organized into a revolutionary Marxist party — that can chart a course toward extending and deepening the socialist revolution in Poland, as part of the worldwide struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. Removing the bureaucratic obstacle that governs Poland today will be a key part of that course.

Given the severe political miseducation that many Polish workers have had, and the numerous political and economic pressures bearing down on the Polish workers state, building such a leadership cannot be easy. It will require much patient work.

Revolutionary socialists, both within Poland and outside, can contribute by explaining the real political context in which the Polish workers' struggle is taking place. They can try to

reestablish a political continuity with the program of the revolutionary workers movement developed and defended by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and the first four congresses of the Communist International.

They can explain the tremendous advances made by working people in Cuba, in Nicaragua, and in Grenada under the government of Maurice Bishop, before its overthrow. They can show how the development of the revolutionary Marxist leaderships in those countries is part of the vanguard of the working class's leadership on a world scale, fighting to apply in practice the genuine principles of communism.

The overwhelming majority of Polish workers have not heard such ideas before. They will have to go through more experiences of their own before they accept them. But the fact that they are mobilized in struggle in defense of their basic class interests means that they will be open to listening to and considering revolutionary socialist views.

The flurry of political debates and discussions in Poland today reflects widespread political misconceptions and disorientation. But it also shows that there is a deep hunger for ideas. □

New Caledonia

How anticolonial forces occupied a town

Eyewitness report on Kanak struggle against French rule

By Vincent Kermel

[On Dec. 1, 1984, proindependence forces in the French colony of New Caledonia proclaimed a provisional government of Kanaky on that Pacific island. The provisional government was set up by the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), a coalition of 10 organizations. That move followed a FLNKS-organized boycott of the November 18 elections to the island's local assembly.

[Because of the French authorities' policy of colonial settlement, the island's 64,000 Kanaks, a Melanesian people, make up only 44 percent of the population. About 35 percent of the population is French. The remainder is composed of some 16,000 natives of other French colonial possessions such as Fiji, Wallis and Futuna, and the Indian Ocean island of Réunion; and by 10,000 Indo-Chinese, mostly Vietnamese.

[The following article appeared in the Dec. 14-20, 1984, issue of *Rouge*, the weekly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

THIO — The nickel-mining town of Thio,

the only community on the east coast of New Caledonia still administered by a European, was under the control of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front for nearly three weeks. This mobilization began after the active boycott of the Nov. 18, 1984, elections

and ended with the lifting of roadblocks on December 10 and the opening of negotiations with [the French government's special envoy] Edgar Pisani.

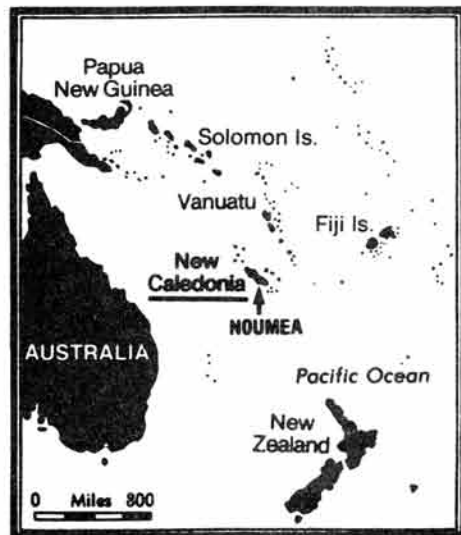
The ferociously anti-independence mayor of Thio, Roger Galliot, is a perfect symbol of the colonial bourgeoisie. A landowner in the Foa region, owner of a nickel mine, and investor in fishing boats, Galliot has one of the great fortunes in the territory.

Galliot's political trajectory is also indicative of how those who hold local economic power have hardened their views as the Kanak people's demands have taken shape.

Roger Galliot was a member of the Caledonian Union (UC) when it was established. He left that organization when it moved toward the demand for independence and for the recovery of stolen lands.

After running in the 1979 elections on the slate of the Federation for a New Caledonian Society (FNCS), linked to [then French President Giscard's] UDF, Galliot set up the far-right National Caledonian Party (PNC) and during the last election made an alliance with the ultraright National Front in France, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The active boycott of the November 18 election was a big success in Thio. Only 10 Kanaks



voted, and out of 1,700 registered voters, including 541 Europeans, less than 25 percent went to the polls.

Galliot received only 65 votes, trailing the Rally for Caledonia in the Republic (RPCR), which has ties to the Gaullist RPR in France.

Strengthened by this initial result, the FLNKS organized to shut down the town. The majority of the nine tribes in the region, totaling nearly 2,000 people, took part in the action.

Well-organized occupation

Seven roadblocks and a maritime patrol controlled access to Thio. Traffic was prohibited inside the town. Through meticulous organization and the FLNKS's determination, it was possible to avoid any violent confrontation, thereby ensuring the operation's success and the self-defense of the proindependence militants.

Economic activity was totally paralyzed. It is estimated that the French-owned Société le Nickel mining company lost more than 28 million Pacific francs [about US\$500,000] per day in Thio.

The way this action was organized indicates the progress made by the FLNKS in this area. A local FLNKS committee directed the whole occupation. The seven roadblocks were staffed by teams of militants with their own self-defense systems.

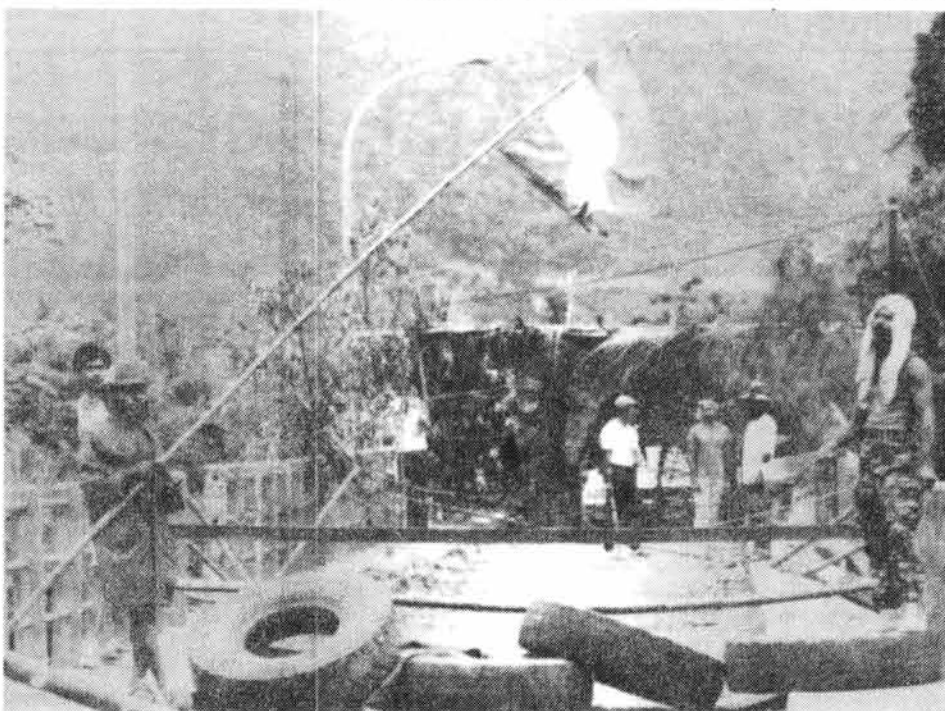
Seizure of the nickel company's vehicles and gasoline stocks and the boats of Roger Galliot's fishing company contributed to the effectiveness of the proindependence mobilization, which was based on real local mass support. Young and old, women and children, everyone had a place in this action.

The danger of a violent confrontation was reduced by the FLNKS's confiscation of several dozen hunting weapons belonging to people in the European community. This action, which was preceded by intensive psychological preparation of that community, also strengthened the defensive potential of the independence forces.

A committee of elders, including one proindependence European, ensured contact with the besieged community. It took charge of health and social problems. As a result, in the village of Petroglyphe the Europeans themselves turned their weapons over to the FLNKS to avoid any reaction to this delicate operation of disarmament. A delegation of them even went to the Thio police station, where 80 police were holed up, to ask them not to try anything since the FLNKS was effectively taking measures to guarantee their security.

In fact, not a single shot was fired against Europeans. The productive apparatus was maintained intact. And the FLNKS prevented a repetition of the looting of stores that took place in the first days. To that end, watch towers and patrols were set up within the perimeter controlled by the proindependence forces.

These weeks of occupation were an unprecedented experience for the local Kanak popula-



Supporters of the FLNKS hoist Kanaky flag at roadblock in Thio.

tion, in terms of scope and duration. The local Kanaks had to ensure supplies for the militant community and its self-defense day and night. This encouraged new experiences of the populations concerned in terms of independent organization, discussion, and action.

Deepening of mobilization

This united regional mobilization of the Kanaks expressed a deepening nationalist and anticolonialist consciousness. It also had an impact on hesitant elements, drawing them closer. Of the 10 Kanaks who voted on November 18, six could be found on the roadblocks within a few days. The local traditional chieftainry associated itself with the movement, even setting up their own blockade.

Immigrants from [the French-ruled Pacific colony of] Wallis and Futuna in Thio also joined this protest action in their majority. This shows the present potential for deepening the unity of all the oppressed and exploited against the reactionary and colonialist right.

The success of this action was not unrelated to the abilities that the local proindependence leaders demonstrated in taking initiatives.

The December 2 neutralization of a company of Mobile Guards brought in by helicopter to take down the roadblocks is a good example of the effectiveness of the independence forces. Having circled the police, the FLNKS members accompanied them to the local police station in Thio without disarming them, "so as not to humiliate them too much," FLNKS leader Eloi Machoro told us.

The roadblocks encircling Thio were lifted December 10, but actions continued in the region. The Thio city hall had already been occupied to prevent the return of the fascist

mayor.

The crucial problem of the land can provide other occasions for action. In the Thio district, out of 100,000 hectares of land, 85,000 belong to the state and 12,000 to the European settlers (mainly to three of them), while the 1,700 Kanaks live on only 3,000 hectares. Land occupations have already begun to take place.

Preparations by right wing

The FLNKS's objective, which links the demand for land with the struggle for democratic administration of the town of Thio, is to gain increasing control of the terrain. Advancing along this path against a profoundly racist settler community that is attached to its privileges will require a degree of determination and mobilization that the FLNKS seems now to be actively preparing.

The colonialist right, especially since the massacre in Hienghène [on December 5, which killed 10 FLNKS supporters], is arming and preparing for violent confrontations.

While Roger Laroque, mayor of the capital city Nouméa, makes veiled calls for this armed mobilization, the reactionary Europeans in the capital are preparing to lay siege to proindependence sectors of the city. At this time they are still only making lists, gathering information, and setting up anti-independence roadblocks. But no one should have the slightest doubt about the intention of a large segment of the local reactionaries to crush the Kanaks and their allies rather than recognize their right to political power.

The Mitterrand government's stalling for time and its passivity regarding these preparations by the colonialist rightists can only increase the risk that this conflict for independence will have a violent outcome. □

Farmers and ranchers back revolution

News conference of UNAG President Daniel Núñez

[Over the second half of 1984, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua has carried out a concerted political campaign to strengthen the alliance between Nicaragua's workers and peasants by strengthening the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG).

[Key aspects of this campaign have included the UNAG assuming a more forceful stance in relation to state agencies servicing agriculture; a government decision to give top priority to rural zones affected by the U.S.-sponsored mercenary bands; and a big effort to project the UNAG as the organization, not only of the small and medium peasants, but of all those agricultural producers who oppose the U.S. aggression and are willing to maintain and develop production in the framework of the revolution. As part of this, FSLN leaders raised the possibility of issuing "certificates of non-affectability," a reiteration of the revolutionary government's promise that the agrarian reform would not affect the lands — no matter what size — of those producers who continued working efficiently and did not decapitalize their holdings.

[An important part of this campaign was the decision to run Daniel Núñez for president of the UNAG. Núñez — an energetic organizer, dynamic public speaker, and FSLN member since 1972 — had been among the most respected officials of the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Reform (MIDINRA).

[The first stage of this political campaign was carried out in June and July, with a series of regional UNAG assemblies and meetings between top government leaders and various agricultural sectors. It culminated in a national assembly of the UNAG on July 7 and 8, 1984, at which Núñez was elected president.

[The second phase was another round of UNAG assemblies followed by a National Assembly of Producers that brought some 30,000 farmers and ranchers from all over Nicaragua to Managua's Plaza of the Revolution on October 21. That second stage was carried out as part of the FSLN's campaign for the presidential and Constituent Assembly elections held November 4. Those speaking at the October 21 rally included Commander of the Revolution Daniel Ortega, the FSLN presidential candidate; Commander of the Revolution Víctor Tirado López, the member of the FSLN National Directorate assigned to work with UNAG and labor unions; and UNAG President Daniel Núñez, who also headed one of the regional slates of FSLN candidates for the Constituent Assembly.

[The following are major excerpts from a presentation by Núñez to foreign correspon-

dents in Managua at the International Press Center on October 5, followed by questions and answers. It was conducted in Spanish, and has been edited and translated by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

To speak about the producers of Nicaragua, it is necessary to do a small historical review of the role that Nicaraguan producers, and above all the small and middle producers, have played in the history of our country.

When the Spaniards arrived in our country, we know that our indigenous people took a rebellious stance.

When the first U.S. intervention took place, represented by William Walker, our peasants, small and medium producers from the mountains of Matagalpa, closed ranks under the command of José Dolores Estrada. In the battle of San Jacinto, these ragged, barefoot peasant producers defeated the first intervention.

Small and medium producers from different regions of the country also accompanied Benjamín Zeledón, who was the son of a producer from Concordia, and resisted the aggression. And yesterday we celebrated one more anniversary of Benjamín Zeledón's rebellion when he headed a confrontation with the imperialist aggressors, thus writing one of the brilliant pages in the history of our people's rebellion.

Sandino was the son of a coffee-growing producer from Niquinohomo. And with Sandino, the small and medium producers of Las Segovias left their farms and joined the Army to Defend National Sovereignty. They are the ones who supported and fought with Sandino to resist the aggression and dislodged the aggressors from our homeland.

Our people, with the Sandinista Front, takes up those rich traditions of struggle. When the Sandinista Front arose, producers of the regions of Las Segovias, of Matagalpa, of Jinotega sided with the *compañeros* of the Sandinista Front to pick up the threads of the history of Zeledón and Sandino and thus arrived at July 19 [1979].

Within this struggle, from 1962 to 1979, more than 3,000 producers were murdered by Somoza's genocidal army. It set up concentration camps in Waslala, Río Blanco, and Cusawás with the assistance of imperialist military personnel.

Since the triumph of the revolution, more than 400 producers — members of cooperatives and small, medium, and large producers — have been killed in the war that we Nicaraguans face from the Reagan government.

Nevertheless, against wind and tide, the

Nicaraguan producers have been taking up that rich tradition of struggle of our forefathers, and in the midst of war, we are producing to guarantee food to our people.

During the 40 years of the Somoza dictatorship, departments like Chontales, Boaco, Matagalpa, Jinotega, Estelí, Ocotal, and Nueva Segovia, which together had more than a million head of cattle, did not even have a single laboratory to treat cattle diseases.

This is despite the fact that our international market was the market of the United States. The organizations of the COSEP,¹ representing ranchers, rice growers, coffee growers, and others, did not even concern themselves with establishing such a laboratory.

In our country, which has more than 13 million hectares [1 hectare = 2.47 acres] of land, if we take all our valleys together we have more than a million hectares, the equivalent of the San Joaquin Valley in California.

Nevertheless, the backwardness of our country — its underdevelopment, is such that when the revolution triumphed, we had scarcely 50,000 manzanas [1 manzana = 1.73 acres] of irrigated land devoted to three principal crops: 20,000 for sugar cane, 20,000 for rice and the remaining 10,000 for cotton and vegetables.

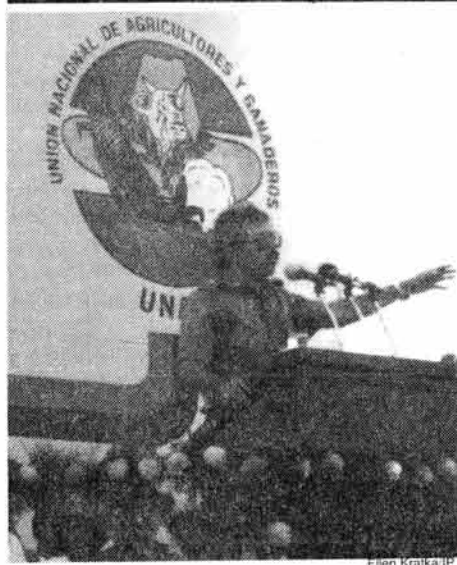
In a country of 130,000 square kilometers, with large valleys and 3 million people, the ranchers and producers of Managua could not even guarantee milk for the children of those who worked on their haciendas.

Thus, Nicaragua, a country with immense resources, which came to be the seventh largest gold-producing country in the world, is a pillaged country, where the gold and the forest resources had been completely plundered.

There were associations that claimed to represent the interests of the producers. But the small and medium producers were the victims of these associations, which bought their coffee, their cattle, their basic grains, but did not concern themselves with returning services to raise the technical level and develop this important sector of our homeland.

When the revolution triumphed, the UNAG arose like the payment on a debt — a debt that had been owed to the producers of this country for their suffering at the hands of the ruling

1. COSEP — Supreme Council of Private Enterprise, the main organization of the Nicaraguan capitalist class. It includes the Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua (UPANIC), which in turn groups together associations of ranchers (FAGANIC), coffee growers (CAFENIC), and others.



Commander Daniel Ortega addressing National Assembly of Producers, October 1984.

sectors from the time of the Spaniards' arrival until July 19.

The initials of UNAG define it: the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers. It is a broad organization that has room for efficient producers, for producers who are able to maintain their Nicaraguan humility, and who have not in the past been tied to Somozaism. Because to have been tied to Somozaism is to have been an accomplice in murder and torture. We are making this organization the organization of those Nicaraguan producers who want to respond to the call of our homeland to produce and to defend it.

While the wounds that our people suffered were still healing, while we were still just beginning to smile at the triumph of our people, the aggression against us began anew. The proof of this are the thousands of dead we now have.

As an organization we try to make those producers who live in the mountains understand that they are the creators of the social wealth of our homeland. Nicaraguan producers, and our people in general, hate war and love peace. We want to tell you that the assembly we are going to carry out on October 21 will be to let the world know — as well as those indifferent Nicaraguans who still exist in our country — that the producers of this country, the best producers of this country, long for peace and support the policies of our revolutionary government.

We want to make our position clear, that the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers supports the policies of our government.

The producers of Nicaragua ask the producers of the world to raise their voices, because what is being committed in Nicaragua is genocide.

I could invite you to go to a cooperative in the town of Estipulas, no farther away than Matagalpa, where 24 heads of families were murdered, where there are 24 widows, 24 mothers who are left without sons, plus many children left without fathers.

Although producers who were affiliated to coffee-growing cooperatives in Matagalpa were murdered and although the people denounce those crimes, there are associations of coffee-growers and ranchers here who are silent before those crimes. We also want to denounce that.

We believe that to be silent before a crime against a producer is to be an accomplice in that crime.

The objective of this demonstration is to fight for peace. Because as long as there is war in Nicaragua there will be all the more difficulties for us to confront.

We struggle for the unity of all the productive sectors of our homeland. In Nicaragua there are patriotic producers, those who are with the revolution. We would like to give you some facts so that you will understand more or less what the UNAG is.

There are two major sectors of Nicaraguan agriculture, the People's Property Sector and the private sector. The latter comprises large producers with more than 500 manzanas, small and medium producers, Credit and Service Cooperatives, and Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives.²

The People's Property Sector controls 20.5% of the land under cultivation. It is responsible for producing 23.9% of the gross value of agricultural output. The large producers with more than 500 manzanas control 14% of the land and 25.3% of the gross value of production. The individual small and medium producers, together with the credit and service cooperatives, have 60.7% of the area under cultivation and produce 44.7% of the total value. And the Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives constitute 4.7% of the land and account for 6.1% of the gross value of production.

We could say that the UNAG encompasses the small and medium producers, who represent 60% of the production of this country. Another 20% is represented by the People's Property Sector and the other 20% by the private sector.

Within the private sector of large producers, there exist patriotic producers who support the revolution.

Thus we can guarantee seriously that 90% of the producers of this country are affiliated to the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers in one way or another. And this has been possible after three years of intense work.

We have been having assemblies throughout the country, from San Juan del Río Coco to Nueva Guinea. That is to say, we have gone to those places where the new policies for our country's agricultural sector are being de-

2. In the Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCS) farmers maintain their individual farms and group themselves together to share government services. In the Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives (CAS) farmers pool their lands and jointly work them as a single enterprise. The People's Property Sector includes state farms, primarily the relatively modern, large holdings of former dictator Somoza and his close associates.

veloped. We have been discussing with these producers the policies, problems, and strategies of production in the midst of war in Nicaragua.

Our people has resisted 13 interventions against our homeland, one of which lasted more than 13 years, and faced a 40-year earthquake, the earthquake of the Somoza dictatorship. Our people — a battle-hardened, generous people, a working people, a people that is making great contributions to international society — is ready to defend itself and to produce. And it is ready above all else to struggle for peace and the happiness of our homeland.

* * *

Question. A major crisis of confidence has been observed due to the war, especially in the fifth and sixth regions.³ What specific measures are you taking to break down support among the peasants for the contras [counter-revolutionaries] in this area?

Answer. If the producers of Nicaragua, if the people of Nicaragua, did not have confidence in this revolution, we would not be, for example, raising the production of coffee in the sixth region in the midst of war and even raising it to the same historic levels reached under Somozaism. As we say, "Words move you, but deeds sweep you away."

That region is producing basic grains — corn and beans. While the cooperative, small and medium producer *compañeros* fight, their wives bring in the crops of corn and beans. So, I ask, what lack of confidence does this show? The counterrevolution is not creating a lack of confidence. What it is creating is the terrorism of war. More than 300 *compañeros*, cooperative members and small and medium producers, have been killed by these genocidal killers, who come like thieves in the night and take away the old people, women, and children to later murder them with impunity.

Q. Has this terror led people to be afraid to declare themselves partisans of the Sandinista Front or of the UNAG? Many people do work with the contras. This is a fact in the fifth and sixth regions.

A. Our people are not cowardly. In Nicaragua, for historical reasons, cowardice does not exist. There is a terror, there is an armed force there, supplied by the United States, and the proofs are there — Yankee mercenaries who have fallen, planes, helicopters.

If there were fear here, in Wiwilí this past Sunday, 2,000 producers would not have come to an agricultural fair where the government, together with the UNAG and the Agrarian Reform, sold 600 cows and bulls. If there were

3. Nicaragua is divided into six regions and three special zones for political and administrative purposes. Region VI is the mountainous departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega in the north-central part of the country. Region V is the departments of Boaco and Chontales, to the south of Region VI. Both regions have been special targets of CIA-sponsored counterrevolutionary bands.

fear of supporting the revolution, those peasants who are in a war zone, in the center of the war, would not have shown up there.

So, there is a policy of terror, a terrorist policy. But I will tell you one thing. In Nicaragua 50,000 producers have never before come together. And the fact is that producers from the war theater, from San Juan del Río Coco, from Wiwili, from Pantasma, from Río Blanco, from Nueva Guinea, from Molucucú, from Siuna, and from all the national territory, will come by foot or however to this meeting [on October 21]. That will demonstrate the confidence that those producers, descendants of the best sons of our people, have in the revolution.

You have to know the history of Nicaragua, you even have to know about the indigenous chiefs of our homeland to know the valor of those peasants who are said to be afraid. Because with all the counterrevolution that exists in those mountains, if the peasantry were following it, Matagalpa and Jinotega would definitely have been taken.

We know that there are difficulties. It is true that there are some peasants who have gone with the counterrevolution, who have been fooled. There was a policy of anticommunism here. For this reason we were one of the most illiterate peoples. After Haiti we were the most backward country. Because of this, in the beginning there was confusion. But the important thing is how many are leaving the counterrevolution.

So there are difficulties, we do not say that there are none. There is a war in that region. But in a war zone like that one, if there were not support for this government the producers would already have come down to Matagalpa, and you would see thousands of peasants coming down to the cities. Nevertheless, the peasants stay to defend their piece of land, their piece of the homeland.

Q. Recently La Prensa published a report about a supposed wave of land confiscations of large producers in Matagalpa. Would you comment on this?

A. In Matagalpa the Agrarian Reform has been carried out more through the purchase of farms than by confiscations.

For example, only two non-Somozaist persons had their lands affected. With the other property-owners, whose names I could give you, the state negotiated the sale of their farms for more than 60 million córdobas,⁴ in order to give the land to cooperatives. So there were negotiations there, not confiscations.

4. Nicaragua has multiple exchange rates, and moreover the córdoba's value has substantially declined over the past few years. Most government-controlled transactions are computed at a rate of 28 córdobas to one U.S. dollar. This rate also roughly corresponds to the purchasing power of the córdoba, taking into account that some basic necessities (for example, rice, beans, and milk) are very cheap thanks to government subsidies, while other goods — especially those which are imported or incorporate a substantial imported component — are very expensive.

But what happens? *La Prensa* is on a campaign to defame the Nicaraguan people, and it is the Nicaraguan people that it is trying to defame because the government of this country represents the Nicaraguan people.

Jaime Cuadra is an efficient producer campesino, and we consider him an honest man. But *La Prensa* wanted to utilize him to say that his property had been confiscated, which is a lie.

La Prensa committed an insult and a slander, and, nevertheless, the revolutionary government here took no measures against it. I believe that the government should have demanded compensation. Why? Because on an international level the damage was already done. It was already announced that in Matagalpa some gentlemen had been confiscated who had not in fact been affected.

You have to understand that the problem in Nicaragua is not a land problem. There is enough land for a million people to work. The problem of Nicaragua is the problem of the war we face and the problem of underdevelopment left us by imperialism.

The Nicaraguan producers, above all our unschooled ones, small and medium producers who live in these mountains, are now pretty clear on what role *La Prensa* plays and what role is played by the revolution's mass media. We can even say with pleasure that in the mountains the peasants now read *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario*. This shows that the consciousness of the peasant producers of this country is advancing every day.

Q. What percentage of the herds does the UNAG control and what percentage is controlled by the organizations of the COSEP? What is the annual meat production of Nicaragua, and what percentage of that is exported and what percentage is consumed in the country?

A. Eighty percent of the approximately 2,200,000 head of cattle are controlled by the private sector. Of this 80 percent, the UNAG controls some 65 percent, including those large, private, patriotic producers who are supporting the revolution. The remainder of the private sector is run by those gentlemen producers who are affiliated to the COSEP through FAGANIC.

The UNAG is growing among the ranchers. Now the producers of El Sauce are turning over 7,000 cattle to the slaughterhouses. And those producers, who previously were affiliated to FAGANIC, today maintain a close relationship with us in the UNAG. That is encouraging. Yesterday we spoke with the compañeros, and they said that they are going to make efforts to increase the amount of cattle delivered next year.

Q. What is the standard of living of the peasants in relation to other productive sectors?

A. The Nicaraguan peasantry was the most repressed and the most exploited sector of the

Nicaraguan people. Our peasantry produced the basic grains: rice, beans, and corn. Moreover, it was the sector most ravaged by the latifundists, who pressed them every day, pushing them toward the mountains.

The peasantry was repressed not only economically, but also by the dictatorship, which murdered them. We have already said that more than 3,000 peasants were murdered in the sixth region. Nevertheless, with the revolution, we have been alleviating this problem for the peasants.

For example, there was previously no electricity in Waslala, which was a concentration camp under Somoza. And the places where the peasants were tortured there still exist. Today there is electricity, there is a school, there is a hospital where the peasants come to cure their illnesses, there are stores, there is even drinking water in that town. There are offices of ENCAFE [the government agency that services coffee producers and sells their crops]. There is a branch of the National Bank. Why? Because revolutions are for transforming the peasantry, which generates the social wealth of the homeland.

In Matagalpa they have just inaugurated a regional hospital, a hospital that leaves no reason to envy hospitals in developed countries.

Thus, in five years of revolution, the peasantry has received schools, roads, health care, and financing. Moreover, the government has forgiven the peasants 500 million córdobas worth of debts they had been holding, debts that had been incurred in times of Somoza.

We can even see how the government, because of certain proposals that our organization has made, has been increasing the price paid to peasants for basic grains. Beans are now worth 800 córdobas [per 100 pounds, as opposed to 400 córdobas before September]. Sixty percent of the coffee of Nicaragua is produced by small and medium producers who are in the war zone, and those peasants are going to receive 2,500 córdobas for each load of coffee this year. So the government has adopted policies that benefit the productive sectors in the countryside.

This includes milk producers. The companies that used to operate in this country never gave them a just price for their milk. Nevertheless, today the milk producers are receiving a just price for the first time in Nicaragua.

This is why we say the happiness of the Nicaraguan people is not going to lie in the cities. It is going to be in the countryside. The development of the Nicaraguan people is there in the mountains. That is to say, the future of the country is in the countryside.

In spite of the atrocious, inhuman, and brutal war that our people are confronting and defeating, the Nicaraguan peasants, with all the difficulties, never before had the benefits that they have achieved in five years of the revolution.

Q. How many producers have been murdered since the victory of the revolution?

A. More than 400 producers have been murdered, including producers from cooperatives, small producers, medium producers, and even large producers.

The material damages are incalculable, because every day they are growing. For example, yesterday in the zone of Concordia the counterrevolution burned down three tobacco warehouses, and these losses reached almost 14 million córdobas.

The counterrevolution is trying to exhaust the country economically. That is what bleeds

our country the most, and the damages are many. The most affected are the cooperatives, which are where the counterrevolutionaries attack the most.

But the most important thing is not the economic damage. The most important thing is that, in the face of the aggression, the Nicaraguan people are strengthening their consciousness every day. What is sadder for us than the economic damage is the loss of every child who falls, every woman who is murdered, every youth. The economic damage does bleed our people, but the saddest thing is the blood that waters the countryside of our homeland.

DOCUMENTS

No more Bhopals!

Indian groups demand end to industrial hazards

[The following statement was issued in response to the deaths of more than 2,000 residents of Bhopal, India, due to poisonous methyl isocyanate gas that leaked from a Union Carbide pesticide plant there on Dec. 3, 1984. The statement was signed by 16 organizations — including the Indian section of the Fourth International — making up the Movement for Safe Environment.]

* * *

We have witnessed the worst ever industrial and environmental disaster in the history of humankind in Bhopal recently. This horrendous tragedy has forced people from all walks of life to react strongly and actively.

Industrialisation in India has taken little account of either the appropriateness of technology or work-related health issues, safety measures, or health hazards for people at large. Hazards and accidents to industries — whether in textiles, chemicals, mines, petrochemicals, railways, docks, cements, or fertilizers are either hushed up, underreported, or are totally ignored. And even when they are known, neither the management, nor the government, nor workers' organisations, nor voluntary groups have paid much attention to it. The time for passive acceptance of industrial hazards is forever past.

What happened in Bhopal is not merely a tragedy — it is a crime against people. We mourn the dead. And strongly condemn those who were responsible for it.

This incident proves to us over again that we cannot depend on industrialists or governments to ensure our health and safety. We appeal to the citizens — professional bodies, civil liberties organisations, workers unions, women's groups, and individuals — to press for the following demands through demonstration, mass education, signature campaign, letters to the editor in the press, legal action, and by sending petitions to Assemblies and to the parliament.

1. *Citizen's committees:* Citizens' vigilance

committees which can co-opt legal, medical, and technical experts in the field should be constituted for supervision and effective implementation of the measures recommended here.

2. *Punishment to the guilty:* All persons, organisations, and agencies responsible for the tragedy — Union Carbide management, state and central government which sanctioned the plant, supervisory and monitoring agencies including factory and explosives inspector — must be severely punished.

3. *Rehabilitation, compensation, and other aid to victims:* Victims should be paid a compensation that is at least equivalent to that legally available in the parent country of Union Carbide, i.e., in the U.S.A. Those who have been disabled should be rehabilitated and provided employment. Union Carbide should be charged with the financing of the setting up of rehabilitation centres. A Special court must be constituted for the speedy processing of Bhopal cases. Long-term monitoring of health conditions of victims, epidemiological and environmental studies must be instituted immediately, paying special attention to the fact that women might have been more susceptible. The results of these studies should be published in the mass media. All arrangements must be made to provide health-care facilities for those who still suffer from long-term effects of the poisoning, years from now.

4. *Right to information:* All the information with Union Carbide, especially with reference to details of manufacturing process, immediate, long-term, carcinogenic, and genetic effects of MIC [methyl isocyanate] and phosgene must be made available to the public. The government must intervene to obtain this information immediately. All hospital records of victims and post-mortem reports of the dead must be made public. All information-process details and toxicological data of products — of all hazardous plants in neighbouring areas [must be made available] in a

language that they understand. All studies undertaken by institutions such as NIOH, CDI, ITRC, NEERI, etc. must be made accessible to the public.

5. *Review of existing laws:* Existing laws concerning industrial zoning, industrial health and safety, and environment should be implemented uniformly all over the country. A reexamination and thorough review of these laws must be undertaken immediately and it must be made public. All such laws must be periodically reviewed.

Current compensation laws do not adequately protect the health and safety of all sections of the population. A comprehensive law covering all compensation issues, making payment of compensation a strict liability of the company, must be brought into existence.

6. *Environmental and health studies around existing & proposed industries:* The government should finance citizens' committees or other independent authority to undertake environmental and health studies around existing hazardous plants and industrial areas. These should be accessible to the public and periodic surveys carried out to assess ill effects. It should be made mandatory to issue public notice adequately in advance of the setting up of any new potentially hazardous plant. Health and environmental studies must be undertaken around the sites and made public.

7. *Rights to workers, unions, and citizens' committees:* Independent committees of workers and their representatives should be given the right to investigate work conditions and to make direct complaint to the court where necessary. All workers in such plants should be provided with relevant safety equipment. All workers — whether temporary, permanent, badli [casual], or contract — should have the right to stop working with full payment until hazardous conditions are remedied.

People unite now!

No more Bhopals!

People's Science Movement, India; Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights; Inquilabi Communist Sangathan [Revolutionary Communist Organization], Indian section of the Fourth International; Nanjavan Bharat Sabha; Lok Vigyan Sangathan, Maharashtra; Medico Friend Circle, India; Doctors for Peace and Life; Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors, KEM, Bombay; Mazdoor Mukti Committee, Calcutta; Shramik Mukti Dal, Maharashtra; Kashtakari Sangathan, Thane; Yukrand, Maharashtra; Krantiba Phule Sanskritik Manch; Khad Kamgar Sangh; Forum for Science, Technology, and Society; Indian Federation of Trade Unions. □

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Burkina's 'democratic, popular revolution'

'Political orientation' speech by President Thomas Sankara

[On Aug. 4, 1983, a revolutionary upsurge in the West African country of Burkina — which was then known as Upper Volta — brought to power the National Council of the Revolution (CNR) headed by Capt. Thomas Sankara. A new government was established that included several left-wing political parties, as well as the group of radical young officers around Sankara. Since then they have sought to mobilize the 7 million people of Burkina to combat imperialist domination and to carry through various progressive social programs. (See two background articles on Burkina in the Nov. 26 and Dec. 10, 1984, issues of *Intercontinental Press*.)

[The following is the text of a speech, slightly abridged, given by President Sankara on Oct. 2, 1983. Known as the "Discourse on Political Orientation," it has become the CNR's main programmatic document. Since it was given before the country's name was changed during the first anniversary ceremonies on Aug. 4, 1984, Sankara refers to the country as Upper Volta and to the people as Voltaiques.

[The text has been taken from a booklet published in 1983 by the Ministry of Information in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina. The subheadings are from the original. The translation from French and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

People of Upper Volta!
Comrade militants of the revolution!

During this year, 1983, our country has gone through some particularly intense moments that still leave lasting imprints in the consciousness of many citizens.

During this period, the struggle of the Voltaic people has gone through ebbs and flows.

Our people have borne the test of heroic struggles, and finally triumphed on the historic night of Aug. 4, 1983. For nearly two months now, the revolution has been on an irreversible march in our country.

Two months in which the fighting people of Upper Volta have mobilized as one behind the National Council of the Revolution (CNR) in order to build a new, free, independent, and prosperous Voltaic society: a new society rid of social injustice and rid of international imperialism's century-long domination and exploitation.

Having travelled this brief road, I invite you to look back with me to draw the necessary lessons, so that we may correctly determine the revolutionary tasks that are posed now and in the near future.

The August revolution: the outcome of the Voltaic people's struggle

The triumph of the August revolution is not just the result of an armed revolutionary blow against the reactionary holy alliance of May 17, 1983.¹ It is the outcome of the struggle of the Voltaic people against their long-standing enemies.

It is a victory over international imperialism and its national allies.

It is a victory over the backward, obscurantist, and sinister forces.

It is a victory over all the enemies of the people who have hatched plots and intrigues behind their backs.

The August revolution is the culmination of the popular insurrection unleashed following the imperialist plot of May 17, 1983, which was aimed at stemming the rising tide of the country's democratic and revolutionary forces.

This insurrection was not only symbolized by the courageous and heroic stance of the commandos in Po, who put up fierce resistance to the proimperialist and antipeople's regime of Dr. Commander Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo and Col. Somé Yoryan.

It was also composed of the people's democratic and revolutionary forces that organized an exemplary resistance in alliance with the soldiers and patriotic officers.

The insurrection of Aug. 4, 1983, the victory of the revolution, and the establishment of the National Council of the Revolution are therefore unquestionably the culmination and result of the Voltaic people's struggle against the subjugation of our country, and for the independence, freedom, dignity, and progress of our people. Simplistic and superficial analyses confined to preestablished schemas, cannot change the reality of these facts.

The triumph of the August revolution thus comes out of — and is deeper than — the people's uprising of Jan. 3, 1966.² It continues and raises to a qualitatively higher level all the great people's struggles that have increasingly

1. On that date, the French government encouraged a coup by proimperialist army officers, which deposed Sankara (who was prime minister at the time) and several other radical figures in the previous regime. This coup sparked a massive upsurge, including large demonstrations in Ouagadougou and a mutiny by troops in Fo. The French-backed regime, unable to contain this upsurge, was then overthrown on August 4.

2. Following the announcement of drastic austerity measures, mass demonstrations broke out in Ouagadougou in January 1966, and a general strike was called. To block this upsurge, the army ousted the previous government of Maurice Yaméogo and installed a repressive military regime.

developed in recent years, all of which marked a consistent refusal by the Voltaic people, in particular the working class and the toilers, to let themselves be governed as before. The most notable and significant dates of these great popular struggles are: December 1975, May 1979, October and November 1980, April 1982, and May 1983.³

In fact, the imperialist plot of May 17 precipitated a large-scale regroupment of the democratic and revolutionary forces and organizations that mobilized during this period by developing initiatives and carrying out actions more audacious than any previously known.

The events of May 1983 contributed greatly to speeding up the process of political clarification in our country, to such an extent that the popular masses as a whole made an important qualitative leap in their understanding of the situation. Imperialism, as a system of oppression and exploitation, was revealed to them in a brutal and cruel flash.

This prelude to the great upheaval helped expose the sharpening class contradictions of Voltaic society.

The August revolution, therefore, came as a resolution of the social contradictions that could no longer be stifled by compromise solutions.

The broad popular masses' enthusiastic adherence to the August revolution is the concrete expression of the immense hopes that the Voltaic people place in the establishment of the CNR, hopes that their deep-going aspirations can finally be achieved, aspirations for democracy, for liberty and independence, for genuine progress, for a restoration of the dignity and grandeur of our homeland, aspirations that have been singularly flouted for 23 years by a neocolonial regime.

Legacy of 23 years of neocolonialism

The establishment of the CNR on Aug. 4, 1983, and the installation of a revolutionary government in Upper Volta since then has opened a glorious page in the history of our people and country.

3. A two-day general strike paralyzed Upper Volta Dec. 17–18, 1975, winning wage increases and tax cuts for workers. In response to the arrests of several trade union leaders, the four main union federations launched a seven-day general strike, from May 24 to May 31, 1979, which won the release of the imprisoned unionists. In the months preceding the Nov. 25, 1980, coup that ousted the regime of Gen. Sangoulé Lamizana, the country was swept by numerous labor actions, including two general strikes, on October 4–5 and November 4–5. In April 1982, the Voltaic Trade Union Confederation (CSV) carried out a three-day strike to protest a ban on the right to strike.

Nevertheless, the legacy of 23 years of imperialist exploitation and domination weigh heavily on us.

Our task will be long and hard: the construction of a new society, a society cleansed of all the ills that keep our country in a state of poverty and economic and cultural backwardness.

During the 1960s, French colonialism — which was being pressed everywhere, had been defeated at Dien Bien Phu, and was experiencing enormous difficulties in Algeria — was forced to draw the lessons of those defeats. It thus granted our country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. This was greeted positively by our people, who had not remained passive but had developed appropriate resistance struggles. For our people, this shift by French colonialist imperialism was a victory over the forces of foreign oppression and exploitation. From the point of view of the popular masses, this was a democratic reform, while from the point of view of imperialism it was a change in the forms of domination and exploitation of our people.

This change nevertheless resulted in a realignment of classes and social strata, as well as the establishment of new classes.

In alliance with the backward forces of traditional society, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of the time undertook to organize the political and economic foundations of new forms of imperialist domination and exploitation — in total contempt of the masses, whom they had used as a springboard to come to power.

Fear that the struggle of the popular masses could only radicalize and unleash a genuine

The legacy of 23 years of imperialist exploitation and domination weigh heavily on us . . .

revolutionary solution was at the base of the choice that imperialism made. Henceforth, it would exercise its stranglehold over our country and perpetuate the exploitation of our people through national intermediaries.

Voltaic nationals became agents of foreign domination and exploitation. The entire process of organizing the neocolonial society became a simple operation of substituting forms.

Neocolonial society and colonial society did not differ in any fundamental regard.

A neocolonial administration was set up to substitute for the colonial administration and they were identical in all ways.

A neocolonial army was substituted for the colonial army, with the same characteristics, the same functions, and the same role of guarding the interests of imperialism and its national allies.

The colonial school system was replaced by neocolonial schools, which pursued the same goals of alienating our children from our country and reproducing a society primarily at the service of imperialist interests and incidentally at the service of the local lackeys and allies of imperialism.



Ernest Harsh IP

THOMAS SANKARA

With the support and blessing of imperialism, Voltaic nationals set about to organize the systematic plunder of our country.

With the crumbs of this pillage that fell to them, they turned, little by little, into a veritable parasitic bourgeoisie that could no longer control its voracious appetite.

Driven only by their personal interests, they no longer refrained from the most dishonest means, engaging in massive corruption, embezzlement of public funds and properties, influence peddling and real estate speculation, and practicing favoritism and nepotism.

This is what accounts for all the material and financial wealth they accumulated behind the backs of the working people. And not content to live off the fabulous incomes they derived from the shameless exploitation of their ill-gotten wealth, they pulled out all stops to grab the political offices that would allow them to use the state apparatus to further their exploitation and fraud.

Hardly a year passed without them treating themselves to extravagant vacations abroad. Their children left the country's schools for a prestigious education in other countries. At the slightest illness, all the resources of the state were mobilized to guarantee them expensive care in luxury hospitals in foreign countries.

All this unfolded before the eyes of the Voltaic working people, an honest and courageous people, but mired in the crassest misery. While Upper Volta was a paradise for the wealthy minority, for the majority, the people, it was a hell of almost impossible suffering.

Among this big majority, the wage earners, despite the fact that they are assured of a regular income, suffer the constraints and pitfalls of a capitalist consumer society; all their income is consumed even before they have touched it. And this vicious cycle goes on endlessly, with no perspective of a break.

Through their respective trade unions, the wage earners engaged in struggles for improvements in their conditions of life. Sometimes the scope of those struggles forced the neocolonial authorities to make concessions. But they only gave with one hand in order to take back with the other.

Also among this big majority are the "wretched of the earth," the peasants, who are expropriated, robbed, molested, imprisoned, looked down on, and humiliated every day, but who are the ones whose labor creates the wealth. It is through their productive activities that the country's economy, despite its weakness, has survived. It is their labor that "sweetens" things for all those nationals for whom Upper Volta is an El Dorado.

And yet they are the ones who suffer most from the lack of buildings, roads, and health facilities and services.

The peasants, those creators of the national wealth, are the ones who suffer the most from the lack of schools and educational equipment for their children. It is their children who will swell the ranks of the unemployed after a brief stint in classrooms poorly adapted to the country's realities.

It is among the peasants that the illiteracy rate is the highest (98 percent). Those who need to know the most so that their productive labor can increase its output are the ones who benefit the least from investments in health care, education, and technology.

The peasant youth, who have the same attitudes as all youth — greater sensitivity to social injustice and greater desire for progress — quit the countryside in a spirit of rebellion, thus depriving it of its most dynamic elements.

Their initial impulse pushes these youth to the large urban centers, Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso. There they hope to find a better paid job and to benefit from the advantages of progress. The lack of jobs pushes them to idleness, with all its characteristic vices. Finally, in order not to end up in prison, they must seek their salvation by going abroad, where the most shameless humiliation and ex-

While Upper Volta was a paradise for the wealthy minority, for the majority it was a hell of almost impossible suffering . . .

ploitation awaits them. But does Voltaic society leave them any other choice?

This is, stated most succinctly, the situation in our country after 23 years of neocolonialism: Paradise for some and hell for the rest.

After 23 years of imperialist domination and exploitation, our country remains a backward agricultural country where the rural sector, making up 90 percent of the active population, represents only 45 percent of gross domestic production and furnishes 95 percent of the

country's total exports.

Simply put, it must be noted that in some other countries the farmers, who constitute less than 5 percent of the population, not only adequately nourish and satisfy the basic needs of the entire nation, but also export large quantities of their agricultural produce. But here, more than 90 percent of the population, despite strenuous efforts, knows famine and scarcity and is obliged to have recourse, along with the rest of the population, to imported agricultural products, if not international aid. In addition, the imbalance between exports and imports helps accentuate the country's dependence on others. As a result, the trade deficit grows considerably over the years and the value of exports only covers about 25 percent of the imports.

In the clearest terms, we buy more from abroad than we sell abroad. An economy that functions on such a basis increasingly ruins itself and heads toward catastrophe.

Private investments from abroad are not only insufficient, but are an enormous drain on the country's economy and thus contribute nothing toward increasing its ability to accumulate. An important portion of the wealth created with the help of foreign investments is siphoned abroad instead of being reinvested to increase the country's productive capacity. In the 1973-79 period, it is estimated that 1.7 billion CFA francs left the country each year as income from direct foreign investments, while new investments only accounted for an average of 1.3 billion CFA francs a year.⁴

The inadequacy of productive investments has impelled the Voltaic state to play a fundamental role in the national economy, to make up for the lack of private investment.

This is a difficult situation, considering that the state's budgetary income is basically composed of taxes, which represent 85 percent of the total revenue and are derived largely from import duties and taxes on imports.

In addition to financing national investment, this income finances state expenditures, 70 percent of which goes to pay the salaries of functionaries and to ensure the functioning of administrative services. How much can then remain for social and cultural investments?

In education, our country is among the most backward, with a school-going rate of 16.4 percent and an illiteracy rate that reaches an average of 92 percent. That is, out of every 100 Voltaics, barely eight know how to read and write in any language.

On the level of health, the illness and mortality rate is among the highest in the region because of the proliferation of communicable diseases and inadequate nutrition.

Besides, how can we avoid such a catastrophic situation when there is only one hospital bed per 1,200 inhabitants and one doctor per 48,000 inhabitants?

These few elements alone are enough to illustrate the legacy that 23 years of neo-colonialism has left us, 23 years of a policy of total national neglect.

4. 465 CFA francs are equivalent to US\$1.00.

This situation, which is one of the most disheartening, cannot be met with indifference by any Voltaic who loves and honors his country.

Our people, our courageous, hard-working people, have never been able to tolerate such a situation. And because they knew that this situation did not arise through an act of fate, but through the organization of society on an unjust basis that only benefits a minority, the people have always struggled in many different ways, searching for the ways and means to put an end to the old order of things.

The parasitic classes that have always prof-

For the parasitic classes, our revolution will be the most authoritarian thing; it will be an act through which the people impose their will on them by all available means, including arms if necessary . . .

ited from a colonial and neocolonial Upper Volta are and will be hostile to the transformations undertaken by the revolutionary process unleashed on Aug. 4, 1983. This is because they are and remain attached by an umbilical cord to international imperialism. They are and remain fervent defenders of the privileges they have acquired from the fact of their allegiance to imperialism.

Whatever they do or say, they remain true to themselves and continue to weave plots and intrigues to reconquer their "lost kingdom." It is pointless to expect these nostalgic ones to change their views and attitudes. All they appreciate and understand is the language of struggle, the struggle of the revolutionary classes against those who exploit and oppress the people. For them, our revolution will be the most authoritarian thing; it will be an act through which the people will impose their will on them by all available means, including arms if necessary.

These enemies of the people, who are they? They were unmasked before the eyes of the

people through their hostility to the revolutionary forces during the May 17 events. They are:

1. The Voltaic bourgeoisie, which is differentiated, according to the functions of its various sectors, into the state bourgeoisie, comprador bourgeoisie, and middle bourgeoisie.

The state bourgeoisie: It is this sector that is known as the politico-bureaucratic bourgeoisie. It is a bourgeoisie that has used its political monopoly to enrich itself in an illicit and indecent manner, using the state apparatus just as an industrial capitalist uses the means of production to accumulate surplus value drawn from the exploitation of the workers' labor power.

This sector of the bourgeoisie will never of its own accord renounce its old advantages and passively watch the ongoing revolutionary transformations.

The commercial bourgeoisie: This sector, by its very activity, is linked to imperialism by numerous ties. For this sector the end of imperialist domination means the death of "the goose that lays the golden egg."

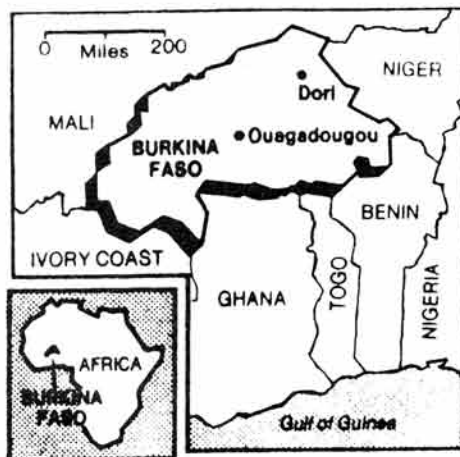
That is why it will oppose the present revolution with all its might. From this category, for example, emerge the shady merchants who try to deprive the people by withdrawing supplies from the market to achieve their goals of speculation and economic sabotage.

The middle bourgeoisie: This sector of the Voltaic bourgeoisie, although it has ties with imperialism, is in competition with it for control of the market. But since it is economically weaker, it is pushed aside by imperialism. Therefore it has grievances against imperialism, but it also fears the people — and this fear may lead it to make a bloc with imperialism.

Nevertheless, because the imperialist domination of our country prevents this sector from playing its real role as a national bourgeoisie, some of its elements could, under certain circumstances, be favorable to the revolution. This would place them objectively in the camp of the people. Meanwhile, it is necessary to cultivate revolutionary suspicion regarding these elements who are moving toward the revolution and the people, since all sorts of opportunists will rush toward the revolution under this cover.

2. The backward forces that base their power on the traditional feudal-type structures of our society. These forces, in their majority, put up staunch resistance to French colonialist imperialism. But since our country gained national sovereignty, they have become integrally linked with the reactionary bourgeoisie to oppress the Voltaic people. These forces have used the peasant masses as a reservoir, so that their votes could be sold to the highest bidders.

In order to preserve their interests, which are common with those of imperialism and opposed to those of the people, these reactionary forces frequently rely on the decadent values of our traditional culture that still persist in rural areas. Insofar as our revolution aims to



democratize social relations in the countryside, give the peasants more authority, and bring them more education and knowledge for their economic and cultural emancipation, these retrograde forces will oppose such measures.

Aside from the reactionary and anti-revolutionary classes and social layers enumerated above, the rest of the population constitutes the Voltaic people. A people who consider imperialist domination and exploitation an abomination and who have continually shown that in constant and concrete struggle against the different neocolonial regimes.

The people, in the current revolution, are composed of:

1. The Voltaic working class, young and few in number, but which has proved in constant struggle against the employers that it is a genuinely revolutionary class. In the current revolution, it is a class that has everything to gain and nothing to lose. It has no means of production to lose, it has no piece of property to defend within the framework of the old neocolonial society. To the contrary, it is convinced that the revolution is its affair, because it will come out of the revolution larger and stronger.

2. The petty bourgeoisie, which constitutes a large social layer that is very unstable and that often vacillates between the cause of the popular masses and that of imperialism.

In its great majority, it always ends up taking the side of the popular masses. It is composed of the most diverse elements, including:

- Small traders.
- Petty-bourgeois intellectuals (civil servants, students, employees of the private sector, etc.).
- Artisans.

3. The Voltaic peasantry, which is composed, in its big majority, of small peasants attached to their small plots of land because of the ongoing disintegration of collective property forms since the introduction of the capitalist mode of production in our country.

The Voltaic working class is a genuinely revolutionary class . . .

Market relations have increasingly dissolved community ties and replaced them with private property in the means of production. In the new situation created by the penetration of capitalism into our countryside, the Voltaic peasant, who is tied to small-scale production, embodies bourgeois productive relations.

From this perspective, the Voltaic peasantry is also an integral part of the petty-bourgeois category.

Because of its past and present situation, it is the social layer that has had to pay the highest price for imperialist domination and exploitation.

The economic and cultural backwardness that characterizes our countryside has kept the peasants isolated from the big currents of progress and modernization, leaving them in the

role of a reservoir for the reactionary political parties.

Nevertheless, the peasantry has an interest in the revolution and, in terms of numbers, is its principal force.

4. The lumpen-proletariat. It is this category of declassed elements that, because of its state of unemployment, is predisposed to being hired by reactionary and counterrevolutionary forces to carry out their dirty work. To the extent that the revolution can transform them by employing them productively, they can become its fervent defenders.

The character and scope of the August revolution

The revolutions that take place around the world are not alike. Each revolution has its own originality, which distinguishes it from the others. Our revolution, the August revolution, is no exception. It takes into account the special features of our country, its level of development, and its subjugation to the world imperialist capitalist system.

Our revolution is a revolution that is unfolding in a backward, agricultural country where the weight of the traditions and ideologies emanating from a feudal-type social organization weigh heavily on the popular masses.

It is a revolution in a country that, because of the oppression and exploitation that imperialism exercises over our people, has evolved from a colony into a neocolony.

It is a revolution that took place in a country still lacking an organized working class consciousness of its historic mission and therefore not possessing any tradition of revolutionary struggle. It is a revolution that took place in a small country of the [African] continent, at a time when the revolutionary movement on the international level is more and more breaking apart, without any visible hope of seeing it develop into a homogeneous bloc that can encourage and give practical support to nascent revolutionary movements.

All these historic, geographic, and sociological circumstances give our revolution a certain, specific imprint.

The August revolution is a revolution that has a dual character: It is a democratic and popular revolution. Its primary tasks are to liquidate imperialist domination and exploitation and to cleanse the countryside of all social, economic, and cultural obstacles that keep it in a backward state. From this flows its democratic character.

Its popular character arises from the full participation of the Voltaic popular masses in this revolution and their resulting mobilization around democratic and revolutionary slogans that express in real terms their own interests against those of the reactionary classes allied with imperialism. The popular character of the August revolution also lies in the fact that, in place of the old state machinery, a new machinery is being constructed that will guarantee the democratic exercise of power by the people and for the people.

While our current revolution is thus an anti-

imperialist revolution, it nevertheless takes place within the framework of the limits of a bourgeois economic and social regime. In developing an analysis of the social classes in Voltaic society, we have put forward the idea that the Voltaic bourgeoisie is not a single, homogeneous, reactionary, and antirevolutionary entity.

In fact, what characterizes the bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries, under capitalist relations, is its congenital inability to revolutionize society like the bourgeoisie of Europe did in the 1780s, that is, in the epoch when the bourgeoisie was still a rising class.

These are the characteristics and limitations of the present revolution unleashed in Upper Volta since Aug. 4, 1983. Having a clear view and precise definition of its content lets us guard against the dangers of deviation and excess that could cause injury to the victorious march of the revolution.

Let all those who have taken up the defense of the August revolution absorb this guiding

The peasantry is the social layer that has had to pay the highest price for imperialist domination . . .

line, so as to be able to assume their role as conscious revolutionaries, real propagandists who, determined and tireless, spread it among the masses.

It is no longer enough to call oneself revolutionary. You must grasp the profound meaning of the revolution that you fervently defend. That is the best way to defend the revolution from the counterrevolutionaries' ceaseless attacks against it and distortions of it. Knowing how to link revolutionary theory to revolutionary practice will now be the decisive criterion in distinguishing consistent revolutionaries from all those who flock to the revolution for motives foreign to the revolutionary cause.

The people's sovereignty in the exercise of revolutionary power

As we have said, one of the distinctive traits of the August revolution that gives it its popular character is that it is a movement of the immense majority for the benefit of the immense majority.

It is a revolution made by the Voltaic popular masses themselves, with their own slogans and aspirations. The aim of this revolution is that the people assume power. That is why the first act of the revolution, following the August 4 proclamation, was an appeal to the people to create Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). The CNR is convinced that for this revolution to be genuinely popular it must lead to the destruction of the neocolonial state machinery and the organization of a new machinery capable of guaranteeing the people's sovereignty.

The history of our country up to today has basically been dominated by the exploiting and conservative classes, which have exercised

their antidemocratic and antipopular dictatorship through their domination over politics, the economy, ideology, culture, administration, and justice.

The revolution has as its primary objective transferring power from the hands of the Voltaic bourgeoisie allied with imperialism into the hands of the alliance of popular classes that make up the people.

This means that the people in power must henceforth counterpose their own democratic and popular power to the antidemocratic and antipopular dictatorship of the reactionary alliance of social classes that favor imperialism.

This democratic and popular power will be the foundation, the solid base of revolutionary power in Upper Volta. Its supreme task will be the total transformation of the entire state machinery, with its laws, administration, courts, police, and army, which had been fashioned to serve and defend the selfish interests of the reactionary social classes and layers. Its task will be to organize the struggle against the counterrevolutionary attempts to reconquer "Paradise Lost," in order to completely wipe out the resistance of the reactionaries who are nostalgic for the past. And from this flows the necessity and role of the CDRs, as the popular masses' stronghold for the assault against the reactionary and counterrevolutionary citadels.

For a correct understanding of the CDRs' nature, role, and functioning

Building a people's democratic state, which is the ultimate goal of the August revolution, is not and will not be done in a day. It is an arduous task that demands of us enormous sacrifices. The democratic character of this revolution requires us to decentralize administrative power in order to bring the administration closer to the people, to make public affairs something that interests everyone. In this immense and long endeavor, we have undertaken to redraw the administrative map of the country to make it much more effective.

We have also undertaken to renovate the management of the administrative services in a more revolutionary fashion.

At the same time, we have dismissed functionaries and officers who, for various reasons, cannot follow the rhythm of the present revolution. Much still remains to be done, and we are aware of that.

Within the revolutionary process that began on August 4, the National Council of the Revolution is the power that thinks through, leads, and controls national life on the political, economic, and social planes. But it must have local bodies in the various sectors of national life. Therein lies the essential significance of the creation of the CDRs, which are the representatives of revolutionary power in the villages, the urban neighborhoods, and the workplaces.

The people's arms, the people's power, the people's riches — it will be the people who will manage them, and that the CDRs are there for.

Their roles are enormous and varied. Their main task is to organize the Voltaic people as a whole in order to draw them into the revolutionary struggle. Organized in the CDRs, the people acquire not only the right to review the problems of their development, but also to participate in making decisions and carrying them out.

The revolution, as a correct theory for the destruction of the old order and the construction of a new type of society in its place, can only be led by those in whose interests it is.

The CDRs are the battering rams that will attack all the strongholds of resistance. They are the building blocks of a revolutionary Upper Volta. They are the leavening that must carry the revolution to all provinces, all our villages, all public and private services, all homes, all milieus. In order to do that, the revolutionary militants in the CDRs must energetically outdo each other in the following main tasks:

1. Action directed at members of the CDR.

The revolution has as its primary objective transferring power from the hands of the Voltaic bourgeoisie allied with imperialism into the hands of the alliance of popular classes . . .

It is up to the revolutionary militants to work to politically educate their comrades. The CDRs must be schools of political development.

The CDRs are the appropriate framework in which militants discuss the decisions of the higher bodies of the revolution, the CNR, and the government.

2. Action directed at the popular masses, aimed at getting them to massively support the CNR's objectives, through determined and ceaseless propaganda and agitation. The CDRs must be able to counter the propaganda and lying slanders of the reactionaries with appropriate revolutionary propaganda and explanations based on the principle that only the truth is revolutionary.

The CDRs must be able to listen to the masses, to become aware of their moods and needs, so that they can inform the CNR in a timely way and make suitable concrete proposals.

They are invited to examine questions affecting the improvement of the popular masses' interests by supporting initiatives taken by the masses.

It is vitally necessary that the CDRs maintain direct contact with the popular masses, through periodically organizing public assemblies at which the questions that interest them are discussed. This must be done if the CDRs want to help correctly apply the CNR's directives.

The CDRs must struggle with the popular masses of the cities and countryside against their enemies and against the adversities of nature and for the transformation of their material existence and morale.

3. The CDRs must work in a rational manner, thereby illustrating one of the traits of our revolution — rigorousness. Therefore, they must adopt coherent and ambitious plans of action that all members must follow.

Since August 4 — a date that has already become a historic one for our people — Voltaics have taken initiatives to set up CDRs in response to the CNR's call. Thus CDRs are being established in the villages, in the urban neighborhoods, and soon in the workplaces, in the public services, in the factories, and within the army. All this is the result of the spontaneous action of the masses. The thing to do now is to structure them on a clear basis and to organize them on a national scale. This is what the National General Secretariat of the CDRs is getting to work on.

The main idea behind the creation of the CDRs is democratizing power. The CDRs will therefore become the organs through which the people exercise those powers delegated to the local level from the central power held by the CNR.

Except for sessions of the national congress, the CNR is the supreme power. It is the leading organ of this entire structure, which is guided by the principle of democratic centralism.

On the one hand, democratic centralism is based on the subordination of the lower organs to the higher ones, of which the CNR is the highest and to which all the organizations subordinate themselves. On the other hand, this centralism remains democratic, since the principle of elections is in effect at all levels and the autonomy of the local organs is recognized on all questions relevant to their jurisdiction, although within the limits and according to the general directives drawn up by the higher body.

Revolutionary morality within the CDRs

The revolution aims to transform all the economic, social, and cultural relations of society. It aims to create a new Voltaic person, with an exemplary morality and social behavior that inspires the admiration and confidence of the masses. Neocolonial domination had put our society into such degradation that it will take us years to cleanse it.

In the meantime, the militants of the CDRs must develop a new consciousness and a new behavior, with the aim of presenting a good example to the popular masses. While carrying out the revolution, we must see to our own qualitative transformation. Without a qualitative transformation of those who are supposed to be the makers of the revolution, it is practically impossible to create a new society rid of corruption, theft, lies, and individualism in general.

The activities of certain militants who cherish the counterrevolutionary dream of amassing property and profits through the CDRs must be denounced and fought. Stardom must be eliminated.

The sooner these inadequacies are combated, the better for the revolution.

From our point of view, the revolutionary is

one who knows how to be modest, while at the same time being the most determined in carrying out the tasks entrusted to him. He fulfills them without boasting and without expecting any reward. One does not make a revolution to simply take the place of the overthrown former potentates. One does not participate in the revolution for vindictive reasons, fed by desire for an advantageous position: "Get lost. This is my spot!" This kind of motive is foreign to the ideal of the August revolution. Those who act in such a way demonstrate their weakness as petty-bourgeois careerists, if not dangerous counterrevolutionary opportunists.

The image of a revolutionary that the CNR strives to impress on everyone's consciousness is that of a militant who is one with the masses, who has faith in them and who respects them. He has freed himself from any contemptuous attitudes toward them. He does not think of himself as a schoolmaster to whom the masses must pay tribute and submit. To the contrary, he goes to their school, listens to them attentively and pays attention to their opinions. He avoids all authoritarian methods worthy of reactionary bureaucrats.

The revolution is different from destructive anarchy. It demands discipline and exemplary conduct.

Vandalism and adventurist actions of all sorts, rather than strengthening the revolution by winning the masses' support, weaken it and repel a large part of the masses from it.

Such insufficiencies most often reflect an ignorance of the revolution's character and objectives. And for us to guard against them, we must immerse ourselves in the study of revolutionary theory. The study of theory raises our understanding of developments, clarifies our actions, and cautions us against being presumptuous on many things.

For revolutionizing all sectors of Voltaic society

All the former political regimes sought to introduce measures to improve the management of the neocolonial society. These various regimes' changes amounted to substituting new

By changing the social order that oppresses women, the revolution creates the conditions for their genuine emancipation . . .

teams within the framework of a continuity in neocolonial power.

None of those regimes wanted to or could challenge the socioeconomic foundations of Voltaic society. That is why they all failed.

The August revolution does not aim to install just another regime in Upper Volta. It seeks to break with all the regimes that have existed up until now. Its ultimate goal is to build a new Voltaic society, in which the Voltaic citizen, motivated by a revolutionary consciousness, will be the master of his own well-



Sankara (left) at a mass rally.

being, a well-being that corresponds to the level of the energy expended. In order to do this, the revolution — even though it may displease the conservative and backward forces — will be a deep and total upheaval that will not spare any sphere, any sector of economic, social, and cultural activity.

1. The national army: its place in the democratic and popular revolution.

According to the defense doctrine of revolutionary Upper Volta, a conscious people cannot leave the defense of the homeland to one group of men, however competent they may be. A conscious people themselves take on the defense of the homeland. Our armed forces thus constitute only one detachment, which is more specialized than the rest of the people, in the task of defending Upper Volta's internal and external security.

The revolution prescribes three missions to the national armed forces:

1. To be prepared to combat all internal and external enemies and to participate in the military training of the rest of the people. This presupposes an increased operational capacity, making each soldier a competent fighter, unlike the old army, which was just a mass of salaried individuals.

2. To participate in national production. In effect, the new soldier must live and suffer among the people to which he belongs. Away with an army that just eats up the budget. From now on, besides handling arms, it will work in the fields and will raise cattle, sheep, and poultry. It will build schools and health clinics and ensure their functioning. It will maintain roads and fly mail, ill people, and agricultural products among the regions.

3. Develop each soldier into a revolutionary militant. The time has ended when it was claimed that the army is neutral and apolitical, while turning it into a bastion of reaction and a guardian of imperialist interests.

The time has ended when our national army acts like a corps of foreign mercenaries in conquered territory. That time will never return. Armed with political and ideological training, our soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers engaged in the revolutionary process

will no longer be criminals in power and will become conscious revolutionaries, existing among the people like a fish in the water.

An army in the service of the revolution, the people's national army will have no place for any soldier who despises, looks down on, and brutalizes the people.

Such an army, even from the perspective of its internal organization and its principles of functioning, will be fundamentally different from the old army.

Therefore, in place of the blind obedience of soldiers toward their squad leaders, of subordinates toward their superiors, a healthy discipline will be developed that, while strict, will be based on the conscious support of the men and troops.

Discipline within a politicized army will have a new content. It will be a revolutionary discipline. That is to say, a discipline that derives its strength from the fact that the officer and soldier, commissioned and noncommissioned personnel, are valued on the basis of human dignity and are only distinguished from each other by their concrete tasks and by their respective responsibilities.

Here as well, the CDRs have a fundamental role to play. CDR militants within the army must be tireless pioneers in building the people's national army of the democratic and popular state. The basic tasks of that army will be:

1. Within the country, defense of the rights and interests of the people, maintenance of revolutionary order, and safeguarding democratic and popular power.

2. Externally, the defense of territorial integrity.

2. Voltaic women: their role in the popular and democratic revolution.

The weight of the centuries-old traditions of our society has relegated women to the rank of beasts of burden. Women suffer doubly from all the scourges of neocolonial society:

- Firstly, they experience the same sufferings as men.
- Secondly, they are subjected to other sufferings by men.

Our revolution is in the interests of all the

oppressed, all those who are exploited in today's society. It is therefore in the interests of women, since the basis of their domination by men lies in the way the society's system of political and economic life is organized. By changing the social order that oppresses women, the revolution creates the conditions for their genuine emancipation.

The women and men of our society are all victims of imperialist oppression and domination. That is why they wage the same struggle.

The revolution and women's liberation go together. And it is not an act of charity or a humanitarian gesture to talk of women's

A national economy that is independent, self-sufficient, and planned will be attained through a radical transformation of the present society . . .

emancipation. It is a basic necessity for the triumph of the revolution. Women hold up the other half of the sky.

To create a new mentality in Voltaic women that lets them take hold of the country's destiny alongside men is one of the primary tasks of the revolution. At the same time, it is necessary to transform the attitudes of men toward women.

Up until now, women have been excluded from the sphere of decision-making. The revolution, by giving responsibilities to women, is creating the conditions for liberating the fighting initiative of women.

As part of its revolutionary policy, the CNR will work to mobilize, organize, and unite all the active forces of the nation, and women will not lag behind.

Women will take part in all the struggles that we will have to undertake against the various shackles of neocolonial society and for the construction of a new society. They will take part in all levels of planning, decision-making, and implementation in the organization of the life of the whole nation.

The final aim of this great effort is to build a free and prosperous society in which women will be equal to men in all domains.

In the meantime, we should have a correct understanding of the question of women's emancipation.

It does not mean a mechanical equality between men and women. The emancipation of women does not mean acquiring habits similar to those of men: drinking, smoking, wearing trousers.

Nor will acquiring diplomas make women equal to men, or more emancipated. A diploma is not a passport to emancipation.

Real emancipation of women is emancipation that gives them responsibility, that involves them in productive activities and in the various struggles facing the people. Real emancipation of women will force men to respect and esteem them.

Emancipation, like freedom, is not granted. It is won. And it is for women themselves to put forward their demands and to organize to attain them.

For that, the democratic and popular revolution will create the necessary conditions to allow Voltaic women to realize themselves fully and completely. After all, would it be possible to eliminate the system of exploitation, while maintaining the exploitation of women, who make up more than half of our society?

3. An independent, self-sufficient, and planned national economy at the service of a democratic and popular society.

The process of revolutionary transformations undertaken since August 4 places on the agenda major democratic and popular reforms.

The National Council of the Revolution is conscious that the construction of a national economy that is independent, self-sufficient, and planned will be attained through a radical transformation of the present society, a transformation that requires the following major reforms:

- Agrarian reform.
- Reform of the administration.
- Educational reform.
- Reform of the structures of production and distribution in the modern sector.

Agrarian reform: Its aim is:

- An increase in labor productivity through better organization of the peasants and the introduction of modern agricultural techniques in the countryside.

- The development of a diversified agriculture, together with regional specialization.

- The abolition of all the fetters that are part of the traditional socioeconomic structures that oppress the peasants.

- Finally, making agriculture the fulcrum for industrial development.

This is possible by giving real meaning to the slogan of self-sufficiency in food production, a slogan that seems so antiquated now by dint of having previously been proclaimed without conviction. First of all, this will be a bitter struggle against nature, which is no more intractable among us than it is among other peoples who have admirably conquered it on the agricultural plane. The National Council of the Revolution will not be beguiled by illusions in gigantic, sophisticated projects. To the contrary, numerous small accomplishments in the agricultural system will allow us to transform our territory into one vast field, an endless series of farms.

Second, it will be a struggle against those who starve the people, the agricultural speculators and capitalists of all types.

Finally, it will be protection against imperialist domination of our agriculture in terms of the orientation, the plunder of our resources, and the unfair competition with our local products by imports whose only value is their packaging for those following the latest bourgeois fads. Adequate producer prices and agroindustrial enterprises will assure the peas-

ants of markets for their produce during all seasons.

Reform of the administration: It aims to make the administration inherited from colonialism operational.

To do that, it is necessary to purge it of all its evils, namely, the heavy, interfering bureaucracy, with all that brings, and to proceed toward a complete revision of the civil service statutes. The reform must lead to a less costly, more effective, and more flexible administration.

Educational reform: It aims to promote a new direction for education and culture.

It must lead to a transformation of the school into an instrument of the revolution. Its graduates must not serve their own interests and those of the exploiting classes, but must serve the popular masses.

The revolutionary education that will be taught in the new school must imbue everyone with a Voltaic ideology, a Voltaic personality that rids them of any tendency toward imitating others. To teach students to critically and positively assimilate the ideas and experiences

Our militant solidarity and support will go to the national liberation movements fighting for the independence of their countries and the liberation of their peoples . . .

of other peoples will be one of the missions of the schools in the democratic and popular society.

To end illiteracy and superstition, emphasis must be placed on mobilizing all efforts to organize the masses to awaken and induce in them a thirst for learning, by showing them the drawbacks of ignorance. Any policy of fighting against illiteracy that does not involve the participation of those most concerned is doomed to failure.

The culture of a democratic and popular society must have a three-sided character: national, revolutionary, and popular. Everything that is antinational, antirevolutionary, and antipopular must be banned. Instead, our culture that celebrates dignity, courage, nationalism, and the great human virtues will be enhanced.

The democratic and popular revolution will create favorable conditions for the blossoming of a new culture. Our artists will have a free hand to go forward boldly. They should seize the opportunity presented to them in order to raise our culture to a world level.

Reform of our national economy's structures of production and distribution: The reforms in this area aim to progressively establish effective control by the Voltaic people over the channels of production and distribution. For without genuine mastery over these channels, it is impossible in practice to build

an independent economy at the service of the people.

People of Upper Volta!

Comrade militants of the revolution!

The needs of our people are enormous. Satisfaction of these needs requires that revolutionary transformations be undertaken in all spheres.

In the field of health care and social assistance for the popular masses, the objectives to be reached can be summed up as:

- Health care available to everyone.
- Initiating maternal and infant assistance and care.
- An immunization policy against communicable diseases through an increase in vaccination campaigns.

• Making the masses aware of the need to acquire good hygiene habits.

None of these objectives can be attained without the conscious involvement of the popular masses themselves in the struggle, under the revolutionary orientation of the health services.

In the field of housing, a field of crucial importance, we must undertake a vigorous policy to end real estate speculation and the exploitation of the workers through excessive rents. Important measures must be taken in this field to:

- Establish reasonable rents.
- Rapidly divide the neighborhoods into lots.
- Construct on a massive scale sufficient modern residential housing, accessible to the workers.

One of the essential concerns of the CNR is to unite the different nationalities that comprise Upper Volta in the common struggle against the enemies of our revolution.

There are in fact in our country a multitude of ethnic groups distinguished from each other by language and custom. The totality of these nationalities forms the Voltaic nation. Imperialism, through its policy of divide and rule, did its utmost to exacerbate the contradictions among them, to set them against each other.

The CNR's policy aims to unite these different nationalities so that they live in equality and enjoy the same opportunities for success. In order to do that, special emphasis will be placed on:

- The economic development of the different regions.
- Encouraging economic exchange among them.
- Combating prejudices among the ethnic groups, resolving the differences among them in a spirit of unity.
- Punishing those who instigate divisions.

In view of all the problems that our country faces, the revolution looms as a challenge that we — motivated by a will to victory — must overcome with the effective participation of the popular masses mobilized within the CDRs.

In the near future, with the elaboration of the

sectoral programs, all of Upper Volta will become a vast workplace where the cooperation of all Voltaics who are able and old enough to work will be needed for the merciless struggle that we will wage to transform this country into a prosperous and radiant country, a country where the people are the only masters of the material and spiritual wealth of the nation.

Finally, we must define the place of the Voltaic revolution in the world revolutionary process. Our revolution is an integral part of the world movement for peace and democracy against imperialism and all kinds of hegemonism.

That is why we will strive to establish diplomatic relations with countries, regardless of their political and economic systems, on the basis of the following principles:

- Respect for each other's independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty.
- Mutual nonaggression.
- Noninterference in internal affairs.
- Trade with all countries on an equal foot-

ing and on the basis of reciprocal benefits.

Our militant solidarity and support will go to the national liberation movements that are fighting for independence of their countries and the liberation of their peoples. This support will be directed in particular to:

- The people of Namibia under the leadership of SWAPO [South West Africa People's Organisation].
- The Saharan people in their struggle to recover their national territory.
- The Palestinian people struggling for their national rights.

In our struggle, the anti-imperialist African countries are our objective allies. Drawing close to these countries is necessary because of the neocolonial groupings that operate on our continent.

Long live the democratic and popular revolution!

Long live the National Council of the Revolution!

Homeland or death, we will win!

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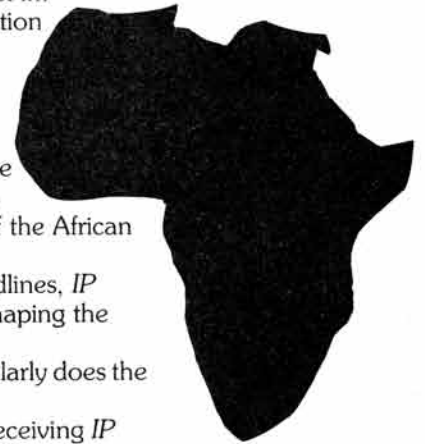
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Interview with Daniel Bensaïd

French LCR leader on 'utopias and a revolutionary vision'

[The following interview with Daniel Bensaïd was conducted by Alain Brossat. It was published in a special issue of *Critique Communiste* devoted to the theme "1984," under the headline, "Utopias, the rejection of utopia, and a revolutionary vision." *Critique Communiste* is a monthly magazine published in Paris by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International, of which Daniel Bensaïd is a leader. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Question. We are living in a phase of rejection of utopia. Going further, it seems as if we have entered the phase of "anti" thought. Among broad layers of intellectuals, people no longer define themselves by what they favor, but by what they are opposed to. The theme of antitotalitarianism, around which quite a large consensus has developed in our country, is the best-known example.

What is also striking is that these "anti" attitudes are broadly determined by the place from which the intellectuals speak. Here anti-totalitarianism provides a world vision for some of them, while anti-Reaganism allows others in other parts of the world to avoid having to pose some delicate questions.

"Anti" thought is a regional thought. It often leads to tremendous misunderstandings: respectable liberal* gurus among us can perfectly well serve as inspirers of radicals in the Hungarian opposition.

In what way does this intellectual climate influence revolutionary practice?

Answer. There are several elements in this reaction that you call "anti." First, we must go back to History, to that great divide — Stalinism — after which you could no longer think as you had before. After Stalinism, you can no longer find in the vocabulary and themes that Marxism deals with the same degree of utopia, in the positive sense of the term, that you could find in the socialism of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Over the course of time, disillusionment has done its work, has cut a wide swath, primarily among the intellectuals. So well that we again see a challenge to the type of linkage that existed between "scientific socialism" in quotes and the utopian heritage that Marx and Engels had properly speaking incorporated into it, as can be clearly seen by reading their youthful works, beginning with the *Communist Manifesto* or Engels' Eberfeld speech.

Today, what seems to predominate among many intellectuals is a fear of any vision, any vision that seems to imply a norm, a constraint, appearing to have a tendency toward or a potential for totalitarianism.

In fact, we see a reaction that goes far beyond anti-utopianism, a fundamentally anti-ideological reaction, a reaction against systems, which leads to a sort of cult of individualism, of the immediate, the multiple.

This reaction goes beyond the borders of Europe. We see it in reading a novel like *The War of the End of the World* by the Peruvian Vargas Llosa, in which he simultaneously expresses a sympathy toward people's revolt, but also mistrust of anything having to do with building, with a social system that could become the carrier of an alienating or oppressive order.

Therefore it is no coincidence that you find Vargas Llosa in the role of a sort of liberal witness against the Sendero Luminoso guerrillas in Peru.

So what approach could we use to take up this question? In my opinion, we must exclude the idea that we could reinvent a utopia through some sort of fresh start, research, dynamization of Marxism in this sphere. It is true that we witnessed a small surge of utopian thought after 1968, but that was, in my opinion, in a context already strongly marked by the decline of the great utopian systems.

I would say on the whole that that surge took place in the context of what the philosopher Ernst Bloch called the fragmentary utopias that, according to him, take the place of the great social utopias. I believe that the era of great utopian constructions has come to an end.

Q. Why?

A. Because you cannot go backwards. Let's start from a provisional definition of utopia: the projection of a different social system, generally in a void. This projection leads to an "elsewhere." But from the moment you enter into the context of a historic thought, you no longer reflect the present moment in terms of utopian elsewhere, but rather in terms of the historic "beyond" of the present moment. And that "beyond" necessarily involves a relationship of negation, but also of continuity with the place and the moment from which you start.

In such an approach, the relationship to the utopia is fundamentally changed. The utopia in that case is what remains undecided in a social and historic vision, the part that is the dream, the part that is the possible. That is how we enter into the era of partial utopias that can, for example, states Bloch, be anchored in the spe-

cific oppression of women, of Jews (the original Zionism), etc.

Q. There are ideological phases, conjunctures where the utopias are "carriers" from the intellectual vantage point, where the mood of the time leads to utopia. There are other periods where anti-utopian thought, or even negative utopias are clearly dominant. What does this alternation between utopia and anti-utopia mean for us? Under these conditions, what is the memory, the continuity of the utopia?

A. If we look at utopia as "the nonpractical sentiment of the possible," we can say that in any phase of transition marked by the decline of one class and the rise of another, there is a utopian moment where anticipation has its role to play.

This was the case at the end of the 15th century, at the beginning of the 16th century where utopia appeared in its two variants, one being authoritarian centralizing that prefigured the modern state, and the other that developed along a liberal, self-governing slant.

This utopian current developed throughout the 16th century. But in contrast, from the start of the 17th century, utopia ebbed in favor of a debate over law, the theory of natural law that was already an instrument of political struggle for the bourgeoisie. Utopia therefore retreated because you were entering the practical and political dimension of the possible.

In another phase, following the French revolution, we saw a renewal of utopia that corresponded both to the new possibilities in terms of productive forces and to the search for a new social expression of these possibilities.

It was at that time that the pre-Marxist utopias developed, the utopias of Saint-Simon, Owen, Fourier, each with its own special features. The closer you get to the practical possibility of the proletarian revolution, the more that form of utopia recedes in favor of a political strategy, and ends up, in a sense, dissolving.

The Russian Revolution translated into reality a whole load from prior utopian thought: everything, for example, involving social experimentation, the recasting of the way of life . . .

Can one say that the status of utopia is ruled by some sort of law of eternal return, in line with the development of social classes and their exhaustion? The problem is, above all, that today it is hard to imagine which class could reactivate the utopia. Bloch says it well: there is no longer any great class that could develop a unified utopian schema beyond the socialist schema, which continues to bear the

*In French political language, liberals are opponents of government intervention in political and economic affairs. — IP

great utopian aim of the withering away of the state, its extinction.

From this point of view, I believe that the utopian surge of 1968 and its aftermath was much shorter than we thought at the time. It flowed from a period of prosperity that has ended. It was part of a conjuncture where everything seemed possible, where the social layers that impelled it felt great self-confidence, where the prevailing sentiment was that the resources of that society were inexhaustible, that you could use them whatever way you wanted.

This was, we should note, a very regional thought, based on the apogee of the accumulation of capital in the developed capitalist countries of Western Europe, a by-and-large local optimism.

What strikes me in the period of crisis and tensions that we see now, more than the quest for a new utopia, is the return of moral thought. It is undoubtedly not for nothing that Sartre's *Notebooks for a Morality* was recently published. It must be seen as a symptom.

Even for those who place themselves in the sphere of Marxism, the integration of a moral concern often appears to be an obligatory passage. Morality often appears as an uncrossable horizon. Through a return to a moral approach to problems, they try to handle the trauma connected with the experience of the bureaucratic degeneration of socialism, connected with the experience of totalitarianism.

There is something peculiar in this return to morality. Not so long ago, the moral approach of dissidents from the Eastern countries (for example Plyushch) seemed somewhat exotic to us. Today there is the feeling that problems are often posed to the workers movement in terms of internal moralization. I am not sure that that's where we can find the solution to the problems we have. But in any case, today the concern with morality seems to me to have largely overshadowed the concern with utopia.

Q. The idea that utopia is the yeast of totalitarianism is very commonly accepted today. Marx and Engels are presented by the right as the founding fathers of totalitarianism. Where do you stand with regard to these "obvious facts" of our period?

A. That question is so vast! We can only deal with specific aspects. Let's take the question of Lenin and Leninism. I have the impression that after 1914 a much more thoroughgoing change took place in Lenin's thinking than has been stated: on the methodological plane (see his reflections on Hegel's *Logic*), on the plane of his perception of the imperialist world as a totality, on the plane of his perception of the State.

From this vantage point, I do not believe that *State and Revolution* was a brilliant improvisation in a revolutionary context. Rather it was a break with a certain way of looking at things inherited from before 1914, a break that was taken further by Trotsky in the anti-bureaucratic struggle and constitutes a new link in the chain of Marxism.

Another thing harped on by the anti-Leninism so prevalent now is the idea that the theory of the revolutionary party he developed in *What Is to Be Done?* harbors all the seeds of totalitarianism.

Here we have a question that is poorly posed. The real problem is inherent in the particular features of the proletarian revolution: the problem of the transformation of a dispossessed, plundered class into a ruling class. Political power becomes a means of emancipation and social transformation. But what does the political power rest on if not the social and cultural heritage of this capitalist society?

In this sense the danger of bureaucratization is inherent in the proletarian revolution, whatever theory of the workers party you base yourself on.

I would go so far as to say that Leninism, with its idea of the vanguard party, creates more favorable conditions than any other to confront this difficulty. In this regard it is less dangerous than the idea prior to Lenin's that the party represents the proletariat as a whole, that it constitutes the political society of the working class, with all its extensions, its mass organizations . . .

The Leninist theory makes it possible to establish a much clearer relationship between the exercise of the sovereignty of power and political organization. It makes it possible to think more rigorously about the separation of the party and the state, the subordination of the party to the sovereignty of the soviets.

All these ideas become clearer once you are confronted with a vanguard party that proposes and tries to convince, but cannot impose itself as the immediate representative of the interests of the whole working class.

It is true that this distinction, which could be seen in potential form in the major works of Lenin after 1914, did not prevail in the 1920s. In the first congresses of the Communist International, the stress was placed on the soviets as instruments for taking power, but party-soviet-union relations were not clearly defined. In any case there is an ambiguity regarding the subordinate relationship of the soviets to the party: is it a political, historic, institutional subordination?

On the other hand, in my opinion the logical corollary to the overall question of the vanguard party must be respect for multipartyism in the transitional society. It was not just for circumstantial reasons that Trotsky turned toward this idea in the 1930s. For him it was not a return to a mundane democratic idea. Rather it was the development of a consciousness, flowing from the experience of the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR, that it is impossible to artificially unify the interests of the working class and suppress its heterogeneity by decree, that differentiated channels of social and political representation of the working class must be established in the transitional phase. I think that the implications of this theoretical reorientation are far-reaching.

Let's look at one final aspect of the question concerning Lenin and Leninism. One of the

"proofs" often trotted out to show the totalitarian cast of his thinking and his action is the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. There are two aspects to this. First, there is a concrete political problem of that time, posing the question: Who dominates whom? Who exercises the political power? In this case, two powers coexisted — the power of the Soviets and the power of the Constituent Assembly — based on different representations of the political reality, of its transformation . . .

From this vantage point, the confrontation was inevitable and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly was a question of political opportunity, not principle.

The second aspect, and here it would be wise to keep a critical distance, is the way in which Lenin and Trotsky would later make a virtue of necessity. They could do so because there was neither a conscious vision of the problem of the transition in their epoch nor a plan to institutionally define those problems. Today, experience has shed some light on these questions.

Let's take two examples. We saw the emergence in Poland, before Jaruzelski's coup, of the demand for free elections to the Sejm [parliament], a demand heading in the direction of the reestablishment of institutions of the parliamentary type. But I think that once such a demand arises in a context where the social relations are not, fundamentally, determined by a market economy, the content of this "democratic" demand is quite different from what it would be in a context where free enterprise rules.

This demand takes a meaning within the perspective of a system of dual representation, where the Sejm would coexist with an Economic Chamber of Factory Self-Management Councils. Once private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, a parliamentary-type form of representation can fulfill a positive function.

In Nicaragua, elections will soon take place for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, unless the imperialist intervention creates obstacles. We can therefore see that in a process of transition, even one that is strongly hampered by the possibility of a military intervention against the revolution, passage to the single party is not preordained.

We see that in Nicaragua there is a certain plurality in parties and debates. It is a demonstration of the strength of this revolution. We will have to see later how this assembly is combined with other forms of representation of a more directly social type. It seems that among the Sandinistas there was a debate over maintaining dual representation after the elections for the Constituent Assembly.

Q. Do you think that regarding a question like the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the question of legitimacy is not posed?

A. We must go further. The victorious Russian revolution thought of itself as an active part of a much bigger revolution. In a question like that one, the Bolshevik leaders related to a

totality in motion, representing a more important criterion than the electoral photograph of Russia at a given moment. What was involved, therefore, at the time was not a problem of morality but a problem of strategy, with all the margin for uncertainty and for possible error that implies.

You cannot make abstract comparisons between the situation facing the Bolsheviks in that period and the one facing the Nicaraguan leaders today. It has been five years since the Nicaraguans took power. In the meantime things have been considerably clarified. A segment of the bourgeoisie left the country; the process we are currently witnessing is also a process of constituting the nation, a nation that is still unfinished.

To return to the Russian revolution, the debate over one or another particular aspect, like the one we have raised, is at bottom always the same: either you think, as the Mensheviks did, that this revolution was premature from the standpoint of the level of productive forces, or you think that it could constitute the starting point for a total transformation of the relationship of forces between imperialism and the revolution, and from that moment on there are no general criteria that let you pose the question in terms of legitimacy or illegitimacy.

The question is one of the context in which the revolutionaries make one or another decision, of possible blank spots in revolutionary thought, of the relationship between theory and experience, etc. The Constituent Assembly of January 1918 could very well have become the institutional center of "legitimization" of the counterrevolution on the eve of the civil war!

Q. Is there a special coloration to utopia in the dependent countries, in Latin America for example?

A. This question is too vast. The thing we should talk about in the first place is a thought that is not utopian at all, but is rather, quite simply, a thought of liberation. A thought that bases itself on misery, ruination, even hopelessness; in many countries, the simple fact of getting rid of the burden of the foreign debt, of the dictatorship of hunger, looms as a tremendous moral and human ambition. We should also mention a specific and interesting phenomenon, "liberation theology," which has its own utopian thrust in the way it reformulates the Christian heritage.

Furthermore, the intellectuals of these countries have a hard time placing themselves in a truly universalist utopia. There is an enormous gulf between their vision of the world and the one that prevails among the intellectuals of the developed countries. We know, for example, that sympathy for the struggle of the Poles, not to mention adherence to that struggle, has encountered different obstacles in Latin America than in Europe. In Latin America, through the intermediary of Cuba, the socialist camp remains a pole of reference. They do not see History from the same angle as here, where an Arab can state with impunity on television that

there are 300,000 political prisoners in Cuba, that Cuba is the capital of racism along with South Africa, etc.!

I have the impression, through discussions with certain exiled Latin American intellectuals, that a sort of "realism" predominates in their stance, a "realism" based on the following reasoning: the revolution is a vital necessity; Cuba — and in the background the USSR — is an inevitable point of reference, but you must not be naive about the reality of the socialist camp.

They sometimes develop a theory that could be formulated: the revolution means justice, in the sense of social justice, but it does not mean freedom. You should not ask too much of the revolution, or you run the risk of grave disillusionment.

You again see reproduced here a separation between a subjective morality of freedom on the one hand and a realpolitik on the other. It seems to me, however, that it is indispensable to give back to Marxism its entire liberating dimension, especially by showing that the necessity for democracy is a functional, not simply a formal, necessity. The events in Poland or those in Grenada that gave the American government the pretext to go in and "reestablish order" suffice to demonstrate that point.

Q. Could you say that there was an important utopian component in Che Guevara's thinking?

A. Rather than a utopian thinking, I would speak of an on-the-spot, appropriate, revolutionary thinking, a thinking that brings together a problem of revolutionary action, a historic vision, and an ethical dimension. In this regard, I find it regrettable that no one has ever made an in-depth assessment of Che's place in the Cuban revolution.

There are undoubtedly some rather suspect reasons for this: it is true, for example, that in the face of the failure of the "10 million" ton harvest in 1970, Castro had to accept the failure of an economic policy, reestablish a book-keeping system, reinstitute material stimulants, revise the wage system, all of which was coupled with Cuba's entry into Comecon and the strengthening of ties with the USSR.

One often has the impression that in the self-criticism of the 1960s policy that led to these difficulties, often people in Cuba consciously or unconsciously telescope things too rapidly, making it possible to ascribe these difficulties to the positions that Che defended in the years 1963-65. But that is not at all obvious.

Che's position did not rest solely on a moral idea, but also on the conviction that a transitional society that rested only on material stimulants would not necessarily go where it wanted to go. He put great stress on the dimension of education and on the value of example, in the military field as well as the economic. But he lacked a means through which to deepen these ideas, an institutional framework favorable to carrying them out.

Che's figure faded because it was symbolically tied to leftism, to a revolutionary volun-

tarism. But his thought nonetheless constitutes an acquisition that can be reactivated, a flame that can be rekindled at whatever moment history moves forward again. In Latin America, this idea of the currency of the revolution was set back primarily for the simple reason that the revolutionary vanguard went through a decade of defeats and dictatorship. Politics therefore resumes on a much more mundane level: in Brazil, a million people go into the streets for direct elections; in Chile, they demonstrate for democracy; in Argentina, there is the vote for Alfonsín, a "realistic" vote.

It is also true that a whole utopian thrust was found in certain sectors of society in Europe in the late 1960s, which has faded. In part, these were just so many illusions that were dissipated. People could in fact believe that there was a direct correspondence between this effect of 1968 on culture and the political and social reality. They believed in an immediacy of the revolution. In certain cases they even evoked the immediacy of communism (*Il Manifesto*, under the impact of the cultural revolution).

It has turned out that all this was, in large part, fantasy, that there was an enormous gap between the reality and these utopian projections. These illusions constituted the arena for a certain utopian climate in the vanguard organizations, among us as well as in Latin America for example. Today, this phenomenon has receded, and people concern themselves with much more matter-of-fact things, resistance to the effects of the crisis here, calling for the reappearance of the disappeared there.

On the one hand, one result of this situation is that people are closer to the political reality. On the other hand, it highlights the danger of getting bogged down to a degree in that reality. Here I am not even talking about the lack of utopia, but quite simply lack of vision, the danger of routine.

Precisely because we confront the repellent image of the countries of the East, the revolutionary vision cannot be reduced to a string of self-defense acts, protests, or strikes.

In addition, the working class and its allies must be able to take it upon themselves at a given moment to develop a vision for society.

This is what is not understood by those who, having been burned once after 1968, are now twice shy, and who view anything having to do with utopia, with anticipation, as nothing more than a little cultural breeze if not an error of youth. □

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'Democracy is not a luxury'

Interview with Michael Lowy

[The following is an interview with Michael Lowy, editor of the book *Marxism in Latin America* and a member of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. It appeared in the October–November 1984 issue of *Pensamiento Propio*, a sociological journal published in Managua, Nicaragua. The translation from the Spanish is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Question. Are divergent conceptions of what "democracy" means at the root of the confrontation between capitalism and socialism?

Answer. Democracy is part and parcel of the definition of what socialism is. I understand socialism to mean the self-emancipation of the workers, effective control by the workers over decisions and management in the social and political spheres. So I cannot visualize socialism without democracy. It is like saying capitalism without capital or feudalism without landed property. It has no meaning.

Q. However, there are ever stronger criticisms from the left of "actually existing socialism."

A. I don't believe that socialism exists anywhere. Socialism is a historic process. In the 20th century we are, in reality, witnessing a long historic process of transition to socialism. Various countries have carried out social revolutions, anti-imperialist revolutions. The beginning of this process of transition to socialism is a beginning with problems, contradictions, advances, set-backs, no?

Q. Is there a contradiction between the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat" and socialist democracy as you conceive of it?

A. I don't think so. However, it has come to be understood that way. But as the term appears in Marx, no. For Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the power exercised by the workers. And the example he gives, the example of the Paris Commune, is a classic example of workers democracy. It was the most democratic form of power possible.

This concept was formulated by Marx in opposition to Blanqui, who put forward the concept of a revolutionary dictatorship, a dictatorship of a small elite, a small vanguard of revolutionaries, who would take power in a kind of coup to liberate the people from above. So Marx, in a polemic against this, came up with the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the power of the whole class, which agrees with the idea of democracy. Rosa Luxemburg

also put forward this concept. She represents the democratic current within European communism.

It seems to me that the negative image comes from the fact that authoritarian and bureaucratic forms, in some cases even totalitarian forms, of states in revolutionary transition have proclaimed themselves to be dictatorships of the proletariat. In addition, the very word itself is identified with military dictatorship, with Pinochet, with Somoza. In the best of cases with Stalin, Kim Il Sung.

Q. Ironically, the concept itself, and many times the form in which it is put into practice, comes much too close to what Marx criticized.

A. As a matter of fact, there is more of Blanqui than of Marx in the way in which it is being handled. For example, let's take the case of Poland, which is an extreme case, but one that reveals a bit of this logic. It is a bureaucratic state of socialist origin. There you can see how far the separation, the alienation, between the political system and the working people has gone. The two are in open confrontation. It is hard to see where the democracy or the socialism is: the workers are repressed because they want to take the economy into their hands.

Q. Revolutions have rejected formal democracy. However, the people's democracy proclaimed by the Grenada revolution was not able to incorporate the people into making the important decisions.

A. The problem is deeds. Concretely, what methods, what channels, what institutions of control exist that allow the mass of the people to control and participate in the economic and political decisions, in managing the life of the state?

This is what seems fundamental to me. And the example of Grenada is interesting. It is a historic experience that showed that in many circumstances democracy is not a luxury reserved for Europeans or for the bourgeoisie. Rather it is a life and death necessity for the revolution.

Q. Does formal democracy make it possible to establish these mechanisms of participation?

A. We must point to the importance of incorporating representative democracy, with all that involves in terms of forms of state organization, into the revolutionary practice of power. We should no longer counterpose direct democracy and people's democracy to representative democracy. It seems to me that we have to start thinking differently about the

traditional approaches that rigidly counterposed these forms of democracy.

The Marxist-Leninist critique of parliamentary democracy is correct. That is to say, elections every four years are no guarantee of democracy. And we have proof of that in Latin America: elections with Batista, elections with Somoza.

But at the same time, it is necessary that there be representative structures — on a national level — as a result of pluralistic elections. Such elections permit a confrontation between different programs and political and social visions. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the limitations of representative democracy in order to make it one element of a much deeper democratic structure rooted in the working people. This structure must permit effective, daily participation in economic and political life through grassroots bodies like committees or councils — in Cuba they are called People's Power — in the final analysis the name makes little difference.

I would say, to coin a "formula," that socialist democracy contains all the gains of traditional bourgeois democracy and, in addition, a series of other democratic gains. So you don't lose anything. Rather you gain something new.

Q. Those who do not believe in the Nicaraguan revolution maintain that the FSLN is holding the elections for merely tactical reasons. Sometimes statements by the Sandinista leaders lend themselves to this interpretation.

A. In Nicaragua, we are witnessing a very interesting experience because it is the first attempt by a country in transition to socialism, a revolutionary state, to seek this linkage between more direct forms of people's democracy — Sandinista Defense Committees, militias, cooperatives — and representative democracy through elections.

I do not think that the elections in Nicaragua are solely the result of international pressure or something solely to legitimize the revolution, although they do serve that end as well.

They have a greater significance, which is that this is an occasion to go through an unprecedented experience. Nicaragua will prove that it is possible to hold democratic elections under very difficult circumstances, with aggression on the borders, with a dramatic economic crisis, with thousands of difficulties. And above all, to carry out these elections with very broad pluralism. If the pluralism is not greater than it is, that is because the parties of the bourgeoisie do not want to legitimize the

revolution.

Any political force that wanted to could participate. Here there are various non-Marxist, non-Leninist, non-socialist, non-Sandinista groups carrying out their propaganda against the FSLN. I have seen the slogans painted on the walls. This is pluralism. No one can say that it is not a very concrete manifestation of democracy.

Q. In these five years, the FSLN has established its hegemony and controls the state. Do you think that totalitarian tendencies may have developed?

A. In any country in the world the party that is in power has instruments that facilitate its propaganda. This is normal. This does not prevent the government party from losing an election. But here in Nicaragua this is not going to happen because we are not simply dealing with a problem of government.

The FSLN will win not because it controls the press, the television, but rather because it is pushing forward a revolutionary process. I be-

lieve that these elections, moreover, will be very useful for the FSLN. Many Sandinista leaders have noted that this is an opportunity to learn to confront the opposition's arguments in open ideological struggle. And not only the opposition. It makes it possible to put behind us a period in which the Front was much more authoritarian toward the other left parties.

It is also an opportunity to deepen its dialogue with the people, to discuss with the broad masses.

A third important aspect is that the Front will know in greater detail the people's concrete problems, so it can revise some elements of its policies. This experience will create precedents.

Q. It takes away arguments from the dogmatists.

A. They will no longer be able to say that pluralism is not viable, that elections play the bourgeoisie's game, imperialism's game. Or that you cannot permit pluralism when there is the threat of aggression. It must be said that in a situation as grave as the one facing Nicara-

gua, even a bourgeois democratic country would have declared the state of emergency and instituted the censorship of the press. You cannot ask Nicaragua — a small country that experienced 50 years of Somozaism — to have a perfect socialist democracy.

Q. Are there expectations in Europe regarding the elections?

A. In the eyes of many people, what is taking place in Nicaragua is rehabilitating the very idea of socialism. After what happened in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, what happened in Kampuchea, it has left a bitter taste in people's mouths. There is a great deal of disillusionment, disappointment. Many people have gone over to liberalism, some to reaction, to anti-communism. Others have not, but have pulled back. What is happening in Nicaragua is one of the great hopes that can once again raise the banner of socialism, of the revolution. It is once again going to concretely identify democracy and socialism. This has a worldwide historical value. □

Canada

Abortion-rights doctors targeted

Government appeals Morgentaler acquittal

[The following article "by the editors," is reprinted from the Dec. 17, 1984, issue of *Socialist Voice*, a fortnightly newspaper that reflects the views of the Revolutionary Workers League, pan-Canadian section of the Fourth International. It has been abridged by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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The Ontario [provincial] government has launched a new attack on women's right to choose abortion. That is the meaning of its December 4 decision to appeal the recent jury acquittal of Drs. Henry Morgentaler, Robert Scott, and Leslie Smoling.

In addition, in the weeks prior to the government decision, antiabortionists on another front sharply escalated a campaign of threats of violence directed against Dr. Morgentaler and his [abortion] clinics.

The opening moves in the Ontario government's attack came earlier this year when the three doctors were taken to court on charges of conspiracy to perform illegal abortions. These charges were thrown out by a Toronto jury on November 8.

Dr. Morgentaler has based his actions firmly on the defense of a woman's right to abortion. In the trial that acquitted him, he admitted to breaking the law. He argued that it was a woman's right to choose whether or not to terminate an unplanned pregnancy. The current law, he explained, allows abortions only under

highly restricted and arbitrary conditions. Many women cannot receive safe, legal abortions in Ontario. Thousands are forced to leave the province or bear unwanted children.

The law is unjust and discriminates against women, Dr. Morgentaler argued. Therefore the doctors were justified in breaking the law and providing women with safe abortions.

The jury, in its unanimous decision, agreed. Its action brought to four the number of juries that have acquitted Dr. Morgentaler on abortion charges. With good reason could the doctor say: "The voice of the people has spoken eloquently through the jury system four times. How many more trials do we need? How many more appeals do we need?"

But the Ontario government — like the federal government which is responsible for the present abortion law — disagrees that women should have access to safe, legal abortions. That's why it is out to overturn the jury verdict. That's why it will drag Dr. Morgentaler through the courts for several more years.

Both levels of government want to bleed Dr. Morgentaler financially and exhaust his will to struggle. They want to see this courageous fighter for women's rights silenced and punished.

Their pursuit of the Ontario appeal signifies that the price of letting him win is too high. This period of capitalist economic crisis *demand*s that governments and employers stead-

ily deepen attacks on democratic rights, unions, and social services. The same fate will meet the "costly" demands of women. The rulers do not want someone like Dr. Morgentaler — and the women's rights movement that stands behind his actions — standing up and providing many others under attack with a fighting and winning example.

As the Ontario government was preparing its response to the jury acquittal, another wing of the antiabortion movement swung into high gear. Since the acquittal, Morgentaler has received several death threats. In Winnipeg, the archreactionary antiabortionist Joe Borowski launched a scarcely disguised call for someone to murder Dr. Morgentaler.

This dangerous right-wing terrorist campaign was unleashed on November 25 with the blessing of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Toronto, Emmett Cardinal Carter. In a letter to Toronto's Catholic parishes, this robed reactionary incited Catholics "to curb and if possible eliminate" the "abomination" of abortion.

The next evening the steps of the Toronto Morgentaler clinic were smeared with tar and the door was padlocked. An anonymous caller warned against reopening the clinic. Last year the clinic was firebombed and Dr. Morgentaler was attacked by a man brandishing garden shears.

Metro Toronto police have been allowed to keep the equipment they seized from Dr. Morgentaler's clinic. And furthermore, Ontario Solicitor-General George Taylor has stated he will let Ontario police loose once again to raid the reopened clinic and press new charges.

It all amounts to a serious escalation against women's rights. It must be met with a sharp response from women, labor, and all who support women's rights. □