
INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

combined
with **inprecor**

Vol. 23, No. 7

April 15, 1985

USA \$1.25 UK 50p

Report From Burkina People Mobilize to Fight Famine and Drought



Ernest Harsch/IP

***Fidel Castro* 'Latin America Is a Powder Keg'**



***Lebanon* Resistance in South Forces Speedup in Israeli Withdrawal**

Israeli armored column
withdrawing southward.

Lebanese force Tel Aviv to speed up withdrawal

By Steve Craine

After two months of vacillation and internal debates, the Israeli government is accelerating its promised withdrawal from the Lebanese territory it has occupied for nearly three years. The phased pull-out plan announced in mid-January never committed Tel Aviv to an exact deadline, but until late March leading government officials claimed the process could not be completed before August or September.

This gradual timetable was designed partly to make the Israeli retreat appear to be a coolly calculated military "redeployment" rather than a setback at the hands of the Lebanese resistance. But by late March the reality of the Lebanese situation had apparently caught up with the Israeli government.

On March 26 Prime Minister Shimon Peres announced, "We will leave Lebanon perhaps a lot faster than a lot of people think and are arguing about." His cabinet members have spelled this out to mean by early or mid-May.

Stepped up resistance by the people of southern Lebanon and a rapidly lengthening list of Israeli casualties have made the occupation increasingly unpopular in Israel. A demonstration calling for immediate withdrawal organized by the liberal Peace Now movement, drew 20,000 into the streets of Tel Aviv on March 17.

Opposition to the pull-out within the coalition cabinet has evaporated. Israeli soldiers, in their enthusiasm to get out of Lebanon, have worked overtime to dismantle their installations — in one case completing in only eight days a job scheduled to take a month.

Politicians in Tel Aviv have been forced into a political retreat as well. They are now abandoning, at least in public statements, one of the central goals of their 1982 invasion and three-year occupation of Lebanon — to install a government in Beirut subservient to the wishes of U.S. and Israeli imperialism and to expel Syrian influence from the country.

The 1982 invasion accomplished its other major goal, however. Not only did it smash the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon, denying the PLO its last base of operations adjacent to Palestine, but this defeat contributed to political divisions that still plague the Palestinian movement.

Israeli war minister Yitzhak Rabin, in explaining the new withdrawal timetable on March 26, claimed, "We are not going to be occupying Lebanon, there will be no far-reaching political goals." Nor would Tel Aviv concern itself, he asserted, with "who will be in power . . . or whatever will happen with the struggles between the various religious groups inside Lebanon. This is over."

Rabin added, "There is one purpose, one

goal that will guide Israel, security against terrorism originating from Lebanon." By "terrorism" Rabin is referring to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian and Lebanese people against Israeli occupation of their land.

During the withdrawal, Israeli forces are working to strengthen their capacity to enforce Rabin's concept of "security." A new fence is being built along the border, and efforts are underway to establish an intelligence network in the area just north of the border and to revamp the puppet South Lebanon Army.

Israeli raids continue

Another sign that withdrawal of the occupation army will not bring relief to the people of Lebanon was the series of damaging raids carried out by the Israeli army in March. Lebanese towns both inside and outside the area still occupied were targets of these attacks.

On March 11 the Israeli army carried out its biggest military assault in southern Lebanon since the 1982 invasion. Just at dawn some 110 armored vehicles descended on the town of Zrariyeh, about three miles beyond the limit of the current occupation zone. At least 34 of the town's 10,000 inhabitants were killed and about 100 taken prisoner.

Israeli officials denied that the raid was in retaliation for the killing of 12 Israeli soldiers the day before, but the raiding troops left behind graffiti on the walls of Zrariyeh proclaiming, "This is the revenge of the Israeli Defense Forces."

Ten days later, four villages were hit by "search and interrogation" raids simultaneously. The village of Humin is only seven miles east of Sidon, well within the area supposedly relinquished in mid-February. "They came at 6 o'clock in the morning, when everyone was sleeping," a resident told the *Washington Post*. "Before we knew what was happening, they were shooting into the village with machine guns and tanks and everyone was running." The Israeli army occupied Humin for 11 hours, dynamiting at least five houses and taking away about 50 young men, blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs. Thirteen people were killed.

The Israeli government speaks openly of its "iron fist" and "scorched earth" policy in Lebanon and promises that such attacks may even increase after the troop withdrawal is completed and south Lebanon can be turned into a free-fire zone.

As Rabin explained, "We hope that once we leave Lebanon there will be no motivation by certain elements to carry out terror attacks against Israel. . . . But if terror acts will be continued . . . we will act with all our strength, on

the ground, by firepower from the air and from the sea, to make it clear that if there will be attacks on our settlements their lives are going to be interfered with on a larger scale."

The Israeli propagandists try to imply that once the army leaves Lebanon no one will have any reasonable grievance against Israel. But Israel's theft of Palestine and its long military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and part of Syria are the real cause of conflict in the area. There can be no hope for peace in the region without self-determination for Palestine.

Continued aid from Washington

U.S. support is as crucial for Israel now that it is withdrawing as it was during the 1982 invasion and siege of Beirut. Ever since Israel was established, Washington has willingly assumed a huge portion of the cost of maintaining the Tel Aviv government. This is because Israeli aggression against the peoples of the Middle East generally coincides with U.S. imperialist interests.

In early March, President Reagan proposed to the U.S. Congress a bill that would eliminate all tariffs between the United States and Israel by 1995. No other country enjoys such free trade with the United States. Washington is also considering a substantial increase in the \$2.6 billion in direct aid it gave to Tel Aviv last year.

On March 12 U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick vetoed a Security Council resolution that would have called on Israel to end its crackdown in south Lebanon. Kirkpatrick called the resolution "unbalanced," adding that it "does not accord Israel fair treatment."

To further underscore U.S. support for Israeli policy, the U.S. Navy dispatched the aircraft carrier USS *Eisenhower* and a group of support ships to the eastern Mediterranean March 7. The *Eisenhower* was one of the ships that participated in air raids and naval bombardment of Lebanon in 1983 and 1984.

Revolt in Phalange Party

The revolt of some elements of the Phalange Party of Lebanese president Amin Gemayel is further evidence of the dwindling influence of Israel over Lebanese politics. The rebels represent the relatively small portion of that right-wing party that is unwilling to abandon its traditional close relationship with Israel in the face of massive Lebanese opposition. Their revolt comes because they have decisively lost this debate within the party.

A key tactic of imperialist domination in Lebanon has long been to foster divisions along religious lines, obstructing unity among Muslim and Christian working people. Of the minority of Lebanon's people who are Christians, most are workers, farmers, and other poor people. However, within the ruling class the majority are Christians, especially members of the Maronite sect. Since the days of direct French colonial rule, imperialism has allowed certain social privileges for the Christian community as a whole, while cooperating

with the Christian capitalists, and the smaller Muslim capitalist class, in exploiting the whole country. Over all, the Christian community is better off than the Muslim.

The Phalange bases itself on a demagogic defense of these Christian privileges. It was established in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel after he returned from the Berlin Olympics, where he was favorably impressed with the Nazi regime.

The Phalangists were put in power by the Israeli invasion in 1982, but before their presidential candidate, Bashir Gemayel, could take office, he was assassinated. His brother Amin, also a son of Pierre Gemayel, was installed in his place.

In May 1983 Amin Gemayel signed a "security" agreement with Tel Aviv legitimizing the occupation and granting de facto recognition of the Israeli state. The Israeli and U.S. governments hailed the agreement as a second Camp David.

But before long Gemayel was forced to find new allies. Popular militias, independent of the central government and its army, fought a war in the Shuf Mountains in late 1983 and early 1984, defeating the Lebanese army and pressuring the U.S., British, French, and Italian troops to hasten their departure from the country. This ended the possibility of a stable Phalange government that would obediently carry out the orders of Washington and Tel Aviv. Gemayel tore up the May 1983 agreement and brought leaders of the Shi'ite and Druse militias into a "national unity" government in May 1984.

Although forced to adapt to the powerful anti-Israeli upsurge of the Lebanese masses, Gemayel also needs the support of outside patrons to keep him in power over the majority of poor, Muslim workers and farmers. Lately he has looked to the Syrian government for this support, while not breaking all his ties with Tel Aviv and Washington. Syria has been an unavoidable power in Lebanese politics since its intervention in the civil war in 1976. There are presently some 30,000 Syrian army troops stationed in eastern Lebanon.

A leader of the Phalange explained the party's position in an interview on Radio Monte Carlo on March 15: "We hope that Syrian interference will reduce Lebanese contradictions and help the Lebanese achieve domestic accord and security in the country."

When Phalangist militia leader Samir Geagea criticized this growing alliance with Damascus, he was expelled from the party, sparking the rebellion among the 6,000 militiamen under his command on March 12.

The Geagea faction claims that Amin Gemayel had betrayed the Christian community and the program of his brother and father. The rebels advocate a federation of religious-based ministates or cantons. They call for the removal of Gemayel from leadership of the Phalange, though not necessarily from the presidency of the country.

Leaders of the revolt have close ties with Israel. Elie Hobeika, who some say is the real power behind Geagea, was identified in an Is-

raeli inquiry as the commander of the forces that massacred hundreds of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982, following the assassination of Bashir Gemayel. Hobeika also reportedly met with Israeli officers north of Beirut on March 15, right after the rebellion began.

The Syrian government of Hafez al-Assad said it would be ready to come to Gemayel's rescue. Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas announced that orders had been prepared to march the Syrian army to Beirut if necessary. But by late March the rebellion had apparently fizzled out.

Armed clashes among the several independent militias, attacks on Palestinian refugee camps, and anonymous bombings continue throughout Lebanon, especially in the south. But regardless of who is carrying out these attacks, the real responsibility for them rests

with U.S. and Israeli imperialism.

Resistance leaders and the government agree that many of the recent bombings have been the work of Israeli agents. The Paris daily *Le Monde* published a list of all targets of car bombings from late January to early March. The majority on this list were targets the Israeli government would have been glad to hit.

On March 8 a car bomb exploded outside the home of Sheik Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of the Party of God, a Muslim organization that has taken responsibility for many attacks on the Israeli occupation forces. Although Fadlallah escaped injury, at least 80 people were killed and hundreds wounded in the blast in a suburb of Beirut. Thousands of protesters turned out to condemn the attack, filling the streets with slogans against the Israeli and Lebanese governments. Banners reading "Made in USA" were hung on the remains of the building. □

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

Signed articles represent the views of the authors, which may not necessarily coincide with those of Intercontinental Press. Insofar as it reflects editorial opinion, unsigned material stands on the program of the Fourth International.

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INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS (ISSN 0162-5594) is published biweekly except for one issue in January and one issue in August for \$30 per year by Intercontinental Press, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Intercontinental Press is indexed by the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore, MD 21218; tel.: (301) 243-2471.

To Subscribe: For one-year subscriptions in the U.S. or Canada send US\$30.00. Subscription correspondence should be addressed to: Intercontinental Press, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Telephone: (212) 929-6933.

For airmail subscriptions to Britain, Ireland, and continental Europe send US\$40.00 for one year; US\$20.00 for six months. Write for subscription rates to all other countries.

For air-speeded subscriptions to Australia: Write to New International Publications, P.O. Box 37, Leichhardt, N.S.W. 2040. In New Zealand: Write to Socialist Books, P.O. Box 8852, Auckland.

We prefer payment in bank drafts or postal checks payable in U.S. dollars because of the charges involved in clearing personal checks drawn on other currencies. However, personal checks will be accepted, with an additional 5 percent added for clearing charges.

Please allow five weeks for change of address. Include your old address, and, if possible, an address label from a recent issue.

Intercontinental Press is published by the 408 Printing and Publishing Corporation, 408 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Offices at 408 West Street, New York, N.Y.

The people mobilize to combat famine

Overcoming hunger is a key revolutionary task

By Ernest Harsch

OUAGADOUGOU — When morning came here on March 13, the sun could not be seen. The harmattan — the heavy, dry winds from the north and northeast — filled the sky with a thick, reddish-brown dust that covered everything.

The revolutionary slogans and signs that adorn Avenue Independence, Avenue Nelson Mandela, and other streets were almost totally hidden. As people made their way to work or to the market, many wore scarves, ski-masks, and other coverings over their heads and across their noses and mouths. Some donned goggles to protect their eyes.

Within two hours, most shops had sold out of protective face masks. A few unscrupulous merchants managed to turn a quick profit by buying up whatever masks they could and reselling them at three or more times their normal cost.

Electric lights were turned on across the city to provide some illumination in the dimness, both in workplaces and on the roads. Those who did not have to go out remained indoors. Those who did venture onto the streets were quickly covered by a fine film of powder.

For many residents of this capital city, it was an unusual and frightening experience. Dust storms like this are quite common in northern Burkina, which borders the Sahara Desert. But never before had one struck Ouagadougou with such intensity, or in the middle of the dry season (rather than toward its end, in late June).

The red dust from the north was a stark reminder to the capital's inhabitants of the intensity of the drought and the steady advance of the desert southward.

According to Marie Dominique Sangaré, the head of the main meteorological center in Ouagadougou, "What concerns us is that because of the lack of rain, the desertification, and the fact that our soil is dry and cracked, these winds whip up and carry the dust, a dust that is becoming permanent." Sangaré also noted that the dust carries many germs, exposing people to all sorts of illnesses.

Famine and poverty

There are other signs here in Ouagadougou as well of the drought and famine that is spreading across the entire Sahel region of West Africa. Refugees from northern Burkina, and from the neighboring countries of Mali and Niger, have been moving southward. Some of them have taken to begging around Ouagadougou's central marketplace and other areas, in the distinctive dress of the nomadic Tauregs or other northern peoples.

The water level in the three reservoirs on the northern outskirts of the city is low, while there is only a bare trickle of water in some parts of the Moro Canal, which runs right through Ouagadougou.

The situation to the south is not much better at this time of the year. During a 140-kilometer drive southward to Pô, near the Ghanaian border, very little green vegetation was evident, and the water level in the reservoirs was also quite low.

The north, however, has been the hardest hit of all. According to the Ministry of Family Affairs and Solidarity, nearly 1 million Burkinabè (out of Burkina's total population of some 7 million) face grave food shortages in

the north and east, especially in the Yatenga and Sahel regions.

At the beginning of the year, Josephine Ouédraogo, the minister of family affairs and solidarity, estimated the grain shortage at 163,000 tons, compared with 120,000 tons last year. But with the influx of refugees from Mali and Niger, she noted, the total food requirement stands at 250,000 tons.

The reasons for these famine conditions are only partly related to the drought, however. Droughts, crop and animal diseases, and other natural disasters hit many other countries from time to time, without necessarily leading to famine. Industrialized and economically developed countries can much more easily over-

The Yatenga: Famine's colonial roots

OUAGADOUGOU — One of the regions of northern Burkina most affected by famine conditions today is the Yatenga, an area of more than half a million people bordering on Mali. Its main town, Ouahigouya, was historically the seat of one of the three kingdoms that made up the Mossi empire, one of the most powerful precolonial states in West Africa.

While the people of the Yatenga were certainly poor before their conquest by French colonial troops in 1895, they did not experience the same kinds of devastating famines that today plague the region. Their current problems stem directly from that period of colonial rule.

A 190-page study of the Yatenga published in 1983 by the Pan-African Institute for Development (PAID) provided considerable evidence of the traumatic impact of colonialism on the people and agricultural development of the region.

The most damaging policies were the imposition of forced labor and the production of two principal cash crops that were destined for export: peanuts (groundnuts) and cotton.

Because of the policy of forced labor, thousands of the most productive inhabitants of the Yatenga were deported to work on French-owned plantations in the Ivory Coast, in the mines of Niger, or to build railways. This reduced the amount of labor available in the Yatenga and seriously affected the production of subsistence food crops.

This policy of forced labor was later abandoned, but the pattern of emigration

had been set. The underdevelopment of the Yatenga and the attraction of jobs elsewhere (especially in neighboring Ivory Coast) continues to draw the most able-bodied people away, with almost half of all males and a quarter of all females between the ages of 20 and 29 absent from the Yatenga for part or all of the year.

The colonial introduction of peanut and cotton cultivation in the 1920s and 1930s also greatly disrupted traditional agrarian practices. The cultivated land area expanded dramatically, although there was only a limited amount that was arable to begin with. This led to overexploitation of the Yatenga's fragile soil and to overgrazing by livestock. There was also an increased cutting down of trees for fuel and to clear new farmland, reducing the protection against the Saharan winds.

According to the PAID report, these phenomena, "which accelerated in the course of the past decades, could only have catastrophic repercussions on the balances of nature."

Peanut and cotton cultivation is very minimal in the Yatenga today. But the period in which it was intensively cultivated laid the conditions that have worsened the effects of the current drought and facilitated the advance of the Sahara Desert.

Along with all the other crimes of French colonial rule, this is one that the people of Burkina are still paying for, and at a heavy cost.

—Ernest Harsch

come the impact of such disasters, or avoid them from the outset, through intensive agriculture, irrigation, and the use of pesticides and animal vaccines.

Burkina's basic problem — like that of most other African countries experiencing hunger and famine today — is its poverty. It has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Life expectancy is just 40 years, more than 92 percent of the people are illiterate, and the infant mortality rate is a staggering 180 out of every 1,000 live births — one of the world's highest.

Although more than 90 percent of the people live in the countryside and work on the land, agricultural production methods are primitive. Tractors and other farm machinery are virtually unknown here. Only 10 percent of the peasants use draught animals, and the rest must rely on hand tools and their own muscles.

This poverty is a direct consequence of colonial conquest and imperialist domination. Since the subjugation of Upper Volta (as Burkina was called until last year) by French colonialism at the end of the 19th century, it has been exploited and oppressed by imperialist interests. This has disrupted traditional agrarian relations and undermined agricultural productivity (see box). Throughout the past century of colonial and neocolonial rule, the country was kept underdeveloped and dependent on the imperialist powers.

Imperialist hostility

Despite their clear responsibility for the current famine conditions in Burkina, the imperialists have thus far refused to give adequate assistance, either in the form of funds or of emergency food shipments.

When she released the figures on the current grain deficit, Josephine Ouédraogo expressed her "disappointment" at the weak response of foreign governments and international food aid donors, despite the fact that Burkina's governing National Council of the Revolution (CNR) has made the country's food needs known. What the international donors seemed to be waiting for, she said, was an "SOS in its true and proper form" — that is, a posture of begging.

The imperialist governments and financial institutions do not like the Burkinabè government's independent stance and its refusal to bow to their dictates. They are hostile to the revolution that has been underway here since Aug. 4, 1983, when the CNR seized power on the crest of a massive popular upsurge. The new government, headed by Capt. Thomas Sankara, has adopted an anti-imperialist course, has enacted numerous progressive social measures, and has encouraged peasants, workers, women, and other oppressed and exploited layers of society to form their own mass organizations and fight for their rights.

The imperialists and their neocolonial allies in the region are worried that a revolutionary advance in Burkina, as poor as it is, could provide an inspiration to other victims of imperialist domination. They would rather let the



Ernest Harsch/IP

Peasants near Kombissiri, south of Ouagadougou. The Burkinabè government has initiated an agrarian reform to improve their conditions and to boost food production.

people of Burkina starve to death, in order to weaken and obstruct the revolutionary process.

When the Burkinabè leaders approached Washington for technical assistance for artificially inducing rainfall in Burkina, the Reagan administration said no. It also threatened to halt all further economic assistance to Burkina if it continued to vote against U.S. policy interests in the United Nations.

On February 1, officials of the World Bank and of 13 imperialist governments met in Paris to set up a new, \$1 billion fund for African countries suffering from famine and economic collapse. But the criteria for receiving this aid are blatantly political — those countries that forcefully attack imperialist policies are for the most part excluded. On the list of the 18 countries likely to obtain such assistance immediately or in the future, Burkina's name is not to be found.

Goal of self-sufficiency in food

But the Burkinabè government and people are not demoralized by the low level of international assistance or the tremendous economic, social, and environmental problems they face.

Coming next issue

An exclusive interview with Burkina's President Thomas Sankara. On the achievements and difficulties of the Burkinabè revolution, women's emancipation, the differing class forces in Burkina, the example of Cuba, the struggle in the United States, and more. Don't miss it.

They are fighting back. They are waging an audacious and determined struggle to overcome Burkina's legacy of imperialist domination and to challenge the forces of nature. The struggle to eat is a key revolutionary task in Burkina today.

In an interview with *Intercontinental Press*, Youssouf Ouédraogo, the minister of planning and popular development, asserted that the government has "a strategic objective of self-sufficiency in food."

But to attain that goal will require a long and difficult effort. Both to meet the immediate, emergency needs in the north and to improve food production over the long term, the CNR is seeking to mobilize and organize the Burkinabè people to be active participants in this struggle. This is in contrast to the approach of the previous neocolonial regimes, which fostered passivity and a reliance on foreign hand-outs.

According to Josephine Ouédraogo, the CNR's immediate operational strategy is "aimed partly at providing food aid and partly at gaining access to the disaster regions, which are sometimes very difficult to reach."

In 1983, shortly after the CNR seized power, a national Solidarity Fund was established, to which people were encouraged to contribute. Since then, the fund has collected some 500 million CFA francs (about US\$1 million), largely from within the country. Most of it has been used to buy grain for distribution in the north or to improve roads in the region.

Recently, a national committee has been set up to fight the effects of the drought. With the help of regional bodies, its task is to assess the

immediate needs in particular areas, so that a rapid deployment brigade can quickly mount convoys of vehicles for emergency supply expeditions.

An indispensable role in the struggle against the drought and famine is being played by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), the mass-based bodies that have been established in every neighborhood, workplace, and village. It is through the CDRs and their elected leaderships that virtually the entire population is being mobilized, in one way or another, to deal with this gigantic problem.

The CDRs have organized convoys of emergency food aid to the north. In many instances, the CDRs have themselves distributed the grain, either free or at low, fixed prices. This has helped to push aside the private traders who have sought to profit from the famine. The CDRs have mobilized people to construct irrigation projects or improve major roads, such as the Dori-Gorom road in the Sahel region, which had been made almost impassable by torrential rains late last year.

Development program

In October 1984, the CNR launched its ambitious People's Development Program (PPD), a 15-month crash plan of economic development that focuses largely on improving conditions in the countryside: the construction of dams, irrigation canals, roads, health clinics, schools, animal vaccination centers, grain storage bins, and other basic facilities. Most are of a modest scale, planned at minimal cost and involving the mobilization of local labor power through the organizing efforts of the CDRs.

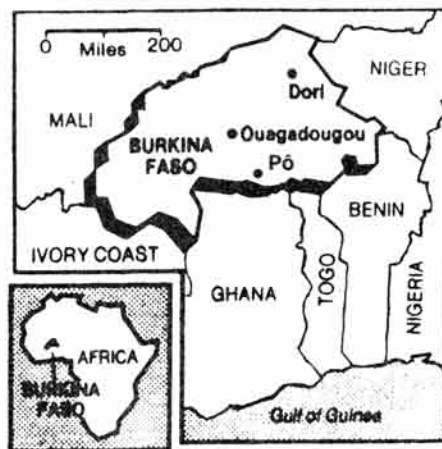
The PPD will help reduce the isolation of the northern regions and improve Burkina's physical and economic infrastructure, making it easier to quickly mobilize and deploy resources to the areas that are in particular need.

Currently, the CDRs are on a major campaign for the "Battle of the Rail," the construction of a railway from Ouagadougou to Tambao in the north — a distance of some 350 kilometers. The first 105 kilometers from Ouagadougou to Kaya are now being laid.

Every day, the radio and the daily newspaper *Sidwaya* provide progress reports. The March issue of *Lolowulen* (Red Star), the monthly magazine of the CDRs, featured the "Battle of the Rail" on its cover. Workers of the various government ministries, public services, state enterprises, and private concerns take turns putting in a full day's labor to lay down sections of the track.

Completion of the Tambao railway will not only make it easier to transport food and other essential goods to the north. It will also make it more feasible to begin exploitation of the sizeable manganese deposits near Tambao, and will likewise benefit the populations across the border in Mali and Niger, who face similar problems of isolation.

In an effort to slow down and halt the spread of the Sahara Desert, another campaign has been launched to plant 10 million trees this



year. The trees will help prevent the continual erosion of the soil and will provide some protection from the desert winds.

Planning Minister Youssouf Ouédraogo told me, "We are providing the social elements that will help keep people where they are, so that the population does not run away from the Sahel, but stays there and helps to transform it."

Burkina's options for intensive agricultural development are limited. It has only one river that flows year round, the Black Volta, which runs through the Sourou Valley northwest of Ouagadougou, making it the country's most fertile region. To take full advantage of the Sourou Valley's potential and to transform it into one of Burkina's major granaries, thousands of volunteers, organized by the CDRs, have already built an irrigation dam and canals there, to irrigate some 16,000 hectares of land. With the addition of another

13,000 hectares fed by rainfall, the area is capable of producing 15 percent of Burkina's cereal needs.

Such projects are being coupled with various agrarian reform measures aimed at improving the conditions of the peasants and encouraging them to produce more.

All land has been nationalized, with peasants retaining full use of their land and eliminating the problems of land speculation that existed in some parts. New banks and credit associations have been set up to make financial aid more accessible to small peasants. The tax on peasant farming that was imposed under French colonial rule has been abolished. The producer price of grain is being gradually raised to spur increased production. This will also encourage peasants to sell their grain directly to the National Grain Board (OF-NACER), which is building up its stocks, and will limit the ability of speculative traders to buy up grains at low prices and resell them at exorbitant rates.

This multifaceted struggle against famine and hunger is only conceivable through the mobilization of the labor and energy of the population as a whole. As the revolution unfolds, it is unleashing those energies and directing them toward a major economic and social transformation of this impoverished country.

There is an important political side to this struggle as well. "A people that is hungry is a people that is dominated and dependent," a brochure of the People's Development Program emphasized.

By surmounting this fundamental problem of hunger, Burkina will be taking an important step forward in its battle against imperialist domination and for genuine independence. □



A billboard near national CDR headquarters in Ouagadougou promoting Sourou Valley irrigation project. It reads: "For independence in foodstuffs and national sovereignty, to the assault of the Sourou."

Revolution comes to Pô

How CDRs have changed a small town in Burkina

By Ernest Harsch

Pô — From a grand old stone building constructed for French colonial administrators in 1922, young political activists are seeking to organize and mobilize the people of this region to carry through a revolutionary transformation of their society. That is no easy task.

Located near Burkina's southern border with Ghana, Pô is a poor town, in one of the world's poorest countries. Its less than 10,000 inhabitants have little safe drinking water and very few social amenities. Pô has no industry. A few people are engaged in petty trade or grow cotton or peanuts for the market. But most grow subsistence food crops such as millet, maize, and beans.

Despite its small size, Pô holds a place of honor in the history of Burkina's revolutionary upsurge.

It was at the military garrison near here that soldiers revolted in May 1983 in opposition to a French-instigated coup in Ouagadougou, 130 kilometers to the north. That coup ousted Thomas Sankara, who had been prime minister for a few months and had used that post as a platform to denounce imperialist domination.

But the new rightist military regime was weak and faced widespread resistance. The rebel troops in Pô, under the command of Capt. Blaise Compaoré, provided a focus for that resistance, attracting radical activists from throughout the country. On Aug. 4, 1983, Compaoré's forces marched on Ouagadougou and, with the support of the capital's population, overthrew the neocolonial regime and installed the new National Council of the Revolution headed by Sankara.

As an activist in Ouagadougou commented to me, "Taking power was the easy part." Now, nearly two years later, supporters of the revolution here in Pô are undertaking the far more difficult task of bringing some concrete material and political gains to the people.

CDRs tackle problems

The center of that effort is the former colonial administration building, now the headquarters for the regional Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR).

Although I arrived unexpectedly, Jean-Baptiste Natama took several hours out of his schedule to discuss the situation in Pô.

Natama, who is 20 years old, had been active in Ouagadougou in the events leading up to the August 1983 seizure of power, as a soldier. Afterward, he became an officer cadet. He was to have gone to Cuba for further study, and learned some Spanish from "a Cuban comrade" in Ouagadougou. But other responsibilities intervened and he was unable to go, though he remains hopeful. Natama was then sent to Pô, as an *animateur politique*, the one

responsible for guiding the CDRs' political work.

Pô itself, Natama explained, is divided into six sectors, each with a CDR of its own and an elected bureau. In addition, Pô is the administrative center for the region, which has a population of about 100,000. There are CDRs in the other towns, such as Tiébélé, Ziou, and Zoago, as well as in the smaller villages.

Whenever a new measure is adopted, Natama said, the CDRs hold a large public meeting, often involving 3,000 or 4,000 people in Pô. This is in contrast to the practice of the previous regimes, which never discussed things with the population. Now, Natama said, "the people are linked to the power. When we do something, we call a meeting."

But there are problems. "Sometimes people don't understand the real meaning of the revolution," Natama explained. "And those who understand it can't speak the language."

Natama himself is a native Moré speaker (the language of the Mossi), while the predominant languages in the region are Kasséna and Nankana. Meetings thus have to be conducted both in French (the language of national government and administration) and the local languages, with difficulties in translation.

Women begin to organize

Also, getting women to be actively involved is not easy, given the extreme oppression they have long suffered. Out of the nine places on a CDR bureau, two are reserved for women, including the position of deputy chairperson. Without this stipulation, Natama felt, women would generally not run for CDR leadership positions. "And if we didn't do this, some women wouldn't agree to join the CDRs." The last big CDR meeting in Pô, Natama added, was to mark International Women's Day on March 8.

Gradually, women are stepping forward. Some have formed a group called La Cellule Feminine (The Women's Cell).

Other campaigns, which will benefit men as well as women, include a literacy program conducted in the local languages, as part of a national effort to combat Burkina's high illiteracy rate. The first class of 90 persons in Pô was scheduled to complete an intensive 48-day course within a few more days, with another class to follow it. Since almost no one in Pô has electricity, the classes must generally be held during daylight hours.

Political activists are also teaching classes on revolutionary theory and practice. A special 20-day course is now underway, given to the women's group, students of the local *lycée* (high school), and CDR activists.

What topics are discussed? I asked. "Capitalism, communism, socialism, the

duties of the CDRs, imperialism and its manifestations in our country, the enemies of our people — the feudalists and the bourgeoisie — the class struggle, democratic centralism."

What materials are used to prepare the classes? "We use Marx, Engels, and Lenin," Natama replied. "Some of us don't have the money. So if someone buys a book in Ouagadougou, they tell about what they read, or pass the book on." The French-language weekly edition of the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma* is generally not available in Pô, but Natama can get it whenever he goes to Ouagadougou.

To a question about the training of the local militia, Natama took out a file and ran his finger along a list of names, counting. "We have already trained 48 boys and girls here in Pô. In the rest of the region, there are about 25 or 30 so far in each department. We have also trained all the government workers."

Like the country as a whole, the Pô region had a cereal deficit over the past year because of insufficient rains. The CDRs set up a local Solidarity Fund and raised money to buy maize from neighboring Ghana.

While the governments of Burkina and Ghana have established close political ties — based on their common resistance to imperialist domination — relations between the people of Pô and northern Ghana have also blossomed. Joint sports matches have been organized, and increased trade is developing. Ghanaians have provided Pô with equipment to make bricks, and CDR members in Pô have helped build schools in Ghana. Natama himself went to Bolgatanga, in northern Ghana, as part of a delegation to mark Ghana's Independence Day on March 6.

Since August 1983, the people of Pô have achieved some modest gains in their material conditions. Before, there were no buses to the capital. So one had to pay 3,500 CFA francs (about US\$7.00) for a taxi. Now there is regular bus service, at a fare of 1,000 CFA francs.

As part of the national People's Development Program (PPD), the CDRs in Pô have already helped organize the construction of several dams, a store, and a butcher shop. They plan in addition to build five or six grain storage bins, a cinema, some small dams, a new hangar for the nearby airport, a small hotel, animal vaccination centers, and other facilities.

The PPD also calls for the construction of a sports stadium in each region. "But it costs too much for a sports complex in Pô," Natama said. "We would need 30 million CFA francs, and our provincial budget is only 9 million."

One project that cannot be put off, however, is the acquisition of a new telephone for the CDR headquarters. Natama took me over to the present one, an old box from the colonial period that is operated by turning a crank on its side. He smiled. "You see the problems we have."

As in the rest of Burkina, the people of Pô have a long way to go to develop their community. But they have made a beginning. □

Ten years since liberation

Government plans growth of agriculture, forestry

By Will Reissner

For more than half a century, the three countries of Indochina — Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos — have been closely linked in struggle. Together they fought against French colonialism, Japanese occupation, and U.S. intervention.

This year Laos will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Dec. 2, 1975. The abolition of the old regime on that date, says Laos' ambassador to the United Nations Kithong Vongsay, "marked the achievement of the national democratic revolution" and "the complete rout of the American aggression." Since then, he states, the Lao people have "embarked on the road toward socialism, bypassing the stage of capitalist development."

History of struggle

The establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic marked the culmination of a decades-long struggle for national liberation, whose roots can be traced back to the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party in February 1930 under the leadership of the Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh.

On Oct. 12, 1945, following the collapse of the Japanese wartime occupation of Laos, Lao revolutionaries seized power and declared their country independent. But French colonial troops quickly returned to Laos, and French rule was reestablished there, as it was in Vietnam and Kampuchea.

The peoples of the three countries of Indochina, however, continued fighting for national liberation. In 1949 the first unit of the Laotian revolutionary armed forces was set up with 100 combatants. In 1950 the Lao Freedom Front came into being, and a Lao Resistance Government was established.

The Second Congress of the Indochinese Communist Party, held in February 1951, decided that separate parties should be established for each of the three Indochinese countries. Lao members of the ICP set to work building the basis for their own party and expanding the operations of the guerrilla movement.

By the time the French colonialists were forced to sign the 1954 Geneva Agreement recognizing the formal independence of the three Indochinese countries, the Lao Freedom Front was in complete control of two provinces.

The U.S. government quickly jumped into the void created by the defeat of the French colonial regime and attempted to prop up proim-



perialist governments in Laos, Kampuchea (then called Cambodia), and the southern half of Vietnam.

From the 1950s, Washington armed and financed successive rightist Laotian governments in hopes of crushing the Laotian liberation fighters. The guerrillas were led by the Lao People's Party,¹ which was established on March 22, 1955, by Laotians who had been members of the Indochinese Communist Party. In 1956, the Lao Patriotic Front was set up as a legal political movement led by the LPP, but encompassing broader forces.

On three occasions — in 1957-58, 1962-63, and 1973-75 — coalition governments were set up, bringing together representatives of the pro-U.S. forces and the Lao Patriotic Front.

But as the strength of the Lao Patriotic Front grew, Washington's military intervention also escalated.

By the mid-1960s, the U.S. Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency were running their own "secret wars" in Laos.

In addition to carrying out its own bombing missions, the CIA organized and financed a mercenary army of Hmong hill tribesmen led by Vang Pao.

The U.S. Air Force began bombing Laos intensively in 1964. By the end of 1973, U.S. aircraft had dropped more than 3 million tons of bombs on Laos, a country with fewer than 4

1. At its Second Congress in 1972, the party's name was changed to the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, which it retains to this day.

million people.

In addition, Laos was heavily sprayed with chemical defoliants in an attempt to deny ground cover to the guerrillas and to destroy crops in guerrilla-controlled areas. According to the U.S. Air Force history of the chemical warfare in Indochina, some 420,000 gallons of Agents Orange, Blue, and White were dropped on Laotian territory.

Washington also organized a force of some 30,000 Thai mercenaries to fight on the side of the Laotian government against the guerrillas.

Despite this massive U.S. military intervention, the Laotian guerrillas continued to gain strength. By the time the third coalition government was set up in 1973, the forces led by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party controlled four-fifths of the country's land area and more than half the population.

Following the defeat of the U.S.-backed regimes in South Vietnam and Kampuchea in April 1975, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party organized a mass campaign that eliminated the pro-imperialist forces from the coalition government and led to the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Dec. 2, 1975.

Socialism a long-term goal

The Lao People's Democratic Republic's goal of advancing "in the direction of socialism, bypassing the capitalist development stage"² is necessarily a long-term task, in view of the country's legacy of colonial underdevelopment and wartime destruction.

Laos is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is estimated that there are 3.8 million inhabitants of the country. The precise number will be known when results are tabulated from Laos' first census ever conducted, which took place in March of this year.³

In its May 1983 report to a conference of "least developed countries of Asia and the Pacific," held in Geneva, the Laotian government outlined the objective problems it faces in developing the economy:

"Since subsistence economy, based on small-scale agricultural production, occupies approximately 85 percent of the population, the fundamental question which the government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has to resolve is the following: how to transform a semifeudal society living in a subsistence economy based on small-scale self-sufficient agricultural-type production into a large scale-production society?"

In fact, much of Laotian agriculture is so

2. This description is contained in a study published in May 1983 by the Lao People's Democratic Republic, entitled *Report on the Economic and Social Situation, Development Strategy, and Assistance Requirements*, Vols. 1 & 2, prepared for the Round Table of the Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific to Implement the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 80s, held in Geneva.

3. With regard to all statistics concerning Laos, a government report notes that "statistical data in the Lao PDR are often mere estimates; they should therefore be interpreted with caution."

primitive that some 200,000–300,000 hectares (one hectare = 2.47 acres) of forest are annually subjected to slash-and-burn methods of agriculture practiced by hill tribes. Under slash-and-burn forms of cultivation, migratory farmers burn down a section of jungle, plant crops for several years until the soil's fertility is exhausted, and then move to another area and repeat the process.

According to the Laotian government, the industrial and mining section of the economy accounts for no more than 5 percent of the country's gross national product.

Furthermore, the government's 1983 report states, "there hardly exist any private enterprises of any significant size in the agro-industrial, mining or commercial sectors." The absence of large private enterprises is not the result of a policy of nationalizations. Rather, it reflects the low level of economic development inherited from the colonial and neocolonial past.

Obstacles to development

Development of the economy is hampered by a number of objective constraints. These include the very low population density (less than 4 million people spread out over a rugged, mountainous country nearly the size of Britain), the low educational and technical level of the population, and the lack of a basic infrastructure of roads, telephones, electricity, warehouses, and the like.

At the time of the victory in 1975, Laos had less than 5,000 kilometers of roads, including dirt roads. By 1981, the total road network had doubled to 10,269 kilometers, of which 1,138 were paved with asphalt, 5,293 were gravelled, and 3,838 were dirt.

Despite the huge effort involved in doubling the road network in the first six years of the Lao People's Democratic Republic's history, huge sections of the country remain inaccessible to wheeled vehicles.

In fact, in 1981 there were only 563 trucks in the whole country, of which only 212 were considered in good condition.

The extent of the backwardness of Laos' infrastructure can be seen in the fact that the entire country had only 4,700 telephones in 1983. This number represents less than 1.2 telephones per 1,000 inhabitants, which is *only one-tenth the average for the underdeveloped countries of Asia*.

Moreover, most of the existing telephone system is already more than two decades old and is, according to the government's May 1983 report, approaching "total" breakdown.

Yet the report notes that "telephone links are essential for basic social, administrative and economic activities."

Goals of development

At the Third Congress of the 35,000-member Lao People's Revolutionary Party, held in Vientiane April 27–30, 1982, party Secretary General Kaysone Phomvihane described Laos as being in the initial stages "of the transitional period" to socialism.



Rural health center.

Kaysone listed three basic tasks to be undertaken: "strengthening of the system of proletarian dictatorship"; stabilizing and improving the living standards of the people; and carrying out a basic survey of the economy and building up key areas that can have an impact on the national economy as a whole.

These tasks, he added, are meant "to create prerequisites" for "building and development of the economy and culture on a larger-scale, at a quicker speed in the plans for 1990."

The Laotian government's development strategy for the period leading up to 1990 is:

- To raise the educational and cultural level of the population;
- To emphasize development of the country's agricultural and forestry resources with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency in basic food commodities and developing a surplus of certain agricultural products for export;
- To emphasize the development of trade and communications between towns and the countryside in order to gradually bring farmers into the money economy and to overcome the backwardness of the existing subsistence economy.

To further these goals, the Laotian government adopted a three-year economic plan in 1977. This was followed by a five-year plan from 1981 to 1985, and preparations are well advanced for the start of a second five-year plan covering 1986–1990.

Given the objective difficulties Laos faces in developing its economy, the goals set in the plans since 1977 have been realistically modest. And the results have been gratifying for the Laotian authorities.

Successful literacy campaign

Perhaps the most stunning progress has been made in the area of education. Reflecting the legacy of the colonial and neocolonial past, about 65 percent of the Lao population was illiterate at the time the Lao People's Democratic Republic was established in 1975.

But by the end of 1984, illiteracy had been virtually wiped out through a mass literacy campaign mounted by the government.

This campaign required a tremendous effort on the part of the entire Lao society. Not only is much of rural Laos made up of isolated mountain communities that are inaccessible by road, but the Lao population itself is made up of 68 different ethnic and linguistic groups, with no one group making up a majority of the population.

The literacy campaign was conducted in the Lowland Lao language, which is spoken as a second language by most of Laos' inhabitants and is the only Laotian language with a written alphabet.

In order to carry out this ambitious literacy program, the government mobilized civil servants, teachers, and Buddhist monks in the campaign.

In villages throughout Laos, Buddhist pagodas were used to teach reading and writing, or classes were held in the open air.

With the successful completion of the campaign, one year ahead of schedule, the government is mounting an ambitious campaign of follow-up adult education to insure that the newly literate population does not lose this valuable acquisition.

There has also been a gigantic expansion of primary and secondary education since the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975. Between 1976 and 1980, the number of primary school students jumped from 317,000 to 479,300, and the number of secondary school pupils rose from 29,500 to 79,000.

By 1983, some 80 percent of children of primary-school age were enrolled in schools, and that is expected to rise to nearly 100 percent by the end of this year.

The five-year plan that ends this year also projected an increase of 25 percent in the number of students in higher education.

Health care: starting from ground zero

In spite of considerable progress in the field of health care since the victory in 1975, "the state of health of the population continues to be precarious," according to the government's May 1983 report.

In 1982, life expectancy at birth was estimated to be approximately 46 years. This low figure reflects one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the world. The 1983 study reports that "the rate of infant mortality (less than one year) was in the order of 175–200 per thousand, but this could be an underestimation."

Much of the population is afflicted with malaria, dysentery, diarrhea, leprosy, tuberculosis, respiratory infections, and parasitic diseases. Many of these, however, could be controlled through improved sanitation, safe water, and vaccination campaigns.

But in trying to improve the state of health of the Laotian people, the government is severely hampered by the limited number and poor training of health-care workers, the lack of hospitals, clinics, and laboratories, and the difficulties of reaching outlying areas with

consistent supplies of medications and health-care workers.

In fact, the Laotian government reports, "the distribution of medications and vaccines outside of Vientiane is accomplished in a sporadic manner and, practically, does not extend to remote regions. This is due notably to the logistical difficulties of supply and to the absence of a continuously refrigerated system in the numerous non-electrified regions."

The Laotian government has made great efforts to increase the number of doctors, dentists, and nurses in the country. The number of doctors rose from 104 in 1977 to 226 in 1982, and is expected to reach 450 by the end of this year.

The number of dentists and dental assistants rose from 2 in 1977 to a projected 101 in 1985. The number of midwives/nurses jumped from 4,023 in 1977 to an estimated 12,990 in 1985.

In its 1981-85 five-year plan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic established five priorities for improving health care: a campaign against transmissible diseases; development of basic health services; improvement of water supplies and sanitation; renovation and re-equipment of hospitals in Vientiane and the provinces; and improvement of pharmaceuticals production from local medicinal plants.

The scope of the problems in these fields, however, can be seen from the goal of providing safe drinking water to 25 percent of the rural population and 70 percent of the urban population, or a total of 27 percent of the entire population of Laos, by 1986.

Record harvests

In the field of agriculture, substantial progress has already been made. Rice production in 1984 set a record of 1.3 million tons. This figure brought Laos close to self-sufficiency in food production for the first time.

The goal for 1985 is to produce 1.6 million tons of food (including 1.4 million tons of rice). Lao agriculture remains heavily dependent on the vagaries of the weather, especially rainfall. But if that goal is reached, Laos will have achieved basic self-sufficiency.

Some of the credit for the improved harvests is due to the establishment of 2,516 agricultural cooperatives around the country. These cooperatives include about 41 percent of the country's farming households and 38 percent of its cultivated land.

The cooperatives make increased production possible through the use of more machinery and other inputs than individual farmers could apply in cultivating small plots.

The Laotian government's emphasis on road-building in the 10 years since it came to power has also benefited agricultural production.

The focus of the program has not been to build new paved highways at this time, given the limited resources available. Rather, the Lao People's Democratic Republic feels that "the construction of rural roads is without

doubt the best support that one can provide for agriculture and these roads are essential for making it possible for the rural population to break [out of a] subsistence economy."

The one large highway building program now being carried out is the rebuilding of the old French-built Route 9 linking southern Laos with the port of Danang in Vietnam.

At present, with Route 9 impassable for most of its length, Laos' only outlet for world trade is through two border crossings to Thailand. However, the existing and potential tensions with the proimperialist Thai government make the Lao People's Democratic Republic anxious to secure another outlet for international commerce.

Virtually the entire highway, which is 246 kilometers long, is "in very bad condition" and must be completely rebuilt, according to a government report. In addition, some 70 bridges along the highway need replacement or reconstruction.

Thus far, 46 kilometers of Route 9 have been completed, and the whole project is scheduled for completion in 1987. Laos is receiving a great deal of aid from the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Sweden in carrying out this project.

Modest plans for industry

The industrial and mining sector of the Laotian economy is still in its infancy, contributing barely 5 percent of the country's gross national product.

In his report to the Third Congress of the LPRP in April 1983, Kaysone Phomvihane said that there were 188 state-owned industrial factories in Laos, employing some 15,000 workers.

Most of the existing industrial facilities are small-scale operations processing agricultural and forest products.

The one exception is electrical power generation. The Nam Ngum hydroelectric dam some 65 kilometers from Vientiane produces large amounts of electricity that is exported to Thailand. In fact, the sale of exported electricity, which totalled some \$20 million in 1982, is by far Laos' largest export earner.

As far as other industrial facilities are concerned, the limited character of Laotian industrialization can be seen in the fact that production of cigarettes, beverages, and corrugated zinc sheets were the three largest industries by value of production in 1981.

In its May 1983 report to the Geneva conference on least developed countries, the Laotian government pointed out that "on the basis of its recent experiences the Government prefers, whenever this is technically feasible, to undertake *small and medium-scale projects* with low capital intensity, with a view to minimising problems of management, equipment maintenance, etc." (emphasis added).

In terms of industrial development through the end of the 1980s, the Lao government has based its planning on two guidelines:

1. Industry should be based on local raw

materials and should help to stimulate and increase production in the primary sector, especially agriculture.

2. Production units "will initially be small and low capital-intensive, even craft-oriented insofar as the technology will permit, [in order] to minimise the problems of management, supply, maintenance of the machines, marketing, etc."

The report candidly notes that "this strategy of the Government may seem to some to lack ambition." But it adds that the government's strategy "does not deny in any way that [the] Lao PDR, with its agricultural, forestry, minerals, energy and human potential will become in due time an economy where industry would be the leading, even dominant, dynamic sector."

But at least until 1990, emphasis in industrial development will be placed on small rice mills, tobacco curing, coffee processing, silk-worm raising, small sugar mills, and forest products.

Foreign aid vital

Because of the extreme underdevelopment of the Laotian economy, with a large majority of the population still outside the money economy, foreign aid has been crucial in funding productive investments by the Lao state.

In fact, barely half the state's annual budget is covered by domestic revenues, although that proportion has been steadily rising in recent years. The remainder of the budget must come from aid provided by international organizations and other countries.

In 1981, Laos received some US\$107.7 million in foreign aid. The largest sources were the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and other workers states. Among the biggest capitalist donors were the governments of Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, and West Germany.

Although the U.S. government poured hundreds of millions of dollars into support for previous right-wing and monarchist governments in Laos, it has refused to provide economic aid since the formation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975.

This means that Washington has provided virtually no help to Laos in recovering from the damage caused by the more than 3 million tons of bombs dropped on the country by U.S. war planes, or the huge amount of chemical defoliants.

Washington does, however, maintain diplomatic relations with Laos (in contrast to its lack of relations with Vietnam and Kampuchea), and there is a U.S. embassy functioning in Vientiane.

Laos has cooperated with U.S. authorities in locating and recovering the remains of U.S. airmen shot down over Laos, and relations between the two countries were described by one Laotian diplomat as "correct."

Improved relations, however, are unlikely to develop as long as Washington continues to pursue its policy of punishing the Indochinese countries for their victories over U.S. imperialism in 1975. □

FLNKS leaders speak in New Zealand

'What we want is total sovereignty over the land of Kanaky'

By Eileen Morgan

[The following article is scheduled to appear in the March 29 issue of *Socialist Action*, a fortnightly newspaper published in Auckland, New Zealand, that reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, New Zealand section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

"We, the Kanak people, want independence and we are determined to go to the very end to obtain independence," Claude Wema, the vice-president of the Kanak and Exploited Workers Union (USTKE), told a press conference held in Auckland on March 14 at the end of a two-week tour of New Zealand at the invitation of the Federation of Labour.

As well as speaking about the role of his union in the Kanak independence struggle and the support it has received from trade unionists in New Zealand and elsewhere, Claude described the current situation in New Caledonia. The day after the press conference, March 15, *Socialist Action* also spoke to Susanna Ounei, a leader of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), who had arrived in Auckland from New Caledonia only hours before.

Situation worsening

"The situation in New Caledonia is getting worse every day," Susanna told *Socialist Action*. "They come into our tribes and destroy the houses of our people. They beat our chiefs, tie their hands and leave them under the trees where the ants can eat them. They beat our people and send them to jail."

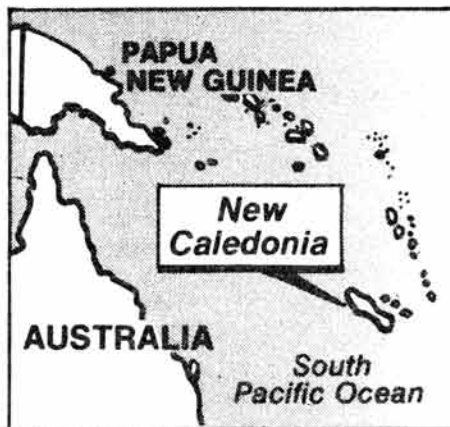
There are currently between 6,500 and 7,000 French troops and para-military police in New Caledonia — around one for every nine Kanaks. Claude Wema described how, backed by armoured personnel carriers and helicopters, they "have descended on and devastated 13 of our tribes."

"A lot of our people are in prison now — more than 100," Susanna added. "The prisoners demanded to be recognised as political prisoners. They are in jail because they fight for liberation. The French refused, so the prisoners went on a hunger strike."

"There were 93 or 94 on the hunger strike when it began. Then the French freed some prisoners. But when this happened, other prisoners just came and joined in the strike. Now it is not only the political prisoners participating in the hunger strike, but all Kanak prisoners."

Protest demonstration

The prisoners are being kept in Camp Est in New Caledonia's capital, Nouméa. Susanna described how they are denied even proper



washing facilities. Instead, she said, they are forced to use the toilet bowls for bathing.

"Last week we demonstrated to protest at how they treat our prisoners," she said. "It was the first Kanak demonstration in Nouméa since November 18 [at the time of the FLNKS-organised boycott of the Territorial Assembly elections] and about 3,000 people took part. It was really positive."

Most of the French settler population is based in Nouméa, and it has been the scene of large anti-independence demonstrations. Asked whether the anti-independents had attacked the FLNKS demonstration, Susanna answered, "No, they didn't. They stayed away because, although the Kanaks are a minority in Nouméa, we are determined to go right to the end for our independence, and Nouméa is on our land. It is not white land. It is part of our future."

Delegation

"A delegation went to see the government, to ask them to stop the repression in the countryside and elsewhere and to change the living conditions of our prisoners. [French government envoy Edgard] Pisani wasn't there, but we were received by a man called Blanc who had replaced Pisani. We presented him with the FLNKS' position."

"I suppose you heard that one of the gendarmes [French police] died in Pouébo, on the east coast," Susanna continued. (He was killed by a machete on March 8 during a cop attack on a Kanak roadblock.) "If he died, it is not because the Kanak people wanted to kill him, but because they just came in and provoke the people. They beat up the women and young people."

As part of its opposition to the French colo-

nial regime the FLNKS has organised boycotts of the primary schools and by Kanak workers employed in the nickel mines. These mines are near the village of Thio, which is a stronghold of the FLNKS, and Susanna described how the non-Kanak miners have to be escorted to work by the police.

'A colonial school'

Speaking about the school boycott she explained, "For us, the school is a colonial school. It comes from France. They take our young people from their families at the age of four or five years and sit them in classrooms to learn French. It is good for the French because it is their language, but as for us — how can we progress? The white children make progress, but it is difficult for us because it is not our language."

"So everyone in the countryside and on the islands of New Caledonia boycotted the white schools. And now I think the FLNKS is going to set up something else, so we can teach our youth ourselves."

On January 7 this year Edgard Pisani put forward a proposal for an "independent state in association with France." This would return formal ownership of the land of New Caledonia to the Kanaks, while leaving France in control of key sectors of the government and the economy. Furthermore, a "privileged resident" status would be created for those who did not wish to take on Kanak citizenship, and Nouméa would also be granted a "special status."

Pisani plan

At his press conference Claude Wema explained that one aspect of the Pisani plan which the FLNKS supported was the idea of moving the independence date forward from 1989 to early 1986. "But linking the independence date to the idea of links with France seems to contradict the essence of independence and this part does not interest us," he said.

"France envisages retaining control of the economy, immigration, the police and the army. But what we want is total sovereignty over the land of Kanaky."

He added: "This is a purely personal opinion, but I think that France is determined to retain a presence in the South Pacific. As for the other aspect of the movement for an independent Kanaky, what they are really afraid of is the 'domino' theory, that it will be contagious for all the other dominated or controlled countries throughout the world. It's a bad example."

Asked how long the FLNKS was prepared

to wait for independence, Claude described how the Kanak people had first rebelled against the French colonialists in 1870, and then again in 1917. "We understand the impatience of our militants," he added. "We are in our third revolution, and we have been colonised for over 100 years. And that is what makes the importance reside in the goal proposed, much more than in the answer of the French government. Whatever the answer, we will go to independence."

On March 31 the French government will announce the final version of the Pisani plan. "But we don't have to dream," Susanna Ounei commented. "We already know Pisani's position. He gave his position on the 7th, and five days later they shot Eloi [Machoro — a leader of the FLNKS]."

"The people refused to accept Pisani's plan. Either we are independent or we are not. We don't want to have something like the Philippines or South Africa. Everywhere — in the countryside and in the Kanak area of Nouméa — the people are determined to get what they want without conditions, without negotiations."

FLNKS congress planned

Once the French government has made its position known, the FLNKS will hold a congress to decide on its response. "But I don't think the FLNKS will bother to negotiate," Susanna said. "They want freedom first of all. After they are free, they will decide who to talk to, who to negotiate with."

One of the problems confronting the Kanaks, Susanna explained, is the fact that New Caledonia is a small island in the South Pacific. "In South Africa, for example, [the Black national liberation fighters] can move to another country — the same in Latin America or [during the independence struggle] in Algeria. But us, we are so isolated. We just live on our own — where can we run?" This is why international solidarity with the Kanak struggle for independence is so important, she emphasised.

Unity growing

Despite the problems, however, the Kanak people are growing stronger and more united in their determination to fight for their independence, Susanna said. The founding conference of the FLNKS in September last year united four Kanak political parties — Union Caledonienne, the Kanak United Liberation Front, the Progressive Melanesian Union, and the Caledonian Socialist Party — along with the USTKE, the Group of Kanak and Exploited Women in Struggle, a church group, and the land committees.

"In New Caledonia now you couldn't say it is this group or that group carrying out the actions," Susanna explained. "The people now are all together in the FLNKS."

"We have a lot of experience of division. The right — the whites — are really strong when we are divided. Now our people are all united and they are really strong." □

Bolivia

Unions end general strike

By Will Reissner

Bolivia's fifth general strike in little more than one year ended March 24 after 16 days. Led by the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), the work stoppage shut down the country's tin mines, banks, government offices, and industrial sector.

During the general strike, more than 10,000 tin miners traveled to the capital, La Paz, to lead mass meetings and demonstrations protesting the government's austerity program and calling for the resignation of President Hernán Silas Zuazo.

For the first time since he took office in 1982, Siles Zuazo called out the army to deal with the strikers.

At a mass meeting marking the end of the general strike, a COB representative told the assembled crowd, "we have lost a battle, but not the war."

The general strike had been called to demand wage increases of up to 500 percent and cost-of-living adjustments to meet the hyperinflation that is rocking the Bolivian economy.

Following the government's latest austerity moves, announced on February 9, prices immediately rose by an average of 400 percent. The government proposed a wage increase of only 332 percent. The huge price increases were the result of the latest devaluation of the Bolivian peso, dropping its exchange rate from 9,000 pesos for one U.S. dollar to 45,000 pesos to the dollar.

For the past four years, Bolivia has been in the midst of an economic crisis, during which the country's gross domestic product has dropped by 30 percent, and inflation has soared to an annual rate of 50,000 percent by the beginning of 1985.

As is the case throughout Latin America, Bolivia's economic crisis has been sparked by declining prices and demand for its raw-material exports (tin, oil, natural gas), and rising prices for the manufactured goods and foodstuffs it must import.

Successive Bolivian governments tried to bridge this widening gap through foreign borrowing. But with prices for its export items remaining severely depressed, the foreign debt has risen far beyond the country's capacity to repay.

When Siles came to power in October 1982 at the head of the Democratic and People's Unity (UDP) coalition,* his government had the support of most organized groupings in the

*The UDP was made up of Siles' Left Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNRI), the Communist Party, and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). In November 1984 the two Communist Party members in Siles' cabinet resigned. □

workers movement.

Siles had been elected president three times between 1978 and 1980, but he was prevented from taking office each time by a military coup.

The military attempted to solve Bolivia's economic crisis by forcing down the wages and living standards of the working class and small farmers. But resistance by the union movement made it impossible for the dictatorship to implement its programs and convinced the military to turn power over to the UDP coalition.

Siles Zuazo began his term by trying to use his popularity to win acceptance from the workers movement for the same kinds of programs that the military had been unable to impose.

But each attempt by Siles to impose an austerity program has been met by a general strike.

In previous general strikes, Siles was forced to yield some ground to the workers. He agreed, for example, to give majority representation to workers' delegates in the management of the state-owned mining company (COMIBOL). Similar gains were made by the United Confederation of Working Farmers.

But with the economic crisis growing ever deeper, and with the government under pressure from the imperialist banks to continue payments on the foreign debt, Siles has plowed ahead in forcing the workers and farmers to bear the brunt of the catastrophic economic situation.

Today the foreign debt stands at \$4.86 billion, most of it accumulated during the 18 years of military governments. But the country's export earnings have dropped from \$940 million in 1980 to only \$700 million in 1984, largely as a result of sharply falling tin prices.

In addition, Bolivia has been affected by the foreign debt crisis of neighboring Argentina, which now owes Bolivia some \$350 million for natural gas received but not paid for.

President Siles has committed his government to using 25 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings to pay interest on the foreign debt. But even this is proving impossible to maintain.

As long as Bolivia continues to be saddled with its massive foreign debt, there is no hope for a solution to the economic crisis.

With Siles showing himself unable to control the workers movement, there have been growing calls from the Bolivian bourgeoisie for his replacement. In December a meeting of political parties, sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, forced Siles to agree to hold elections in 1985, one year ahead of schedule. Those elections are now set to take place July 14. □

'For working-class and people's unity'

Interview with a leader of Bolivian POR (U)

[The following interview with Antonio Moreno, a member of the Political Bureau of the Revolutionary Workers Party (Unified) (POR [U]) of Bolivia, is reprinted from the March 8-14 issue of *Rouge*, weekly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International.]

[In its introduction, *Rouge* states that the POR (U), the Bolivian section of the Fourth International, has several hundred members and plays a decisive role in the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB) and in mobilizations of the Bolivian people.]

[The interview was conducted by François Ollivier in February. The translation from French is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Question. How would you characterize the political situation in Bolivia?

Answer. Three factors dominate this situation. The first is the economic crisis. The latest devaluations — taking the exchange rate for one U.S. dollar from 9,000 pesos to 40,000 pesos — the runaway inflation, and the clamp-down on wages on the orders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are causing ever greater misery for the people.

Next, we should point out that the people's movement is disoriented. For two years the country has been in the throes of real chaos. The state is disorganized. The ministries no longer function. The banks have been on strike for three weeks. The transportation system cannot be counted on. Even the authority of the police is questioned with strikes by the municipal police.

But despite this crisis wracking the state, the people's struggles have not achieved tangible results in terms of people's living conditions. And no credible political perspective has yet emerged as an alternative to the UDP [Democratic and People's Unity], the class collaborationist coalition of reformist parties around President [Hernán] Siles Zuazo.

Finally, the third factor is the offensive by the right wing, which is profiting from the UDP's crisis. This offensive is targeted on the elections that are supposed to take place in June 1985. For the right wing, the defeat of the UDP means the defeat of the left.

The right is divided into two currents. Former dictator [Hugo] Banzer's ADN (Nationalist Democratic Action) advocates a direct political confrontation with the workers movement and, in particular, denationalization of the Bolivian economy. Large sectors of the economy, particularly the mining sector, have traditionally been under state control.

The other current is represented by the MNR-Histórico (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement-Historic) of [Victor] Paz Es-

tensoro, a bourgeois sector seeking to settle the Bolivian crisis through less drastic methods.

Q. Is there much risk of a coup?

A. There is little risk of a coup in the coming weeks. The bourgeoisie found a mechanism that is less socially costly than a coup — the June 1985 elections, after which it could govern through the MNR-Histórico or the ADN.

You cannot, however, totally dismiss the possibility of a coup. In fact, given the strength of the mass movement — a succession of general strikes, land occupations, factory occupations, semi-insurreccional situations in certain villages where the peasants have sometimes risen up for several days — some sectors of the army might be tempted by a coup aimed at destroying the revolutionary vanguard and then preparing for elections to legitimize the coup.

Q. What role does the COB play?

A. The COB — the sole union federation of the Bolivian proletariat — has long traditions of class-struggle battles and fights. It is the only institution that has put forward an alternative solution to the crisis, through a series of immediate and transitional demands aimed at mobilizing the Bolivian workers: minimum wage, sliding scale of wages, monopoly of foreign trade, opposition to the IMF's demands, repudiation of the foreign debt, co-management (with the workers having a majority) in all the nationalized sectors, workers control in the private enterprises, and, finally, a series of measures for an agrarian reform plan.

On the basis of this program, the COB has launched several hunger strikes. It has carried out massive general strikes. These general strikes have mobilized not only the workers, but also the peasants and certain sectors of the petty bourgeoisie who therefore acknowledged the COB's leadership.

But these mobilizations had their limits. There were economic limits because the wage increases gained through the struggle were nullified by inflation. There were also political limits because the workers are now conscious of the need for a political outcome that goes beyond the framework of the COB.

In particular, there is a broad discussion in the vanguard concerning these questions. The United Revolutionary Leadership (DRU) is a reflection of this process. It is composed of the POR (U), popular sectors of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Socialist Party-1 (PS-1), the Revolutionary Front of the Socialist Left (FRIS), and the Revolutionary Party of the Nationalist Left (PRIN) headed by COB leader Juan Lechin. The DRU has the

support of thousands of class-struggle trade unionists.

Q. What perspectives do you see for the DRU?

A. The formation of the DRU was the result of a long fight waged by the POR (U). It is the product of a long battle for unity, a battle to bring together all the organizations, all the currents, that see themselves as part of the class struggle.

Basing itself on sectors of the workers and peasants that are a big majority in the COB, the DRU fulfills two functions at the same time. It is a class-struggle trade union tendency leading the COB, and it is also a revolutionary political frame of reference for these class-struggle trade-union currents.

The DRU was formed in March 1984. Five months later the DRU dealt a stinging defeat to the PCB (the pro-Moscow Communist Party) at the COB convention.

But for programmatic reasons — the reference to the socialist positions of the COB is inadequate, and it lacks a more solid program for winning power — as well as for reasons having to do with the relationship of forces within the left, the DRU has not yet been able to play the role of a national political alternative.

Many parties on the left are not in the DRU. The PCB — which is a minority tendency in the COB but is the largest and best organized party in Bolivia — is today fighting the DRU.

All these things are real obstacles, especially since it falls to the DRU to establish an alternative in the face of the UDP's crisis.

That is why the DRU, fighting for the united front, proposes the establishment of a people's coordinating council. The aim is to bring together all the working-class and people's organizations, thereby preparing for both the June 1985 elections and the coming confrontations with the bourgeoisie.

In this context the POR (U) emphasizes the need to forge working-class and people's unity in the mass organizations of the Bolivian people, and through this, to make the "people's coordinating councils" into political instruments for united mobilization, with a perspective of winning power. □

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Sandinista leader speaks to unionists

'We are advancing the consolidation of the revolution'

[Following are two documents from the Fourth National Assembly of Unions—Leonel Rugama, held in Managua January 26–27.

[The first is the text of the closing speech delivered to the Assembly by Commander of the Revolution Víctor Tirado López.

[Second are the resolutions adopted by the assembly.

[The meeting brought together some 800 labor leaders, the majority of whom were representatives of the unions led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). These include: The Sandinista Workers Federation (CST, representing industrial workers), Rural Workers Association (ATC, farmworkers), Health Workers Federation (FETSALUD), National Union of Employees (UNE, government workers), Nicaraguan Journalists Union (UPN), and National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN, teachers).

[Other unions represented were the General Workers Federation (CGT), a labor group led by the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN), and the Workers Front (FO), the trade union arm of the People's Action Movement (MAP).

[The translations by *Intercontinental Press* are from a printed pamphlet published by the CST.

[Also included in the pamphlet are Tirado's opening speech to the assembly and a balance sheet on "How the Resolutions of the Third Assembly—Enrique Lorente were carried out." The text of the resolutions of the Third National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente, held in September 1984, were printed in the Nov. 26, 1984, issue of *Intercontinental Press*.

[Tirado's opening speech to the union gathering described the situation facing Nicaragua as a result of the war of aggression being waged against it by Washington. He reiterated the Nicaraguan government's attempt to reach a negotiated accord, while reaffirming the necessity of mobilizing the entire population behind the military and economic effort needed to defend the revolution.

[He outlined some of the economic steps, including major sacrifices, that will be required to continue the military defense of the revolution. These measures were discussed by the assembly, and the delegates voted "to make available all of the nation's resources for the war."

[Following the union assembly, the Nicaraguan National Assembly adopted the Wage Scale Law on February 7. This legislation raised wages from 47 to 60 percent to compensate at least partially for the deterioration in the buying power of the córdoba. The increases were made on a sliding scale with the largest raises going to production workers.



VÍCTOR TIRADO

José G. Pérez/IP

[On the following day the top leadership of the FSLN issued a statement outlining a series of economic measures to try to deal with problems created by Washington's war.

[In addition to prioritizing wage increases for production workers, other measures were proposed to help increase the supply of goods. These included granting incentives to productive industries, particularly those creating exportable agricultural products.

[At the same time a number of cutbacks were announced. These included eliminating subsidies of basic foods, a freeze on education budgets, and reduced public works. Unrestricted support was reaffirmed, however, for defense-related needs and health care.

[Currency modifications were proposed aimed at boosting domestic production in order to conserve hard currency for importing absolutely essential goods.

[In presenting the proposals, Commander of the Revolution Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua, stated, "This year, our first task is to militarily defend the Revolution. As such, we must guarantee the conscription of combatants into the new Irregular Warfare Battalions to fight the mercenary forces.

[*"We must guarantee clothing, boots, food, medicines, and transportation for the people's soldiers. And if this means more restrictions and more sacrifices for the working people actively serving in the rearguard, we should be prepared to assume them."*]

* * *

Compañeros:

In the revolution lies the future of independence, of dignity, as Sandino once said and

then confirmed through his struggle against U.S. intervention. You are the continuators of Nicaragua's Army to Defend National Sovereignty.

You are not just the producers of commodities or articles that are sold in the market. You are also defenders of our sovereignty, of that sentiment of independence that our forebears bequeathed us and gave us the responsibility for upholding and deepening.

Yesterday we were speaking about the international policy of the United States regarding Nicaragua in particular. We described what the policy of the United States was toward Nicaragua and we are not going to dwell on it again, because all the agreements and resolutions that the *compañeros* read are closely related to our principles and our revolutionary process.

We are going to read certain concerns that the president of the United States has about Central America, since in fact we are confronting the mightiest power in the world. At any moment it can not only intervene, but also smash us to bits.

This power controls and dominates the strategic weapons of destruction. But although it maintains and controls those weapons, although it has the political and military desire to destroy us — and not just the Sandinista People's Revolution but other revolutions as well — the international situation does not permit that power to do so.

Other very important political forces have arisen. Although they do not have the atomic bomb or strategic nuclear arms, they do have the moral authority and the necessary support that has been able to prevent the United States from using its militarist policy, and that is what's important.

And do you know what other very important thing has succeeded in preventing the use of that type of weapon? It is you, the laboring *compañeros*, the workers. It is you who approve these kinds of very important resolutions. And in addition to being the key to the development of our economy, you are the key to the revolution.

The United States has not used those weapons because a revolution exists, called the Sandinista People's Revolution. That has also prevented aggression on a larger scale. But other revolutions will come, other great movements will come that are going to shake up the old systems, the economic systems that are not responsive to the peoples.

The coming revolutions — which I would say are not now at the point of triumph, but are in gestation — have a vast field for their stage, covering all the backward countries, the countries that want to escape from poverty, the countries where their peoples want to be able

to read the accumulated intellectual wealth of the world.

They want to read all the great poets that humanity has produced. They want to read Hegel, and even Marx and Lenin.

Those countries that are called the underdeveloped countries, that they call the Third World, have been exploited in the most inhuman way for long years.

That is why these revolutions of national liberation are inspired by the desire to overcome backwardness, poverty, underdevelopment. And that is why — note this well — they are certainly not in the political and economic interests of the United States.

That is why these revolutions of national liberation run up against the aggressive, interventionist, and exploitative policy of the United States. That is how revolutions are.

And it is a law that in these countries we will have to pay with sacrifices, we are going to encounter difficulties, as you stated in your discussions and resolutions. It is logical that a clash will take place between a great power that wants to maintain and hold other countries in exploitation and the countries that want to escape that exploitation.

We were saying yesterday that the present ruler of the United States, upon starting his second term as president, has focused his energies on campaigns against Nicaragua on all fronts, on a national as well as international level.

He is determined to achieve a consensus that will allow him to consolidate his policy so he can support the counterrevolution.

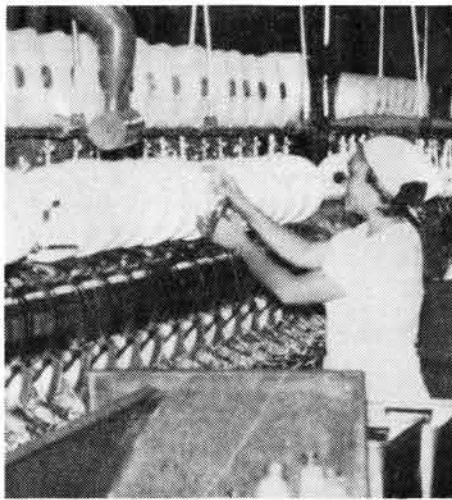
We are going to confront these situations, and we must know how to do so in a revolutionary way. We have to know how to face the foreign policy of the United States, not just as the Sandinista Front, not just as a revolutionary government. We have to face it as the working class, as peasants, as the social unity of all the laboring people.

The workers also have a great responsibility in the task of maintaining and consolidating this revolution, which is being successfully led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, its vanguard.

I do not think that, given your political and ideological positions you would call for the U.S. imperialists to come and direct our destiny. I believe that you think the opposite, and that is how it must be.

This assembly demonstrated the high degree of ideological consciousness that this revolution has reached in the midst of all the difficulties, in the midst of the complexities, in spite of the internal and external conflicts.

We could compare this assembly with the great assembly held on Sept. 27, 1864, when the first assembly of the international workers movement took place in Europe. The delegates to that assembly used their own economic resources to pay their way. So too, you are attending this assembly, paying your way with your own economic resources, without falling back on the finances of any other organization. That is a great success.



Arthur Hughes/IP

Texnicsa textile mill, Managua.

And all these successes must be the work of the working class; the working class must not go begging for anything from anybody. The working class must take full control of its assemblies. The working class knows and must be clear and conscious of the fact that it is represented in the revolutionary government.

The elections and the inauguration of the president of the republic, Commander Daniel Ortega, are simply the reflection of the interests of the working class. That is how it is and that is how it will be.

But when we call on the workers to follow the most correct, the most just path, we do so to further the interests of the workers, to benefit our children.

When we say that the working day should be productive, when we call for punctuality at work, we do this so that the interests of the workers are deepened, because that is the perspective, the aim, and the objective of the new society that we want to build.

We face difficult conditions, there is no doubt about that. For that reason we always appeal to the laboring population, to the workers, because when we began the armed struggle we always went to those who had nothing, and we appealed to them, as we are appealing to you today, because you are the ones who can understand this revolution.

It is you, the laborers, the workers of the countryside, the workers of the city. There is no other social force in the country capable of confronting the economic aggressions that we are suffering.

When some private producer — for reasons not having to do with production and as an individual, because the private sector as a whole is not affected — when some person as an individual is affected or has his property confiscated, immediately they accuse us internationally of being totalitarian. Immediately in the United States they activate all the propaganda. They line up and get together to say that in Nicaragua we have a doctrine of expansionism, a doctrine of arbitrary confiscations. But here that has never happened and you understand it better than anyone. You have re-

ceived explanations of what the revolution is about.

Never, at any time, have we thought in our political concepts or our economic strategy that the doctrine of the Sandinista revolution could become a medium of expansionism.

Sandinismo is a Latin American doctrine — that is true — that has ideological and political content. But we cannot hold that back, just as we cannot hold back the ideas of Jefferson, Washington, or Lincoln, or just as we also cannot hold back the ideas of Martí, Bolívar, Morazán, Darío. So too we cannot hold back the ideas of Sandino.

It is not our fault that his ideas have spread in this century and that today the imperialists use them to attack and criticize us, saying that we are expanding in Central America and destabilizing democracies. That is the U.S. government's political error.

I accept and I assimilate the ideas of Jefferson and Lincoln. And I say that they are profound ideas, revolutionary ideas, ideas of revolutionary construction. I am not ashamed of those ideas. I assimilate them because they are great ideas and those men helped forge the destiny of humanity.

Sandino also helped to do that. But they do not hold Sandino in high esteem. They have abandoned and forgotten Sandino. *That is why the Sandinista National Liberation Front redeemed the ideas of Sandino. But it does not project them as expansionism. It projects them ideologically and politically. It projects them within the culture of Latin America because in reality Sandino was a Latin Americanist.*

That is why when more than 800 workers' leaders meet in this assembly, I think we are advancing in consolidating the revolution, because you are the ones who have to maintain and project this revolution; you are the great promoters of this revolution.

There are those who say that you are simple workers. But in reality, that is not how it is, because you are men who have acquired a political education. I can assure you that any high-ranking figure from Western Europe who turned up among you would find you to be astute students of politics.

We are going to comment on some recent views expressed by the president and vice-president of the United States. You surely know about them already, but it is important to interpret them. It is important to interpret phenomena in order to change them, and everything you are proposing in your resolutions signifies change.

Listen to what the vice-president of the United States said: "Our hemisphere," he says, "must be the hemisphere of the human spirit, of democracy; that means that we must continue supporting those in Nicaragua who are fighting against the Communist Sandinistas. We have to continue that effort."

I am reading these statements to you because your resolutions condemn the aggression.

Further on he said: "The world is beginning to understand that the Sandinistas have be-

trayed their own revolution and that the so-called 'contras' are the true defenders of justice and democracy, and it is absolutely essential that we not abandon the 'contras' at this point in their history."

I comment on this because over there they are pressing for approval of \$14 million and maybe a bit more, which is related to the resolutions of this assembly and to what Commander and Minister of Agricultural Development Jaime Wheelock communicated to you yesterday.

The vice-president of the United States did not explain how he will continue aiding the "contras," but he said they must be aided. So we will have to face a difficult situation in 1985. Whether or not the U.S. Congress approves the amount and the volume of funding, the president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, says they are looking for new mechanisms through which to fund the anti-Sandinista groups, according to reports on National Public Radio today in Washington.

That means that if the measure does not go through in Congress, they will look for other sources of funding. It means that we will continue facing, for at least four more years, a policy of intervention, a policy of aggression.

Therefore, as a workers movement, we must be attuned to what U.S. foreign policy is saying about us and adjust our demands accordingly.

What we have to defend is our project. From now on that means that the resolutions we have approved today must be carried out, and not a month from now or longer. They must be carried out immediately, from the time we leave this room. They must be carried out now because the battle against imperialism is not just taking place on the military plane, but also on the economic plane. As one *compañero* was saying, the *compañeros* who are removed from their work centers to take part in military defense must be made up for by those who remain at that same work center. That means production and productivity must be increased in line with that center's conditions and labor needs. That is called being revolutionary. That is called observing and carrying out this assembly's resolutions.

We have consistently told you on countless occasions that it is necessary to provide continuity to the agreements arrived at, so that in the next assembly we can see what mistakes and errors have been made and what advances have been made and what is new that we can project into the future.

Those ten resolutions will have to be enriched, and perhaps others will have to be incorporated into the final document through your contributions.

Given the situation that we are living through, that the forces of U.S. imperialism have imposed upon us, the Nicaraguan working class and the laboring people have to focus all their activity, all their actions on saving energy, on increasing productivity and boosting export products, on planting coffee, cotton, sugar cane, on confronting the costs of

production.

This means that the laboring people, the workers, in keeping with the ideological and political level, will have to make a great effort to lower the costs of production in those areas in which we are capable of investing all our resources and savings.

That is the only way we will be able to compete with the international prices of other countries, both in volume and in price. If we succeed in lowering the cost of producing sugar, which is sold at US\$0.04 per pound, we will have positive results.

If the cost to us of a pound of sugar were two and a half cents, and we sold it at the international price of four cents, we would really be transforming society, because we would be obtaining a profit that could be invested to benefit the popular sectors, or other sectors of the Area of People's Property [state enterprises] to develop them.

So our effort is to lower costs in order to be able to obtain the necessary profits. But we are not a country that can set the prices for the goods we export or for those we need to buy. We are a country on whom they impose prices.

We would like it if the price of sugar on the international market were ten cents per pound or more. But Nicaragua still does not decide costs and prices.

But we can lower costs so that they are in line with international prices, and we can have some surplus to be able to say with full assurance that the development of the country is going forward at the price of sacrifice and work.

In order for the policy of economizing to function on all levels — in industry, in agricul-

ture, in the home, the office, the neighborhoods, in the face of the aggression against us — we have to unite our efforts in defense of the homeland of Sandino and [Carlos] Fonseca.

We have to measure the economic efficiency achieved in production in the state, private, and cooperative sectors against costs and earnings, productivity and profit.

Our enterprises have an important and effective role. They are enterprises and work centers that have to achieve profitability for two reasons: first, because they must be self-financing; second, because the surplus must be reinvested in social works.

Therefore the new society requires the sacrifice, the participation, and the performance of all of you, because the surplus is not only reinvested in the enterprise, but also in society as a whole.

We are not building a country for the benefit of a single individual sector. We are building a new society in which one enterprise is related to another, one sector is related to another to be able to carry forward the economic development of society.

So in spite of our limitations, our products must maintain a level of quality, and that quality must be equal to the competition in the international market.

I think that in Nicaragua the workers are as capable as the workers in France or the United States, although those workers have a higher technical and scientific level. We can produce quality articles. We can compete in the international market with our products.

But for that to happen we need to save in material consumption, we need to optimize the

Help us cover the Nicaraguan revolution

In this issue of *Intercontinental Press*, we are featuring two documents from a trade union assembly held in Managua, Nicaragua, in late January, including a speech by Commander of the Revolution Víctor Tirado.

Documents like this are a regular feature in *IP*, provided by our reporting bureau in Managua. Documents that give our readers valuable information on the unfolding revolution in Nicaragua and present the views of the Sandinista leaders — views that are often either ignored or distorted in the big-business news media. Many of these documents are unavailable anywhere else in English.

In addition, our Managua bureau provides regular first-hand reporting on the course of the Nicaraguan revolution and on Washington's criminal war against the Nicaraguan people.

IP has maintained this full-time bureau in Managua since shortly after the Sandinistas overturned the Somoza dictatorship in July 1979. It is the only English-lan-

guage magazine that has done so. In addition, the bureau serves as a reporting source for the U.S. socialist newsweekly *Militant* and for the U.S. Spanish-language fortnightly *Perspectiva Mundial*.

But it costs money to provide the kind of coverage of the Nicaraguan revolution that *IP* readers have come to expect. While some articles are mailed to us, for the more fast-breaking developments we cannot count on such a slow and unreliable means of communication. But articles phoned into New York from Managua are expensive. Travel costs also continue to mount.

And even without the added expenses of maintaining the Managua bureau, the fact is that the income we receive from subscriptions and bookstore sales does not cover the costs of putting out *IP*.

We are thus appealing to you, the readers of *IP*, to help us continue this kind of coverage, with financial contributions. Please send whatever you can afford. Mail it to: *Intercontinental Press*, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014, USA.

utilization of financial and material resources, we need to lower costs to compete at home and abroad.

The goal is for the unprofitable enterprises to become profitable and for the profitable ones to increase their profitability.

The establishment of wage rates tied to efficiency and quality, the good use of raw materials is called revolution. It means transforming society, which is called economic development, because it is true that we have few resources and are being attacked, being threatened, and we are devoting great resources to military defense.

But there are still resources available, limited though they may be, which we must use in the most efficient and rational manner.

We must use those resources for the revolutionary transformation of society, in which military defense plays an important role.

Our revolution has very particular characteristics. It does not look just like the victories that other people have won in their struggles against dictatorships, against tyrannies, to build a new society. There are things in common. We see things that are similar.

But what the Sandinista People's Revolution has contributed, what it has added to the accumulated political culture is so great that we should feel satisfied and dignified, because in the world they really respect us.

That is the greatest gain we have achieved, and it should make us feel satisfied. No Central American country has been able to achieve this great work. All submit to the same empire, and they convince themselves that the empire is going to solve their socio-economic problem for them.

We were dominated by the empire for a long time and no problems were ever solved.

We are in the process of solving problems; that is the great advantage of economic and political independence from the great empire, which has felt threatened because it is losing influence and losing ground.

Latin America is going to be democratized. We are going to travel a path that is different from the one that the United States traced out for us in the early years of this century.

Whether or not revolutions take place, the contradictions between the democratic governments of Latin America and imperialism will deepen. And that is a great step forward; it is a great project. And it is one of the great means by which Latin America, as Darío and Martí said, will return to us, and they will see that Latin America belongs to Latin Americans. If we want to have a really independent country made to our own specifications, we must interpret the present situation with the concepts, ideas, and contents I just spoke about.

In spite of the poverty, the great difficulties, the high prices, the costs of basic necessities, we always call on the working class and the laboring population because they are the ones who understand the problem.

When we commit ourselves to struggle

against the internal enemy called the speculator, we have to face up to that great battle because it is a social task, a challenge for the working-class sector, a goal for the peasant sector.

It is work led and carried out by the Sandinista National Liberation Front and, in the first instance, by the revolutionary government

that was just inaugurated a few days ago.

Future complaints and objections should not be made simply to criticize or point out the errors of one institution or of the government itself. Rather they should be concepts you feel involved in. Therefore, just as we make criticisms, so too should we be self-critical.

Free homeland or death!

Motions of Nicaraguan unions on defense and the economy

The unswerving course of U.S. policy — its eagerness to destroy the Sandinista People's Revolution and to try to regain U.S. hegemony in the area — is a dangerous destabilizing element that is a grave threat to world peace.

For the Nicaraguan trade union movement, and especially for our industrial working class, this situation poses the need to mobilize the organized workers around the principal tasks that can guarantee the consolidation and deepening of people's power and the inevitable defeat of imperialist aims.

In this regard, the resolutions and fundamental tasks formulated by our union movement at the Third National Assembly of Unions—Enrique Lorente remain valid, and we support the drastic changes in economic policy to defend and deepen our revolutionary process.

Economic production becomes the rear guard of the war fronts, and that is why we must make all the nation's resources available for the war. This requires of the workers a greater discipline, a greater spirit of sacrifice, and a greater willingness to struggle than we needed in overthrowing the Somozaist dictatorship.

Productive efforts must be utilized in such a way that we increase production and raise productivity to the maximum level of capacity, thereby making it possible to obtain more products to meet the needs of the people and gradually improve their living standards.

Specifically we can summarize the commitment we make to our people in 1985 as follows:

1. Fight imperialism by wiping out the counterrevolutionary bands.
2. Begin to wipe out the sources that generate speculation and nonproductive jobs.
3. Raise production and productivity.

To fulfill these objectives we will drive ahead on the following tasks:

I. Broaden and deepen the mobilization of the workers around the defense of the homeland

To accomplish this task, we must better prepare and organize ourselves to defeat both the CIA-run mercenary war we presently face, and a possible direct military intervention by the U.S. Army.

Wiping out the mercenary bands is an urgent

requirement to bring peace and tranquility to the zones directly affected by the war, to normalize productive activity in those places, and to halt the enormous economic drain and the deterioration in the people's living standards as a result of the presence of the mercenaries in our country.

The massive organization and combat preparedness of the workers is the main element that may persuade the Reagan administration not to go forward with its intentions to intervene. That organization and preparedness is also the guarantee and safeguard of our sovereignty, right to self-determination, and national independence.

That is why we, the workers, reaffirm our commitment to give decisive support to the Patriotic Military Service. We will do this through the mobilization of those *compañeros* within our ranks who are called up, and by contributing to the conscious fulfillment of this duty by those who work in other spheres of economic activity or who have not yet entered active economic life, for example the student *compañeros*.

In this regard, in order that production not be affected; we will work to prepare substitute cadres for those who are mobilized. Together with the directors of the enterprises, we will fight against the various forms of evading the fulfillment of this patriotic duty.

In carrying out this task, we will pay special attention to explaining things to young people and their families and to widely circulating and explaining the Law of Patriotic Military Service.

At the same time, we will provide moral and material support to the mobilized draft registrants and their families, through joint work with the National Commission to Aid the Soldiers.

In addition, in the military sphere, we commit ourselves to strengthening the combat reserve units and militia units. In line with the requirements of the Sandinista People's Army, these units are being expanded or set up in order to successfully develop a people's war of active resistance in the event a Yankee intervention takes place.

This mobilization in the military arena will be accompanied by whatever updating and improvement is needed in the combat preparedness of the militia members and in the civil de-

fense plans aimed at safeguarding the physical being of the workers and the material base of the work centers.

We will hold a broad discussion in the ranks on the need to work beyond the regular working day in order to free up more worker compañeros to crush the [counterrevolutionary] bands and at the same time insure that the quantity and quality of production is maintained.

II. Produce with maximum economizing and efficiency

A war economy like the one in which we currently function demands a strict rationalization of human and material resources. In particular it demands an iron discipline, heightened patriotic consciousness, and an extra effort by all workers.

The fundamental and primary link in the chain that must be set right is the link of production. Production is the indispensable and decisive peg on which the defense of the homeland rests. Due to the effects of the war itself, production is absolutely dependent upon a policy of maximum economizing and efficiency.

We believe that in the present year we can accomplish these requirements by:

1. Planning and organizing the mobilization of the labor force to accomplish the fundamental task of bringing in the coffee, cotton, and sugar harvests. This must be started early enough so we can avoid having to improvise. It involves effective coordination between union organizations and the national center of the harvest, with the unions providing statistics so we know what forces are available.

2. Having the unions encourage women to become more integrated into production and participate in the unions, as a way of dealing with the need for workers in production and to replace those mobilized.

3. Tying wages to production, since wages become a valuable means of increasing the workers' living standards when coupled with increased and improved production of material

goods and services.

4. Completing the application of the National System for Ordering Wages and Work along with *establishing job classifications*. This will be a task to be carried out as a general policy. The results must be reflected first of all in once again reaching the levels of productivity achieved in the past, in order to then rise to the levels of productivity that a war economy urgently needs.

We are in favor of strict control over the application of the National System for Ordering Wages and Work in its entirety.

5. *Maintaining emulation* as an important mechanism leading to improved labor discipline, efficiency at work, and consistent guidelines on conservation, austerity, and rationalization of resources.

Emulation will have to be applied in all work centers, especially in the APP [Area of People's Property — state-owned enterprises].

6. *Spreading the Innovators' Movement*¹ in factories and enterprises and making it more dynamic and energetic. We must encourage the interchange of experiences and results among the innovators, with a view toward strengthening the policy of conservation and efficiency and confronting the problems stemming from backwardness and technological dependency.

7. Immediately solving the problems of correct utilization and maintenance of the new machinery that exists in the country through training and raising the consciousness of the personnel who operate and repair it. The country's technical institutes should be involved in this process.

Likewise we demand that all machinery not in use due to lack of parts be rehabilitated

1. The Innovators' Movement attempts to draw on the accumulated experience and creativity of Nicaraguan workers to overcome production problems flowing from breakdowns in machinery and lack of spare parts. Workers improvise parts to replace those that would otherwise have to be imported.

through the joint effort of the innovators, workers, technicians, and professionals.

8. *Having union locals actively and energetically participate in running the enterprises*. The executive boards and union ranks as a whole should work closely with the administration both in drawing up and in carrying out production plans. Enterprise committees and production councils should be strengthened.

The union local should be the main element of control and, at the same time, should guarantee the fulfillment of production goals. All workers should be broadly informed about all aspects of the goals.

9. *Having the unions involved in the productive branches of the economy constantly monitors production and maintains free-flowing communication so that inputs and raw materials can be properly and efficiently distributed throughout the entire chain of production*.

This means, for example, developing links that start with the customs workers unions and continue through the workers in the warehouses, transportation, marketing, primary transformation of the product, etc.

In this process, the unions should apply their initiative and revolutionary consciousness, using all means at their disposal: direct union-to-union contact, telephone calls, radio, the printed media.

10. Urging the various state leadership bodies to energetically fight against bureaucratism, lack of planning, negligence, underutilization of resources, and a whole series of other factors stemming from the lack of an effective, coherent, meshing of the chain of production. We will actively support the application of these measures.

11. Demanding that the mass media put into practice an information policy that provides orientation on how to effectively apply the measures of the revolution's economic policy, that extolls work in production and in fundamental services, and that gives examples of labor heroism and vanguard activities in the Innovators' Movement and in the fulfillment and overfulfillment of goals.

III. The basis of the wage policy for 1985: Tie wages to production and fight against hoarders and speculators until prices are controlled

This element, combined with tying wages to production, will be the central focus of our wage policy for 1985.

That is because hoarding and speculation as a system mercilessly exhaust the workers' wages.

Therefore, this struggle that we will begin in 1985 must be a first firm step by the working class toward effective control of prices, enabling us to stabilize prices in a relatively short period and establish harmony between prices and wages.

For this to happen we workers must achieve an efficient distribution through secure chan-

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nels,² putting an end to the anarchic distribution that makes it possible for the black market and the shortages to exist.

This requires strengthening the distribution channels:

The food outlets and the territorial network, which we will push forward through contracts with the Ministry of Internal Commerce (MICOIN), and strengthening the work of the union locals in order to encourage union and family vegetable gardens, so that products get to the wage workers in accordance with priorities reflecting the limitations in supply. First priority should go to workers producing material goods and providing fundamental services.

Likewise, we must send a warning to those who form part of the system of speculation, at the same time inviting them to get involved in productive work as an alternative.

The suspension of subsidies is a necessary element in procuring a more just redistribution of national income to the benefit of the workers. The way subsidies are currently applied benefits the speculators.

By suspending the subsidies, the state could make this income available to specifically benefit workers in various ways.

One way is by revising the rates of the National Wage Scale. We have proposed to the government that wages be readjusted to keep up with inflation and to keep up with the price increases when subsidies are suspended.

This wage increase should be in line with the price increases in the people's basic market-basket and should benefit all wage workers in the country, prioritizing productive workers in the countryside and cities and workers in some basic services.

However, we view *labor productivity and the fight against speculation* as fundamental.

We are in favor of discussing with the state a revision of retirement pay and pensions, prioritizing widows and orphans of those who have fallen in defense of the homeland.

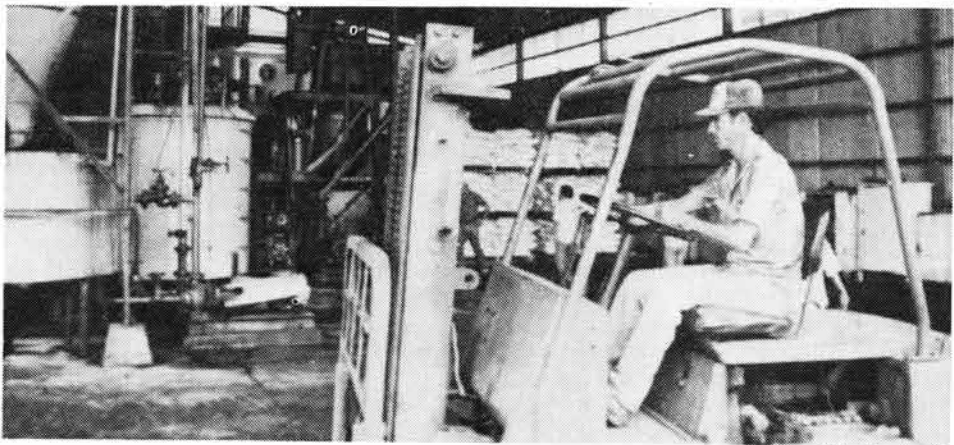
We will fight the distortion in wages caused by payment in kind or free delivery of products to workers. Instead there should be wage incentives linked to raising production and the productivity of labor.

IV. Unity of the workers movement

The Fourth National Assembly of Unions favors a rapid development of the unity of the workers movement, which would make it possible to have a single leadership and orientation in our efforts to defeat our people's enemies and overcome the economic difficulties, as a basis for building a new society.

In this regard, we support steps leading to strengthening a single union leadership, taking off from the experiences of the national assemblies of unions, assemblies of unions by

2. Secure channels are retail outlets under strict government control, although not usually owned by the government. They include workplace commissariats; the "territorial network," largely composed of traditional neighborhood grocery stores; and rural supply outlets.



Michael Baumann/IP

Benjamín Zeledon sugar mill near Rivas.

industry, which have been the result of discussions from the rank and file, and regional assemblies that we have been holding. This work will deepen the democratization of the workers movement.

We will fight against bureaucratic styles of work through concrete plans to solve the main problems we face:

a. Decreases in the length of the working day.

b. Low productivity.

c. Lack of effective links between some leaders and the ranks.

d. Lack of creative initiative by the workers to solve the many problems of production.

The solution to these problems will in turn lead to greater unity of the workers movement.

V. Contribute to the defeat of imperialist policy in the international arena

We must, necessarily, merge our internal tasks, which are aimed at guaranteeing the consolidation and deepening of the revolutionary process, with a factor that has been very important in our struggle for peace and the right to self-determination: international solidarity.

Therefore, the union movement should contribute in an increasingly vigorous way to defeating imperialist intentions. In this context, we support the negotiations and peace initiatives put forward by the revolutionary government and those developed by the Contadora Group.

In line with this, we must call upon all union federations, unions, and friendly organizations that are in solidarity with our revolutionary process to come out against approval of the funds that Reagan is requesting to finance the counterrevolution; and to maintain permanent campaigns opposing all the attacks, and in particular the invasion plan that imperialism has been cooking up.

Likewise, we must urge that these campaigns include the demand that the United States return to the negotiating table with Nicaragua, this dialogue being one way to seek peace in the Central American region.

For our part, we will make every effort

aimed at forming a common front of Central American workers and governments, regardless of political and ideological tendencies, with the aim of defeating the Reagan administration's policy of aggression against Central America and achieving an effective peace and coexistence among our countries.

In the same way, we should develop a world campaign to force the U.S. government to respect international law and particularly the jurisdiction of the World Court at The Hague and the decision this court made concerning the suit brought by the the revolutionary government of Nicaragua. Such a campaign should support fair compensation to our people for the damages caused.

To fulfill this task, we will continue to apply the resolutions of the International Union Gathering held in Managua in April 1984.

These perspectives taken as a unit must make up the basic focus of our union movement's activities in defense of the homeland, in the struggle for the demands of the workers, and in building a new society.

In order to be able to fulfill these tasks, the union locals will receive all the necessary tools and training that are required. To that end we will continue to push forward adult education and economic education through our union education system, which includes the national, regional, and shopfloor schools, and workers' study circles.

We in the local union assemblies and the various levels of leadership will be the ones who make sure that the present lines are carried out correctly and efficiently. This will make it possible to advance in the consolidation of the Sandinista People's Revolution.

The revolutionary process has placed this great challenge before the workers movement of our country. Yesterday we won power so we could exercise it for the benefit of the working people. And today, basing ourselves on the working people and as the fundamental nucleus of the working people, under the wise leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, we will fulfill our duty to the homeland.

Managua, Free Nicaragua, Jan. 27, 1985

'Latin America is a powder keg'

Fidel Castro discusses U.S. intervention, debt crisis

[The following is a major excerpt from a February 13 interview given by Cuban President Fidel Castro to representatives of the Spanish news agency EFE. The text is taken from the March 3 issue of the English-language *Granma Weekly Review*.

[In the sections we have omitted for reasons of space, Castro discussed Cuba's relations with Spain, focusing on trade relations and protectionism and Spain's membership in the imperialist North Atlantic Treaty Organization; recent progress in relations with the United States; the question of Castro's role in the leadership of the Cuban revolution; and the status of political prisoners in Cuba.]

* * *

Ricardo Utrilla. To turn to Latin America, what do you think at present of the possibility of a direct U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and what would be Cuba's attitude in that event?

Fidel Castro. Unfortunately, the possibility of a U.S. intervention in Nicaragua exists.

Now, as we have said in our conversations with the Americans and the legislators, it seems inconceivable to us that the United States should commit such an error. I'll tell you why. Setting aside the fact that it constitutes a violation of the norms of international law, which beyond everything it would clearly be, I don't think that that would be a persuasive element for someone with an imperialist mentality who considers invading any small country its right.

But, firstly, I have said that from a practical standpoint it's senseless to invade a country to solve problems which can be solved perfectly well through political and peaceful means, through negotiation, because I think that possible solutions for Central America do exist, solutions which satisfy the interests of Nicaragua, of the Central American countries, and of the United States itself.

Secondly, because Nicaragua is a country of the Latin American family. I think that the experience of the Malvinas is sufficiently recent, the terrible reaction that the Malvinas War wrought in Latin America and how, despite the fact that the Argentine government was an indefensible, completely isolated, and discredited government, the Latin American nations unhesitatingly supported Argentina, that is, they supported the Argentine people. They supported the Argentine nation in its war against the British and there was a deep sense of solidarity.

These are new times; we are no longer living in the '20s or in the beginning of this century when the United States would intervene in Santo Domingo, in Haiti, in Cuba, in Central America, or in Nicaragua without any great protest. In those days they would intervene, not out of fear of communism — this is new, a new variety of pretext — or fear of revolutions.

When there was no Cuban Revolution, no Russian Revolution, in those times the pretexts were different: sometimes a five-million-dollar debt that wasn't paid would cause a U.S. military intervention in Haiti, or in Santo Domingo, or in Nicaragua. There would be intervention over debts, no respect of any kind, and often in the countries of Central America and the Caribbean.

Now, there are the mass media, greater education and awareness on the part of our peoples of their rights, their independence and their prerogatives. At that time there was no United Nations, nor was there the Organization of American States, which the United States later took charge of creating, discrediting, and destroying, all in one go.

An intervention in Nicaragua would cause a commotion in Latin America and, moreover, I would say a special, exceptionally critical situation in the economic and social order. Graphically speaking, we say that to intervene in Nicaragua is to play with fire beside a powder keg, because, in my opinion, the political and social situation of Latin Amer-

ica can be described as a powder keg. It would really be a great folly on the part of the United States.

Thirdly, in order to intervene in Nicaragua, they would have to commit genocide and kill tens of thousands of men, women, and children in Nicaragua. Perhaps they would have to kill hundreds of thousands of people in full view of international opinion, in full view of the mass media, television, film. No matter how many measures they might take, they wouldn't be able to hide the magnitude of the genocide they would have to commit there with the use of their warships, bombers, tanks, and troops to kill Nicaraguans, that is, to kill Latin Americans, members of a same family.

And lastly, it would involve an elevated cost of U.S. lives and becoming bogged down in a fight against the Nicaraguan people that would be interminable. The Nicaraguans are a militant, patriotic, brave people. Solving the problem of disarming every Nicaraguan patriot is not going to be so easy. Moreover, there was the experience in Sandino's times when a handful of men resisted a U.S. invasion for many years.

There really doesn't exist the technology to counteract and conquer popular resistance. This has been shown everywhere. Look at the example of Vietnam, the problem of the Sahara, the Sahara you Spaniards handed over to the king of Morocco, perhaps thinking in Ceuta and Melilla, as if the king would never begin to reclaim them also someday.

Among Spain's errors, in my opinion — and I say this in all honesty — among the moral deeds about which Spain cannot be proud, is having handed over the Western Sahara to Morocco. After being there hundreds of years, in the end the Spanish shamefully withdrew from that desert inhabited by the Saharawis, who are as Saharawi as we are Cuban and, moreover, speak Spanish. It was handed over to the king of Morocco who wanted to control the phosphate mines and the marine riches that comprise the basic resources of that heroic people.

There are 200,000 Moroccan soldiers there and they are impotent in

There is no technology capable of smashing movements of popular resistance . . .

their drive to seize that desert country void of forests, jungles, or great mountains. They are impotent and helped by the United States, with advice from the United States, with sophisticated devices, radar that can detect a man's every movement. Nevertheless, they are impotent and, in the long run, condemned to defeat.

The Saharawis are no longer isolated; they are recognized by the majority of OAU [Organization of African Unity] member states and that is a good example.

For five years the Salvadorans have been fighting against an army advised by the United States, an army with many planes and helicopters, conducting many reconnaissance missions, and outfitted with a great deal of sophisticated equipment. They have demonstrated their capacity to adapt to U.S. strategy and technology and also to the abundant military and economic resources which the United States gives to the Salvadoran army.

There are many examples in the world and they are not new. The case of Cuba itself; if you review the history of Cuba, it was a handful of men who waged war for ten years against 300,000 Spanish soldiers and only in the central and eastern parts of the island. We were the Vietnam of the last century.

It's been shown that there is no technology capable of smashing movements of popular resistance, of people motivated by patriotic and

revolutionary ideas. It is going to be useless. The political and human price they will have to pay is so high that, as I've told the Americans, a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua seems inconceivable to me.

In the face of the United States' military might, its numerous aircraft carriers, its complete air and sea dominion of the area, the Nicaraguans would be virtually unable to receive any help. All that would be necessary would be for the United States to set up a rigorous air and sea blockade with the military resources it has and no one else has. Cuba simply does not have the means to break such a blockade. In other words, in terms of practicality, it's impossible for us to give them any kind of support in the military terrain under such circumstances.

Our own armed forces are of a defensive nature. Our forces are strong on the defense of the country. Our forces are strong and based on the people, on millions of organized people, all the people organized everywhere, on every square meter of land, in the cities and towns, in the countryside, in the mountains, and on the plains. In other words, they are very strong for fighting a similar kind of war, a popular war against an invasion.

Our air and sea means are limited and made up of means which are completely defensive in character. We know how to employ them in conjunction with land forces that are indeed powerful in the event of an invasion of the country, but we do not have air and sea means to counter a U.S. blockade. If they blockade us, we ourselves do not have the military means to counter such a blockade.

We have plans, programs, ways to resist and know what to do under such circumstances. We have developed all the plans for a blockade, for blockade with a war of attrition, for blockade with an invasion of the country and even occupation of the country. We have studied everything.

The Nicaraguans follow the same philosophy we do. They do not have offensive armed forces, nor would it make any sense for them to use theirs against any neighboring country. It would be to hand the United States on a silver platter a pretext to intervene in the country, to invade the country, to smash the country.

We revolutionaries have demonstrated that we are calm and rational, because we ourselves have U.S. troops and an illegal U.S. naval base on our territory. They have been there since the end of the wars about which I spoke earlier. A puppet government that they put there rented it for 100 years. No, not for 100 years. They rented it and didn't stipulate any limit. In this case the 100-year maximum is recognized by international law.

Utrilla. I think Cuba would be unable to do anything in material terms.

Castro. It is materially impossible. The United States knows this, everybody knows it, and everybody with military experience knows we have no option, that we can't, just as in the case of a blockade against Cuba, break the blockade; we could resist the blockade and resist aggression. The Nicaraguans are guided by the same principle; we are small countries in this area, where the United States has overwhelming superiority in conventional air and naval weapons, not to mention nuclear weapons.

I think this reflects the extent of our peoples' merit. This does not crush us, it does not discourage us, it does not intimidate us; we are ready to struggle. In such conditions we know that an attack on Cuba, for example, would ultimately be a defeat for the United States but one which would be very costly for us. It's the type of glory and victory we would not want, although we know what the result would be. They would need millions of soldiers to keep up an occupation of Cuba and they don't have them, nor would they ever be able to accomplish this unless they exterminated the entire country.

They can drop a few nuclear bombs and wipe us off the face of the earth, but that is not a defeat. History could never consider it a defeat when a people had resisted to the end and kept the flag flying high to the last. A defeat is when you surrender and lower your flag. Exterminating us would be a pyrrhic victory, if they could, and they can't with impunity, they just can't.

Our country can be exterminated but not defeated. That is our philoso-



José G. Pérez/IP

Castro speaking at January 11 inauguration of Victoria de Julio Sugar Mill in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega is at left.

ophy and the philosophy of the Nicaraguans and the Salvadorans. They won't surrender even if they send 10,000 million dollars in arms and economic help to the Salvadoran army.

Utrilla. Then what is the solution in Central America from the U.S. point of view? To permit the continued advance of the Sandinista Revolution?

Castro. From the U.S. point of view, they in fact want to destroy the Sandinista Revolution. They also tried to destroy the Cuban Revolution, the independence of North Vietnam, and the Revolution in South Vietnam, just as the French sought to keep their rule over Indochina and Algeria. France is one of the most advanced and powerful countries in Europe in the military field. Algeria is a country which was 85 percent illiterate, almost entirely desert, which has many desert areas, and the Algerian people resisted and won their independence. That is, there have been many wars to block the sovereignty of countries, the independence of countries, to block revolutionary processes, and in the end nothing was achieved.

Now the theory that Nicaragua is a risk for the United States, a threat to the United States, is a legend, a myth. In relation to a small country with a population of three million, among the poorest in Latin America, with a huge debt of thousands of millions of dollars, destroyed by the Somoza regime and earthquakes, it is an outright lie that it can threaten the security of the United States, a downright lie.

Utrilla. But as an example to be followed by countries in similar straits and . . .

Castro. Well, that's something else. They want to destroy the example, which is something else.

Utrilla. That happened with Cuba.

Castro. If the problem can only be solved by having a country renounce its sovereignty and ideas then there'll be no solution.

Utrilla. The thing is that the United States feels that the only way to express the ideas of a people is through Western-style democracy with free elections where political parties can function, where there is a preparatory electoral campaign, that is, the whole works.

Castro. But that's just what the Nicaraguans did. That is what they have done in the framework of the strictest rules of liberal, bourgeois, Western elections, however you want to call them. They did just that; they accepted. They were asked to move up the date for the elections

and they did, with direct balloting and the participation of all parties that wanted to. They even economically helped opposition parties that were organized.

But what has happened regarding the elections in Nicaragua? The United States knew the right would lose the elections and the Sandinistas would be clear winners, and right from the start they moved to sabotage them, with all kinds of excuses. They then demanded that the elections be delayed. The Sandinistas were faced with the problems of internal war, economic problems, and the elections. At the same time, they submitted themselves to this trial by fire, and passed.

They also knew they would win the elections. They were convinced that they had the support of the people, just as the United States was convinced that its parties, its pupils in Nicaragua, would lose the elections. It was the U.S. government that encouraged [Arturo] Cruz to pull out and sabotage the elections. They also tried to have the liberals, to have [Virgilio] Godoy, withdraw as well. We know this and we know the strategy which the U.S. followed: first tell Cruz to pull out, then pressure Godoy to do likewise and leave the Sandinistas on their own, to discredit and contest the elections.

The United States didn't dare accept the election challenge. Even though it talks so much about elections and its parties and candidates were allowed to run, they didn't dare accept. It wasn't the Nicaraguans who rejected elections of a traditional bourgeois-democratic nature which, as you know, are a farce in many countries.

Even the most expert publicity agencies in the United States are often contracted, along with image-building experts. Election campaigns are organized that cost hundreds of millions of dollars. They are sold just as Coca-Cola or Chesterfield, furniture or perfume, and other products of the consumer society are sold. This can very often be seen in Latin America.

The Sandinistas accepted the challenge of elections. It was the United States which turned down the challenge, trying to sabotage the elections so they could be called into question. But more than 1,000 observers and journalists there saw that the people turned out to the polls and did so enthusiastically.

More turned out to vote in Nicaragua than did in the last election in the United States. In the U.S. elections, the turnout was just over 50 percent, while in Nicaragua it was more than 70, between 70 and 80 percent. What's more, Daniel [Ortega] got more votes than Reagan, a higher percentage of the votes cast. He got more than 60, about 66 or 67 percent. If you add the votes of other parties who claim to be more leftist than the Sandinistas, those who voted for the revolutionary process constituted more than 70 percent of the people. I repeat, between 70 and 80 percent, which is more than in the United States.

What right is there to challenge the elections in Nicaragua? They accepted the challenge; it was the United States which did not accept the challenge of elections.

Now, what I am saying is that there is a solution. I believe and am absolutely convinced that a negotiated political solution is possible in Nicaragua, based on information from all the talks which have taken place, the views of all sides. I am absolutely convinced that a solution exists, which is what Contadora is trying to accomplish, in finding a solution in Central America. Who has opposed the solution and the formula pro-

Our country can be exterminated but not defeated . . .

posed by Contadora? Not Nicaragua, the United States.

The United States constantly claimed to support Contadora until the time came for the test, the moment of truth. The Contadora delegates drew up an Act that lays down difficult conditions and limitations for Nicaragua in many respects, but they accepted it. It was a brave decision. They accepted the Contadora Act, but the United States did not.

Why hasn't the Contadora Act been signed? Simply because the United States has rejected it, is trying to modify it, and mobilized its allied countries in the area to contest the Contadora Act. Those are the facts which are known to all.

What do I think? The United States still hopes to destroy the Nicara-

guan Revolution from within. Why? In the first place because of Nicaragua's economic problems that are caused by three factors: one, the problems facing all nations of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Dominican Republic has them, as you see, Panama and Uruguay have them, Peru has them, all countries have them, and they are problems arising from the international economic crisis and the low prices of their export commodities, to which the debt is an added problem.



Cuban militia women. "Our forces are strong and are based on millions of organized people."

Two, problems resulting from economic measures taken by the United States against Nicaragua. It has been deprived of its sugar quota — as was Cuba. It has been left with but a small portion of its quota, apart from other measures against the Nicaraguan economy, since the United States was Nicaragua's major market.

Three, the action of the counterrevolutionary bands, thousands of men organized, trained, and supplied by the CIA, who are completely given over to, whose main strategy is to affect the economy, affect the coffee harvest, destroy economic installations and transportation. That is, the main order given to the counterrevolutionary bands is to strike at the Nicaraguan economy. Of course, this has had its effect. It has affected coffee production by 30 to 35 percent, fish, timber, and staple legumes.

The United States thinks the Nicaraguans won't be able to hold out and that the combination of economic problems and armed counterrevolutionary bands will destroy the Sandinista Revolution from within. I don't think the United States is considering a direct invasion for the moment, that's my personal opinion. That danger will reappear when they realize that the Nicaraguan Revolution won't be destroyed from within, because, while production in Nicaragua may not be at 100 percent capacity, it is at 70 or 75 percent, and they are receiving help from abroad, from various Western countries, among them Spain, along with the help from the socialist countries.

As I said previously, those seven ships which the Pentagon talked about, claiming that they were taking weapons to Nicaragua, did not contain a single bullet. They actually contained essential merchandise, oil, food such as wheat and rice, construction material, chemical products, fertilizer which the Nicaraguans need and which — if well administered — will enable them, together with what they produce, to endure the economic crisis; and the bands on the other hand will never be able to defeat the Sandinista army.

Utrilla. Has Cuba given the Nicaraguans military aid, apart from the instructors?

Castro. In what sense?

Utrilla. With material or . . .

Castro. We have helped the Nicaraguans where we can, though of course not with troops. There are no troops there, not a single Cuban military unit. Nor do they need it. All we have are advisers, instructors, teachers, that kind of personnel.

Utrilla. How many?

Castro. I won't say the number because I don't have the right to say how many there are. I do say there is military cooperation, in the area I mentioned, because they have had to build a new army. They had no officers who had gone through academies. They had no instructors for their military schools. They had no professional cadres, because the officers who had gone to academies served Somoza. They had to build a new army, training hundreds of thousands of citizens in defense, so they needed teachers, instructors, and advisers, and we have provided them at the indispensable level.

Utrilla. So you wouldn't say sufficient, just indispensable.

Castro. Well, I think it is sufficient, but I shouldn't mention figures. Some time ago I gave approximate figures, but I don't plan to do so again. They are not really figures we should be talking about or publishing. We don't object if the Nicaraguans want to do so, but it doesn't seem right to me that we should be giving out information about the number of Cubans there.

There isn't just military cooperation. Our main form of cooperation is not military, it is civilian.

Recently, we opened a modern sugar mill, one of the most important factories in Central America, built in a brief period of time. We supplied about 65 percent of the equipment manufactured in Cuba, plus equipment we had purchased from the socialist countries, 80 percent and more of the components, the blueprint, the equipment, and also technicians, engineers, and construction workers who worked there along with Nicaraguan workers. When it was opened, we donated it to Nicaragua.

All our economic cooperation in Nicaragua has been in the form of a donation, except for the mill. When the mill came up, they asked for credit for its construction. At the time, their production was on the increase: the output of coffee and other items was growing. Then came the action of the bands, U.S. intervention, the hostility of the United States, and key lines of production began to be affected.

We took stock of the situation and said: well, they have economic problems, the best thing would be to cancel the debt. It seemed to be the most correct thing and in line with what we have been saying. Thus, Cuba decided to renounce the credit and cancel the debt on the construction of the mill. We have also helped them in the construction of roads, bridges, and other projects.

Utrilla. Then the debt for the mill was canceled?

Castro. Totally. Now we are in debt to them, because we still have to send a few hundred tons of components. Since the debt has been canceled, we have gone from creditors to debtors, because we must send those items. It has been canceled completely.

Utrilla. And the Salvadoran guerrillas, are you helping them in any way?

Castro. Let me continue with Nicaragua.

We have also given them important aid in the educational field, and public health is now one of our most important sectors of cooperation with Nicaragua. We have hundreds of doctors and health personnel working there. They are especially needed because war has its wounded; they need surgeons; there are surgeons of ours there along with other types of doctors. They in part care for the war wounded, but mostly the

Cuban doctors and health personnel care for the Nicaraguan people.

We cooperate in the field of agriculture and in sports. Our cooperation with Nicaragua is basically civilian. I said economic, but I meant to include education and health services, etc. We also train cadres. We have trained about 1,500 teachers; we have a training program for Nicaraguan teachers.

The bulk of our cooperation is civilian, but there is military cooperation. This is known about and we have said so. This seems very fair to us. Nobody has any right to contend it, least of all the United States which, in violation of international norms, is organizing, training, supplying, and directing mercenary bands against the people and government of Nicaragua. Can our right to give them relatively modest cooperation for defense be challenged?

However, the Nicaraguans bear the brunt of this struggle and effort, as shown by the fact that thousands of Nicaraguans have died as a result of the bands' attacks, the majority of them civilians: women, children. They attack a bus full of civilians, a truck, villages, and many more civilians than soldiers have been killed by the bands, about 4,000 people in all. The United States knows this, and this is only on the Sandinista side, because we must also take into account the Nicaraguans who have been led to their death on the side of the counterrevolutionary forces. About 8,000 or 9,000 people must have died in this dirty war organized

The United States won't seriously negotiate as long as it hopes to destroy the Sandinista Revolution . . .

by the United States.

My opinion, of course, is that although a solution exists, the United States won't seriously negotiate or support Contadora and its efforts, as long as it hopes to destroy the Sandinista Revolution from within. It is a tragedy but a fact. They hope to destroy the Revolution, which is why there are no serious negotiations. If the United States seriously wants to negotiate, there will undoubtedly be peaceful solutions in Central America which satisfy Nicaragua, the Central American peoples, and the United States.

Marisol Marín. Do you think the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran guerrillas pursue or hope to create in their respective countries a Cuban political and economic model?

Castro. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know the views of the Sandinistas and of the Salvadorans, though logically we have more contact with the former because it is an established government, while the Salvadorans are in their country and many of their top leaders have been in the country a long time, but we are also familiar with their views.

Nicaragua is a country with a much lower level of development than Cuba at the time of the triumph of the Revolution. Cuba had attained a certain level of industrial development. It had a larger working class, more agricultural workers — there were hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers, hundreds of thousands of industrial workers, a much more developed working class.

Nicaragua is a much more industrially and economically backward country than Cuba when the Revolution triumphed. In Nicaragua there is a lot of craft industry still, and many people who earn a living from petty trading. It doesn't have the same level of development as Cuba when our Revolution triumphed; conditions are different.

They know full well that their struggle is basically a struggle for independence, national liberation, and social progress; for implementing agrarian reform, educating the entire population, providing everyone with health care. Economic development is the top priority for the Nicaraguan government, not the construction of socialism.

Marín. Do you mean it is not a top priority or not their objective?

Castro. Actually, it's not their objective, it's not a short- or even medium-term objective. If you want you can add that it isn't their current objective. When I say current objective, I am thinking of a rela-

tively long period of time, as they see it.

I think the Nicaraguan plan — and I have no disagreements with it, neither theoretical nor practical, and I say that sincerely — is perfect, given the conditions in their country and in Central America. It is perfect.

I can go on a bit more regarding this question.

This doesn't mean that the Nicaraguans aren't revolutionary; they are revolutionary. It would be a mistake to think that they are mere reformists, mere patriots or democrats who don't want to transform their country in a social sense.

I think the Nicaraguans are revolutionary and I don't think they would renounce, just as no revolutionary would renounce, the objective of transforming their society and even building socialism when socialism is possible and it could become a possibility one day. I don't think they would renounce having their Revolution one day go as far as any other social revolution.

It seems to me, for example, that Felipe [González, prime minister of Spain] hasn't renounced the objectives of socialism in Spain, although Spain is a capitalist country and will continue to be one with a large number of both national and transnational firms.

Felipe talks about socialism and I suppose the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party plans to build socialism. At least that's what they said when the Party was formed. But, I ask, does Felipe plan to build socialism right away? There is a completely capitalist society in Spain, I don't think even the most ignorant expert on economic, social, and historical issues would dispute this, and it would be in a better objective position for socialist construction than Nicaragua.

Well, I don't think the Sandinistas will renounce their objective, on a long-term basis, of building socialism; but in the medium term they have no plans to establish a socialist regime in Nicaragua. Their organization is called the Sandinista National Liberation Front and not the Socialist Party.

That is why I told you, since you asked about priorities, that their priorities are a series of reforms in the structure, I think that agrarian reform is most important; of course, they also nationalized the holdings of the Somoza family, they did not nationalize the bourgeoisie's property because in Nicaragua there was virtually no bourgeoisie, only an embryonic bourgeoisie. Somoza was the one who owned many firms in Nicaragua, and they confiscated his holdings because they had been obtained through theft and, of course, they were not given to the transnationals or to private enterprise.

I don't think the Sandinistas can be criticized because they confiscated Somoza's property and didn't hand it over to U.S. or private firms. There is the oil refinery owned by a U.S. transnational. People from the United States and other countries, national and foreign firms have property, and there are no plans to nationalize them.

I said there were a series of structural changes and a program of economic and social development. That's what the Nicaraguans face and it must be understood. This is not a fairy tale or an invention, a disguise to fool anybody. Their method is real and we fully agree with it in theoretical and practical terms, because we feel it corresponds to the Nicaraguan reality.

Of course, if Cuba gives them financial and technical help for the construction of a sugar mill, they won't end up handing it over to a private company. But in many countries, among them Mexico, oil is state-owned, the petrochemical industry is state-owned, the iron and steel industry is state-owned. In Nicaragua the state controls foreign trade and financial resources. This has been done by various capitalist countries, although I understand that there are private banks in Nicaragua. But financial control is not held by the private banks; it is held by the state. Control of foreign trade is not held by private institutions; foreign trade is in the hands of the state. There are those kinds of measures.

They must develop the country, that is their program; developing the country, I imagine, by means of a program of agricultural, industrial, and energy development. Economic development of the country is the fundamental task, in which I think private enterprise will also have a role to play as much as possible.

They even planned to draft a law on foreign investment. There were sectors where they did not have the technology or financial resources so I suppose it will be necessary to use foreign resources and companies in

those cases; even in our case, if necessary, there may be situations in which foreign technology and investments are needed.

Development is the main objective of the country, since it is very difficult to have socialism without development. Of course, it will be development that does not benefit capitalism and will not be carried out with the supervision of landlords and capitalists. It will be development under the leadership of a revolutionary government which serves the people and not the landlords, oligarchs, or foreign companies, which is

The main order to the counterrevolutionary bands is to strike the Nicaraguan economy . . .

what we find all over the hemisphere.

I think this is very clear and I know very well that this is the program, the program of a mixed economy and political pluralism, yes of political pluralism with no fear.

Now they plan to draft a constitution. I can't say what kind of constitution it will be, they are working on it, but I think the constitution will reflect their program.

Marín. What about the Salvadorans?

Castro. I think the case of the Salvadorans is exactly the same. Of course, El Salvador may have a little more industrial development than Nicaragua, but I haven't heard the Salvadorans talk of socialism. What they want is to rid themselves of a genocidal regime and a system — everyone knows this — which has lasted a long time, in which an oligarchy, a small group of 30 or 40 families, owns the country. I think the Salvadorans have more or less the same plans as the Nicaraguans; in fact, I think other nations of Latin America once they reach liberation will not strive for socialism right away or in the mid-term.

I think the two basic problems for Latin America are, first, independence — independence is the first thing Latin America must obtain because it really isn't independent — and, second, development, together with structural changes, not only economic but also social development.

There are Latin American countries where the transnationals have made big investments and they have attained certain levels of production, but there has been no social development. Illiteracy still runs at 30 percent and, together with semiliteracy, makes for a figure as high as 80 percent, and sanitary conditions are terrible. Infant mortality is high, life expectancy low, the social problems are endless.

These are the two most urgent problems in Latin America. Of course, neither the oligarchs nor the military who have been at the service of foreign interests, the oligarchy or the United States, will fight for independence. The people are the ones who must fight for it.

I even think, although nobody can be a prophet, that other Latin American countries will, to a greater or lesser degree, adopt the Nicaraguan program. This program is real, that is, it is not an invention, a pretext or lie, it is no trick. They take it seriously and I think the challenge they have set themselves is admirable. Ah! Because they trust in the people, and, if they work well, they will always have the support of the people.

The secret of remaining in power is not to be found in constitutional mechanisms or electoral systems. In our system, which is different from that of Nicaragua, if the Revolution did not have the support of the people, power would be lost, because how are elections undertaken? The people themselves put forward the candidates at the grass roots, and those delegates from the circumscriptions are the ones who elect the municipal, provincial, and national bodies.

Remaining or not remaining in power does not depend on electoral mechanisms. It is a matter of holding onto the support of the people, and if you have that you can retain power with any mechanism. Without their support, you lose power, no matter what mechanism you have. That's a fact.

So they accepted. It is admirable, the first thing they accepted was the type of classical, traditional elections, like those in the United States and other Latin American countries, the rare times there have been elec-



Michael Baumann/IP

Construction vehicle in Rio Iyas, Nicaragua, one of 30 blown up by U.S.-backed counterrevolutionaries in an August 1982 raid.

tions, because the history of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua is not one of electoral processes; from the time of [William] Walker, the U.S. pirate who intervened in Central America in the mid-19th century, until now, it is not a history of elections, except for the case of Costa Rica. Don't look for it in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, or El Salvador.

Horrible things happened for 100 years and the United States never spoke of democracy there. The United States started talking about de-

Economic development is the top priority for the Nicaraguan government, not the construction of socialism . . .

mocracy when revolution broke out in Central America. Before it didn't say a word.

Marín. When you say that other Latin American countries are following or seem to be following the Nicaraguan plan, which countries are you referring to?

Castro. I am referring to future social changes in Latin America that will inevitably come. I am not referring to any country in particular, but rather to any country where it is truly the people who take power and not the oligarchs, the representatives of big capital, or the traditional army, although, in some cases, in two cases, the army has played a progressive role: Peru and Panama.

We can't generalize when we talk about the armies and, moreover, we still don't know what the armed forces' role will be in these changes. The role of the military in some places will be very reactionary, while in others it may be very progressive. There are two countries where the army has played a progressive role and they are Peru and Panama.

It was the National Guard in Panama, with [Gen. Omar] Torrijos, that led the struggle for demands related to the Canal, and Velasco Alvarado's military government [in Peru] implemented important progressive social and economic initiatives, including a fairly thorough-going agrarian reform.

Utrilla. Before going on to other broader topics related to Latin America, Commander, I'd like to press my previous question a bit: what kind of aid is Cuba providing the Salvadoran guerrillas?

Castro. I already replied to this when the question was put to me before. I do not wish to affirm or deny our aid. For the time being, they have and will have our political solidarity, our support in all spheres, in-

cluding the international one. In terms of aid in the form of arms, as I recently said, it is almost impossible for arms to reach the Salvadorans. A discussion of the topic is almost metaphysical.

Utrilla. Almost, Commander, it is almost impossible.

Castro. It is almost impossible; I can't say that it is completely impossible. I can say that it is practically impossible and also that the issue is almost metaphysical — I say almost because we're discussing a theoretical problem.

I will say that helping the Salvadorans cannot be at all questioned from a moral viewpoint, and, moreover, from the viewpoint of the strictest justice, because the Salvadorans began to fight against a regime that has practiced systematic genocide, that has murdered 50,000 people in the country. The Salvadorans are fighting for their survival. I think that their cause is just and the right to help a country, a movement, a people who are fighting and against genocide is not questionable.

On what moral principle can the United States talk about not supporting El Salvador, contest aid to El Salvador, if they organize, supply, and arm thousands of men to carry out a counterrevolution in Nicaragua?

In other words, helping the Salvadorans is not questionable in moral terms, in terms of principles. It's in terms of practicalities that I say there may be theoretical, moral, legal, if you will, discussion, but to do so in practice is very difficult.

I also said that this was not a basic issue. When we waged our struggle here in Cuba against an army like Batista's which had 70,000 armed men, we did so without foreign aid, with the weapons and ammunition we captured from Batista's troops.

The main supplier of the Salvadoran revolutionaries today, I can assure you, is the Pentagon, because a part of the weapons and the ammunition the Pentagon sends to El Salvador ends up in the hands of the revolutionaries. And that is a guaranteed supply. History has shown that it is perfectly possible. When I speak of the Salvadorans' capacity to resist indefinitely, I am talking about their capacity to fight under the worst conditions, conditions in which they do not receive even a single rifle or a single bullet from abroad.

They have adapted perfectly well to the difficult conditions of struggle in their country; they have been able to respond to all the tactics and strategies of the U.S.-advised Salvadoran army, and, moreover, they can survive indefinitely, without any foreign aid. I think that this is actually the important thing, not whether someone sends aid or not, but whether it is vital or not to receive it.

I've gone as far as to say that it is virtually impossible. I won't be totally negative about the possibilities, of course, but I think that what's basic in this regard is that they can resist and fight without foreign aid. I think that this is the point, the key issue, the one that matters. That is, can the Salvadorans continue the struggle without foreign aid? And I say: yes, they can continue the struggle indefinitely and resist without foreign aid.

Utrilla. In summary, then, as in the case of Cuba, there is no possible military solution for the United States in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Castro. Oh, no! There is no military solution in this matter. That is a

I don't think they would renounce having their revolution go as far as any other social revolution . . .

conclusion I can categorically state. On the other hand, there are political solutions that would be to the benefit of Nicaragua, the peoples of Central America, and the peoples of the Caribbean and, of course, the United States. That's the position I maintain.

So you've drawn correct conclusions.

Marín. Speaking now about Latin America, do you think that the process of democratization, of the recuperation of democracies in Latin America, can benefit Cuba in the sense of gradual reestablishment of re-

lations with countries with which until now you have not had relations or where they were broken? I am concretely referring to Brazil and Uruguay.

Castro. I think that that holds the least importance for us, that is, the issue of relations with countries which have begun a new stage is of least importance. The issues of Cuba's prestige or the moral problem of completely defeating the isolation is not essential. We do not subordinate the issue of relations with Cuba to our interest, rather we subordinate that issue to the interests of each one of those countries. I think that each one of those countries should do what it considers most appropriate to its interests, if it's in their interests to reestablish relations soon or if they prefer to wait.

We are not exerting any pressure in this regard, and we are letting them decide what they consider most suitable and do it at the most appropriate time. But we truly do not attribute any basic importance, to tell the truth, to the relations in and of themselves. There are more important things than this, from my point of view, such as the consolidation of these democratic processes, and I feel that everyone should help and

The right to help a people who are fighting for survival and against genocide is not questionable . . .

cooperate in this and not present difficulties.

I think that these democratic processes take on a strategic importance at this time and have a deep significance.

The U.S. administration may say that democracy is advancing, but what is advancing is the crisis of the U.S. system of domination in Latin America. This process signifies that military dictatorships are on the decline; that resorting to repression and force to maintain the system has failed; and that the murders, the sophisticated torture, the missing — things the United States taught the repressive forces, the army and the police in Latin America — that all these atrocious methods no longer serve to maintain the system. The crisis is so profound that the military has understood that these countries have become unmanageable.

Utrilla. Is the present case of Guatemala typical?

Castro. We can't say that it is typical. Guatemala's situation is different. It has serious economic, political, and social problems, yet it is different. It has conditions unlike those of the Southern Cone, they're not the same. Those countries have greater industrial and social development, greater development, shall we say, of the intellectual sectors and of the masses' political awareness and culture. The circumstances are different. Central America is poorer, more accustomed to the system of oligarchical families, military caudillos, interminable military dictatorships. It has had a political experience different from that of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay.

In other words, the military understand that the situation in those countries is unmanageable. They are withdrawing from government and transferring it to civilians after having totally failed in the leadership of the state and also after having ruined the countries to greater or lesser degrees. In Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay they ruined the countries to an extraordinary degree; in Brazil, they handed the country over to the transnationals so that they could go there and produce with cheap labor in the midst of tremendous poverty.

But I detect a certain difference between the policy followed by the Brazilian military and that followed by the Chileans, Argentines, and Uruguayans, who opened the doors wide to competition and wiped out national industry. The policy of the Brazilian military was different, but they all know that their countries have become unmanageable and they are handing over the power to civilians. That is, the crisis is so profound that they no longer consider themselves capable of ruling.

Marín. Although they are also going to be unmanageable for the civilians.

Castro. They've been handed a tragic legacy: in Argentina, a foreign



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FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador. "The main supplier of the Salvadoran revolutionaries today is the Pentagon."

debt of 45,000 million dollars; in Uruguay, 5,500 million; in Brazil, Tancredo [Neves] inherits a 104,000-million-dollar debt; that of Chile, where there will inevitably be changes, is now 22,000 million dollars. During the period of the Popular Unity government, the debt was 4,000 million, the price of copper was not so low, and the situation was becoming very difficult.

Of course, Allende's situation was compounded by being refused foreign credits. The United States adopted economic measures against his government. But now the civilians are receiving a tragic legacy. In Argentina, as in Uruguay and Brazil, there is huge, unmanageable inflation and extremely serious cumulative social problems.

A few days ago a journalist handed me an Argentine one-million-peso bill and said, "Do you know how much this was worth a few years ago?" I said, "Not exactly." He said, "Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Do you know how much it is worth now? Seventy-nine cents."

Perhaps the great success of these military governments is that they turned all the citizens into millionaires. Inflation makes the economy unmanageable. Living standards have considerably declined in all those countries. I estimate that in Argentina the standard of living has dropped by 65 percent in comparison with before the military's ascent to power; by 50 percent in Uruguay; and in Brazil, I don't know exactly, but it could be between 65 and 70, at least 70 percent, although I do not know precisely.

Utrilla. More than in Argentina.

Castro. No, possibly not, 70 percent or 65 in Argentina. In Brazil perhaps it has dropped by 70 percent, which is a conservative estimate;

it could have dropped even more although I do not know the exact figure.

These civilian governments come into power and are forced to take severe restrictive measures when the population's living standard is no longer base 100, but rather 65, 50, 70.

Now this huge debt will have to be paid back under the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund. The restrictions began in Mexico at base 100. The populations of the Southern Cone will not tolerate further restrictions; no more can be squeezed out of them.

We have very illustrative examples, such as the Dominican Republic. The Monetary Fund formula was imposed and they had to fill the streets with the army and police to kill scores of people and wound hundreds more when the first measures were taken. They changed the peso parity. It was equivalent to one dollar and they changed it to three pesos per dollar for the acquisition of a series of imported products, medications, and some others, but they didn't apply it to fuel and certain foodstuffs. Now comes the second phase, for they've already put the dollar at three pesos for all merchandise.

The Dominican people are a people who were under a constitutional regime, an elected government, with a relatively calm situation, and a virtual people's insurrection took place. When they applied the second phase of the measure, they had to send the army and the police to take over the streets of the cities in order to prevent protests. There is tremendous discontent.

Despite the fact that Panama's levels are not low, the attempt to implement some tax measures and to postpone a salary increase for some professionals, doctors, and teachers, also provoked a social upheaval. Of course, it was utilized by right-wing parties that mobilized hundreds of thousands of people. The government even had to rescind the measures, because the Panamanian National Guard has a patriotic stance and is not given to taking to the street to fire on the people.

These are examples of two nearby countries. Now the debt that these countries and all other Latin American countries have is unpayable. Our position is that it's unpayable. This is my firm conviction.

Something very important is that it's not a question of renegotiating the debt, rescheduling it and providing terms of ten, 12, and 14 years with three-, four-, and five-year grace periods to pay the principal. The debt can be renegotiated and nothing at all will be solved. They can't pay the interest, that's the key point, they cannot pay the interest.

Now, at present the Latin American countries have to pay 40,000 million dollars every year in interest — 40,000 million dollars every year! — which is compounded by the flight of capital and the repatriation of the earnings of foreign enterprises. According to estimates, in recent years the net drain of capital from Latin America alone reached 55,000 million dollars. Now, the debt reaches the terrifying figure of 360,000 million and the interest due on this will reach 400,000 million in ten years.

Twenty-four years ago, [U.S. president John] Kennedy promoted the Alliance for Progress as an antidote to prevent social convulsions, and undoubtedly the measures were imaginative. He proposed reforms and economic aid totalling 20,000 million over several years to solve the

What is advancing is the crisis of the U.S. system of domination in Latin America . . .

problems of development and social problems.

The population is now twice as large as 24 years ago and the social problems have multiplied. The foreign debt is 18 times greater than what Kennedy proposed as aid and the interest payments are 40,000 million a year, 400,000 million in ten years. So it's not a matter of whether the countries want to pay the debt or the interest rates. It's that they have no alternative; they cannot pay them.

If these democratic processes try to pay the debt — not the debt, but simply the interest rates — they will be ruined politically. And the danger will not be the return of the military for the military do not want the government even if it were given to them. The danger is a complete

political destabilization and social explosion. That's what I say is going to occur if there's an attempt to impose the Monetary Fund's formulas and collect those interest payments.

So I suggest the following: that Latin America needs a grace period of approximately ten to 20 years as a minimum in terms of its foreign debt obligations, including the interest.

Utrilla. A complete freeze on the debt.

Castro. A grace period of approximately ten to 20 years, no less, on the principal and the interest according to the country and the circumstances. This is what I maintain and what I am completely convinced of. And this is not to solve the problems; it's only a start in order

Resorting to repression and force to maintain the system has failed . . .

to have some relief, a breather, for after all it won't overcome the problem.

As I explained in the beginning, the problems of unequal exchange and the protectionist measures will have to be solved for the development of trade. In other words, it would only be a breather for a new international economic order, just a respite.

This is not easy because the governments of the industrialized countries have their difficulties. Each one reacts thinking about its own domestic problems: I have so many unemployed; I am undergoing industrial modernization, say the French and the Spanish. The Germans see their unemployment climbing to 2.6 million, a record postwar figure, while the British have 3 million. Unemployment is on the rise in many countries.

The United States adopted the most selfish of all policies. It imposed a financial monetary system supported by its great economic might and based on high interest rates which extracted hundreds of thousands of millions from the world economy, including the economies of the Third World countries.

Everyone was depositing their money in the United States, because if they kept it in the currency of their country, it dropped in value. There would be a devaluation and for all those who had money, let's say someone with a million pesos, to use a currency with a certain value, like with the Mexican devaluation, its worth dropped by 25 percent in a few weeks. The same in Argentina, Brazil, everywhere.

With free exchange and inflation, no one was motivated to deposit money that was not secure anywhere and it was taken abroad, attracted by high U.S. interest rates. For the time being the United States has solved its economic problems with this policy of high interest rates and the extraction of money from other countries. But neither can the United States withstand this situation much longer.

Another problem which has affected the world economy is that country's 200,000-million-dollar budget deficit. The history of the Vietnam War, which was waged without taxes, is being repeated. Now we have an arms race which is being conducted without taxes and a 123,000-million-dollar trade deficit which is untenable for the U.S. economy. Thus, these are objective realities that must be taken into account.

I also think that one of the bases for the hope that common sense will prevail, if this is seen with due clarity, is that the United States will understand that it is also to its benefit to halt the arms race and seek international détente. Neither can the U.S. economy withstand this policy much longer. It can only withstand it a maximum of six months, a year; the most optimistic estimate would be a year and a half or two years.

In 1984, 24 percent of the net savings of the United States was deposited from abroad. The international economic crisis has not been solved; everything's limited to optimistic words. The U.S. government said that the United States was the driving force behind other countries for economic recovery. It has in fact driven them, not to recovery but rather to a worsening of their difficulties.

Regarding the debt of the Third World, we propose the following: since the creditors are primarily private banks, the solution will be for the industrialized countries to take over the debts owed to the private

banks if bankruptcy of the financial system is to be prevented.

The United States has a public debt of 1,650,000 million and this would only increase it slightly. The aggregate Third World debt is less than what is spent every year in military expenditures and will have to be cancelled in the long run.

If the world can have the luxury of spending at present a million million dollars in military expenditures, I wonder why, just once, the debt



Argentine workers on strike.

of Third World countries cannot be cancelled.

My opinion is that no other alternative exists. To try to collect this debt, at least in Latin America, would be socially explosive. Although the situation in Africa is very serious, it is different. There, a large part of the population lives in villages as they lived centuries ago. There, the people suffer hunger and drought and die, but the continent will not inevitably explode.

There is a different social composition in Latin America including workers, peasants, middle strata, intellectuals, great urban masses. The social conditions for such an explosion exist in Latin America.

What do the recently elected civilian governments propose? The Argentine government has clearly said that it is unwilling to accept recessive measures or allow the consequences of this debt to fall on the people, that they cannot halt development. The president-elect of Brazil and other political leaders have spoken in a similar vein. But if the countries have to extract 40,000 million every year, how is development possible? They would have to adopt terrifying measures on top of living standards which have declined considerably.

It has been said that the debt problem is political, not just technically financial. That's correct, it is political and it's already begun to be revolutionary.

The positions are clear: I don't want to do this, that, and the other. But the formula has not been mentioned. The United States has tried to divide the Latin American countries in the debt renegotiations, negotiating with each government separately. How many times have the main debtor countries met and made the solemn promise that they will not found a debtors' club, when in reality they ought to start saying the opposite and join forces and form a club, a front, a committee, whatever is necessary, and meet with the creditor countries. The creditors are already closely united in the Paris Club and the International Monetary Fund.

What does it mean to say that the problem is political? Simply that the seriousness of the situation and all the foreseeable consequences must be discussed on a political level.

I think that there might be a breather if the Latin American countries

are freed from paying the debt. But there would still not be a solution to the problems of underdevelopment, nor would a new international economic order have been established. It would simply be a start.

Utrilla. It seems you view that outbreak as such a terrible thing that it would not work in a positive way for revolutionary Cuba. But if there is an outbreak, a revolutionary outbreak, isn't this in a sense what Cuba would want for Latin America?

Castro. Well, nobody knows how it will be if events keep moving in that direction. Nobody can predict what will happen, of what type or nature it will be. What I am simply saying is that now the threat is not that the military will return to power; the danger is that Latin American societies will explode.

I will give you another example: Bolivia, where there is a president whom I really esteem, with every desire to salvage the democratic process, a Communist Party even which is not involved in subversion or disorganizing the country but is rather an ally of the government, which participated in the coalition that won the elections, which has taken on the policy of the government. And yet the real situation now is that no government party controls sectors of the labor movement which refuse to make new sacrifices. Inflation increases, strikes come one after the other, the social situation is untenable, and the Communists are not the ones stirring up protest, it is the unions, the workers, peasants, the people in general who can no longer take the sacrifices. You see there the presence of objective factors, not subjective ones.

Who will they blame for subverting order? It is the people who are no longer resigned, no longer accept limitations on their standard of living. Ah! Because the debt must be paid, the interest rates and the demands of the Fund must be met.

Less than four years ago, a civilian government came to power in Peru in elections where they won more than half the votes cast and obtained a majority in Parliament. Now that party which won the elections has the support of only 3.8 percent of the voters. Indications are that APRA [American People's Revolutionary Alliance] will win the elections with a majority, but then how will it handle the debt and other social problems the next day? In Peru there is an evident social upheaval in the making which nobody really understands but which is surely a reflection of crisis and instability.

Those are two countries; I already mentioned the Dominican Republic and Panama, now Bolivia and Peru. The problems of the region are clear. In my opinion, according to how people see it, there will be social revolutions, for better or for worse, there will be social revolutions if this problem is not solved. The other solution can provide a respite and a potentially less traumatic process.

Utrilla. But from what we have heard of your opinion, perhaps Cuba, the Cuban regime, you personally, would look more favorably on a democratic process which would lead to a revolutionary process of a

I estimate that in Argentina the standard of living has dropped by 65 percent . . .

traditional nature rather than an almost cataclysmic explosion whose results are unpredictable.

Castro. I am simply trying to present things as objectively as possible, as I see them.

This issue came up recently when I was asked about the famous question of exporting revolution, and I said: it is impossible to export the conditions which give rise to revolution, because if we are to talk of subversive elements, my view is that the measures of the Monetary Fund, the foreign debt, the 40,000 million dollars in interest rates every year, the international economic crisis, the drop in the prices of the main export commodities of Latin American nations, protectionism, high interest rates, are all very subversive factors.

I would say the Pope's trip was subversive, because the Pope visited some Indian communities, neighborhoods of poor people, and spoke of the need to give land to the peasants and the need for schools for the

children; hospitals, doctors, and medicine for the sick; work for the family breadwinner; three meals a day. All those things are subversive in the conditions of the underdeveloped nations of the hemisphere.

If the Pope had come to Cuba, he would have had to talk about something else. He would not have had to call for schools for the children, since 99 percent go to school, or hospitals, doctors, and medicine for the sick, or work for breadwinners, or milk for children, or three meals a day. He has reflected a situation which exists in Venezuela in spite of its oil income, in Ecuador and Peru, in the cities and countryside of the nations he visited, all over.

But how can all this be solved? He has said this is a duty and need of society, but how is it to be done? There is the debt, underdevelopment, accumulated social problems, interest rates, huge inequality in the distribution of wealth; a whole number of factors have perhaps unwillingly been laying the groundwork for social revolution.

Utrilla. Well, in Marxist terms, those are the objective conditions for revolution.

Castro. Yes, yes, the enormous economic and social problems that have accumulated and the crisis which has developed are the objective

The populations of the Southern Cone will not tolerate further restrictions . . .

conditions for revolution.

Utrilla. Talking about the famous business of exporting revolution, of which Cuba has so often been accused, it is somewhat off the mark but isn't Cuba tempted, in view of the fact that the objective conditions exist, of the dried grass that has piled up, to light the flame, to set off the spark?

Castro. There is no need for the flame. There can be spontaneous combustion, and then not all the water in the world will be enough to put it out.

Utrilla. If the flames go up, it'll really burn . . .

Castro. I think these are the factors that determine social change. I am not interested in preserving the existing social order; I think it must change. Nor am I interested in preserving the system of U.S. rule over our peoples. My view is that this order can't continue and that system of rule can't be preserved. It will change, and I think the change will start in the light of this situation.

I simply analyze the problem and say with absolute conviction what will happen if this situation continues. I think the explosive situation can ease if the debt is canceled in one way or another, by agreement between the parties or by a decision of the debtors. However, there is already an unsolvable crisis of the system, and I have seen and talked to people, noting that conservatives are dying out in this hemisphere.

If you talk to conservatives, they are hardly conservatives any longer, and they are frustrated and desperate. Workers are desperate and so are middle sectors, and this is very important, because those sectors are very important in such crisis situations; even certain upper class sectors are desperate.

I think the order or the system can no longer hold together. I think the question is to be realistic and see if these conditions continue, until there are really explosive social convulsions, because those objective factors exist; the subjective ones are not so evident, not so clear, that is, the organization of the forces that will bring about change. But the same happened at the time of Latin American independence: all the factors existed and then came a new element, Napoleon's occupation of Spain, which gave rise to patriotic juntas that were initially established as an act of loyalty to Spain and ended in the independence of this hemisphere.

I analyze this and I am not advocating one method or another, I am analyzing and thinking about how I see events, and what will happen. Perhaps it would be better for change to take place in the most orderly

manner, less wrenching and less bloody. I would say it would be preferable.

I think, I don't go around setting off social explosions, but I think of what happened in other parts and in another era. The situation in France in 1789 was very similar. French society exploded and it was a large and bloody convulsion.

Utrilla. But some social outbursts are reactionary rather than progressive.

Castro. I don't think so. That time has passed. It would only be isolated cases.

Utrilla. No longer in Latin America.

Castro. In many parts the military took power and implemented fascism and torture, disappearances; they ruined the nations they ruled. What is the alternative? In Brazil the opening came as a result of the people's struggle, the mobilization of many millions of people on the issue of direct voting, the intelligent action of political parties that united and, although they lost in Parliament, won in the electoral college which had been set up exclusively to elect official candidates. Now you can see the political change which has taken place in Brazil. It was not violent but it was profound; that is, the opening is serious and solid.

Now the people are on the scene. In my opinion, there is no risk of a military coup in Argentina, Uruguay, or Brazil. There are always some military with those inclinations, 8 or 10 percent, madmen who talk of coups, but the majority realize it would be crazy. Ah! But when there is social turmoil and the economy is afloat, 90 percent may be inclined to a quick coup to administer the country.

But that is not the case now; those societies are in crisis and the military can't run them. The resort to repression has already been tried and it didn't solve the problem. They were worn down while the situation got worse. The resort to force remains in isolated countries, such as the Dominican Republic, where they shoot at the people, but in other key countries, they already resorted to everything and it is impossible to

With a million million in military expenditures, I wonder why the debt of Third World countries cannot be canceled . . .

have more going missing, being tortured or murdered, than those that have already gone missing or been tortured and murdered.

Utrilla. Yes, that is the case of Argentina.

Castro. So, there were social convulsions and they were halted for some time with brute force in Uruguay and Chile, the Switzerlands of the Americas. They already resorted to the military. Pinochet doesn't have much time left either. The situation is the most critical in Chilean history. Everybody opposes him, people aren't afraid anymore.

As I point out, even the United States doesn't want Pinochet because it fears a Nicaragua in the Southern Cone. That is the country which I feel is closest to a much more profound social revolution if rebellion breaks out. The United States realizes this and is trying to ease out Pinochet, convince him to leave, or drive him out some way but has not been able to because Pinochet is very stubborn, sassy, answers back and holds onto power. It's a volcano.

Utrilla. If you have no objection, Commander, let's go on to Cuba.

Castro. Fine, but first let me see if I've left something out, some idea . . . I talked about Chile, that it is not among the processes of democratic opening, that one of these processes may come about, perhaps a popular revolution, if Pinochet's presence spins out. This is the way things look to me. The general situation is important from another angle, because the United States has to take it into consideration. In this



Students in Chile demonstrate for Pinochet's resignation.

context, is it going to bring about genocide in Nicaragua, an invasion of Nicaragua?

I'm simply formulating my ideas. I believe that in this world we must be objective and realistic and be able to foresee what's coming. I believe that there are many who are thinking about these problems. Of course, the industrialized countries and the United States will try to prevent such a thing from happening, but how are they going to do it? Well, it'd be practically a miracle — a miracle in common sense because as a rule such miracles have never existed. . . . Neither the colonial nor the neocolonial powers have ever been capable of foreseeing and forestalling events.

Kennedy showed concern after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Prior to the Cuban Revolution, nobody could speak about land reform, tax reform, or a social program for Latin America, because anybody who mentioned such things was accused of being a Communist. With the advent of the Cuban Revolution, they began to worry for the first time.

The peoples of this hemisphere owe a great deal to the Cuban Revolution. The United States began to show some concern. I even think that after the Cuban Revolution the Latin American countries have become more independent and the object of greater attention. The U.S. government said: well, let's introduce some reforms, let's do something before more revolutions break out in this hemisphere, and it came up with the thesis of the Alliance for Progress, some 24 years ago.

Even the United States doesn't want Pinochet because it fears a Nicaragua in the Southern Cone . . .

How much time has passed? How many new problems do we have now? And what's the solution now? Will they have the wisdom to handle this problem, to say let's be flexible? It's difficult, yet possible. I wonder what the industrialized countries can do. They could absorb the debt with their own banks and give some breathing space.

I believe that would open a new stage. I think this is an irreversible process, and perhaps rational analysis and a realistic approach to the situation might lead to an orderly, not necessarily violent solution.

All I do is analyze, how we see the situation. I even said to the Americans when they spoke of the advantages of normal relations with Cuba, that they would be political, and greater for them than for Cuba. We can sit here quietly in the front row, so to speak, waiting to see what's going to happen, watching events unfold.

I said that, politically, it was to the advantage of the United States, because that country could at least show its capacity to adapt to changes and realities. I was thinking that when problems like Grenada's are not

on some small island, or in Nicaragua, or in small countries of our area, when a profound social crisis breaks out in Chile, Peru, Brazil, or Argentina, the United States would be powerless to do anything, because such problems cannot be solved by landing a battalion of paratroopers with some pretext or fairy tale.

Failing to understand these problems can be very costly. And, I say, you cannot intervene there and apply the remedy of intervention. When it's a case of Nicaragua or Grenada, you can still speak of intervention and of sending troops and battleships. But when the problem arises in South America, things will be very different.

Why did Central America explode, then? Simply because they were unable to foresee what was coming. Why didn't they then start talking about elections and struggling for political change? Why didn't they start worrying about the underdevelopment, poverty, and oppression of 10 and 15 years ago? Why weren't they aware of this before? Ah, well, they weren't and now they want to intervene.

What's going to happen in South America could also be foreseen and they could say: this is the general picture as we see it and it is on this basis that we must draw our conclusions. Nothing would make us happier than to see the big powers act sanely, prudently, astutely, wisely. And I don't think I'm doing anybody any harm by talking about these problems.

Utrilla. I've been thinking that given the way you explain the situation — and it seems to me that you do so in clear, correct terms — it would almost be contrary to Cuba's interests if, for example, the United States was to recognize that your analysis was correct and try to block the revolutionary process in Latin America. I'd say that you're giving advice to one you know to be deaf.

Castro. I think this is tied up with the international situation, because the problem is not strictly Latin American. It involves the whole world. The economic crisis is real and affecting the industrialized countries and, in much larger measure, the Third World countries.

We, of the non-aligned nations, have said at the UN and everywhere else that the Third World problems are desperately in need of a solution. The Europeans know what is happening in Africa with the drought and millions of people dying. In the past, people died in Africa and nobody heard about it.

Utrilla. But there are no revolutionary focal points. . . .

Castro. I was saying that in the past people died of starvation in Africa and nobody heard about it. Now everybody sees it on TV. Of course, there have been revolutionary changes in several African countries. What happened in Upper Volta, in Ethiopia, in Ghana? The economic and social situation led to revolutionary changes, yet one cannot

speaking of an explosive situation on a global scale.

Africa's level of economic, social, and cultural development is lower than that of Latin America. The working class, the peasantry, and the cultural elite are less developed than in Latin America. Africa does not have a large and extended middle strata. Neither does it have a relatively high number of doctors, economists, teachers, lawyers, engineers, or architects, or millions of university students like Latin America. Africa is in a different stage of development. Its people are paying the consequences of underdevelopment, economic crisis, and natural disasters. There may be changes, but they have neither the magnitude nor the world repercussions of those in Latin America.

I believe that in the framework of the international situation, we must also take into account the danger of war, the arms race. If the problems we're talking about are to be solved, a number of strange concepts and ideas must be given up. I'd say that such ideas as military superiority, star wars, astronomical military expenditures, and a frenzied arms buildup are incompatible with any solution to the world's serious economic and social problems.

I believe that the idea is to seek peace, international détente, coexistence, and even cooperation among countries. In other words, averting war is as necessary as bringing about social change.

All these problems are closely related and I believe that the solution calls for a change of ideas in many countries, in the industrialized capitalist countries.

The United States in particular must take a realistic stand to these events. It has done so with China. Twenty years ago they talked about

When a profound social crisis breaks out in Chile, Peru, Brazil, or Argentina, the United States would be powerless . . .

the yellow peril, the red peril. Every peril in every color came from that country.

Now they are investing in that country, trading with China, and making all sorts of investments there. They even prefer a more or less orderly China, where there is social justice, to a feudal, hungry China. Just imagine what would happen if the situation of the old China with hundreds of millions of hungry people was added to that of Africa now.

And yet the Chinese revolution has created different conditions. And now the United States is delighted with its relations with China. They have learned a lesson there. Why don't they learn it here? I'd say that what I have said about Latin America forms part of a broader analysis of the world's problems, of war and peace, the arms race and development. I even think that the only way to tackle the problems of underdevelopment is through the cooperation of the whole world community: the socialist countries and the capitalist countries.

Peace alone can't solve the problem of underdevelopment. Its solution is to be sought within an outlook of world peace, the kind of peace that does not consist solely of stopping the manufacture or reducing the number of nuclear arms, or calling off a star wars program, but is rather one that reflects a real willingness to raise millions of human beings out of poverty by using the resources which are now so absurdly given over to military expenditures.

An objective analysis of the situation might help the industrial powers — including the United States, if it's capable of being realistic — to find new formulas and new concepts which, in my opinion, are possible and applicable.

As far as our area is concerned, the principle of noninvolvement in other countries' internal affairs could be applied, and this is something we're ready to respect 100 percent: no involvement, even though we may sympathize with the revolutionary movements. No involvement either on the part of the United States or Cuba. Let every country take on full responsibility for whatever political and economic system it decides to follow, and let no one try to promote a new social system from outside or prop up an unjust social order.

Utrilla. Don't oppose revolution because it's inevitable.

Castro. In Chile, the United States and the CIA spent millions, brought people out onto the streets, conspired, put Pinochet in power, and there they have him. Did they solve anything by doing this? Is the United States by any chance completely disassociated from the coup

Peace alone can't solve the problem of underdevelopment . . .

d'état in Brazil in 1964? Doesn't everybody know that it instigated the coup against [João] Goulart? The United States is not divorced from these coups and these military formulas, nor from the training in methods of torture and repression in Vietnam. Its advisers and its training schools were the teachers and the universities that graduated Latin America's great thugs and torturers.

Now the United States is testing and improving two great systems of interference in our countries. In El Salvador, it is trying to develop the technique to crush a revolutionary movement that applies tactics of irregular warfare, while in Nicaragua it is applying techniques designed to defeat a revolution using irregular warfare.

Thus, in El Salvador, it's trying to defeat the revolutionary guerrillas, while in Nicaragua it's applying a different science, that of how to defeat a revolutionary government through the actions of mercenary guerrillas. It's trying out both techniques. It's already practiced enough the science of direct or indirect intervention in Central America, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. Has it solved anything? Why doesn't it give the Latin American people's political and social processes a chance to develop freely?

I'm not trying to give advice. I'm only analyzing and reasoning things out. The United States could show a certain capacity to foresee events. But if it doesn't have that capacity, I know what's going to happen. I have no doubt as to that.

As I said before, if you talk with Latin Americans, you'll find that there are hardly any conservatives left. It's possible that on occasion you won't notice a great difference between what a conservative tells you and what I say, when it comes to saying that such and such a principle, free competition, the lifting of barriers, or such and such a formula to have industry compete with foreign industry in the production of goods for internal consumption, had ruined the country. They're horrified! They don't even want to hear talk about such economic theories.

Free exchange has also been very costly to Latin American economies. I know cases of people who asked for a loan in national currency, exchanged the national currency for dollars, deposited the dollars in the United States where they gained interest, and within a few months were able to pay back the debt with only 50 percent of the dollars. Many people have lost their faith in the classic, traditional mechanisms.

I've noticed something new in Latin American women, doctors, and intellectuals who have been in Cuba recently for various events. There's

The future belongs to the people of this continent . . .

a strong inner force that wasn't noticeable before. Last year I met with hundreds of Latin American film directors, producers, actors, and actresses. They have to compete with the U.S. circuits. They produce excellent films and yet they can't even cover production costs because the U.S. transnationals control everything. You can't imagine how irritated people of the most diverse social sectors and strata are.

We have before us a continent in ebullition; the future belongs to the peoples of this continent. Europe is spent. I say this in all seriousness. It's spent. Europe is politically and intellectually spent, as I see it. The consumer society has its price. Our continent has enormously varying content and values and also many things in common, to the extent that there's a strong movement of Latin American and Caribbean film producers, writers, and intellectuals on this continent, when there isn't in Europe or elsewhere. □

Cuba supports Nicaraguan initiative

Will recall 100 military personnel, ready to send new aid if requested

[The following statement was issued by the Cuban government in Havana on March 4 in response to the February 27 declaration of Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega. It is reprinted from the March 10 issue of the English-language *Granma Weekly Review*.

[For the text of Ortega's declaration, see the March 18 issue of *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

On February 27, the Nicaraguan government by way of its president, Commander Daniel Ortega, made a responsible and well-founded foreign policy statement in which it announced a series of measures it will adopt unconditionally in a demonstration of good faith and in order to promote the negotiating process and the search for a political solution to the conflicts in Central America.

The measures include renouncing the help of 100 Cuban military cooperation personnel from among those now rendering internationalist service to the people of Nicaragua, the victim of aggression by mercenary bands at the service of imperialism and the object of constant threats of direct military intervention by the United States. According to the Nicaraguan statement, the 100 Cuban military personnel will start leaving in May.

Cuba fully supports the February 27 statement, the measures announced, and the Nicaraguan government's generous and courageous gesture of adopting this initiative which is in no way a sign of weakness or the "fruit" of imperialism's aggressive policy against Nicaragua as representatives of the U.S. government claim. On the contrary, it is an act of maturity, levelheadedness, and self-confidence, a manifestation of the firm resolve to struggle for peace, and it would be foolish to ignore the Nicaraguan people's and Sandinista leadership's great determination never to capitulate in the face of aggression and always to defend their country and Revolution regardless of the cost.

We have always said that Cuba would never adopt unilateral measures regarding cooperation with Nicaragua, but it will fully support measures adopted by the Nicaraguan government in the search for peace and will strictly abide by all commitments that involve Cuba stemming from decisions of the Nicaraguan leadership.

In line with this policy and taking into account the spirit, objectives, and responsible nature of the Nicaraguan statement, the Cuban government hereby declares that:

1. For the remainder of March and all of April it will not send to Nicaragua any more military or security cooperation personnel over

and above the number there at present.

2. It will withdraw 100 military and security cooperation personnel from Nicaragua in May.

3. We will keep the Contadora Group informed of all necessary details on the withdrawal of this personnel.

4. In view of the unconditional nature of Nicaragua's commitment, withdrawal of this personnel by the Cuban government will take place whether or not the U.S. Congress approves aid for the mercenary bands fighting against the Nicaraguan government.

5. If after the Nicaraguan peace efforts and the withdrawal of the 100 above mentioned military and security personnel, the government of the United States persists in its dirty war policy and threats of aggression against Nicaragua's government, Cuba will feel absolutely free to make the decision it judges convenient should Nicaragua request the dispatch of new advisers, instructors, or teachers in military and security training over and above the number that remain there.

6. Thousands of U.S. soldiers, numerous military bases, and an enormous amount of war matériel from that country are in Honduras and constitute an evident threat to Nicaragua.

7. The United States, through the CIA and other channels, is carrying out a dirty war against the legal and popular government of Nicaragua by organizing, training, arming, and directing the mercenary bands which have killed thousands of people, among them many civilians including women and children, and have inflicted heavy economic losses on the Nicaraguan people.

8. The government of the United States advises the Salvadoran army in its genocidal war against the heroic people of that sister nation and provides a steady flood of military equipment, including planes and helicopters with tremendous firepower, having terrible impact on the civilian population.

9. The actions of the United States in Central America threaten peace and openly violate the most elementary legal and moral standards of international relations, along with the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other states. In the case of Nicaragua the United States' obstinacy has driven it to announce openly that it is seeking the government's overthrow.

10. Cuba favors a genuine and fair solution to the conflicts in Central America which, among other things, will lead to a withdrawal of all foreign military personnel, a total halt to the supply of weapons to Central America, and strict implementation of the principle that no-

body can meddle in the internal affairs of those countries.

11. The United States' demand to maintain military bases and a whole apparatus for intervention in the internal affairs of the Central American nations, of blackmail and threats of aggression against any one of them, is inadmissible to the international community and to the conscience, dignity, and sovereign rights of all the peoples of Latin America.

12. On such premises and as long as the impossible ideas of destroying the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and eliminating every single revolutionary in El Salvador remain, there will be no solution to the problems of Central America.

13. Cuba will continue to support firmly the efforts of the Contadora Group to achieve a just settlement which is satisfactory to all countries in Central America. This is a real possibility and it has not been accomplished yet due exclusively to the obstacles and open opposition of the U.S. government.

14. The Cuban government will rigorously fulfill such an agreement on all aspects relating to our cooperation with Nicaragua once it had been accepted by the government of that sister nation. □

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