

INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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Vol. 23, No. 8

April 29, 1985

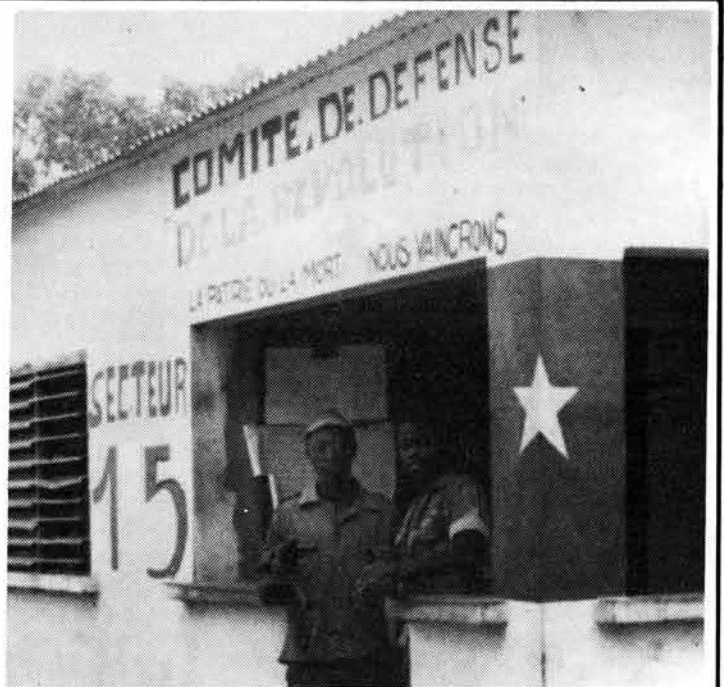
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Year Two of the Burkina Revolution

*Exclusive Interview With
President Thomas Sankara*

**'We Must Fight
Imperialism Together'**

Neighborhood center of a
Committee for the Defense of the
Revolution in the capital
of Burkina, the West
African country formerly
known as Upper Volta.



Ernest Harsch/IP



Ten Years Later **The Real Lessons of the Vietnam War**

Tank flying NLF flag captures
Presidential Palace in Saigon,
April 30, 1975.

**Nicaragua Takes Steps to
Strengthen Military Defense**

**Salvadoran Unions Hit
Human Rights Violations**

Nicaraguan revolution and faint-hearted liberals

By Doug Jenness

There is a well-known adage that says, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Implicitly then, those who aren't so tough don't get going, unless it's to turn tail and run. This appropriately applies to many U.S. liberals and radicals who are in despair over the many difficult challenges facing the Nicaraguan revolution.

In the past few months a number of articles from these circles have appeared, expressing disenchantment with the course of the Sandinista-led Nicaraguan government. One article that particularly conveys this mood of gloom and doom appeared in the March 30 *Nation*, a weekly liberal magazine published in New York. The author, Nancy Nusser, is described as a free-lance journalist living in Nicaragua.

The revolution, Nusser admits, made "some important successes" between 1979 and 1982, particularly in combatting illiteracy, establishing medical centers, and beginning several key development projects. "But in the last two years," she moans, "rather than making progress, the Sandinista revolution has been rolled back."

Nusser swamps the reader with a long list of problems. "Buildings deteriorate, streets and bridges go unrepaired. Shortages of staple goods are chronic. Long lines at the gasoline pumps are a frequent occurrence." Moreover, she claims, the literacy rate is decreasing, the campaign against malaria is slowing down, and the foreign exchange crisis has worsened. Scores of teachers and health workers are being killed by *contras* (counterrevolutionaries).

On top of all this, "Nicaragua has not had time to catch its breath between catastrophes." She lumps together the 1972 earthquake, the death of 50,000 people in the struggle to overturn the Somoza government, and the 1981 floods, which destroyed much of the agricultural crop.

"The shortages and the decline in the quality of life have lowered morale in the capital," Nusser claims. "'I get a sense that everyone is depressed,' a doctor told me."

"Despite widespread protests," she contends, "the government plans to draft 20,000" into the military this year. Nicaragua is "limping through the sixth year of its revolution," she complains, and "the Nicaraguan people have lost their enthusiasm for the 'revolutionary process.'"

While attributing many of the difficulties to the war being waged against the government by U.S.-financed *contras* and to U.S. trade sanctions, she asserts that, "some of the nation's problems can be blamed on the policies

of the Sandinistas' nine-man directorate." Their "dogmatic policies" have led to "disastrous results," she argues. She cites what she calls their "hardline" toward opponents, "heavy-handed policies" toward the Miskito Indians, and the confiscation of private property, which, she says, has caused "capital flight."

If the situation in Nicaragua were as bleak as Nusser paints it, it would be enough to dishearten even the most resolute revolutionary fighters. But fortunately the despondent mood in the journalistic circles whose company she keeps does not accurately reflect the sentiment of Nicaragua's working people or the real direction of the revolution. Rather than being rolled back, the workers and peasants revolution is advancing and growing stronger.

What working people achieved

To see this, it is necessary to be clear on what Nicaragua's workers and peasants did in July 1979 and what they have achieved as a result.

Through a massive revolutionary insurrection, they overthrew the capitalist dictatorship headed by the hated Somoza family. This was no simple changing of the guard. The government of the big landowners, bankers, and businessmen, which pledged allegiance to U.S. imperialism, was smashed. Its military apparatus, police force, and judicial system were destroyed.

State power was transferred from the exploiting class to the exploited classes. In place of the capitalist government, a popular, revolutionary government was established in which working people play the decisive role. This workers and farmers government created its own military force and its own forms of governing. It immediately began to take measures to improve the social and economic conditions of the exploited and oppressed. In the past five and a half years there has been a massive expansion of health programs and education; the building of new roads, schools, and hospitals; and the wiping out of accumulated peasant debts and the granting of new credits.

These big strides were possible only because working people imposed their will through their government. Social and economic gains were achieved *in spite of* the legacy of the 1972 earthquake, *in spite of* the backward conditions created by years of imperialist oppression, *in spite of* the inequalities of the imperialist-dominated world market, and *in spite of* the 1981 floods.

Nicaragua's working people have made economic advances and improved social services while every other government in Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, has been driv-

ing down the living standards of its working people. Even with the 100 to 200 percent price increases announced earlier this year as part of the government's wartime austerity measures, the cost of the "basic food basket" in Nicaragua is lower than or comparable to basic consumer costs in other Central American countries.

The imperialist bankers who run the International Monetary Fund have prodded government after government in Latin America to squeeze more profits out of working people. The Nicaraguan government, however, has refused to be bossed or bought by the ruling families in the United States. In response Washington has launched a major effort to destabilize and overthrow the Sandinista government.

Key task is defense

This has made defense of their government the paramount task of workers and farmers in Nicaragua. Gigantic human and material resources are being allocated to put up an effective defense against the U.S.-financed mercenaries. This has meant substantially strengthening the military forces, including the use of a draft. And it has required putting the productive resources of the country behind the defense effort.

The government points out that at the present time 40 percent of the budget must be devoted to defense.

The FSLN leadership, in a statement issued in February explaining a series of new economic measures, stated that, "These tremendous expenditures to a large degree explain the problems of shortages, price rises, inflation, and speculation that we are confronting and that we are going to combat."

Defense needs have made it impossible to continue the economic and social programs at the same level as in the first years of the revolution and have led to difficulties for working people. Moreover, as in any war, there are casualties.

But unlike Nusser, who is overwhelmed by the situation imposed by Washington's intervention, the big majority of Nicaragua's workers and peasants are not depressed or disillusioned. With determination they are mobilizing to defend the revolutionary government and are making big sacrifices to ensure that they win. They recognize that if their government, which has made possible the gains they have achieved, is overturned, all hope of further economic and social advances will be snuffed out. Without this government, which President Reagan has publicly vowed to crush, working people in Nicaragua will no longer have the most powerful instrument they have ever had to fight for their interests.

The commitment of the working class to the defense effort was expressed at the last National Assembly of the country's major unions, held in January. The delegates adopted a motion affirming that, "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 overturning the Somozaist dictatorship."

The unionists also pledged to wage an educational campaign to explain the draft to young people and their families as part of an effort to curtail draft evasion.

The mood in the countryside was captured well in a report from a participant in the Maurice Bishop International Brigade that recently helped harvest Nicaragua's coffee crop in San José, near Matagalpa. Zachary Sklar, writing in the February 9 *Nation*, explained that despite hardships "the *campesinos* I talked to were proud of what they had achieved since the revolution and were ready to defend it."

He quoted one farm worker on a state farm who pointed out that, "'Under Somoza we were slaves. The bosses used hunger to force us to continue working. All we had to eat was beans, no rice. If you cut an orange off a tree, you were beaten and fined. We worked from dawn till dusk every day, no vacations. . . . Our children died of starvation and disease; we were all illiterate and we lived in terror of the National Guard.'"

The farmworker, according to Sklar, explained that today "everyone at San José eats three full meals a day and all the fruit they can pick. Malnutrition, once so prevalent, has been wiped out, as have polio and diphtheria. The government provides the farm with free medicine and a full-time nurse; all who wanted to have learned to read and write; and the workers, organized in their own union, participate in decision-making about production."

Working people strengthen government

The determination of Nicaragua's working people to defend their revolution is paying off. They have prevented the *contras* from establishing a base inside Nicaragua, and they have dealt them some heavy blows. At the same time the Sandinistas have taken the initiative to use every available avenue to explain their views internationally and win broader support. They have ably exposed each of Washington's attacks.

In the course of defending their revolution, the workers and farmers have strengthened and further consolidated their government. They have deepened their experience and their political understanding. The alliance between the country's workers and peasants has been welded tighter, especially as a result of the extensive distribution of lands. Despite Nusser's lamentations, workers and peasants power is firmer today than at any time in the past five and a half years.

Nusser, and other liberals and radicals like her, who are not active in the workers movement, do not approach the situation inside Nicaragua from the standpoint of the working class. They mistake their own despair and fears for the actual course of the class struggle.

As this struggle has intensified, they have buckled and begun to find fault with the revolution and its leadership. And worst of all they

have started echoing some of the slanderous charges being churned out by the imperialist propaganda mills.

Nusser makes no proposal for what the Nicaraguan government should do. The situation to her is hopeless. "There can be no stability until the war ends," she whimpers, "yet neither a quick victory over the *contras* nor an easy

solution to the economic crisis is in the cards."

The only logical thing from her standpoint would be for the Sandinistas to make a deal with Washington. But the only deal Washington has stated it will accept is that the revolutionary government give up its sovereignty. And that, Nicaragua's working people have made clear, they will never do. □

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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.

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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.

Swedish socialist on tour

Union activist meets with U.S., Canadian workers

By Steve Craine

Göte Kildén, a socialist auto worker from Sweden, is on an 18-day speaking tour of the United States and Canada in April. The purpose of the tour is to promote understanding and solidarity among workers of these three countries and to assist the international movement against U.S. intervention in Central America.

At the start of his tour, Kildén told the U.S. socialist weekly *Militant* that he had come to "exchange experiences with other socialists and unionists — to see in what way the workers here are reacting to the offensive of the employers and the government." And, he added, he was interested in seeing what kind of solidarity activities are being carried out in North America in defense of the Nicaraguan and Central American revolutions, because this is an issue of great concern to the union movement in Sweden.

Kildén, 39, works at the giant Volvo truck and auto plant in Gothenberg. It is the largest industrial plant in all of Scandinavia, employing more than 12,000 workers. At Volvo he is a leader of the Union Opposition, a broad current of militant unionists that is seeking to transform the union into a consistent defender of the interests of the workers on and off the job.

Kildén is also a national leader of the Socialist Party (SP) Swedish section of the Fourth International, and was recently announced as an SP candidate for Swedish parliament, along with scores of other SP nominees.

Canadian and U.S. workers face many of the same attacks as the workers in Sweden are confronted with. In all three countries, the bosses' drive for increased profits has led to speed-ups, plant closings, inflation, and cuts in social services.

Gothenberg has long been the center of Sweden's important shipbuilding industry. But although it once employed some 18,000 workers, only 7,000 jobs remain. Many other manufacturing jobs have been lost to similar "modernization."

One of the biggest immediate problems for the Swedish working class is that wages have consistently lagged behind the rate of inflation. Since 1976, Kildén told the *Militant*, workers have suffered a 15 percent cut in real wages. "The workers," he said, "are forced to find individual solutions. Working overtime, extra jobs, two in the family working. I work extra as a truck driver in the ports. I have a family of three kids.

"The companies have had big profits in the last two years. We have a labor government, and the workers want to get back what we lost

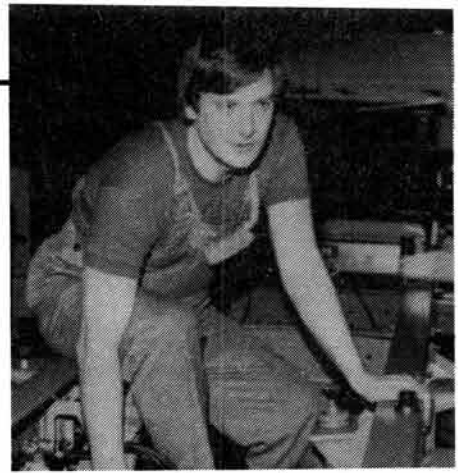
in the years before," he added. A coalition of bourgeois parties was in office in Sweden from 1976 to 1982.

But the response of the current Social Democratic government to the workers' demands is "an austerity program with tax 'reforms' that are good only for rich people," Kildén noted.

The union leaderships' reaction in Sweden, including the top officials of Kildén's union, the Swedish Metal Workers Union, has also been to retreat in the face of the employers' offensive. Like their counterparts in the United States and Canada, the union leaderships have sacrificed the needs of the workers to the demands of the capitalists. Kildén hopes to exchange experiences with militant workers in North America on how to move the unions in a class-struggle direction.

His tour will take him to major auto-manufacturing centers like Detroit, Toledo, Kansas City, and St. Louis as well as other important cities like Montreal, Los Angeles, Houston, Minneapolis, and New York. In several of these cities arrangements have been made for Kildén to meet not only with industrial workers, but also with working farmers. In Sweden, farmer protests are developing in response to the capitalist crisis in the countryside, and militant farmers' actions in the U.S. midwest have received a good deal of publicity there.

Another important stop of the tour will be in Washington, D.C., where Kildén will join in a national demonstration on April 20 against the



GÖTE KILDÉN

U.S. war in Central America and against government and corporate complicity with apartheid in South Africa.

Swedish workers have a stake in the Central American struggle, he told the *Militant*, because despite Sweden's labor government, it remains an imperialist country with extensive investments in Latin America. The fact that Sweden has a Social Democratic government and a strong union movement has meant the government is sensitive to pressure from the workers and has not taken a hostile stance toward the Nicaraguan revolution, he pointed out.

At the Volvo plant, Kildén said, "We took the initiative and invited a representative of the Salvadoran FMLN-FDR to speak at a gathering of delegates representing 30,000 workers." The union officialdom has cooperated in collecting money for Nicaragua through the unions.

Kildén's tour is an opportunity for fighters for social change in the unions and in other movements to exchange views and experiences and strengthen the fight on both continents. □

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Workers resist government's attack

Hundreds of thousands join strikes, massive demonstrations

The Danish working class is locked in one of the biggest battles with the employing class and its government in decades. Since March 24, 320,000 workers employed by privately-owned firms have been on strike. They are supported by tens of thousands of public employees, many of whom have held sympathy strikes. They have also joined the massive wave of demonstrations against the government that has been sweeping the country.

The effects of the strike are extensive. Airplanes are grounded, ferries idled, construction work suspended, and food and fuel deliveries severely disrupted.

The striking workers are demanding a 35-hour workweek and wage gains sufficient to help offset a 10 percent inflation rate. They are also calling on the government to halt its strikebreaking intervention into the strike.

In Denmark the main union federation, the *Landsorganisation* (LO — National Union Federation) negotiates a national contract with the government and the bosses for the great majority of workers. Discussions for the next two-year contract in the private sector collapsed on March 21 when the employers refused to offer more than a 2 percent wage increase the first year and a 1.5 increase in the second year. Moreover, they only offered to reduce the workweek by one hour in the next two years.

When the workers walked off the job, the government, headed by Conservative People's Party leader Poul Schlüter, announced that it would seek back-to-work legislation in the Folketing (parliament). The proposed bill accepted the employers' demands and made all strikes illegal. The law gives the government powers to deal with the strike that bypass the normal parliamentary procedures.

Schlüter's minority government, made up of right and center bourgeois parties, won the backing of the Radical Liberal Party for the terms of imposing the settlement. On March 30 the Folketing adopted the bill, which many in the labor movement are calling the "Slave Labor Law."

On the day before the law was adopted, tens of thousands of public employees joined a sympathy strike, and 100,000 workers demonstrated outside the Folketing building in Copenhagen.

Struggle continues

After the bill was passed, 100,000 demonstrated again April 1 in Copenhagen and large protests occurred the same day in nearly every city throughout the country of 5 million. Pickets organized by a left wing in the trade unions,



HARDY HANSEN

the Shop Stewards Coordinating Committee, blocked buses, trains, and ferries. Where workers arrived for work, they held meetings and decided to walk out.

According to a report in the April 3-10 *Klassekampen*, the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), the Danish section of the Fourth International, "A gigantic wave of struggle swept across the country in the days leading up to the weekend's adoption of Schlüter's Slave Labor Law. Hundreds of thousands have demonstrated. The law was adopted. But if anyone believed, or hoped, that it would stop the union movement's struggle, they were thoroughly taught the opposite."

A series of sympathizing strikes, most of them from one to three days long, were organized and demonstrations have continued. The largest occurred on April 10 when 200,000 marched in Copenhagen and hundreds of thousands more demonstrated in other cities. Banners demanded, "35-hour workweek now!" and "Hands off wage talks!" Not since a big strike in 1956 has Denmark seen such large demonstrations. The strike that year was for reducing the workweek from 48 hours to 40 hours and for higher pay.

Workers' living standards reduced

Since the beginning of the world capitalist crisis in 1974, Danish workers and farmers have suffered severely. Unemployment rates remain high and living standards continue to deteriorate. The March 21-27 *Klassekampen* pointed out, "In the last 10 years, from 1975 to 1985, the real wages of LO members have dropped by 15 percent." The Schlüter government eliminated cost-of-living escalator clauses for wages in 1982.

While the workweek is officially 40 hours, the actual workweek for many workers is often considerably longer. Many employers under

so-called flexible working hour schedules can keep employees on the job for up to 11 hours a day.

The strike has generated considerable debate inside the the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which has the largest number of seats in the Folketing and was the governing party most of the time between 1945 and 1982. Parliamentary leaders of the SDP, like former Premier Anker Jørgensen, have been urging the workers to accept the government's Slave Labor strikebreaking law. Instead of striking, they say, workers should try to pressure the government to make a few adjustments in this law. Some SDP union officials, like Hardy Hansen, who heads the Danish Union of General and Semi-skilled Workers, however, says that workers should not accept the settlement imposed by law.

The SAP, many of whose members are active unionists, is energetically throwing itself into strike activity. Its newspaper is being published twice weekly in special editions during the strike, and special efforts are being made to get it sold widely.

The SAP calls on the unions on the national level to support the strike with funds. After the government's antistrike law was adopted, money from these unions' strike funds was stopped. The SAP also calls on the LO to organize a general strike to force the removal of the Schlüter government.

In a public statement published in *Klassekampen*, the SAP urged, "The workers parties must join together to break completely with the bourgeois parties. They must establish a workers government that follows a labor policy." □

Iceland seamen win gains

A three-week strike of seamen's unions in Iceland in March has won a 50 percent increase in minimum base pay and other improvements for fishing boat crews. The unions had demanded a 75 percent increase in this rate, which is the wage guaranteed regardless of the value of the catch. The boat owners initially offered only 15 to 20 percent.

The unions also won concessions from the employers and the government that will boost the workers' pensions, meal allowances, and payments based on the profitability of each trip. Fishermen are paid a proportion of the value of fish caught, but the base rate protects their incomes against fluctuations in the catch.

Fishing is Iceland's main industry, accounting for about 75 percent of the country's export earnings. □

Salvadoran unionists present views

Violations of human rights, civil liberties get worse

[The following declaration was issued on January 18 by four national trade union federations of El Salvador and three independent unions. The four federations are: the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers Unions (FENASTRAS), the United Workers Federation of El Salvador (FUSS), the Federation of Food Industry, Garment, and Textile Workers Unions (FESTIAVTSCEs), and the Federation of Public and Municipal Employees Unions (FUSEPM). Together, these union bodies have some 25,000 members.]

[The declaration was published on January 23 as a paid advertisement in *El Mundo*, a major daily in El Salvador. The translation is taken from the March-April issue of *El Salvador's Link*, a newspaper published in New York by Casa El Salvador Farabundo Martí.]

* * *

In this historic period, when the ruling classes and the apparatus of their rule are being racked by profound economic, political, social, and ideological crises, we have decided, as workers and trade unionists, to issue the following Declaration:

I. The violence in our cities has grown worse

Although it is true that the United Nations, in a session last December 14, characterized the armed conflict in El Salvador as a generalized war of a noninternational nature, it also recognized that there continued to be numerous serious human rights violations. It stressed that the right to life is the most fundamental human right, and as such must be respected. It also lamented the hostilities that are producing so many casualties among the civilian population of our country.

As Salvadoran workers, we recognize that the United Nations Resolution is an accurate reflection of the situation that exists today. But we are also aware that violence has been a constant factor we have had to live with, throughout every period of our country's history. Rule by violence is an integral part of our society, and it is the norm for governments to remain in power through the exercise of every type of repression.

We have tasted violence in the form of guns, and in the form of a mass media that serves the interests of the ruling class; we have experienced the violence of school programs that reward individualism rather than principles of human solidarity, and the violence of laws that legislate against the poor and hungry of our country. We have seen a society of private entrepreneurs remain in power through repression, living off the poverty of the oppressed, illiterate, and permanently needy masses of the

cities and the countryside, thinking of them as nothing more than so many voters or so much cannon fodder.

But five years ago, human rights violations and curtailments of freedom reached a monstrous level. The situation has grown even worse in recent weeks, above and beyond an already permanent state of siege that has caused the suspension of all civil liberties, although it will never be possible to suspend our will to live in freedom. There is nothing new in the abuse that is being leveled by the government against the organized expression of the people. Thousands of victims could rise up from their graves to point accusing fingers at the ones who hold material and intellectual responsibility for so much politically motivated bloodshed.

And now, it is not only the obstinate old oligarchy, with its tactics of evasion, but also the demagogues and sell-outs, unscrupulous politicians, who are getting their turn to contribute to the decimation of our country's purest asset: its youth. And the only novelty about all this is the mirror in which it is reflected: government leaders in El Salvador and the United States see what is happening as the expression of an advance in the "democratic process"; we see it only as genocide. For us, the only alternative to a miserable life is violent death. The sole alternative to the distress of working families is the grief and impotence they feel when a member of the family disappears, or is lost or taken prisoner, without any legal justification whatever, on charges of subversion, communist activities, or collaboration with the guerrillas. Crime stalks the city streets, and the countryside is adorned with sophisticated weaponry. All this is the Reagan Administration's "civilized" contribution to accelerating the democratic process.

And now, when the mirror reflects the democracy of the dead, when government leaders claim that the roots of the violence have been eliminated, the workers ask:

- Why are there so many political prisoners?
- Why are all the repressive laws still in effect?
- Why has there been no explanation of all the disappearances?
- Why are political leaders and union heads still being captured?

II. The economic crisis rages on

From the outset, the workers have said that the present government lacks a coherent economic policy. It is sufficient to consider the problem of foreign currency. Dollars have never poured into the country the way they're pouring in today; and all the same, there are no

medical supplies or services, no raw materials, no government expenditures for education, or anything else of the sort. A free market has been established which seems as unstable as the black market, and equally vulnerable to speculation.

If we consider that an eighth of the population is receiving dollars from their families abroad, the gravity of the situation becomes apparent. And if we remember that 33% of all imports were transferred to the free market in December, the picture looks really bleak for the ruling Christian Democratic Party. But since the party is not being kept in power by the people, but rather by the United States Embassy, the people are likely to continue in their present situation:

- Half a million individuals have been displaced.
- 60,000 political murders have been committed; the number increases daily.
- 4,000 teachers have been dismissed.
- 3,000 schools have been shut down.
- The education of 200,000 students has been disrupted.
- There is an infant mortality rate of 75 per 1,000.
- Cases of measles have increased by 550%.
- Whooping cough in children has increased by 324%.
- Government expenditures on health care have been reduced to almost nothing: the budget provides 119 million colons for the purpose. (The Salvadoran Social Security Institute, which expected 225,489 colons for 1979, barely came to 118,831 in June of 1983.)
- The Defense and Public Safety budget has swelled to 674 to 675 million colons.
- Agrarian reform has become bogged down, and is now actually moving backward.
- The war continues, and the thousands of casualties in the ranks of the armed forces and, of course, among civilians, has filled Salvadoran families with grief.

III. The elections offer no choice

Nothing good has ever come out of a Salvadoran election; bad candidates can only become worse electees. And a people that never consciously opted for elections now is participating en masse, thanks to manipulation by all the mass media, which have been saturated 24 hours a day with electoral propaganda.

The elections are a giant circus, and mean big business even for the losers, because of the political debt. They represent no political or democratic advance, but rather a kind of regression; for if, in 1984, there was no Electoral Law, now there are 2 of them. And if, in 1984, there were unregistered thieves, now the regis-

tered thieves have generated conflicts, not about power, but about cheap political interests.

Our country weeps while the wheelers and dealers sate their appetites on human flesh, and the blood of the people flows copiously through the streets.

It is important that we reflect upon the reasons why the President and the assembly are fighting. It is not because of the state of siege: they are in agreement over that. Nor are they fighting for the liberty of Captain "Fosforo Avila," the man accused of murdering the Maryknoll sisters. They are in agreement over that. Nor are they fighting over juicy plums like the Delegate posts that pay 5,000 to 10,000 colons, and the Mayoralty of San Salvador, which manages an annual budget of 60 million colons. They are, in fact, fighting for control of the central government. The dispute is over control of high government positions: the prize apple and its worms.

The fight is for management of the big businesses that are created by the United States Embassy, and wind up in the torn pockets of corruption. Now corruption was not invented by this government, but it has always been an institution in public administration.

The presidential vetoes of the Electoral Law, Budgetary Law, and Public Employees Act should therefore not be seen as national policy, or as the result of some flaw in the legal process; this is how the interests of the organized right-wing factions prevail in political parties. This is how the people who swore to uphold the constitution either abide by it or reinterpret and discard it, as they please. And that very constitution has become the Bible of the ultra-right, and serves their interests in every way.

The people, meanwhile, just look on. And those of us who view this new historic document with fear have little trust for many of the new provisions, including those that deal with pluralism, the political debt, the workers' bank, incentives for voluntary retirement, etc.

The contradiction in the government is not going on between higher bodies of the state. It is a contradiction between the members of the oligarchy who have been removed from power and the allies of the Reagan administration. It is not an organizational problem; it is an expression of the oligarchy's power crisis.

We continue to reject any elections for as long as the present state of violence and danger continues. All that elections have accomplished so far is to divide the Salvadorans. They have protected the interests of certain groups, and have given rise to false "leaders," who have violated the very order they themselves imposed.

Dialogue as an approach to a negotiated political solution

Last October 15, we began a new chapter in the history of our country: for the first time ever, talks were begun with forces that oppose the government. This had never happened before. It might be recalled that in 1833, the San

Martín government sent a priest to parley with Anastasio Aquino and his Nonualca tribesmen; but the priest was sent only as a spy. In 1932, the rebel forces asked for talks with General Martínez, but he refused to receive them. Today, the government, faced with its evident inability to resolve the national crisis, has twice sat down — on October 15 and November 30 — to negotiate with opposition forces in La Palma and Ayagualo.

What is most important is not that the talks were begun; it is more important that they continue, in a favorable political spirit.

Peace should not be seen as an end to the conflict, but rather should be sought in the solution of the country's problems. Peace in this sense is what the people want. We seek a just peace, a peace that brings humiliation to no one. But the roots of the conflict lie in social injustice that is expressed in the following terms:

- A 38% rate of unemployment which, together with the rate of underemployment, amounts to an 80% shortage of jobs for those who are actively seeking work.

- The inability of workers to pay the family food bill, which now comes to 970 colons per month.

- The decline in real wages, because the purchasing power of the colon has decreased by at least 65%.

- A 97.7% increase in prices overall, and a 122% increase in the price of food.

Protests needed for FMLN prisoners

The Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) and Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador, along with international solidarity organizations, have initiated an emergency campaign to free two members of the FMLN being held by the Salvadoran army.

Yanet Samour Hasbun, 34, (known as Commander Filomena) and Maximina Reyes Villatoro, 26, were captured on Dec. 30, 1984, by members of the National Guard in the city of San Miguel. After being interrogated and tortured for three days at National Guard headquarters in San Miguel, the two women were transferred on January 2 to the custody of the Intelligence Division of the army's Central High Command under Gen. Onecifero Blandon. There they have continued to be subjected to physical and psychological torture.

Neither of the prisoners has been granted any kind of hearing before a court of law, and the army officially denies their capture. This makes the threat to their lives even greater.

Commander Filomena, a former university student, is a member of the Central Committee of the People's Revolutionary Army-Party of the Salvadoran Revolution (ERP-PRS), a component of the FMLN.

A communiqué concerning this case, broad-

- An irrational increase in government indebtedness. (It is costing 447.7 million colons — more than 25% of what we export — just to pay the interest on our foreign debt.)

- The lack of decent housing, schools, health care, social services, etc.

The conflict arose out of all of these unmet needs. We can no longer continue to blame Cuba, Nicaragua, and other countries for causing the war; nor can we consider the East-West confrontation to be the causative factor.

This war has its roots in profound social injustice, and only when the situation has been remedied will we be able to end the conflict. Peace will be our reward for a more rational use of our resources, and a better distribution of the wealth of the country. Reform measures should be resumed and extended; but to judge the projects of AID [U.S. Agency for International Development], it would seem that everything is meant to turn the cooperatives into private enterprises; and projects headed by the Office for the Promotion of Rural Enterprise are dependent on the ASI [Association of Salvadoran Industrialists], which in turn is a member of the ANEP [National Association of Private Enterprise].

We demand the kind of serious dialogue which can lead to a negotiated political solution to the conflict. We demand an end to the constant rise in prices of consumer goods.

No increase in bus fares!!

Support the united workers' movement!!

cast on the FMLN's Radio Venceremos on January 21, pointed out that the High Command has been responsible for violations of prisoners' rights that are respected by the FMLN when it captures government soldiers.

"Our forces have respected the lives of thousands of captured soldiers, officers as well as enlisted men," the communiqué stated, "among them the lives of ex-Vice-minister of Defense Col. Francisco Adolfo Castillo, and also well-known murderers such as Napoleón Medina Garay."

The FMLN statement called on the Catholic Church and human rights organizations to investigate the case and press the army for an explanation of its treatment of the two activists.

"We call upon the international solidarity movement to develop an extensive campaign to secure the release of Commander Yanet Samour Hasbun 'Filomena' and compañera Maximina Reyes Villatoro," the communiqué concluded. Amnesty International has also issued an urgent action call on this case.

Protest letters and telegrams should be sent to: President José Napoleón Duarte, Casa Presidencial, San Salvador, El Salvador; and Gen. Onecifero Blandon, Jefe de Estado Mayor, Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas, San Salvador, El Salvador. □

Interview with President Thomas Sankara

'We must fight against imperialism together'

[The following is an interview with Capt. Thomas Sankara, the head of the governing National Council of the Revolution and the president of Burkina Faso (the Republic of Burkina), formerly known as Upper Volta. It was obtained by Ernest Harsch on March 17 in Ouagadougou, the capital of that West African country. Originally given in French, the interview has been translated by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

Question. What do you see as the revolution's greatest accomplishments since you took power in August 1983?

Answer. After a year and a half of revolution, we would say today that we have not succeeded in carrying out — at least we have not finished — the material transformations.

Yet we can pride ourselves on having constructed schools, clinics, and dams, built roads, increased our farmland, carried out re-

No longer will the wealth of our country belong to a minority . . .

forestation. We can also take pride in having given housing to the people. But this is not enough. Much more remains to be done.

The most important thing for us, however, is the transformation of people's outlooks that we have undertaken. This transformation in outlooks means that each of us now knows that wielding power is their business, that the destiny of Burkina Faso is the business of all Burkinabè and not just of some people. Everyone has something to say. Each one of us demands an accounting from the other. Never again will things be done as before. No longer will the wealth of our country belong to a minority. This wealth belongs to the majority, a majority that speaks its mind.

Perhaps some of the ways of doing things here have not been very pleasant. But that's natural. If you have kept people dominated for many decades and then one day they have the freedom to express themselves, naturally they go to extremes. It's necessary to understand that and to have a certain indulgence.

Thus, the most important aspect of our revolution is above all this transformation of outlooks. The rest will follow.

Q. And what have been your greatest problems and difficulties?

A. The greatest difficulty we have faced is

the neocolonial spirit that exists in this country.

We were colonized by a country, France, that left us with certain habits. For us, being successful in life, being happy, meant trying to live as they do in France, like the richest of the French. And so the changes that we want to carry out face some obstacles, some restraints. These restraints involve those people who do not want to accept even a minimum of social justice, who want to preserve all their privileges at the expense of others.

Naturally, this obliges us to carry out a struggle. Basically, and first of all, it was the bourgeoisie that we fought against. It was then, and above all, the petty bourgeoisie, which is very dangerous and which is very much inclined toward the bourgeoisie at the same time that it also admires the prestige of the revolutionaries. It wavers.

We think that to the degree that this petty bourgeoisie is not massively involved in the revolution, we will have difficulties. It is this petty bourgeoisie that shouts, that poisons minds, that denigrates. Numerically it doesn't represent anything. But since our society is a neocolonial society where the intellectual has a preponderant place, then these people have a preponderant place in opinion-making.

The other difficulties, natural and otherwise, are not serious. Our big difficulty then is imperialism, which tries to dominate us from within as well as from outside our country. Through their multinationals, their big capital, their economic power, they try to control us by also influencing our discussions, our national life. They create difficulties and try to strangle us, for example, by using an economic blockade.

At the same time, and hand in hand with this, they try to plot against us, against our internal security. In order to combat this imperialism, we still have many struggles to conduct.

Q. Has imperialism's opposition been as severe as you expected, and how well do you think you have been able to resist it?

A. In fact, I must tell you sincerely that as a revolutionary I understood what imperialism was in theoretical terms. But on coming to power, I discovered other aspects of imperialism that I had not known. I have learned, and I think that there are still other aspects that I must discover. Between theory and practice, there is quite a difference.

I've seen in practice that imperialism is a monster, with claws, horns, and fangs that bite, that has venom, and that is merciless. A

speech isn't enough to make it tremble. No. It's determined. Imperialism has no conscience. It has no heart.

Fortunately, the more that we have discovered that imperialism is a dangerous enemy, the more determined we have become to fight it. And each time we find new forces to stand up to it.

Q. How has the organization and training of the militia been going? The development of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution?

A. We are satisfied with them. Of course, at

The peasant will be encouraged to improve the land . . .

the beginning there were many people who got involved without knowing what sacrifices would be demanded of them. But when they learned that it would be a little difficult, they began to back off. We think that this is natural. The revolution advances like a bus, with its difficulties. When it changes speed, there are some who fall off. That's natural.

But now consciousness has overtaken euphoria. This consciousness has allowed us to make a great leap forward.

Q. It's obvious here that the youth are with the revolution. What success have you had in drawing the older members of society behind what you are trying to do?

A. With the others there have also been successes, because they realize that the revolution has brought them things they had never dared dream of. To be sure, they are often frightened by the methods and language and think that they no longer have the energy to keep up with the revolution.

But we are in the process of setting up a framework for these elders who want to participate in the revolution, in their own way and at their own pace, while always entrusting the political and ideological leadership to us. We are in the process of establishing an organization of elders that is going to be very useful to us. Besides, there are elders, aged people, who are already doing important work.

Q. Last week, you had a women's week here, culminating in International Women's Day [March 8]. What did that indicate about the extent of women's involvement in the revolutionary process?

A. During the previous regimes, women here were organized into folkloric groups. They sewed uniforms, sang, danced, but didn't really know where they were going.

Even after August 4 [1983], we faced problems in mobilizing women, because of their subjectivity. The women were very subjective and didn't yet see what the revolution could bring them and what role they themselves had to play in the revolution.

We have given them the time to let their revolutionary role come to fruition. This time was valuable, because now they use a totally different language in their meetings and discussions. They feel that their role is not just to make demands. The women must first of all pose in a clear and objective way the basis of their oppression and domination. They are beginning to do that better and better.

They are beginning to define who their enemies are within the country, such as the backward men, but also enemies like imperialism and the cultural system that it brought here. There is also the feudal system of yesterday, which existed here even before the arrival of colonialism. The women have now begun to understand all these things. They will therefore be able to fight against them.

A positive thing we have noted with women is that they are now ready to liberate themselves. You cannot free a slave who is not conscious of being a slave.

We have also noticed that our women have now become conscious. The work they do will be for their liberation and will be their contribution to the revolution. They have understood that the revolution and only the revolution can liberate them.

It was this qualitative change that we lacked. Bringing together thousands and thousands of women was an easy thing that we could do at any time. But we understood at a certain point that this was not really useful; it was unproductive and we gave it up.

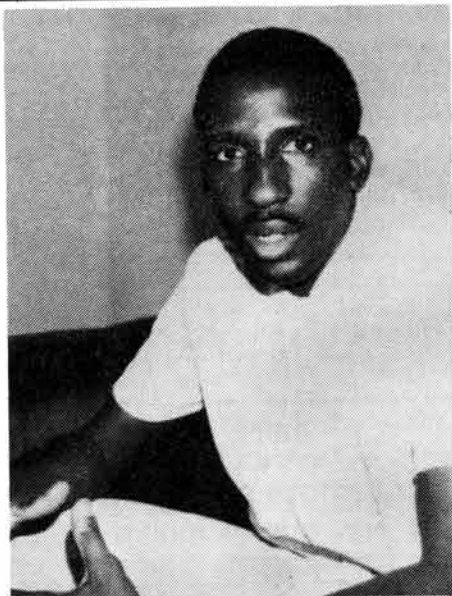
We have now returned to it once more, in a very modest way, from the grassroots. That is why we were able to hold this women's week, which was very positive.

Q. How do you think the agrarian reform and the formation of CDRs in the villages will change social relations in the countryside, particularly the role of the chiefs?

A. The country's traditional organization is under attack, and that's natural. It's a feudal system that doesn't allow development, that doesn't allow a minimum of social justice and the enlightenment of the masses.

This feudal system functioned so that some people, simply through the circumstances of their birth, could control considerable land, many hectares, many square kilometers of land. They distributed this land as they saw fit. The others could only cultivate the land and pay them. Their reign is coming to an end. And in certain regions it is already over.

We know that this decay of the feudal system in our countryside will be beneficial, because from now on the peasant who has a piece



Ernest Harsch/IP

THOMAS SANKARA

of land will have the security to work it, because he will know the land is entrusted to him. Henceforth, the land belongs to the Burkinabè state and no longer to an individual. But the Burkinabè state can entrust the use, management, and cultivation of the land to those who work it.

The peasant will be encouraged to improve the land, to work it much more than under the old system, under which you could use organic or chemical fertilizers to enrich the soil and then one or two years later the owner would

I consider the Cuban revolution a symbol of courage and determination . . .

come to demand that you leave, just when the land begins to become fertile.

The development of our agriculture is tied to the security with which the toiler can cultivate the land. This feudal organization must give way to new structures, through which the people express themselves.

Q. Several weeks ago, Le Monde and Jeune Afrique, both published in Paris, reported on a statement by several trade union leaders criticizing the government's policies.¹ They presented it as a major split between the Na-

1. On January 28, several union leaderships issued a statement charging the government with violating trade union rights. Some of these unions are politically led by a wing of the Patriotic League for Development (Lipad), which has long looked to Moscow for political inspiration, or by the Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party (PCRV), which looks to the Albania government. Both the PCRV and this wing of Lipad have come out in opposition to Sankara's National Council of the Revolution.

tional Council of the Revolution and the working class. Is that the case? Is the conflict with the working class, or is it just with these trade union officials?

A. It's basically a problem with the leadership of these organizations. These leaderships are petty bourgeois leaderships. As petty bourgeois, they therefore thought that the revolution came to sweep aside the reactionary and bourgeois classes in order to put themselves into power. So naturally we have conflicts.

Yet the worker is completely satisfied with the decisions we are making. When we said that one no longer has to pay rent, the worker benefitted. But the union leaders, who rented out houses, could not be happy. You must understand this. It's very important.

Besides, you posed the question very well. Is this a conflict with the workers, the working class, or with the leadership? It's a conflict with the leadership and not with the workers. The proof: Have you seen any strikes here? There are no strikes. These same workers are in both the CDRs and the unions.

It's only the leaderships that are not completely happy. And that's natural. It's because of their petty bourgeois outlook.

The revolution in Africa faces this great danger: Every time, it is initiated by the petty bourgeoisie, that is, generally by intellectuals. At the beginning of the revolution the big bourgeoisie is attacked. That's easy. They are the very wealthy, the big capitalists, large and fat, with big cars, big houses, many women, etc. People know who they are, and they are attacked. But after one, two, or three years, it's necessary to attack the petty bourgeoisie. And when the petty bourgeoisie is attacked, the very leadership of the revolution is attacked.

The unionists have contributed a great deal to the revolution here. They have contributed to our country's popular struggles. But they did so as petty bourgeois who dreamed about sweeping away the bourgeoisie in order to take their place. And now they are afraid of the revolution.

You see, that's why in certain African countries they say revolution, revolution, revolution. But these people have gold chains, beautiful ties. They are always in France buying expensive clothes and big cars. They have bank accounts, etc. Yet they say revolution.

Why? Because when they finished attacking the big bourgeoisie and wanted to attack the petty bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeois bared their teeth and they took fright.

What do they do? They give big salaries to the military, the government ministers, the praetorian guard. All the top union leaders and others are given big posts. They're named ministers, prime minister, coordinator of this or that. They're happy. They keep quiet.

The ministers themselves begin to become businessmen, traders. They send their children to school in Europe or the United States. If you take the situation under Sékou Touré [late president of Guinea], who spoke of revolution

— the largest number of French-speakers in the United States were Guineans.

Every revolution that starts out with the petty bourgeoisie comes to a crossroads where it must choose: To hit the petty bourgeoisie and be able to keep the revolution radical — and then you have many difficulties. Or to coddle the petty bourgeoisie — and you have no difficulties. But then you also no longer have a revolution; you have a pseudorevolution.

That's why the petty bourgeois here are not in favor of reducing their salaries. But they are in favor of levying taxes on the peasants in the countryside and increasing their own salaries. They make 200,000 [CFA] francs a month and think they should be increased by 5,000, 10,000, 15,000, or 20,000 francs. If we raise their salaries, they will organize support marches. If we lower them, they protest. They don't want to see the peasant benefit.

So we say that the petty bourgeoisie is always pulled between two interests. It has two books. On the one hand Karl Marx's *Capital*, on the other a checkbook. It hesitates: Che Guevara or Onassis? It's necessary to choose.

Q. This problem you have just discussed is obviously also reflected on the level of the different left-wing political organizations here, in the conflicts involving the Lipad, the ULC, the Communist Group, and others.² How do you see this problem being overcome?

A. Each organization builds itself and maintains itself through its influence and importance among the popular masses. It's necessary to let the organizations continue like this and differentiate themselves in the eyes of the popular masses. And when the popular masses get to know all of them, then they will choose. They will strengthen or fight against certain organizations.

That's why one must never make a revolution with just a few people who begin to lock themselves in an office in order to say, "I am from this organization. You must accord me such and such importance."

That's the problem we find in some countries. Take Chad, for example, with its political tendencies. When the leaders gather in an office for discussions, each one says they represent a tendency. They say, "Me too, me too." But if you leave them to the masses, the masses will eliminate those that should be eliminated and preserve those that should be preserved.

Our problem here is that this petty bourgeoisie, thanks to the relations that it has with the foreign press, tries to make a big uproar. When you read *Le Monde* or *Jeune Afrique* or listen to the Voice of America or Radio France Internationale, there's an impression that things are not going well in Burkina

Faso. But things are going quite well here.

That is because the petty bourgeoisie here has connections. They are intellectuals. They have traveled. They have relations in many countries and they rely on that.

Here they have been unmasked. Here there is no problem. And some are even ready to discuss with us. Look at Arba Diallo, the former minister of foreign affairs.³ He was in prison and he was released. They want to discuss with us because they no longer carry much weight.

The sole support they have is from abroad. The press that writes articles against us every day is foreign. If we had a lot of money it

We wish success to the American people, all of whose struggles are also our struggles . . .

would be possible to give it to a magazine so that it could write in our support. But we don't have money for that kind of thing.

Q. Are there any prospects for trying to unify the various groups that support the revolution?

A. It's possible. We have confidence that it's possible. But this unification will be to the detriment of individuals and not of organizations, since in an anti-imperialist struggle, a revolutionary struggle, the organizations can have a platform.

Individuals, however, may say no, since they don't profit from it. There are individuals who prefer to be number one in a village rather than number two in the city. And since they don't want to be number two in the city, they prefer to have their organization to themselves and refuse to unify, even though the organization wants unification. The individuals will thus be eliminated one by one in order to make way for the organizations.

Q. When you visited the United States last October, you passed through Cuba on your way, both to and from the United States. And in Cuba you received the José Martí award. What do you think is the significance of the Cuban revolution?

A. I consider the Cuban revolution a symbol of courage and determination. It's a great lesson. Cuba, a small agricultural country, without immense resources, except for certain very limited ones, has been able to stand fast, despite the direct and indirect pressure of the big United States. It's a great lesson.

We know that Cuba did not resist alone and that it needed the internationalist support of the Soviet Union to aid and strengthen it. But we know that this support is not enough. That's

why we look at the Cubans with admiration.

When I saw Fidel Castro, I told him, "It's already been 25 years, but you still look like a revolutionary who has just come down from the Sierra Maestra." We have much, much admiration for the Cuban revolution.

Of course, the revolutions are not alike. The conditions are not the same either. But as for the courage, the determination to always involve the people, Cuba provides lessons that are very valuable.

Q. We in the Socialist Workers Party in the United States think it's important for U.S. working people to learn more about revolutionary struggles in other countries, like here in Burkina. That's a first step toward solidarity. We have the same enemy — U.S. imperialism. The forms of our struggles may be different, but the enemy is the same. So we think that if workers become conscious of that, they will naturally feel solidarity with your struggle against imperialism here. And getting this kind of internationalist consciousness, we think, is also important for working people's understanding of who and what their enemy is at home.

A. It's a problem of communication. The imperialism that we are fighting isn't an isolated thing. It's a system. As revolutionaries and from a dialectical point of view, we must understand that we must also have a system. Against a system, you counter with a system. Against an organization, you counter with an organization, not just with people full of goodwill, good sentiments, honesty, courage, and generosity.

Therefore imperialism, which is worldwide and which isn't located in just this or that country, must be fought with a system that we are going to fashion together. Consequently, we must get to know each other, understand each other, establish a platform, an area of understanding between us in order to be able to combat this imperialism seriously and with a good chance of success.

That's why I agree with you on the need for communication and mutual understanding. I believe that you're a journalist. That's your job, and you will help in that.

I also believe that's the reason why even though I'm very busy today, even though I have many files on my desk, I have a duty to give you at least five minutes to explain to you what we are doing. As revolutionaries, we don't have the right to say that we're tired of explaining. We must always explain.

We also know that when the people understand, they cannot but follow us. In any case, we have no enemies when it comes to peoples. Our only enemies are the imperialist regimes and organizations. Thus we have the right to explain.

Q. If you had a few minutes to address the working people of the United States, what would you say?

A. We hope that the American working

2. Part of Lipad today supports the government and part does not. The Union of Communist Struggle (ULC) has five ministers in the government. The Communist Group is a split from the PCRV and supports the Sankara leadership.

3. Foreign minister in the first cabinet established after the August 1983 seizure of power, Arba Diallo is a prominent Lipad leader.

people, and the American people in general, would understand that the people of Burkina Faso are not enemies of the Americans. The people of Burkina Faso are a people who are proud of their identity and independence, who jealously guard their independence. Just like you Americans; when you fought for your independence you said, "America for the Americans," and you didn't want any European intervention. You fought against Great Britain for your independence. I think that's natural and that it's only fair that we should have the same elementary right.

You should know that we are in solidarity with the Americans in their suffering. Even if you have greater material wealth than we, you have misery in your hearts, and we know, like you, what the cause of that misery is.

That misery is the ghettos of Harlem. It's also the fact that the American, whatever his wealth, lives like a pawn on a chessboard, who can be removed or manipulated. This misery is also the life of aggression and barbarism, the dehumanized and inhuman life that was created in the United States because of the power of money, of capital.

We know, like you do, that it's imperialism that organizes and sustains all this. We must fight against it together.

We appeal to the American people to understand us, to aid us in our struggle, just as we will also aid them. But it can never be said that we're their enemies. That's not true. We wish full success to the American people, all of whose struggles are also our struggles.

Unfortunately, they are not told one-tenth of

the truth about the realities of the world. We hope that the American people will not be those people who are insulted around the world, by slogans on the walls, "Yankee go home. Yankee go home." The American people cannot be proud of that. A country, a people, cannot be proud that wherever they go other people look at them and think that behind them are the CIA, the attacks, the arms, etc. The American people are also a people capable of love, of solidarity, of sincere friendship.

We want to correct all this. We want to help you have your place, whether through your leaders or through yourselves, the people, on the condition that you accept the fact that we condemn the evils and causes of this general, worldwide distrust toward the American people. □

Burkina revolution brings gains

A difficult struggle against imperialist domination

By Ernest Harsch

OUAGADOUGOU — For a century, political life here was considered the exclusive preserve of just a handful of people.

Under French colonial rule, it was a few colonial administrators and businessmen who made all the decisions. Under the neocolonial regime that followed, it was a coterie of top military officers, merchants, traditional tribal chiefs, businessmen, and government bureaucrats, who still often followed the dictates of Paris.

But the vast majority of this country's laboring masses had absolutely no say over what policies were adopted. Kept illiterate and impoverished, they could do little more than scratch out a bare existence by tilling their fields or tending their herds.

Today, this is beginning to change. Since a mass, anti-imperialist upsurge brought into power the National Council of the Revolution (CNR) on Aug. 4, 1983, people from one end of Burkina to the other are getting involved in political activity, on an unprecedented scale.

Here in the capital, the signs of this are quite evident.

Every morning, scores of youths are out on the streets selling the main daily newspaper, *Sidwaya*, or *Carrefour Africain*, a weekly magazine that features interviews, documents, and commentary on the Burkinabè revolution. Sometimes they hawk *Lolowulen* ("Red Star"), the magazine of the mass-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), and other publications.

Billboards line the main avenues urging the population to participate in the mass vaccination program, to exercise revolutionary vigilance, and to join the CDRs. In the poorer sections of Ouagadougou, such as along Avenue Yénnega, the hand-painted initials "CNR" are especially numerous.



Young people with guns are a very common sight.

Some are in uniform, young men and women with red berets and gold stars, carrying their Kalashnikovs, riding on bicycles or mopeds, mingling with the crowds, lounging under the trees. Civilians show no uneasiness around these soldiers, and often chat or joke with them.

This casual attitude toward the troops comes from the changes that have taken place in the army since August 1983: a massive purge of reactionary, arrogant, and backward officers and troops, and an even more massive recruitment of young activists inspired by the need to defend their country against imperialism.

Moreover, soldiers are no longer the only ones with guns. Tens of thousands of civilians have been trained and organized by the CDRs to form People's Vigilance Brigades, the local militia units. Guns are kept in workplaces, offices, and CDR headquarters. Sometimes in the early morning, groups of 50 or 60 young militia members, male and female alike, can be seen jogging through the streets as part of their training.

According to President Thomas Sankara, "Security in Burkina is enforced much more by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution than by the classic army."

Political meetings of one kind or another take place daily. Activists often gather at the headquarters of Ouagadougou's 30 local CDRs to discuss the problems of their areas, exchange information, or mobilize for particular campaigns. In the evenings, literacy classes are held in the poor neighborhoods, as well as classes on various political topics.

While political activity is the liveliest here in Ouagadougou, it has also begun to spread — to one extent or another and with many difficulties and setbacks — to some of the remotest parts of the countryside. Mass rallies have been held in scores of towns, large and small. CDRs have now been organized in almost every one of Burkina's more than 7,000 villages. Although they function with varying degrees of effectiveness and participation, they for the first time provide the peasants — who make up more than 90 percent of the population — with a vehicle through which they can express themselves.

Legacy of French 'civilization'

The biggest challenge that the people of Burkina face in advancing their revolution is the legacy of 100 years of French imperialist domination.

The French colonialists first came in force in the 1890s. With armed might they broke the resistance of the indigenous societies, in particular the Mossi empire centered here in Ouagadougou, and carved out a new colony that they called Upper Volta.

This French "civilizing mission" brought the imposition of taxes, the forced cultivation of cotton and peanuts (groundnuts) in some parts of the colony, and the deportation of tens of



Ernest Harsch/IP

Children playing by drainage ditch in Ouagadougou.

thousands to work on French-owned plantations in the Ivory Coast, Dahomey (now Benin), and other nearby countries. Upper Volta was consciously kept undeveloped, to serve largely as a reserve of cheap migrant labor. No significant industry was developed, and most Voltaics were confined to subsistence agriculture.

While many aspects of traditional society were undermined by the impact of colonial rule, the tribal chiefs were largely kept in place. But their roles were transformed into that of paid agents of the colonialists. In the same way, a tiny layer of Voltaics was trained to take part in the colonial administration.

It was this layer that took over the reins of government when Paris finally decided to allow formal independence in 1960, in response to the wave of struggles for independence that was sweeping West Africa. But for all intents and purposes, Upper Volta remained under the French thumb. The government budget was heavily subsidized by Paris, the currency remained tied to the French franc, and foreign policy was dictated from France.

This century of imperialist domination has left Burkina's laboring masses in an appalling state of poverty and misery.

Most inhabitants do not have safe water to drink. Diseases like yellow fever and malaria are endemic, and outbreaks of cholera are not uncommon. There is only one doctor for every 50,000 inhabitants, and until recently the bulk of them were based in the two main cities, Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. About 180 of every 1,000 children die in infancy. Life expectancy itself averages only 40 years.

Per capita income is just 53,000 CFA francs (a little more than US\$100) a year. Illiteracy

reaches 98 percent in the rural areas, and the school attendance rate of 16 percent is one of the lowest in the world.

Most Burkinabè today live in thatched or dried mud-brick houses. Their villages generally have no electricity, telephones, or post offices. Transport in the countryside is rare. Some have bicycles, but most people must walk. It is not unusual to see women with large loads on their heads and babies strapped to their backs walking long distances from one village to another. Simply to fetch water, a woman may have to walk 10 or 20 miles a day.

Even Ouagadougou itself, a city of some 300,000 inhabitants, is obviously poor. While there are some attractive, modern buildings in the center of town and a few better-off residential sections, the majority of the city's people live in small, single-story houses crowded along unpaved dirt lanes, with open drainage ditches. Some areas around the outskirts of Ouagadougou look little more developed than rural villages.

Improving living conditions

Overcoming this legacy of backwardness created by imperialist oppression is one of the key tasks of Burkina's revolutionary process. It is an enormous and difficult task, one that will involve years of struggle and hard work.

But since August 1983, through the organizations and mobilizations of the population, some important steps have been taken.

A major campaign has been launched to fight the effects of the famine and drought and to lay the groundwork for future economic development. (See article in April 15 *Intercontinental Press*.)

Agrarian reform has been initiated, to begin

tackling the social and economic backwardness of the countryside.

Traditionally, most land in Burkina has not been privately owned, but has been considered communal property. This is still the case in many rural areas. In the past, the social function of the chiefs was to serve as custodians of the land, distributing it to villagers on the basis of need. But with the advent of colonial rule and the penetration of capitalist market relations into parts of the countryside, this role was corrupted and many chiefs acted as if the land was theirs, demanding payment for its allocation or selling plots to land speculators.

One of the CNR's most important measures has been to declare all land the property of the state. This eliminates the buying and selling of land, and thus the evil of speculation in land, and entrusts full rights to use the land to those who actually work it. With this security, they will be encouraged to increase agricultural production.

In addition, special assistance is being given to the peasants, including the construction of new feeder roads, dams, and irrigation canals and greater access to credit on easy terms. The old colonial "head tax" — in which each family member had to pay from 500 to 1,000 CFA francs a year — has finally been abolished.

A mass literacy campaign is beginning to get off the ground, with classes organized in the villages by CDR activists. Regular school fees have been reduced, and steps have been taken to increase school attendance, including the construction of hundreds of new schools.

From Nov. 25 to Dec. 10, 1984, health workers, CDR activists, and others carried out a massive "commando" vaccination program. In that period of just 15 days, some 2 million Burkinabè children were vaccinated against the three most serious diseases affecting children in Burkina — measles, meningitis, and yellow fever.

New health clinics have been built, particularly in the countryside and in the poorest sections of Ouagadougou and other cities. Doctors and other medical personnel have been sent out into the rural areas to bring health care to those who most need it — and who were totally ignored in the past.

The "perks" of top civil servants — housing subsidies, cars, etc. — have been drastically trimmed, and part of the money was used to establish Ouagadougou's first municipal bus service.

New technical and financial assistance is being provided for housing construction, relying as much as possible on local materials and techniques. Small brick-making enterprises are quite busy these days, and it is common to see rows of freshly made bricks drying in the sun. Near the airport here in Ouagadougou, the Cité An II housing project is now under construction (similar housing complexes have already been built in the provincial capitals).

CDRs have been set up in all the workplaces, both in state and private enterprises. In the state-run enterprises, new management councils have been established, with CDR ac-

tivists, union delegates, and employee representatives holding half the seats in each council.

Budget debate

On the night of Dec. 9, 1984, an unprecedented public debate was held on the government budget. From 8 p.m. until 6:30 a.m. the next morning, some 3,000 delegates gathered in the House of the People on Avenue Nelson Mandela to discuss how to reduce the budget's deficit for the year 1985. The delegates came from CDRs throughout the country. The trade unions, civil service, students, and military were also represented. Crowds of people packed into the conference hall to listen to the debate, and those who could not get in followed it on the radio, which broadcast the discussions live.

"This is no longer the time when the budget was secretly prepared in the ministerial offices," a senior official declared. "It must now be the affair of the entire revolutionary people."

One after another, delegates got up to propose various steps to reduce unnecessary expenditures or to tap new sources of revenue, so that more funds could be made available in the coming budget for productive investment and improvements in social services.

Some delegates proposed taxing high company profits. The representative of the transport department's CDR suggested that all senior civil servants and military officers give

up a month's pay, and the rest a half-month's pay. This proposal was greeted with considerable applause, and was adopted by the conference as a whole. Another delegate proposed that university students contribute 2,500 CFA francs a month (about US\$5).

The conference also hailed the government's "purge of the administrative apparatus," the work on the big Sourou Valley irrigation project, and the bringing to trial of corrupt officials before the People's Revolutionary Tribunals. It likewise proposed "the systematic revision of all colonial and neocolonial laws and the establishment of a single set of statutes, the statutes of the Burkinabè working people."

When the budget was released in January, a number of the recommendations of the conference were incorporated into it. These included the deduction of a month's pay for top civil servants and a half-month's pay for the rest, as well as the students' contribution. The money generated from this made it possible to increase public investments to 9.4 billion CFA francs for 1985, compared with 2 billion CFA francs last year.

The salary reductions naturally caused some discontent among civil servants, especially those in the higher grades who were affected most severely — and who are generally far better off than the vast bulk of the population.

Nevertheless, to soften the impact of this measure on salaried employees as a whole, the government provided all employees in public

and semipublic enterprises with their traditional end-of-year bonus (rather than withholding it, as had previously been considered).

More significantly, the government decreed that no tenant would have to pay rent during the year 1985. This is obviously a very popular measure here in Ouagadougou, where most inhabitants do not own their own homes and some workers must pay up to 30 or 50 percent of their incomes in rent.

According to Capt. Pierre Ouédraogo, the national secretary-general of the CDRs, the measure is not a nationalization of housing, but simply a one-year's rent suspension. A national housing organization has been set up to monitor compliance with the decree, and special steps are being taken to ensure that small proprietors and those whose only income comes from rent are compensated. Commercial and industrial rents will continue to be paid, but directly to the state.

Hailing the rent measure, a declaration by the military garrison CDR of Ouagadougou said that it would "channel income from real estate toward the coffers of the revolutionary state," at the same time that it would "weaken the economic base of a faction of the bourgeoisie, notably the comprador bourgeoisie." It would likewise "bring relief to the people, to the petty bourgeoisie and working class, who up until now have been the ones from whom the greatest sacrifices have been demanded."

International Women's Day

In the week leading up to International Women's Day on March 8, women from throughout Burkina gathered in Ouagadougou for a major conference on women's emancipation. They came from all 30 provinces and from all 30 sectors of Ouagadougou.

In a series of plenary sessions and meetings of various subcommittees, they examined and discussed many different aspects of women's oppression in Burkina, such as forced marriages, divorce, polygamy, the problems of widowhood, and sex education.

For many women, who have traditionally faced considerable social isolation, the conference was an important educational process — to speak publicly, to debate out ideas and proposals, to learn from the experiences of women in other parts of the country. According to a report on the conference by Apolline Ouédraogo in the March 8 *Carrefour Africain*, "the participation of women from the provinces enriched the discussions, because they always added specific details that had not previously seemed important to those from the cities."

One issue that aroused considerable controversy was the question of whether abortion should be legalized. While some favored its legalization, others raised objections on various grounds ranging from considerations of religion and custom to the absence of adequate sanitary and medical facilities. The conference participants decided to refer this question for further discussion among the masses of Bur-



Ernest Harschi/IP

Billboard in Ouagadougou: "The CDR: Authentic organization of the people in the exercise, control, defense, and consolidation of revolutionary power."

kinabè women.

On most questions, however, there was agreement. The conference passed resolutions calling, among other things, for:

- Effective implementation of the ban on forced marriages and suppression of the bride-price as an obligatory practice.
- Abolition of the custom whereby a widow must remarry into the family of the deceased husband.
- Abolition of the practice of female circumcision.
- A major sex education drive.
- Elaboration of a family code.
- The turning over to the people of wells now monopolized by tribal chiefs, and other steps to improve water supply.
- Steps to eliminate prostitution and find new occupations for former prostitutes.
- Education for handicapped children and steps to improve education in general.

The conference participants also vowed to work toward the creation of a national women's organization.

On International Women's Day itself, a major rally was held at the House of the People, with President Sankara and other top leaders present. A majority of the participants were women.

Outside hung a banner reading, "For a free and prosperous society where women will be equal to men in all spheres."

The keynote address was given by Alima Traoré, a member of the National Secretariat of the CDRs, with the responsibility for organizing and mobilizing women. She declared that for a woman to be free, it was necessary "that she be independent from the man who lives from her labor, and that marriage must be a union between two free beings, equal and independent." She added, "The struggle for women's emancipation must begin with women's reeducation, but it must also be the concern of men."

Traoré emphasized, "We do not pretend to have solved all the problems of women, not even half of them." Instead, she said, what the women's week accomplished was to set out the guidelines for a radical solution to women's oppression.

The conclusion of the rally highlighted the growing participation of women in the military defense of the country. A unit of female CDR members provided a demonstration of how to strip down and reassemble semiautomatic weapons.

A revolution against imperialism

The initials "RDP" are used over and over on the radio, in the press, and in slogans painted on the walls. They are the French initials for the "Democratic and Popular Revolution," the term that the leadership uses to describe the revolutionary process under way here.

In an essay on ideology in the March issue of the CDRs' monthly *Lolowulen*, Philippe Somé explained:

The revolution of Aug 4, 1983, is a democratic



Ernest Harsch/IP

Women in Burkina's countryside milling grain by hand.

and popular revolution, that is, a struggle through which the democratic and revolutionary forces in Burkina strive to eliminate the domination of imperialism and to break the bourgeois, reactionary, conservative, and backward social forces that are opposed to the people's economic and social progress.

At this stage of our revolution, democracy and national independence are closely connected. One cannot build true democracy under the shadow of imperialist domination, nor transform formal political independence into genuine independence without the support of the people. Our revolution can therefore be democratic and popular only if it has a dual content: a struggle against imperialist domination and exploitation, and a struggle against the reactionary national bourgeoisie and its backward forces.

Activists here explain that "socialism is not on the agenda" in Burkina, given the country's extremely low level of economic development and the small size of its working class. At the same time there is considerable interest in and discussion of revolutionary Marxist ideas.

Works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and others are easy to find in Ouagadougou's bookstores — though the selection is often limited and the prices of these imported books are prohibitive to most Burkinabè. The French-language weekly edition of *Granma*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, was evident in a number of offices I visited. Lenin, in particular, is frequently quoted in articles and speeches, including those of Sankara.

Pointing to several volumes of Lenin's *Collected Works* sitting on his desk, Babou Paulin Bamouni, the general director of *Carrefour Africain*, commented, "Marx, Engels, Lenin, we agree with the general framework. But little that they wrote applies directly to a country like Burkina. We're trying to apply it to condi-

tions of extreme underdevelopment, in which classes are not very clearly defined and there is no bourgeoisie like those that exist in Europe. And our proletariat numbers only 20,000."

Since Burkina has 7 million people, that means that the working class as such (excluding salaried senior civil servants, managers, and administrators) accounts for just 0.3 percent of the total population. The country's entire industrial base is very small, comprising a textile mill, a plant that processes oil from agricultural products, a bicycle factory, a sugar processing plant, a soap factory, and some other light industries. Only a few employ more than 200 workers.

Given this low level of economic development, Bamouni stressed, "We're trying to figure out our own road."

In training cadre, various works are used in study classes. According to Bamouni, "We use Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*, *Ultraleftism — An Infantile Disorder*, and *Two Tactics*. Also Stalin on the national question."

Political currents

There are several different organized political groups involved in the revolution. The main ones are:

- The Association of Communist Officers (ROC), led by Sankara.
- The Union of Communist Struggle (ULC), which has five ministers in the government. It came out of a Maoist current in the student movement, but no longer professes any particular allegiance to Peking's line.
- The Communist Group, a small formation with no ministers in the cabinet. It recently emerged from a split in the Voltaic Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), an organi-

zation that is in agreement with the Albanian CP and is hostile to the Burkinabè government.

• The Patriotic League for Development (Lipad), which generally looks to Moscow for political inspiration. Before August 1983, it was the largest single group on the left, but it has since split into several wings. One Lipad leader is a minister in the government, and a few head important projects. Others, however, have come into conflict with Sankara and the CNR.

None of these groups today present much of a public face. They do not have public headquarters and do not publish regular newspapers or bulletins. For some leaders of these groups, this reflects a desire to overcome the organizational and political divisions of the past and to work toward greater unity.

"We see the divisions in the world communist movement," Bamouni commented. "We're trying to work out our own stance." He added that the ultimate goal is to unify the various groups into "a united Communist Party. But that can't be done from the top down. The main thing is to work among the ranks, in order to build it up."

Some steps have been taken in this direction. At the same time, however, the conflict between an important wing of the Lipad leadership and the other groups has become extremely sharp.

In August 1984, a number of Lipad members who held cabinet positions were dropped from the government following a series of public polemics between them and other leaders. Some Lipad leaders were briefly detained, including Soumane Touré, the general secretary of the Burkinabè Union Confederation (CSB, formerly the Voltaic Union Confederation).

These conflicts have had repercussions within the union movement. Touré's CSB has been considerably weakened over the past year. Of the 26 unions originally in the federation, all but six have left it and now function as autonomous unions. The CSB was the only union federation that did not participate in the December budget conference.

In early January, Touré was brought before a People's Revolutionary Tribunal on charges of blocking a transfer of assets from the National Social Security Fund, of which he was a leading official, for the financing of various development projects. Although Touré was acquitted, he took advantage of the fact that the tribunal session was broadcast live on the radio to level charges that the government was corrupt and had embezzled billions of CFA francs.

The government publicly refuted Touré's accusations, in considerable detail. Touré was also detained pending further investigations of his conduct, which, according to Justice Minister Blaise Compaoré, carried "an undertone of threat to state security."

A propaganda campaign against Touré was also launched. For instance, a general assembly of the Kadiogo provincial CDR (the province around Ouagadougou) called for Touré to

be brought before a "revolutionary court martial" and accused him of being "a political and trade union anarchist who cannot be dissociated from imperialist pay."

On January 28, the CSB and nine other small public sector unions and student groups, including some led by the PCRV, issued a statement attacking the government. They charged that the provisions of the budget cutting the pay of civil servants had "reduced the workers' purchasing power." They also accused the government of "attacking democratic and trade union freedoms."

Response to charges

The government and its supporters responded to this political challenge in various ways.

As they have done in the past when confronted with political criticisms, the authorities took a number of administrative measures. Officials of the 10 groups signing the statement were suspended from their jobs by presidential decree. They were also barred from using public transport, benefitting from the no-rent provisions, or acquiring housing in the new housing complexes built by the CDRs. The Philippe Zinda Kaboré High School here in the capital was closed for several days to head off a planned antigovernment demonstration by a student group allied with some of the signatories of the January 28 statement.

At the same time, the Burkinabè leaders mobilized their own supporters. Various CDRs held assemblies and issued declarations supporting the governing CNR, including in Koudougou, Paura, Bazèga, Bobo-Dioulasso, and other towns and regions.

The Ouagadougou garrison CDR took up the charge that democratic rights were being restricted, stating, "In our opinion, the notion of freedom is intimately linked with class struggle. Democratic freedom today is the achievement of the popular and democratic revolution and this can benefit only the militants of the RDP. It is used by the people to assert their domination over their class enemies."

On February 6, a mass student rally was held in Ouagadougou. Sankara, who was one of the speakers, said that it was held in reply "to the imperialist radio stations that have announced with so much clamor that students, in particular grammar school students in Ouagadougou, have decided to boycott the CNR." Sankara said, "When students stand up in Ouagadougou . . ." But he was interrupted by chants of "Imperialism trembles!"

A few days later, the CDR at the University of Ouagadougou organized a rally of more than 2,600 students, a big majority of the total university enrollment. Slogans proclaiming "Down with anarcho-syndicalism!" are still up on the walls of university buildings.

An editorial in the March 8 *Carrefour Africain*, signed by Babou Paulin Bamouni, took up the question of whether the opposition to the government by the PCRV and a wing of the Lipad leadership represented a "political crisis." He argued that it did not, since the bulk

of the "peasantry, working class, petty bourgeoisie, and lumpenproletariat" continued to support the revolutionary process, as did a majority of the "revolutionary forces of the left."

In late February, leaders of the three largest union federations — the National Organizations of Free Trade Unions (ONSL), which accounts for 60 percent of all unionized workers), the National Conference of Burkinabè Workers (CNTB), and the Voltaic Workers Trade Union (USTV) — met with Sankara and Minister of Labor Fidèle Toé. Boniface Soudaye, speaking on behalf of the union delegation, said after the meeting that there was no "misunderstanding" between the government and the unions.

According to a Ouagadougou radio broadcast, Sankara "laid particular emphasis during the meeting on the role of the worker in the revolution and disclosed that an organ for discussions between the government and the trade unions would be set up to enable trade unions to participate in all levels of debate in a disciplined manner."

While the central leaders here have responded sharply to the actions and statements of the Soumane Touré wing of Lipad, they have made a distinction between it and other currents in the organization. In addition to Michel Tapsoba, who holds a cabinet position, Lipad leaders like Philippe Ouédraogo and Adama Touré have now broken with Soumane Touré and are more favorable to the government. In late February, former minister of foreign affairs Arba Diallo was released from detention and reinstated in the civil service.

In an interview conducted with foreign journalists in early March, Sankara was asked about Soumane Touré's case. He noted that the investigations were still continuing and that no decision had yet been made. Stating that "we fully understand" the calls by the CDRs for Touré's court martial, Sankara added, "But one should also understand that it is also our mission and our duty to safeguard dialogue. . . . We are in Burkina, land of revolution, land of tolerance, and land of the expression of even contradictory ideas."

Whatever the political difficulties facing the revolutionary process, including within the leaderships of the left-wing and anti-imperialist organizations, it is clear that the Burkinabè masses continue to actively support the struggle. That is attested to by their participation in the CDRs, by the tens of thousands who have joined the army, and by the tremendous mobilizations that have been undertaken to build up Burkina's economy.

It is that foundation that provides the best prospects for the revolution's further advance. □

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Advances made in military defense

Defense Minister announces new steps to enforce draft law

By Ellen Kratka

MANAGUA — "We have seen in the last months how the entire nation, and in particular the working and popular classes, has been spiritually and morally strengthened to bear with fortitude and dignity the imperialist encirclement and war that the country is suffering," Commander of the Revolution and Minister of Defense Humberto Ortega told the people of Nicaragua on February 7 in a nationally televised message. Ortega's talk described the current state of Washington's war against Nicaragua and outlined new measures to fortify the country's defenses.

Ortega explained that spearheading Washington's aggression are CIA-financed and -trained mercenaries and ex-National Guardsmen from the overturned capitalist regime headed by Anastasio Somoza.

Imperialism's goal at the moment, he said, is "to maintain the mercenary forces in constant military activity" in order to try to weaken Nicaragua's defenses and make a direct intervention easier without having to count on the use of large U.S. forces in that attempt."

The mercenary forces are being well-supplied to carry out this objective. Referring to the current debate in the U.S. Congress over whether to continue to fund the *contras*, Ortega pointed out that the key issue in this debate "is not the 14 million [dollars], but rather the political act." Continuing the war of aggression does not ride or fall on this appropriation bill. The bill is primarily an effort by the Reagan administration to win greater support for its course in Central America. The imperialists' supply of arms, trucks, planes, and food to the mercenaries "has not been stopped at any time," Ortega pointed out.

The mercenary army, Ortega explained, is an unavoidable necessity for imperialism since "for other reasons of a political and diplomatic character" it has not yet decided to intervene directly with its own troops.

No social base for 'contras'

A mercenary army, however, suffers from a fundamental flaw, Ortega pointed out. It does not have "a broad, massive social base" in the country from which to replenish its losses. Lacking this base, the *contras* have resorted to kidnapping hundreds of peasants and forcing them to serve in their guerrilla effort.

This sordid tactic is backfiring, however, as a result of a government amnesty for Nicaraguans involved in counterrevolutionary activity. Since this program went into effect more than a year ago, more than 2,000 have deserted the counterrevolutionary bands, including 1,500 in the Las Segovias region alone.

"The permanent pressure" of Nicaragua's army, militias, and special forces has put the *contras* in a "situation of a frankly defensive process," Ortega said. "They haven't even been able to take and hold small, remote villages in the wooded, mountainous zones where they currently operate."

The imperialists, he warned, now realize that there is no "secure future" for the mercenaries. "The real danger . . . is that as imperialism finds itself with its mercenary forces stricken . . . it could launch adventures of another type."

Therefore, Ortega affirmed, "the only thing we can count on is the ever greater and more intense preparation of the people in arms." This is what imperialism seeks to stop, just as it tries to break up the army and weaken the country's other organized defenses.

Ortega recalled that last November when President Reagan made saber-rattling charges that Nicaragua was getting MIG fighters from the Soviet Union, many people in Nicaragua believed an invasion was imminent.

This spurred a new understanding of the need to organize a "people's war" against U.S. aggression. New advances were made in military defense as working people began to recognize that organizing to defeat the *contras* also means "strengthening all the mechanisms of

active resistance in their maximum, massive, and popular expression in order to repel, bog down, and defeat the interventionist enemy that dares to invade our main cities, including Managua." And conversely, preparing to confront an invasion will allow the revolution to "smash in the shortest time possible, the counterrevolutionary mercenary forces."

Ortega praised the armed Nicaraguan people, saying that they have been "battle-hardened and tempered like steel" both through combat and the economic hardships "the war has inevitably caused us."

He noted, however, that "up until today we have been able to basically sustain the life of the country, guaranteeing a certain normality in certain spheres." But can we continue like this, he asked, "with this will of Mr. Reagan to close the door of dialogue with us, to openly ask for war against Nicaragua, to ask his spokesman [Caspar] Weinberger to call for a commercial blockade of Nicaragua?"

Advances in military training

"We believe," Ortega answered, "that if this unchanging policy of Mr. Reagan is maintained, inevitably the whole country will have to suffer equally the situation that this war is making us live through in these moments."

Ortega also took up the present development

Nicaraguans jail Somoza collaborator

By José G. Pérez

MANAGUA — A prominent former member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) has been found guilty of collaborating with Anastasio Somoza's secret police. Somoza's dictatorship was overthrown in 1979 by a popular insurrection led by the FSLN.

Augusto Montealegre Valle had been working with the FSLN since 1968 and played a leading role in Managua during the 1979 insurrection. Following the victory, he served as a captain in the army and a member of its general staff; as ambassador to Panama; and, most recently, as a functionary of the FSLN's Department of International Relations.

On February 28 Montealegre was expelled from the FSLN and accused of having been an informer for Somoza's Office of National Security (OSN) beginning in 1969. Based on documents found in the files of the OSN and testimony of several individuals, Montealegre was charged with having informed on numerous members of the Sandinista Front, including its central founder, Carlos Fonseca, and three members of its current National Directo-

rate.

At first Montealegre denied most of the charges, admitting only to having made some statements to the OSN while under arrest. He said that following the victory of the revolution he "took it for granted" that the appropriate bodies were already aware of his case. He claimed that Edén Pastora, then vice-minister of defense, had talked to him about it shortly after the victory. Pastora subsequently betrayed the revolution, becoming the head of a counterrevolutionary terrorist group.

In the middle of the trial, Montealegre decided to plead guilty to some charges, saying they were "errors produced by my weaknesses" which he had "begun to overcome a long time ago."

Montealegre was judged by the common criminal courts, not the anti-Somozaist people's tribunals. He was found innocent of the major charge — "a crime against international order" — and guilty of criminal conspiracy and endangerment. The judge gave him the minimum sentence for these convictions, a total of three years' imprisonment. □



José G. Pérez/IP

Nicaraguan defense minister Humberto Ortega.

of the army and militias and announced new draft call-ups and training programs.

He pointed out that the recently developed Irregular Combat Battalions (BLIs), the main army units being used against the contras, "have already created a feeling of fear and respect on the part of these mercenary forces."

The BLIs, in turn, depend on the success of the Patriotic Military Service (SMP), Nicaragua's draft. "The implementation of the Patriotic Military Service," Ortega continued, "has constituted a strategic achievement of the system of national defense. That is why imperialism and its agents have tried so hard to boycott and attack this strategic step of the revolution."

Ortega also praised the level of skill reached by the draftees in a short period of time. "We are convinced," he said, "that our soldiers are capable of performing in any military structure of any army in the world." The formation and training of the SMP has allowed Nicaragua to deal heavier blows to the enemy while keeping casualties among SMP troops to "infinitesimal" levels.

The greatest losses to Nicaraguan government forces, Ortega noted, were suffered earlier, before the more than 30,000 youths in the SMP were prepared. These losses occurred primarily among the "workers and peasants, who have basically been making up the Reserve Infantry Battalions, the local militias, and the border peasant militias."

Thus, moving the SMP troops into action also provided some breathing space for the army reserves and the militias. These forces, benefiting from their army experience, have now been strengthened, better organized, and more highly trained. They often play back-up roles for the BLIs on the battlefronts as well as defending their own territory.

Ortega also noted that the development of a stable army has helped economic production. Many production workers are in the reserves. Now that the reserves no longer are the principal force mobilized for the front, they are less affected by the ebb and flow of the war.

Enforcing the draft law

Ortega took up the problem of the small minority who have thus far evaded the draft

law. They have "indirectly lent themselves to the manipulations of the revolution's enemies ... which in practice is to contribute to the counterrevolutionary war," he said.

He explained that "in a state of war ... it is not possible to guarantee that the different activities of the country are carried out normally." But from here on, he emphasized, the Nicaraguan government will ensure greater compliance with the law. "We are not going to allow any fissure to develop in our country." The law, which specifies penalties for failing to register or show for call-up, Ortega affirmed, "must be applied with greater coherence, greater firmness, greater consciousness."

Ortega said that those who violate this law will find "the doors of the revolution closed" to them. Compliance will be a necessary pre-

New book of Nicaraguan speeches printed

A valuable new resource for the movement against the U.S. war in Central America is now available. Pathfinder Press in New York has just published *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution*, a collection of speeches by Sandinista leaders and documents of the Nicaraguan revolution. It will soon be available through Pathfinder distributors in Britain and Australia as well.

As editor Bruce Marcus says in the book's preface, "Getting out the story of this revolution and its accomplishments is one of the most important tasks of its supporters as they work to mount the broadest possible opposition to Washington's war. Learning the truth and telling it to others — that is the first step to help defend the people of Nicaragua and support their right to national sovereignty."

The new, 400-page book provides a firsthand record of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua. It explains, through the words of more than a dozen of Nicaragua's leaders, why that revolution has become the focal point of world politics — why it is an inspiration to workers, farmers, and oppressed peoples throughout the world and the nemesis of imperialism.

This volume follows an earlier publication

requisite to getting a job, education, social services, and other benefits since "those who should enjoy the revolution in spite of our limitations are those who really defend and love it."

In addition, the practice of exempting those who are "indispensable" to their workplace will be eliminated. These exemptions, Ortega, said, are sometimes a cover for "buddyism" and other abuses "which do not match the moral demand, the political reality, the reality of the war that wants to crush us all equally."

New inductions through the Patriotic Military Service are taking place from January to July of this year. Two additional forms of registration will be implemented. The first — for 17- and 18-year-old men — will form a pool of youth who will be called up this year only in the event of a direct U.S. troop invasion or a qualitative worsening of the war.

The second will be for 25- to 30-year-old men who will then be part of the new Reserve Military Service. The idea is to strengthen the BLIs by guaranteeing them greater stability and establishing permanent skills among their members.

Anyone younger than 25 who is not called to active duty, and those up to age 40 who are able, will also become part of the Reserves.

Everyone else — "all the young people, adults, women, state functionaries, functionaries of the mass organizations, factory workers, union officials, students ... all our people," Ortega stated — will be encouraged to join the militias. □

of Pathfinder Press, *Sandinistas Speak*, that included speeches from before the victory of the revolution to 1981. The 41 speeches, interviews, articles, and resolutions in *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution* cover the period from early 1982 to the end of 1984.

While dealing with many of the accomplishments and challenges of the revolution — education, land reform, women's emancipation, economic development, relations with the isolated Atlantic Coast — the speeches in this period were all given in the context of the rapidly escalating war of aggression by the U.S. government. In the very first speech in the collection, for example, Sergio Ramírez discusses how "U.S. working people can stop intervention in Central America."

To help bring this book to activists in the fight against intervention in Central America, Pathfinder is planning a big promotional effort for the April 20 demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and other cities.

Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution can be ordered from Pathfinder distributors at: 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10014; 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL; or P.O. Box 37 Leichhardt, Sydney, NSW 2040. □

Revolution makes big achievements

Australian, New Zealand 'brigadistas' get first-hand view

By Elaine Edwards

[The following article appeared 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.]

* * *

For three weeks in January, 89 Australians and five New Zealanders were given the opportunity to visit Cuba and view the tremendous gains made in that country since its 1959 revolution.

They were in Cuba as part of the Southern Cross work brigade, organised by the Australian and New Zealand Cuba Friendship Societies. This was only the second year that a work brigade from the South Pacific had gone to Cuba.

Their host in Cuba was ICAP — the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples — which organised a wide range of activities to enable brigade members to gain a fuller understanding of Cuban life.

In return, for part of the time they were there, brigade members volunteered their labour to help pick oranges for Cuba's citrus industry.

The brigade was welcomed to Cuba by Guillen Zelaya, vice president of ICAP, who visited both Australia and New Zealand as a guest of the Cuba Friendship Societies in 1984.

Cuba's people

In Cuba, Zelaya told the brigade, "you will have the experience of getting acquainted with a hard-working, courageous and internationalist people, who are as enthusiastic as on the revolution's first day.

"Seven days ago there were the celebrations for the 26th anniversary of the revolution. We reached this date with many achievements, demonstrating to the world that a united and conscious people can do anything, and can offer assistance to poor and underdeveloped countries."

Zelaya also pointed out that Cuba "had managed to develop despite U.S. imperialism. We have been subjected to countless attacks and our problems increased with the election of the Reagan administration. We have developed our troop militias in the last four years to be able to defend ourselves. But they will never be able to make this country of giants kneel down."

Zelaya finished his welcome by explaining that Nicaragua also was defending itself against U.S. aggression, and calling for inter-



Prensa Latina

Members of Territorial Troop Militia. "Brigadistas" from Australia and New Zealand were told: "The people are prepared to resist the enemy with any kind of weapon, from the most sophisticated to the most elementary."

national solidarity in the fight for peace.

In the following weeks, brigade members had the chance to see for themselves the truth of Zelaya's comments, as they visited schools, hospitals, factories, farms; heard lectures on various topics; met with representatives of some of the mass organisations that Cubans belong to; and questioned Cuban working people everywhere they went.

The first obvious signs of the achievements of the Cuban revolutionary process could be seen just by looking around: unlike the Cuba before 1959 and the other Latin American countries today, widespread poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, are problems no longer seen.

Also apparent was the absence of discrimination towards Black Cubans, a fact especially commented on by the two Aboriginal members of the brigade. Up to 40 percent of Cuba's population are estimated to be of African descent. However, questions about race would often meet with a puzzled response from young Cubans. "But how can you tell if someone is black or white?" was a common answer. "Someone may look black but then you look at their mother and she's white."

Rogelio Díaz, of the National Institute of Internal Demand (which carries out research of

an economic and social nature to help plan production closer to what people need and want), was one of those who explained to the brigade some of the gains in more detail.

The development of new industries and factories has helped lead to unemployment being eradicated as a problem for Cuba, as well as producing more goods for the population.

While most of the countries in Latin America are in economic crisis, suffering under huge foreign debts, Cuba is experiencing economic growth, with a rate of 7.4 percent being achieved in 1984.

"Because there is no unemployment or underemployment, and most households have more than one person working, there is a high purchasing power," Díaz explained.

Social services

"Added to this, a number of services are provided free of charge — health, education, sports events, sports practices, and community services such as funerals. Bus services cost five cents and there are no direct taxes. There is a broad network of school and work lunchrooms — these are free for students and 50 cents for workers.

"At present 50 percent of households don't pay rent and through a new law those paying

rent now will soon stop paying and instead own their own houses."

Díaz also explained the rationing law, which was brought in during the early years of the revolution to ensure that everyone had access to essential goods that were in short supply. Rationed goods still exist, and their prices are kept frozen to protect families with the lowest incomes, but these goods are also now available in the free market at higher prices.

"In 1970," said Díaz, "out of each peso, 94 percent was spent on rationed goods. With the increase in incomes and availability of goods, in 1984 only 30 percent was spent in this area."

Living standards

The result of all this is that "despite restrictions on the availability of consumer goods, the standard of living of the Cuban population is on the increase consistently — for example, there are 80 TVs per 100 families, 140 radios per 100 families, 85 percent of houses have electricity."

Education levels are also rising each year, with a large number of Cubans engaged in some sort of study. From a situation 26 years ago where a quarter of the population were illiterate, Cuba now has 3.1 million students of all ages at the different educational levels.

Brigade members were also able to visit different educational institutions — child-care centres, high schools, universities — and view this progress for themselves.

The brigade was also taken to visit some hospitals and talk to public health officials, to gain a better understanding of Cuba's health system. Cuba has won international acclaim for its success in rising from the death and disease that haunt Third World countries to match, and in some cases, surpass, the health-care level of many advanced capitalist countries.

Psychiatric hospital

A visit to a psychiatric hospital provided an especially clear illustration of the changes that had occurred, for this hospital had existed before the revolution.

Photographs on the wall, of patients imprisoned in dirty, barbaric conditions, were a grim reminder of what the hospital had been. It was hard to believe it was the same institution that the brigade saw, with its new wards, gardens, work areas and classrooms.

One of the staff members who had worked at the hospital since the 1950s described how the patients "had been caged like animals — when we moved them into the new buildings we had to teach them how to live as humans again."

This involved also teaching them how to read and write, first by incorporating them in the nationwide literacy campaign of 1961 which taught basic educational skills to the whole Cuban population, and today by established schooling at the hospital itself.

Viewing the care given to psychiatric patients made all the more scandalous the lie spread by some capitalist newspapers that Cuba had cynically shipped some of its pa-

tients to the United States in 1980, together with a number of other Cubans who left at that time.

People's Power

Another aspect of the hospital's functioning was that, through regular meetings, the patients participated in its management. And this was something the brigade members saw wherever they visited: those involved in a workplace or institution also helping manage it.

The brigade was able to have a short meeting with some representatives of a local People's Power, the governing bodies in Cuba which involve working people in decision-making from the neighbourhood level to the provincial and national levels.

Meetings were also held with Communist Party and Young Communist League representatives, who explained the leading role these organisations play in the direction of the country.

Discussions also occurred with the Federation of Cuban Women, the Central Organisation of Cuban Trade Unions and some Committees for the Defence of the Revolution.

Through all these meetings, brigade members were able to see the high level of democracy that exists in Cuba; to see that it is the workers and farmers of Cuba who decide how their country is run and in whose interests.

Role of women

Of special interest to many of the brigade members was seeing how the role of Cuban women had changed since the revolution. What they found was Cuban women stepping forward to begin taking an equal place alongside men in the development of their country.

More and more women are being incorporated into paid employment, so they now make up nearly 10 percent of the workforce in a range of occupations. Child-care centres have been built throughout the country, paid maternity leave is a right, and abortion and con-

traception are easily available.

Sexual discrimination is against the law and wife-beating and rape are now virtually non-existent. The government actively encourages women's participation in all aspects of life, including placing priority on continuing to build facilities such as child-care centres, the short supply of which still places restrictions on women's fully equal incorporation in society.

Equal responsibilities

Alongside all these measures, the government launched an educational campaign against discriminatory attitudes and prejudices. This included the introduction of the Family Code, a law which specifies the equal responsibilities of both partners in a marriage for housework and looking after children.

A woman representing the Young Communist League explained to brigade members that "one of our fundamental tasks is to work towards the full equality of women in our society. Socially and legally women have all the possibilities — what we're fighting against is the subjective elements.

"The battle for equality is not easy, it needs many years to overcome prejudices existing in both men and women. Changes in ideas are slower than changes in material conditions. . . . But it is a battle which we're winning gradually."

Cuba has set itself over the next 15 years the task of concentrating all its major forces on economic development. A visit to Holguín province, in the south of Cuba, allowed brigade members to view some of the advances being made.

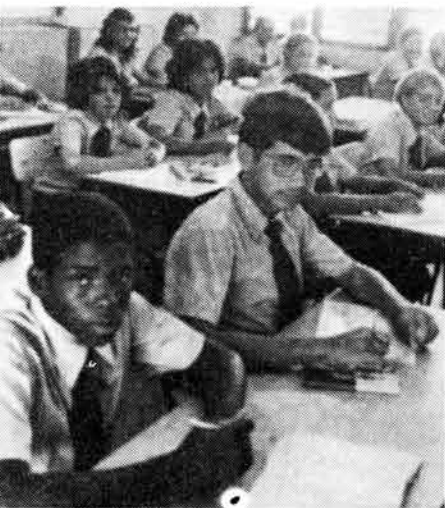
The trip to Holguín included visits to a sugar mill, nickel plant and factory for making cane harvesting machinery, as well as hearing explanations of future plans to develop the region.

Economic blockade

While in Holguín, the brigade learnt in more detail of the effects of the economic blockade imposed by the United States which severely obstructs Cuba's international trade. For example, the U.S. refuses to buy goods from other countries that have been made with Cuban nickel.

Brigade members were especially interested in hearing of the role played by the Australian government recently in helping create difficulties for the Cuban economy. In discussions aimed at reaching an international sugar agreement on prices and quotas, the Australian government at the last minute sabotaged an agreement being reached with the suspected intention of deliberately affecting Cuba, which relies on sugar as its major export.

Difficulties in selling goods have created problems for Cuba in gaining money to buy needed products. The brigade was given the example of safety equipment such as steel-capped boots being one of the wide range of items in short supply because of these disruptions. It is only its trade with the Soviet Union and the other workers states of Eastern Europe



Students at Lenin Vocational School.

that has allowed Cuba's economy to grow as it has.

In Holguín also, the brigade learnt more vividly about another problem facing the Cuban economy — the need to divert resources towards defence. Throughout the 26 years of its revolution, Cuba has had to face U.S. aggression and defend itself accordingly.

Since 1980, with the rise of revolutionary movements in Central America, and the U.S. no longer bogged down in Vietnam, this aggression has been stepped up. Cuba, like Nicaragua, has had to fortify itself for an invasion.

The people in one neighbourhood in Holguín took part in a military exercise for the brigade, to show how every Cuban is prepared and ready to defend their country.

As the brigade toured this neighbourhood, everyone acted as though an attack was really happening: school children ran to bomb shelters, make-believe injured were carried away, homemade weapons began to be produced, and militia members rushed to an apartment block to defend it from "invaders."

Neighbourhood defence

It was explained that every neighbourhood in Cuba is organised into similar defence zones. "We know that imperialism is immensely stronger from a military point of view, so we have the concept of war of the entire people," said Guillermo Benítez, a leading official of Holguín province.

"The people are prepared to resist the enemy with any kind of weapon, from the most sophisticated to the most elementary. If every old woman heats up a pot of water and throws it in the face of a U.S. soldier, then thousands of U.S. soldiers will be injured. Resistance can continue in any part of the country, even if the top leadership has disappeared."

Seeing the dislocations caused to the Cuban economy by imperialist aggression made all the more significant to the brigade something else they saw in Cuba: examples of the unselfish assistance given to Third World peoples by Cuba despite its own economic needs.

Currently there are 22,000 scholarship students from more than 80 countries studying in Cuba to become doctors, engineers, technicians and the like. They mainly study at the expense of the Cuban government.

Namibian students

The brigade visited a school for Namibian students on the Isle of Youth, where the students explained what it had meant for them being given the opportunity to come to Cuba. Most of them had been refugees, survivors of a 1978 massacre by South African troops in which many of their family members had been slaughtered.

Cuba's aid does not stop there — many Cubans go abroad to assist other countries to meet the basic health and education needs of their people, build up their economies and defend themselves. There are more Cuban doctors overseas, for example, in over 25 countries, than doctors working for the United Nations

World Health Organisation.

Twenty Cubans who had worked on internationalist projects came to talk to the brigade about their experiences. They explained why so many Cubans volunteer to leave their families to work in assisting other countries to develop.

International solidarity

"Cubans feel that it is our duty to help other peoples because the Cuban revolution would not exist today if it were not for the international support that Cuba has received over the years," said one woman.

"I am the daughter of a campesino [poor farmer] but I have been able to become a doctor — this could never have happened before the revolution. I want other peoples to be able to share the gains Cubans have made."

In addition to economic assistance, Cuba

gives political support to liberation movements. Brigade members took part in a meeting in solidarity with the peoples of Central America, which heard from Cuban, Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalan revolutionaries.

For many of the brigade members, it was this spirit of friendship and solidarity, that is such a dominant feature of Cuba, that was strong in their minds when they returned to Australia and New Zealand.

Since their return, there have been media interviews and meetings with brigade members in which they have tried to break through the widely-spread propaganda against Cuba by telling the truth about what they saw — a country which provides a beacon for working people everywhere of what can be achieved when workers and farmers become the governing power. □

Canada

5,000 protest Reagan

Demonstration in Quebec builds April 20 actions

By Gary Kettner

[The following article appeared in the March 25 issue of *Socialist Voice*, a fortnightly newspaper published in Montreal that reflects the views of the Revolutionary Workers League, Canadian section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

QUEBEC CITY — Five thousand protesters from across Quebec converged on the Quebec National Assembly here March 17 to demonstrate their opposition to the "Shamrock Summit" between Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

U.S. aggression against Nicaragua was most prominent among the many targets of the overwhelmingly youthful crowd. Opposition to the U.S. and Canadian nuclear arms build-up — cruise missile tests, "Star Wars," and the new radar warning network to be built in northern Canada — was another popular theme. Many demonstrators also carried placards protesting the failure of both governments to deal with the problem of acid rain.

The Mulroney-Reagan talks underlined the close military and political collaboration between the Canadian and U.S. governments in the war drive. The demonstrators chanted "Reagan — murderer! Mulroney — accomplice!" to sum up their view of the U.S.-Canadian collaboration.

The demonstration was organized by the Coalition for Peace, Justice, and Freedom, a broad coalition of unions, youth organizations, women's groups, Central America solidarity committees, and peace and ecology groups.

The success of the demonstration was

another indication of the widespread opposition to the war in Central America and solidarity with the people of Nicaragua. It will encourage building toward the next major anti-war protests, scheduled for April 20.

The Reagan administration's recent open call for the overthrow of the government of Nicaragua adds new urgency and importance to these upcoming actions. The broad support for the April actions in the U.S. marks an important step forward for the antiwar movement in that country.

Plans for the Toronto April 20 march against intervention in Central America and the Caribbean are now taking shape. The Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC), has announced that the demonstration will begin at Moss Park (Queen St. at Jarvis) adjacent to the Canadian Forces Armory. The march will proceed through downtown Toronto, past the U.S. consulate, to a rally at City Hall.

The demonstration has been endorsed by the Metropolitan Toronto Labor Council, the Toronto Disarmament Network, Canadian Action for Nicaragua, and the Against Cruise Testing Coalition. Other endorsers include: John Donaldson, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labor; Paul Heffernan, Toronto Local President, Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Region 5; Spadina NDP [New Democratic Party] Foreign Policy Committee; Metro NDP Antiwar Committee; and the Dovercourt NDP Executive.

Thousands of leaflets publicizing the demonstration have been printed. Distribution began at the March 9 International Women's Day demonstration. Volunteers and funds are

urgently needed. For more information contact TAIC, 427 Bloor St. W., second floor, Toronto.

In the United States work continues to build the April actions for Peace, Jobs, and Justice in Washington, D.C. The actions planned include educational, cultural, and religious activities on April 19; lobbying of Congress and non-violent civil disobedience on April 22; and a national march and rally on April 20. Similar

actions are being organized in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Houston, and other cities.

Broad local coalitions to build the actions have been organized in major cities across the United States. The actions have been endorsed by a wide range of national disarmament, solidarity, Black, and Latino organizations and by five unions: the United Food and Commercial Workers, International Association of

Machinists, United Farm Workers, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.

Opposition to racism and apartheid is one of the themes of the actions. It is expected that the April march will include many of the forces that have participated in the recent widespread U.S. protests against the apartheid regime in South Africa. □

Britain

Miners' defense campaign launched

More than 150 NUM members still in prison for strike activity

By Dick Withecombe

[The following article appeared in the March 25 issue of *International Viewpoint*, a fortnightly review published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

* * *

During the course of the miners' strike over ten thousand miners have been arrested, along with fifty women supporters; 5,000 miners have been injured on picket lines, and four have died. Miners and their families have not only had to endure the physical hardship of the strike, they have also found themselves in the dock for offences ranging from assault on police officers to that of "unlawful assembly."

The miners and their families have committed no crime except to fight for their jobs and communities and to have kept on fighting even when the TUC [Trades Union Congress] and other trade union leaders had failed them. The full armoury of the state has been unleashed to punish the miners for their resistance. They are political prisoners.

A campaign is being launched in Britain to raise money and solidarity for those in prison and to support their families. Many of them have also been sacked [fired] by the National Coal Board and will, therefore, face added hardship when they are released. Rank-and-file activists internationally have shown massive support for the strike, and it is vital that this kind of support continues in defence of the prisoners and their families.

During the 11½ months of the miners' strike, out of the 10,000 miners arrested more than 150 have been imprisoned. Many more are being held on remand — for instance over 100 in Armley in Leeds, Yorkshire, alone. Towards the end of the strike, the courts began to take full advantage by hearing many cases that have been pending for weeks, some up to six months.

The first woman, Brenda Greenwood, was jailed in Risley for defying bail conditions that instructed her to keep away from the picket at

Ollerton in Nottinghamshire, when she attempted to prevent her husband from returning to work!

In South Wales, 103 miners are still waiting for the courts to hear their cases. They are accused of causing criminal damage during an occupation of the cranes at Llanwern Steel Works. In Kent, miners' leader Terry French has been sentenced to five years imprisonment.

In Pontefract, Yorkshire, a major campaign has been established in defence of nine miners arrested (one of whom has been sentenced to six months imprisonment) in the small mining village of Fitzwilliam, in connection with incidents on July 9, when police invaded the village late at night wreaking havoc in their wake — leaving three people in hospital. In Lancashire, Bold NUM spokesperson Dennis Pennington has been jailed for three months.

Many miners who have been arrested have had stringent bail conditions imposed on them, even before their cases have been heard in court. Peter Smith, Branch Secretary of Fryston colliery in Yorkshire, was banned from the county and forced to live in Southport, separated from his wife and family. When eventually his case was heard, he was found to be innocent of all charges.

The courts were being used to break up the determination of striking miners. Police were concentrating on arresting miners who they identify as the main strike organisers and spokespeople, who also seem to be incurring the most severe sentences.

In the majority of the coalfields, defence campaigns are being established. Several have existed for months, raising money for the families of miners in prison, organising messages of support, and major rallies, meetings, and publicity. Recently a national campaign was established with striking miners and miners' wives attending from all the coalfields with the exception of Durham and Lancashire represented.

Below is a list of miners who are in prison — overall there are over 150. Messages of sup-

port are especially welcome:

In H.M. Prison, Armley, Leeds LS12 2TJ: Garry Millward; S. Neath; Terence Cap-Stick; Clive Thompson; Robert Latham; Ian Black; Paul Truman; Michael Eyrebowho; M. Hobson; Steve Wakefield; Neil Marshall.

In H.M. Prison, Lincoln, Greetwell Road, Lincoln LN2 4BD:

Steven Wakefield; Steven Gregory; Victor Gregory; A. Edwards; S. Meeth; Jimmy Lees.

In H.M. Prison, Featherston, New Road, Wolverhampton WV10 7PU:

John Ellis; Mark Glore; Peter Newbold; Billy Taylor; Mark Grove.

In H.M. Prison, Ranby, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 8EU:

Robert Andrews; M. Wyville; Peter Cooper; Ron Staniland; Paul Brothwell.

In North Sea DC, Frieston, Boston, Lancashire PE22 0QX:

Todd Booth; Chris Hyman; John Wallace.

In H.M. Prison, Strangeways, Southall Street, Manchester M60:

Chris Thomas.

In H.M. Prison, Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18:

Terry French B (five years).

In H.M. Prison, Haverigg, Millam, Cumbria:

Peter Hurst G78282.

In H.M. Prison, Cardiff, Knox Road, Cardiff CF2:

Russel Shankland 883752; Dean Hancock 899410.

In H.M. Prison, Sudbury, Derby DE6 5H: Andre Bradley; Kevin Neal.

In Sudbury Open Prison, Derby DE6 5HW: David James; Peter Pearson; Michael Southwell.

For more information about the Yorkshire campaign, write to: South Yorkshire Defence Campaign, 73 West Street, Sheffield. Tel: Sheffield 701384.

A national campaign for the prisoners is about to be launched and information about this can be obtained from Martin Walker, 01 854 8888. □

Torture in West Bank prison documented

'An institutionalized system that works on all Palestinian detainees'

By Jonathan Kuttab

[The following article is reprinted from the March issue of *Arab Perspectives*, a monthly magazine published in Washington, D.C., by the Arab Information Center. The author is a Palestinian lawyer and director of Law in the Service of Man, the affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists in the occupied West Bank.]

* * *

Law in the Service of Man, the affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, has just released a report entitled "Torture and Intimidation in the West Bank, the Case of Al-Fara'a Prison." This report documents the practices of the Israeli authorities in the prison of Al-Fara'a near Nablus in the West Bank. This is a prison run by the Israeli Army rather than the Israeli prison services authority.

The bulk of the report consists of eyewitness accounts in the form of sworn affidavits, taken first-hand by the trained staff of Law in the Service of Man from various former prisoners. The affidavits, together with the accompanying commentary, describe a system of intimidation and harassment, mistreatment and torture. All of this treatment is designed with the specific intent of obtaining from the Palestinian detainees confessions and denunciations of other Palestinians.

The value of these accounts does not lie only in the fact that they constitute solid, authentic, well-documented proof of the violations of the human rights of Palestinian prisoners, but also in the documentation of the role that the confessions play within the system of military justice imposed upon Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The harassment, mistreatment, and torture of the Palestinians usually occur during the initial interrogation, immediately following arrests.

The Palestinians are usually arrested shortly after midnight in an atmosphere that is deliberately intended to create maximum psychological disorientation and fear. Large numbers of soldiers enter private houses. Needless to say, no arrest warrant is produced. The detainee is sometimes blindfolded; his house is searched, particularly for books and publications. He is then hustled off into the night towards one or another of the military compounds.

Military Order No. 398 permits the authorities to hold such a person up to 18 days without a trial and without being brought before a military court judge and without being charged with any offense whatsoever. It is during this period that most of the mistreatment and torture occurs.

It is important to note that during this time, the prisoner is usually held in utter isolation from the outside world and from other Palestinian prisoners in order to maximize the impact of the mistreatment he receives. An atmosphere of intimidation and terror is created around him, and he is subjected to various forms of physical and psychological pressure in order to obtain his confession.

During this initial period, no attorney is permitted to see the detainee. While the military orders are clear that a detainee is entitled to legal counsel of his or her choice, the same military order qualifies this right by stating that it may be suspended or denied if deemed necessary for the security of the state or in order to avoid interference with the process of interrogation. As a matter of course, lawyers are almost never permitted to see their clients until after a confession is signed.

As to the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Israeli apologists, whenever faced with the charges of torture in prisons, always advance the argument that the Red Cross is allowed to see prisoners.

But Red Cross visits are not a guarantee that no torture occurs, for two major reasons: First, because the Red Cross is not allowed to communicate to the press or to the outside world the substance of what it finds out or even the dates of visits to the detainees. Therefore, when the Red Cross comes across cases of clear and persistent torture, it must give the information to the Israeli officials but not to the outside world.

This restriction became very evident when a team from the *Sunday Times* of London investigated allegations of torture several years back. The Israeli rebuttal that the Red Cross had seen the prisoners in question simply prompted the reply that the Red Cross has never revealed the results of its investigation of charges of torture of these individuals. Therefore, the fact that the Red Cross has seen them cannot be used to prove that they were not tortured.

Mr. Niell McDermott, General Secretary of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), which co-published the report, has issued a similar challenge to the Israeli authorities in his statement before the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

The second reason that the Red Cross cannot prevent torture is that the Red Cross is not permitted to see detainees during the first 14 days of their detention. It is precisely during this initial period that most of the torture and mistreatment occurs.

In the report by Law in the Service of Man, in section four, several detainees described

what happened when they, in fact, did complain to the Red Cross about the torture to which they were subjected. Such complaints to the Red Cross resulted in new punishment of prisoners and in much more severe beatings of the prisoners after the Red Cross representatives had left.

The types of pressures and methods that are used in order to obtain the confession are described in detail in the affidavits provided by the prisoners.

Methods used include isolation, psychological disorientation, placing a hood over the heads of the detainees and keeping them handcuffed for hours or days on end, sleep deprivation, making them stand in narrow cells filled with filthy water, forcing them to stand naked in the rain at night, forcing them to take hot and cold showers alternatively, beating them on the genitals, kicking them with steel-capped shoes, burning with lighted cigarettes, dousing them with buckets of urine and cold water, making them stand against the wall with their hands over their heads for hours on end, frequent beatings and insults and threats, prolonged deprivation of food, and a consistent pattern of humiliation, curses, brutalization, and threats of a sexual nature.

One favorite device seems to be to threaten sexual abuse against members of the family of the detainee.

It is important to note here that the purpose of this torture and mistreatment is specifically to obtain confessions. These confessions are written in Hebrew by an Israeli officer, often not the same person who conducts the initial interrogation, who takes the statement after the prisoner has been "broken." The statement is almost always taken in Hebrew and the prisoner is forced to sign it. Most prisoners do not speak or read Hebrew.

The value of the confession is that it serves as the primary source of evidence and the basis for the conviction of the prisoner at the military trial that follows. In fact, the confession is usually used to formulate charges against the prisoner.

While most convictions in the military courts are based on confessions in Hebrew, the courts do not use such confessions as the sole basis of the conviction. This is technically correct because Israeli military courts require a *dvarma*, which means "something else." This could be a minor item of evidence not related directly to the offense with which the prisoner is being charged.

To illustrate what this means I will relate the story of seven Palestinian youths who were charged with participation in demonstrations. They all denied the charge but were convicted

anyway on the basis of a confession coerced out of an eighth youth who named them in his statement.

The youth later renounced his initial confession and stated under oath in the courtroom that it had been elicited from him under torture. The judge refused to accept his statement and refused to believe the witnesses for the seven youths, who testified that the youths had been in a different place at the time of the demonstration.

The *dvarma* — “something else” — used to support the confession was the testimony of one Israeli soldier who stated that a demonstration did occur on the stated day in the village of Sa’ir, according to the charge sheet. That soldier had not seen, nor could he identify, any of the seven defendants. However his testimony that there had been a demonstration that day was considered sufficient corroboration of the charges to serve as a *dvarma*, and all seven youths were convicted.

An Israeli apologist may claim that there is a procedure for challenging the admissibility into evidence of any statement or confession whenever it is claimed that the confession is taken under duress or torture. Again, this is technically correct.

Whenever a Palestinian lawyer claims that the confession of his client is taken under torture, the military court judge will stop the trial and hold a hearing in chambers known in Hebrew as *mishpat zuta*. This is a session held in secret, on the single question of admissibility of the confession.

At this hearing both sides are permitted to bring their witnesses. The defendant cannot usually produce any witness to substantiate his own testimony as to the torture to which he was subjected. This is so because the torturers usually use nicknames and do not reveal their true identity. In addition, most of the torture occurs while the Palestinian prisoner is hooded and therefore cannot see his tormentors.

The officer who takes the confession used in the trial is usually different from the members of the *Shinbet* (secret police) who are the ones who conduct the torture. This means that the only testimony on behalf of the client in most such hearings is the testimony of the prisoner himself. On behalf of the prosecution, the officer who actually took the confession testifies that he treated the prisoner well and that he merely translated the prisoner’s statements, which were given of the prisoner’s own free will.

The almost inevitable results of a *mishpat zuta* is that the confession will be considered admissible and the trial will be resumed. Experienced lawyers who have been trying military court cases for over 10 years can boast of no more than four or five incidents when a *mishpat zuta* succeeded in ruling out a confession. When the trial is resumed, the confession is used as the primary basis for conviction.

The accusation of torture leveled in the report of Law in the Service of Man is not made lightly.

International law distinguishes between mistreatment of prisoners and torture. Torture is viewed as the systematic process of employing physical and psychological pressure upon a prisoner with the specific purpose of obtaining denunciations, confessions, or information, or for the sadistic purpose of inflicting pain. This is different from the definition of mistreatment of prisoners, also prohibited by international law, where the purpose is to generally harass, intimidate, beat-up, and otherwise create discomfort for prisoners.

What makes the case of Law in the Service of Man convincing when it alleges that torture occurs is the close interrelationship between the system of torture and the manufacturing of confessions, which are necessary for the system of military justice imposed in the West Bank. This system requires that wherever possible, a confession is obtained from every person who is detained before he is brought to trial. There are few cases where individuals have escaped court trial precisely because they did not break down and confess during their periods of interrogation. In such cases that person is usually released.

The very large percentage of cases which are based primarily on a signed confession in Hebrew indicates that the practice of torture in

Israeli prisons is not a passing phenomenon, nor is it carried out by a few psychopathic prison guards. Rather, it is an institutionalized system that works consistently on all Palestinians who are detained in Israeli prisons.

One last point that needs to be made in this regard, is that there is no appeal from the decisions of a military court. It is impossible to apply for amnesty to the military governor of the West Bank. Such appeals are almost never successful, and lawyers who file them do not usually even get a response to them. As for regular legal appeal of the decision, there is no procedure or avenue for appeal. The decision of the military court is final.

The report of Law in the Service of Man and the International Commission of Jurists simply documents the cases of incidents that are known to be common, everyday occurrences in the West Bank. The hope is that by documenting them carefully and objectively, attention can be focused on this phenomenon.

Experience in other contexts has also shown that the most effective way to fight torture is publicity. It is hoped that information and exposure of the issue of torture in the West Bank may contribute in a small way to reducing the suffering of those who live under this system. □

DOCUMENTS

On Grenada’s anniversary

Statement of Grenada Nationals in Toronto

[The following statement was released in March by Len Brathwaite, for the Organization of Grenada Nationals in Canada. For further information on this organization, write to: Organization of Grenada Nationals, Box 315, Station O, Toronto, Canada M4A 2N9.]

* * *

Six years ago, on March 13, 1979, Eric Gairy’s repressive government was overthrown by the New Jewel Movement, bringing to power the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) — the first revolution in the English-speaking Caribbean. In the words of the new prime minister, Maurice Bishop, “This revolution is for work, for decent housing and health services, and for a bright future for our children and our great-grandchildren.”

The PRG measured up well in the four and a half years of its life. The many gains of the young revolution were startling. Unemployment was reduced from 49% to 12%, new laws ensured the right to strike, parish councils were set up for the people’s participation, education and health services were made free for all, scholarships were available, adult literacy programmes and agro-industries were established, a new land-reform law was enacted, the rights of women were upgraded, a housing programme went into effect, and a new inter-

national airport was under construction. In 1982 the World Bank reported that Grenada had the best managed economy in the English-speaking Caribbean and the highest economic growth in the Western Hemisphere.

Many of these gains were rolled back by the disastrous overthrow of the revolution in October 1983. We, the Grenada Nationals, believe that the People’s Revolutionary Government was destroyed from within by the selfish ambitions of Bernard Coard and those in the Central Committee of the party who followed him. They were obviously the unconscious allies of the CIA.

They ordered the house arrest of Maurice Bishop, two of his cabinet ministers, and a trade union president. They arrested Kendrick Radix and George Louison and threw them into Richmond Hill Prison. In our view this clique was also responsible for the assassination of Maurice Bishop, three of his cabinet ministers and two trade union presidents — Unison Whiteman, Jaqueline Creft, Norris Bain, Fitzroy Bain, and Vincent Noel. Other innocent Grenadians were also killed.

Following these tragic events, Coard and his new Revolutionary Military Council inflicted a brutal curfew on all the people of the island amounting to house arrest. This tragedy of vio-

lence opened the door for the invasion by the United States and their Caribbean lackeys.

On October 25, when Grenada was invaded, Ronald Reagan announced that the invasion was "in the vital interest" of the United States. Later, in a TV interview, U.S. Rear Admiral Robert McKenzie stated that the invasion plan executed in Grenada was drafted by him in 1981 before the military-naval manoeuvre code-named "Amber and the Amberines."

We, the Organization of Grenada Nationals in Toronto, wish to disassociate ourselves from all groups campaigning for the release of those charged with the assassinations. At the

same time we call for the immediate withdrawal of all United States and other foreign troops, and an open trial of those charged. It is impossible for democracy to function in an occupied country.

In a radio/TV address to the nation on March 23, 1983, Maurice Bishop spoke these ringing words, "Our enemies had better try to understand the deep pride and dignity of our people and the courageous way in which we have always faced up to difficulties. They will do well to recall the heroic history of struggle and resistance of our people from the days of Fedon through Butler and Marryshow up to the present." □

New Caledonia

'The worker will have a voice'

Proindependence union organizes Kanaks, other workers

By Eileen Morgan

[The following article appeared 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.]

* * *

The Kanak and Exploited Workers Union (USTKE) was set up on December 1, 1981. Speaking at his Auckland press conference on March 14, Claude Wema, the union's first vice-president, explained that Kanak workers had found that it was not possible to work through the already-existing trade unions, which were controlled either from France or by the French settlers.

"The Kanak has been invisible, has been ignored," he said, "whether it be as a worker in a trade union, or at school. For this reason we have had to take our destiny in our own hands."

As a union, the USTKE is committed to the struggle for Kanak independence. It is one of the groups which united last year to form the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), and Claude described it as "the transmission sector between the political decisions and the broad base." He himself represents the USTKE on the political bureau of the FLNKS, and is a member of the Provisional Government of Kanaky declared by the FLNKS on December 1 last year.

A voice for workers

Explaining the link between the fight for national independence and the demands of Kanak workers, he said: "If we are part of the FLNKS today, it is precisely so that the worker will have a voice in New Caledonia after independence."

Although only a few years old, the USTKE is now the second-largest of New Caledonia's five union organisations. There are currently 2,500-3,000 workers in the five main areas:

health, municipal workers, public servants, air transport workers, and postal and telecommunications (including radio and television) workers. Both manual workers and white-collar workers are included.

The majority of USTKE members are Kanaks. However, "the word 'exploited' in our name shows that it is not for Kanaks only, but for all workers," Claude explained. "Those that come from other [French-controlled Pacific] islands like Wallis and Futuna are obviously not whole-heartedly with us, but we do have a certain amount of support from some of them."

All workers benefit

He went on to say that the USTKE was fully prepared to maintain a dialogue with the other trade unions in New Caledonia if they were open on the question of independence — "but with the anti-independenceists, no."

Claude also explained that workers outside the USTKE — including those opposed to independence — had benefited from struggles waged by his union. One example he gave was of a five-day strike waged against the French UTA airlines at one airport, in protest at the sacking of 15 workers. One of the results of this strike was the setting up of site committees to represent all the workers.

On another occasion, he participated in a 45-day occupation of one employer's house in support of a group of workers and their families from the Wallis islands.

One of the most important ongoing campaigns being waged by the USTKE is against the exclusion of Kanaks from many jobs. Out of a total Kanak population of 62,000 only 7,000 work. The rest live in tribal areas in the countryside, and rely on subsistence farming and fishing.

There are 2,300 workers employed by the Société le Nickel [the main nickel company]," Claude pointed out, "but only 300 of these are Kanaks. In the region of Thio, there are 223 workers, but only 87 Kanaks. And the local

Kanak population in the different villages in the region is about 1,000.

"Those of you who have been to Nouméa will know that in all the large supermarkets it is almost impossible to find a Kanak girl serving."

A journalist at the press conference said that he had been told in New Caledonia that the Kanaks were not interested in such jobs, and preferred rural living. Claude responded: "What really happened is that they imported workers from Wallis and Tahiti without ever asking us if we would like that sort of work."

Immigration policy

From the early 1970s onwards, workers were brought into New Caledonia in large numbers from other French colonies in the Pacific. This was in addition to earlier immigration from former colonies such as Algeria and Indochina. Coupled with immigration from France itself, this had made the Kanaks a minority in their own country — only 43 per cent of the population.

"This stemmed directly from a decision by a government minister that the solution for New Caledonia was to 'whiten' it," Claude explained.

As a member group of the FLNKS, the Kanak trade union has been the victim of repression from the French authorities and right-wing paramilitary groups organised by the white settler population. In late November, the USTKE's headquarters in Nouméa was ransacked by the police, who destroyed printing equipment and confiscated files. Then, on January 11 this year, anti-independence rioters burned the office to the ground, causing \$10,000 worth of damage.

Right-wing attacks

The right-wing settler group which organised this attack, the Caledonian Front, has also been behind the recent acts of economic sabotage in the nickel mines and elsewhere which have been blamed on the FLNKS. They were also the organisers of a "picnic" — in reality, a right-wing anti-independence demonstration — at Thio on February 17. Eleven people — including a tribal chief — were injured when police escorting the demonstration attacked local Kanak tribespeople.

Following the Thio "picnic," French government representative Edgard Pisano ordered five leaders of the Caledonian Front to leave the country. They are still in Nouméa, however, and the French police claim that they cannot find them. "But, after all," Claude pointed out, "Nouméa is not the size of New York!"

Without its headquarters, Claude described the USTKE as "birds without a nest. So we would like to ask the trade unions in New Zealand for a little help towards re-making our nest."

However, he added, "We are still active, and fighting actively in the struggle for the independence of our country." □

Marcos regime in crisis

Trial of military chiefs exposes corruption

By Neil Jarden

[The following article appeared 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.]

* * *

Events in the Philippines continue to underline the deepening difficulties of the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos.

This crisis has been sharpened since last November, with Marcos being confined to his palace since that time because of ill health. The possibility of his death or forced early retirement has generated a wave of manoeuvring among Marcos' own forces as to who might succeed him.

Meanwhile, the trial of military officers accused of being responsible for the 1983 assassination of opposition politician Benigno Aquino, continues to be a source of exposure of the regime's corruption.

Military tops had at first sought to show that Aquino was killed by Rolando Galman, who they claimed had been hired by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Galman was killed at the airport by government "security" forces immediately following the shot which killed Aquino.

Military on trial

But even the commission of inquiry set up

by Marcos was forced to conclude that there was no evidence to support the claim that the CPP was behind the killing. Following the commission's findings, armed forces chief of staff General Fabian C. Ver and 25 others were put on trial for the double murder of Aquino and Galman.

But since early February, five key witnesses of the killing have disappeared. Their earlier testimony had implied that Galman could not have killed Aquino, and they had also said that they feared for their safety.

Meanwhile, Marcos has declared that if Ver is acquitted by the court, he will be reinstated as army chief of staff. And the court itself has allowed the defendants to remain in the custody of their superior officers, and has also given them the option of not even appearing at the trial.

A report headed "Marcos' soldiery believed gambling, smuggling, extorting" in the March 1 *Evening Post* (from the London *Observer* news service) provided further examples of the level of corruption in the Philippine military. It reported a case of "salvaging" (summary execution after torture) by soldiers in May of last year, of nine young men in Lagoni, on the island of Negros. A court-martial was begun of the 13 soldiers involved, but was since dropped because all the witnesses to the killings were too scared to give their evidence.

Marcos' tough stance is worrying his imperialist backers in Washington. They are concerned that by adopting a too rigid and authoritarian position he may go the same way as did the shah of Iran and Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, as well as making it more difficult for them to present a case for continued U.S. bankrolling of his regime. Thus Washington has made it clear that it does not want Ver reinstated, and that it wants to see at least a show of diminishing corruption and "liberalisation" of the regime.

Allies share view

That this view is shared by the allies of the United States was demonstrated in a recently-

Help us expand coverage of South Pacific

Intercontinental Press is stepping up its coverage of workers' and national liberation struggles in the South Pacific region — Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, New Caledonia, and other Pacific island nations.

Since the declaration of a provisional government of independent Kanaky last December 1, *IP* has had nearly a dozen articles on the inspiring fight of the native Kanak people for self-determination. These have included exclusive interviews with leaders of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) as well as background pieces and eyewitness accounts of how the Kanaks have defended themselves against French troops and anti-independence French settlers.

An important factor in our ability to provide a platform for the ideas of these anti-colonial fighters has been the assistance of members of the Socialist Action League of New Zealand. This issue, for instance, includes an article reprinted from *Socialist Action* reporting on a recent tour of New Zealand by a leader of an FLNKS-affiliated trade union.

Intimately linked to the Kanak freedom movement in New Caledonia are the struggles of the Maoris and Pacific islanders in New Zealand. Here, too, *IP's* correspondents have provided our readers worldwide with a unique perspective.

IP correspondents based in Australia and New Zealand have been able to travel in the

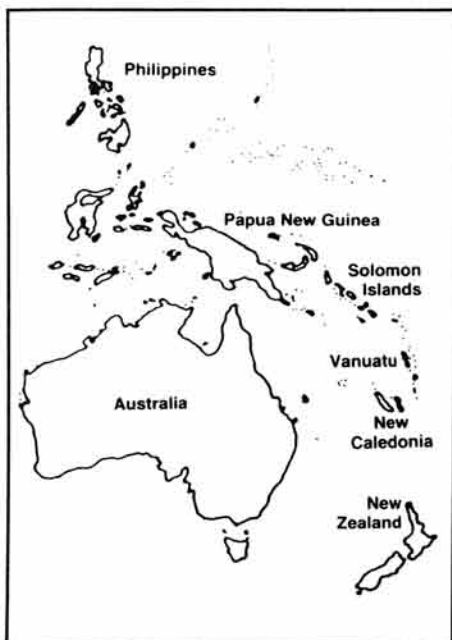
region and send us on-the-scene reports from newly independent Pacific countries like Vanuatu. The series of interviews obtained by Deb Shnookal in the Philippines last year were also the kind of exclusive coverage that makes *IP* a unique resource for revolutionaries around the world.

Supporters of *IP* in New Zealand and Australia also promise to keep up their coverage of developments in the labor movements of their countries. The protests against complicity with U.S. war aims through the imperialist ANZUS alliance have forced the Labour Party government of New Zealand to ban visits by U.S. warships to New Zealand ports and have generated much discussion in Australia as well.

But it costs money to keep in touch with these important struggles so far from our editorial offices in New York. And at the same time, of course, we cover many other areas of the world class struggle.

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published statement made in July last year by New Zealand's defence secretary, Denis McLean. Speaking at a Pacific and Asian Affairs Council luncheon in Honolulu, McLean said he thought that the Marcos government was not flexible or tough enough to deal with "communist insurgency." He noted in passing that New Zealand had considerable aid invested in the Philippines.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs Richard Armitage, on a visit to Manila earlier this month, expressed Washington's alarm at the "deterioration of economic and security conditions in the Philippines." In contrast to Marcos' propaganda, which downplays the strength of the CPP's New People's Army, Armitage said that the government forces would be unable to defeat the NPA without substantial U.S. aid.

Imperialists' dilemma

The imperialists' dilemma is that while they recognise the problems of hanging onto Marcos, there is no clear obvious alternative political force which could guarantee their economic, military, and political interests in the face of deepening mass opposition to the regime. They are particularly concerned for the security of the two largest U.S. military bases in Asia, both located in the Philippines: Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay naval base.

This was expressed in a U.S. government policy report on the Philippines which was leaked in Washington during March. The report stated that Marcos "at this stage, is part of the problem [but] he is necessarily part of the



FERDINAND MARCOS

solution. . . . We need . . . to try to influence him through a well-orchestrated policy of incentives and disincentives. . . . Marcos will try to use us to remain in power indefinitely."

U.S. aid

The leaking of this report coincided with a request by the Reagan administration for \$NZ611 million [US\$275 million] in military and economic aid for Marcos next year. As reported in *Time* magazine, the Reagan policy aims to "bolster the credibility of elections, es-

tablish freer markets . . . and restore the professionalism and effectiveness of the armed forces."

Reports continue of protests against the regime in Manila. On March 15 at least 15 people were wounded when police attacked a protest of 2,000 slum-dwellers near the presidential palace. They fought back with rocks and homemade bombs. And a month earlier club-wielding police waded into an encampment of 500 farmers at the Agriculture Ministry protesting against high fertiliser prices. □

300,000 in Australian peace marches

By Ron Poulsen

SYDNEY — More than 300,000 people participated in antinuclear protests around Australia on March 31. Spokespeople for the main organizers of the Palm Sunday rallies, People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND), noted the increase over the estimated quarter of a million marchers in similar actions last year. This was attributed to the heightened concern over nuclear weapons generated by the recent controversy over nuclear ship visits and Australian government involvement with the U.S. MX missile tests in the Tasman Sea.

The largest march was in Sydney, where upwards of 150,000 people took part in one of the largest processions ever seen in this city. In the front ranks were several leading state and federal Labor Members of Parliament, including Neville Wran, premier of New South Wales and president of the federal Australian Labor Party (ALP). (It was Wran's state government that recently reversed its 1976 stance of not allowing U.S. nuclear warships to enter Sydney Harbor.) As elsewhere, leaders of the small, liberal capitalist party, the Australian Democrats, also made themselves prominent.

The rally was addressed by New Zealand Labour Party parliamentarian Helen Clark. She stressed the support that New Zealand's Labour government had gained within New Zealand, as well as from the Pacific island nations and from people in Australia, for its ban on port visits by U.S. nuclear warships. Support for the New Zealand government was a recurring theme of PND and left spokespeople at other rallies as well, as these speakers criticized the failure of the Hawke government to adopt a similar "anti-nuclear" stance here.

There was also a broad turnout in most other cities. Organizers estimated that at least 100,000 participated in Melbourne and around 15,000 in each of the state capitals of Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide. Several thousands demonstrated in Hobart, Newcastle, and the national capital, Canberra, while hundreds also marched in several provincial cities.

The marches and rallies drew support from a diverse range of groups. A considerable proportion were local and national antinuclear and environmental organizations, as well as church groups. There were sizeable Australian Labor

Party contingents and a number of trade union groups.

In Sydney, for example, members of the New South Wales Fire Brigade Employees' Union marched behind a banner featuring a firefighter's hat and the slogan "This is the only hat we'll fight under!" Such progressive sentiments contrasted with other contingents in the march that carried symbols of Australian nationalism and banners calling for Australian "independence."

The official march placards of the PND called for nuclear disarmament "east and west," while Australian Democrat banners also called for multilateral disarmament. This theme prevailed among march placards and banners. However, many banners concentrated on calls for the closure of the U.S. bases in Australia, for Australian withdrawal from the ANZUS alliance with the United States and New Zealand, and for an end to uranium mining here.

Around the country, the more vocal contingents (and those with a clearer understanding of the source of the war threat) were those most often placed at the rear of the marches — Aboriginal rights groups, migrant workers' organizations protesting the military dictatorships in Chile and Turkey, as well as supporters of the liberation struggles in South Africa, the Philippines, and New Caledonia, and solidarity organizations campaigning against the U.S. war in Central America. □

4,000 march in Guadeloupe

More than 4,000 people demonstrated in Guadeloupe April 7 to demand independence. Guadeloupe, an island in the Caribbean, has been a French colony for 350 years. The present population is 330,000.

The rally culminated a three-day conference that brought together independence movements from most of France's overseas possessions.

The protesters assembled at an abandoned sugar mill in the northern part of the island. The action was called by the Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe. □

Marroquín fights for visa

Government delays socialist's appeal for residency

By Steve Craine

The U.S. government continues to refuse to process the application of Mexican-born socialist Héctor Marroquín for a permanent residence visa — or "green card" — to allow him to stay and work in the United States.

Although Marroquín, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, has lived in the United States 11 years and is married to a U.S. citizen, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and other government agencies have been trying for seven years to send him back to Mexico.

In Mexico, Marroquín would face probable repression. He fled from there in 1974 after being framed up for his political activities. Along with three other student activists, he was falsely accused of a murder. Two of the accused were later shot down in cold blood by Mexican cops, and the third was kidnapped and "disappeared."

Marroquín continued his political activity after coming to the United States, helping to organize a union at the plant where he worked in Texas, and later joining the YSA and SWP. That Washington is victimizing him for his political views was made clear by the prosecuting attorney at his initial deportation hearing. "Marroquín," he said, "has admitted from his own mouth that he is a Marxist. The U.S. does not grant asylum to Marxists."

In recent years, Marroquín has become well known as a campaigner against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. In speaking out all over the country for the rights of undocumented immigrants, he has linked the government's treatment of workers coming from other countries to its aggression against the workers and farmers of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Grenada, and Cuba.

In June 1984 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear Marroquín's appeal for political asylum. He had already applied for permanent residence status based on his marriage to a U.S. citizen. Such a marriage is routinely considered sufficient grounds for permanent residence. INS officials, however, claim a "lengthy investigation" is needed before it can act on this application.

The INS is also demanding that Marroquín leave the country and submit a new application at the U.S. consulate in Toronto, Canada. Although this procedure might be considered routine red tape in other cases, it opens the real possibility of the government attempting to bar Marroquín's return to the United States. But when Marroquín requested that a date be set for an interview in Toronto, the INS and the U.S. consulate there refused even to schedule it.

The Political Rights Defense Fund, which

has organized a campaign on Marroquín's behalf, is calling for protests against this deliberate stalling on his case.

Marroquín's reputation as a fighter for the rights of the oppressed and against U.S. war policy has won him wide support from unions, Black and Latino rights organizations, and antiwar groups both in the United States and internationally.

He has campaigned against government attacks on the sanctuary movement, which aids refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, and other countries forced to flee their homelands by U.S.-supported wars and dictatorships. He points out that attacks on the sanctuary movement are designed to intimidate all those who would speak out against Washington's Central American policy.

Jack Elder, who was convicted in Texas of helping Salvadorans enter the country, responded to a message of solidarity from Mar-

roquín: "I appreciate your support and your understanding of what the real issues are in this case. I also wish to express my support for your own struggle to remain in this country in spite of pressure from the INS."

The Congressional Black Caucus, made up of all 19 Black members of the U.S. Congress, recently sent a message in Marroquín's behalf to the U.S. consul general in Toronto. It said, in part, "Because of the long lapse between acceptance of Mr. Marroquín's case last March [1984] and the present, there is some concern that the file has been overlooked. The Members of the Caucus urge you to grant Héctor Marroquín an interview regarding his permanent residence visa."

The government's obstruction of granting a green card to Marroquín constitutes an ongoing form of victimization. Without the residency visa, he is not allowed to work or join a union in the United States, and the possibility of summary deportation is always present.

Letters and telegrams demanding that the government act on this application should be sent to Alan Nelson, Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C., with copies to the Political Rights Defense Fund, P.O. Box 649, Cooper Station, New York, N.Y. 10003. □

Antigua regime tries to gag 'Outlet'

For the third time in just two years, the Antiguan government has taken legal action to try to silence *Outlet*, the weekly newspaper of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM). The ACLM, which is chaired by *Outlet* editor Tim Hector, is the largest left-wing organization in Antigua.

On April 1, virtually the entire Antiguan cabinet, led by Deputy Prime Minister Lester Bird, turned out in court to testify against Hector and *Outlet*. Hector has been charged under the Public Order Act with "publishing a false statement" that would "undermine confidence in the conduct of public affairs."

The charge stemmed from a front-page article in the Aug. 24, 1984, *Outlet* charging that an unnamed minister in the government had been stopped by U.S. intelligence officers at the Miami airport with \$2 million in his luggage. The minister was said to have told the officials he was carrying the money for Peter De Savary, a businessman who has had shady financial dealings with South African interests.

Prime Minister V.C. Bird himself is slated to testify in the case, the first time he would appear in court in 30 years.

In a related case, Minister Without Portfolio Molwyn Joseph has brought a suit against Hector in response to a speech he made in October 1984 charging fraud in the marketing of beer.

Also, *Outlet* has lost an appeal of a 1983 ruling imposing a fine on the newspaper for publishing allegations of police brutality in the death of a young man in police custody.

Several months before the most recent trial began, *Outlet* exposed the fact that Ron Sanders, a key adviser to the deputy prime minister, had received large payments from the Space Research Corporation (SRC), which has tested artillery for the South African military. It was the ACLM's revelations of the SRC's operations in Antigua in the mid-1970s that forced the Bird regime to bar further testing on the island.

An article in the April *Caribbean Contact*, published by the Caribbean Council of Churches, commented that the ACLM and *Outlet* have emerged as the sharpest critics of the Bird government. "In the middle of the paralysis that has affected the traditional opposition here," the paper said, "the ACLM has been taking the fight to the government most effectively. Its weekly organ, *Outlet*, is now the most widely read newspaper in Antigua and its rallies remain among the best attended." □

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How the NLF won

The real lessons of the tenth anniversary

By Will Reissner

The approach of the tenth anniversary of the "fall" or "liberation" of Saigon (April 30, 1975) has brought forth a torrent of retrospectives in the U.S. big-business media. But these retrospectives are curiously one-sided in discussing the "lessons of Vietnam."

They ignore the fundamental question: How and why did Vietnamese working people win, not once but repeatedly, and always in the face of overwhelming numerical odds?

The Vietnamese established their first independent government in August 1945 following the collapse of the Japanese occupation. That victory, however, was soon snatched away by the return of French colonial troops.

In response, the Vietnamese liberation fighters, organized by the Communist Party-led Viet Minh liberation front, waged an armed struggle against the French colonial rulers, and by 1954 they had liberated most of Vietnam, both north and south, and forced the French to leave. But they were robbed of the south at the bargaining table in Geneva.

In 1959, armed struggle resumed against the U.S.-backed and -financed regime in the south. By 1964 the Communist Party-led National Liberation Front was at the point of overthrowing the Saigon government. This time the Vietnamese revolutionaries were thwarted temporarily by the massive U.S. military intervention.

But they fought on. By 1973 they had forced the total withdrawal of U.S. troops, and on April 30, 1975, they entered the presidential palace in Saigon, paving the way for Vietnam's reunification.

What explains this staying power? How could the Communists win in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds?

Real lessons of Vietnam

To this day, the Pentagon and U.S. policy makers cannot answer those questions.

Consider the following confrontation after the war's end, described by Col. Harry Summers of the U.S. Army War College.

Summers recalls: "I once blustered to a North Vietnamese colonel in Hanoi, 'You know you never beat us on the battlefield.'"

"That may be so," the Vietnamese officer replied. "But it is also irrelevant."

The Pentagon and the Vietnamese revolutionaries were in fact fighting two different wars!

Back in 1969, when the number of U.S. ground troops in Vietnam was at its all-time high — 542,000 — and when U.S. warplanes were pounding North and South Vietnam around the clock, Vietnam's military leader

Vo Nguyen Giap calmly told an interviewer, "we won a military victory over the French, and we'll win it over the Americans, too."

Gen. Giap, the high school teacher turned military strategist, explained his absolute confidence. "They have plenty of arms," he said of the U.S. forces, "but arms don't do them any good, because the Vietnam war isn't just a military matter. Military strength and military strategy can't help to win, or even to understand it.

"The United States," Giap continued, "has a strategy based on arithmetic. They question the computers, add and subtract, extract square roots, and then go into action.

"But," Giap explained, "arithmetical strategy doesn't work here. If it did, they'd already have exterminated us. . . . [T]hey thought they could bring us to heel by dumping billions [of pounds] of explosives on us. . . . [T]hey figure everything in billions, billions of dollars. They don't reckon on the spirit of a people fighting for what they know is right, to save their country from invaders."

Giap added "it's not a question of men and matériel." Rather "the Vietnam war has to be understood in terms of the strategy of a people's war."

Basis of Vietnamese strategy

Five years earlier, on Dec. 22, 1964, Giap had succinctly laid out the key to the Vietnamese struggle, which Pentagon strategists were unwilling and unable to understand.

Armed struggle, Giap explained, is simply an extension of political struggle: "The military line of our [Communist] Party derives from and always follows its political line" (emphasis added).

Military strategy, he added, is shaped "to achieve the political aims of the revolution through armed struggle or political struggle combined with armed struggle."

The key to success, in Giap's view, was "to mobilize and organize the entire people, particularly . . . the large mass of peasants under the leadership of the working class."

The "political aims of the revolution," Giap explained, were to win "independence for the nation" and give the "land back to the tillers."

It was these goals — national independence and land for the peasants — that galvanized Vietnamese working people into action and gave the revolution its incredible strength and staying power.

To carry out those goals, organizational methods were adopted that insured that everyone had a place in the struggle, that the weight of the masses could be brought to bear in the movement.

The Pentagon's inability to come to grips with the political nature of the war waged under the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party was brought home again last November in a federal courtroom in New York City.

Westmoreland trial

Gen. William Westmoreland was suing the CBS television network for libel. At issue was Westmoreland's decision in 1967 to stop counting the National Liberation Front's hamlet militias and local self-defense guards in the total "enemy" strength.

Westmoreland testified that as supreme commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, he had ordered that 120,000 NLF local militia fighters be excluded from the military total, not because he was trying to cover up the size of the "enemy" forces as CBS had charged, but rather because "these were old men and women and young boys."

Westmoreland added that they were "really not a threat and . . . not dangerous to us because they were confined to the hamlets."

These self-defense militia units, Westmoreland testified, were in fact made up of "civilians," whose weapons — booby traps and sharpened bamboo stakes — were primarily defensive.

Westmoreland was, of course, correct in asserting that these "old men and women and young boys" were no match for regular U.S. army units in military terms. But he was then, and remains today, blind to the political significance of the militias.

The local militia forces and local political cadres formed the backbone of the political struggle in the countryside, where the vast majority of the Vietnamese people live.

The local hamlet self-defense forces were a vital link in the chain of revolutionary forces. They prevented the Saigon regime from maintaining a presence in thousands of hamlets. They protected the local political cadres. And they defended and safeguarded the social revolution in the countryside — the redistribution of land and destruction of landlord power.

They were part of a pyramid of military units, encompassing the part-time local militia fighters, the full-time regional guerrilla forces, and the main force units organized along conventional military lines.

This three-layered military organization was able to keep the enemy continually off balance. If the French (or later the Saigon and U.S. armies) tried to occupy all the hamlets and villages, they had to spread their forces very thin and open themselves up to attack by numerically stronger regional guerrilla units and main force units.

On the other hand, if the enemy concentrated its forces in large units, it could not maintain a presence in much of the countryside, and the local militia units could drive out the isolated government agents and landlords and organize a revolutionary administration.

In addition, the Vietnamese revolutionaries

paid close attention to coordinating actions among workers and students in the cities, the peasants in the plains, and the minority groups in the mountains.

Military action and political action went hand in hand. On numerous occasions military attacks on government posts were coordinated with local uprisings organized by the underground political organizations.

This was seen most spectacularly during the National Liberation Front's 1968 Tet Offensive, during which guerrillas launched attacks on 36 of the 44 provincial capitals and on 64 district capitals, as well as many military bases in coordination with local uprisings throughout the country.

U.S. military experts insist to this day that the Tet Offensive was a military defeat for the NLF because it was unable to hold any of the capitals it captured, and because it suffered heavy casualties. The NLF might reply that that is "irrelevant," because Tet was a resounding political victory.

The Tet Offensive destroyed the Johnson administration's claim that the war was being won. It panicked the Saigon regime, and encouraged to the anti-government masses.

Land reform in liberated areas

The profoundly political character of the Vietnamese revolutionary armed forces could be seen in the name adopted by their very first unit — the Vietnam Armed Propaganda Brigade for Liberation.

The Armed Propaganda Brigade was set up on Dec. 22, 1944, by the Communist Party. Its 34 members were commanded by Giap.

From this arithmetically insignificant start, the powerful Vietnam People's Army emerged, an army that defeated the powerful French colonial army and the even more powerful U.S. army, and that in 1975 would demolish the huge puppet Saigon army financed by Washington.

From the very beginning of the armed struggle against the French colonialists, in each area liberated by the Communist Party-led forces, landholding patterns were revolutionized. Village notables lost their power to monopolize communal lands. Distribution of communal and abandoned land was equalized.

In addition, after the August 1945 revolution brought the Communist Party to power in Hanoi for the first time, maximum rents were lowered to 25 percent of the crop, peasant debts were abolished, and taxes were made progressive rather than regressive. Nearly one-fifth of all peasant households received parcels of land.

During the guerrilla war against the French, the CP deepened the land reform. On Dec. 1, 1953, they further lowered maximum rents and redistributed more land.

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap recalls the impact of the December 1953 land reform decree on the peasant ranks of the guerrilla army. At that time preparations were under way for the siege of the 16,000-man French garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

Pentagon pulled no punches

No people in world history has been subjected to the level of devastation suffered by the peoples of Indochina.

Between 1965 and 1975, Washington spent between \$159.4 billion (the Pentagon's figure) and \$239.6 billion (according to a Senate committee) in trying to crush the Vietnamese revolution.

In the decade after 1964, Washington used 14,392,302 tons of explosives in Vietnam, including 400,000 tons of napalm.

This bombardment left more than 25 million craters in an area smaller than the state of California, as well as untold quantities of unexploded ordnance in fields and forests.

The impact of the U.S. bombing on North Vietnam was described by Canadian journalist Michael Maclear, who spent considerable time reporting from there during the war. U.S. bombers, he wrote "had totally destroyed urban life, or anything of brick and mortar, in the provinces below Hanoi."

To destroy the croplands of the NLF's peasant supporters and the forests used as sanctuaries by NLF fighters, the Pentagon

sprayed South Vietnam with nearly 19 million gallons of herbicides (including more than 11 million gallons of the notorious Agent Orange). As a result of the defoliation, the bombing, and the use of bulldozers, about half the forests in South Vietnam were destroyed.

More than 3 million U.S. soldiers served in the war zone at one time or another. At the peak of U.S. troop deployment in 1969, there were 542,000 U.S. soldiers stationed in South Vietnam, another 64,000 offshore with the Seventh Fleet, and 20,000 at three U.S. air bases in Thailand from which U.S. warplanes bombed North and South Vietnam.

In addition, Washington's own troops were backed up by another 68,900 troops from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. By 1971, the Saigon armed forces totalled more than 1 million men.

Some 58,655 U.S. troops were killed in Vietnam.

The number of Vietnamese casualties has never been determined.

Mobilizing up to 200,000 porters, the Vietnamese were able to transport heavy artillery and other weapons and supplies by bicycle, animal cart, and on foot across 500 miles of mountainous terrain.

After 55 days and nights of fighting, the Vietnamese captured the garrison on May 7, 1954, a victory that broke the will of the French government to continue the war.

Giap noted that the new "policy of systematic rent reduction, and the carrying-out of land reform decided by the Party and government" had an electrifying impact on the ranks of the guerrilla army.

"Our cadres and armymen saw more clearly what the objective of our struggle was: national independence and land to the tillers. Hence, their combativeness increased greatly. More than ever, our army was transported with enthusiasm, ready to go to the front to annihilate the enemy."

1954 Geneva Agreement

After the crushing defeat they suffered at Dien Bien Phu, the French colonialists were in no position to continue their war. At a peace conference in Geneva, attended by representatives of several imperialist powers, including the United States, and from Moscow and Peking, an agreement was reached in July 1954 under which the French granted independence to their three colonies in Indochina — Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea (Cambodia).

But the agreement, which the Vietnamese were pressured into signing, specified that the Viet Minh forces would temporarily regroup all their armed forces in the northern half of

Vietnam, above the 17th parallel, while the French would regroup south of that line as they prepared to withdraw from the country.

The accords promised that elections would be held in 1956 to reunify the country under one government.

Some 90,000 Viet Minh fighters did march north under the terms of the agreement. But the scheduled election never took place in the south. Rather, the Eisenhower administration, which had been financing 78 percent of the French war budget in Indochina by 1954, poured in military and economic aid to establish a separate state in the south, headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, who had played no role in the struggle against the French.

President Eisenhower himself acknowledged that Diem could never compete with Ho Chi Minh for popular support (see box on page 254). If elections had taken place as specified by the Geneva Agreement, the U.S. president admitted, "possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader."

With no base of support, the Diem regime had to rely on brute force to stay in power. U.S. government documents reveal that in June 1954, fully one month before the Geneva Agreement was signed, Washington had already decided to finance, arm, and train a 234,000-person army for Diem.

Under Washington's tutelage, the newly-installed Diem regime unleashed a reign of terror aimed at rolling back the social revolution that had taken place in the vast areas of the south controlled by the Communist-led Viet Minh

during the anti-French war.

In the liberated areas, the Viet Minh had carried out sweeping land reform programs that had eliminated landlordism in large areas of the south by 1954. The population of the liberated areas had also been organized into peasant associations, women's groups, youth organizations, and local self-defense forces.

Diem: 'land to the landlord'

Diem instituted his own "land reform" program in 1955, fixing maximum rents at 25 percent of the peasants' harvest. But the real impact of Diem's program was to give the land back to the landlords who had been driven out by the Viet Minh! Peasants found that they were being forced to again pay rent for land that they considered their own property.

Protected by Diem's police, the landlords returned to collect the rents they had been unable to pocket while the Viet Minh had controlled the countryside.

Once they were in a position to resume collecting rents, notes James Harrison, author of *The Endless War*, "the limit of 25 percent was almost universally disregarded by landlords who frequently demanded 40 to 50 percent of the crop."

With Diem firmly in control, one-quarter of 1 percent of the rural population owned 40 percent of the rice land, and 80 percent of the peasants were again paying rent to the landlords.

After the 1954 regroupment of 90,000 Viet Minh fighters to the north, estimates of the number of CP members remaining in the south range from 30,000 to 60,000.

Diem's repression hit the CP's local structures extremely hard. In Tay Ninh province, for example, 50 percent of the party cells were destroyed by mid-1955, and 90 percent by mid-1959.

It is estimated that in the years after 1955, about 90,000 CP supporters were executed and up to 100,000 were jailed.

The low point in the CP's organizational strength came in 1959, when Diem's legislature passed Law 10-59, setting up special military tribunals to carry out immediate death sentences against anyone found "to hide a Communist or . . . become involved with a Communist." By that year CP membership in the south had fallen to perhaps 5,000.

CP begins to fight back

In January 1959, the CP decided to organize armed struggle in the south. The first major armed action took place on Jan. 17, 1960, in Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta, signalling the start of the "second resistance." Ben Tre later came to world attention during the 1968 Tet Offensive, when a U.S. officer told the press "it became necessary to destroy the town to save it."

With the renewal of armed resistance in the countryside, the Diem regime stepped up its repression against the peasants. In 1959, Diem began herding peasants into "agrovilles" — concentration camps in the countryside sur-

rounded by barbed wire and guarded by government troops and police.

This program was later supplanted by the U.S.-designed "strategic hamlet" program. By 1962, the Saigon government had built 4,000 "strategic hamlets," containing 39 percent of South Vietnam's population. Another 7,000 were then in the planning stages.

The Pentagon also began spraying Agent Orange and other chemical defoliants on the South Vietnamese countryside in 1961 to destroy the crops and woodlands used by pro-CP peasants and guerrillas.

National Liberation Front founded

In 1960, the Communist Party joined with other anti-Diem forces to form the National Liberation Front. The NLF provided political leadership to the struggle and administered liberated zones.

Despite the years of repression, Diem was never able to establish a social base in the countryside since he was totally identified with the return of the landlords.

By 1961, the U.S. government acknowledged that the Diem regime was close to col-

Leaders of the two sides

From beginning to end, the U.S.-organized regime in South Vietnam was led by figures who had played no role in the struggle against French colonialism.

The first head of the Saigon regime, Ngo Dinh Diem, spent the years of the war against the French in New Jersey and Belgium.

The last head of the Saigon government, Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, had been a paratrooper in the *French army*, fighting against his own people.

Thieu and his vice president, Nguyen Cao Ky, slipped out of Saigon in the days before the final collapse of their regime. Thieu had sent a considerable fortune out of the country before he left and now lives a life of leisure in Britain.

The leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party, by contrast withstood decades of prison, underground existence, and life in the jungle as guerrillas.

CP leader Ho Chi Minh presented figures on the repression in a 1960 report marking the party's 30th anniversary.

Ho reported, "speaking merely of the comrades in the Party Central Committee, 14 have been shot, guillotined or beaten to death in prison," since 1930.

Of those who escaped death, 31 members of the Central Committee spent a total of 222 years in jail under the French.

The present premier of the reunified Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, was jailed for seven years by the French, while CP Secretary General Le Duan spent 11 years in prison.

lapse. A 1961 memo from Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to President John Kennedy discussed the implications of "the fall of South Vietnam to Communism," adding that "the chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing that fall by any means short of the *introduction of U.S. forces on a substantial scale*" (emphasis added).

As the Diem regime continued to lose control of the countryside, the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam grew, from 685 at the end of 1960 to 1,364 by the end of 1961 and 9,865 at the end of 1962. By the time of Kennedy's death in November 1963, the number of U.S. troops, called "advisers" by the administration, had risen to 16,000.

The influx of U.S. troops could not, however, stop the erosion of the Diem regime. Joseph Buttinger, once one of Diem's strongest backers, admitted that by 1962 Diem was a hated man, totally isolated in the cities and the countryside. "Opposed by the intellectuals, despised by the educated middle class, rejected by businessmen, hated by the youth and by all nationalists with political ambitions, and totally lacking in mass support, the Diem government had to rely for its survival on an apparatus of coercion."

In 1963 the Kennedy administration encouraged a coup to overthrow Diem, during which Diem was assassinated. The change in regimes, however, did not stabilize the situation for Washington.

With the pro-U.S. forces lacking a social base in Vietnam, political power became a short-term prize to be fought over by ambitious military men eager to line their pockets. In the first 20 months after Diem's overthrow, there were 13 coups and 9 cabinets in Saigon.

All the while, the National Liberation Front continued to grow in strength in the countryside and the cities. By 1965, the Saigon government admitted it controlled only 25 percent of the 16 million people in the south.

GIs take over combat

From 1954 to 1965, Washington had tried to prevent the victory of the Vietnamese revolution in the south by financing and training a Vietnamese puppet army, with direct U.S. military involvement limited to Special Forces counterinsurgency units.

But Washington ran up against an insurmountable obstacle: the Vietnamese masses simply would not fight to defend a neocolonial landlord regime. In 1966 only one in seven youths ordered to report for military service in the Saigon army actually showed up. And throughout the late 1960s, of those inducted into the Saigon army, one in three deserted each year.

In March 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara reported to the National Security Council that the South Vietnamese regime was on the "verge of total collapse."

Rather than accept a victory by the National Liberation Front, the Johnson administration decided to use U.S. combat troops and U.S. air power to try to destroy the NLF.

The sustained bombing of North Vietnam began on Feb. 7, 1965, when 49 U.S. jets pounded targets north of the 17th parallel. A month later, the first direct U.S. combat troops, 3,500 Marines, landed in South Vietnam. By the end of the year more than 184,000 U.S. troops were in the country.

For the next eight years, Washington wreaked untold havoc on Vietnam in an attempt to destroy the revolutionary forces. In addition to the military effort to destroy the NLF's forces, Washington organized a far-reaching and sophisticated program of terrorism in the countryside in hopes of destroying the NLF's political presence.

From 1968 to 1972, the CIA-organized Phoenix Program, supervised by 650 Americans, organized death squads to identify and eliminate NLF political cadres. In the course of the program, according to official figures, 20,987 Communists were killed, 28,778 were jailed, and 17,717 were "reeducated." Other estimates place the number of deaths as high as 100,000.

In addition, Washington had considerable success in driving the NLF's supporters out of the countryside.

In 1964, just before the big U.S. escalation, 80 percent of South Vietnam's people still lived in rural areas. By 1972, the population was only 35 percent rural. Millions of people were driven from the land by the U.S. defoliation, the creation of "free fire zones," the bombing, and the military sweeps, and were forced into the cities or refugee camps, where they were dependent on U.S. hand-outs.

Yet the National Liberation Front was able to adapt and survive.

U.S. had to win, NLF had to survive

And because the NLF was able to survive, ultimately it was able to prevail.

As a foreign occupation force, the U.S. military had to *destroy* the NLF's armed forces and political infrastructure in order to win the war.

But as a local revolutionary movement with deep roots, the NLF needed only to outlast the U.S. intervention.

In 1946 Ho Chi Minh had warned the French: "You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours. In the end it will be you who will tire of it."

That turned out to be true for the French, who tired of it after nine years of fighting. And it was equally true for Washington.

The Vietnamese knew that they would have international support for their struggle, from the workers states, from the peoples of the semicolonial countries, and from sectors of the population in the imperialist countries as well.

They knew, as the mass of U.S. working people themselves eventually learned, that the U.S. war against the Vietnamese revolution was not in the interests of working people in the United States, and that U.S. workers and conscript soldiers had no reason to fight to preserve a neocolonial regime in South Vietnam. As U.S. casualties mounted, so did opposition

'Faceless Viet Cong'

In an article in the April 1966 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, CIA officer George Carver popularized the term "faceless Viet Cong," conjuring up images of fanatic automatons.

But the Communist Party activists in South Vietnam were anything but automatons. They lived lives filled with personal heroism, tragedy, dedication, and idealism.

Take the life of Nguyen Thi Dinh, who was deputy commander-in-chief of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces and is now a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Born in a peasant family in Ben Tre province south of Saigon in 1920, Dinh became active in the struggle against French rule while still in her teens. Her brother, who had been arrested and tortured during the uprisings of 1930-31, encouraged her to begin selling revolutionary periodicals.

Dinh married another revolutionary in 1938. Three days after the birth of their child in 1939, her husband was arrested, and she herself was arrested in July 1940.

Upon her release from prison in 1943, Dinh discovered that her husband had died on the notorious French prison island, Poulo Condore.

In 1946, during the armed struggle against the French, Dinh left the south for the first time, traveling to Hanoi to accompany a shipment of arms to the southern fighters.

Dinh and her comrades underwent numerous trials during the bitter struggle against the French. Living in swamps, fields, and caves, she recalls, "I myself came close to being killed many times."

When the Geneva accords were signed in 1954, in Dinh's view the Viet Minh was near victory in the south as well as the north. But under the terms of the accord she laid down her weapons, awaiting the elections that were supposed to reunify the country.

Dinh remained in the south after 1954,



NGUYEN THI DINH

struggling to survive the repression unleashed by the U.S.-organized Diem regime, which had offered a huge reward for her capture. For years she was in hiding.

In 1959, when the CP decided to form small-scale units to begin to strike back against the Diem regime, Dinh helped lead the January 17-18, 1960, uprising in her native Ben Tre province, which is often cited as the first armed action of the Second Indochina War.

Capturing some 100 weapons, she and her comrades organized a liberated area in their zone, deep in the Mekong Delta.

Dinh and other activists also organized demonstrations of thousands of "old women, young girls and children" to demand an end to government sweeps and repression in the area.

Recalling the courage shown by countless men and women during the struggle, Nguyen Thi Dinh wrote in 1968 that "during the darkest years of the revolution in the south, it was people like [these] ... who taught me a very profound lesson about patriotism and the indomitable spirit of a revolutionary. It was this," she added, "which kept us from faltering and enabled us to stay by the side of the people, cling to the land, and resolutely maintain the movement without being deterred by hardships, dangers and death."

to the war.

The combination of the tenacious resistance of the Vietnamese people and the mass antiwar movement in the United States and throughout the world forced Washington to withdraw its troops in 1973.

Once Washington withdrew its ground forces, the Vietnamese revolutionaries were able to finish off the neocolonial regime in less than two years, despite the continuing flood of U.S. military aid to the Saigon government to the very end.

Even after U.S. combat troops were withdrawn, the Saigon government had a huge superiority in firepower and an absolute monopoly on air power with its nearly 2,000-

plane air force. From 1973 to 1975, the Saigon regime used 18 times more shells than the Vietnamese revolutionaries.

In the end, high-tech warfare was defeated by "people's revolutionary warfare."

One week before the total collapse of the Saigon army, Gen. Thieu resigned the presidency and abandoned his troops. With his army in flight, Thieu bitterly lashed out at U.S. military critics of his performance. "I would challenge the United States army," he said, "to do better than the South Vietnamese army without B-52s."

Thieu had to follow his ill-gotten fortune out of Vietnam because he knew he could not put that same challenge to the NLF forces. □

Government offers amnesty

Rebels must accept by end of 1986

By Will Reissner

In recent weeks Washington has announced several moves designed to bolster the flagging morale of the battered counterrevolutionary groups operating against the government of Kampuchea.

Secretary of State George Shultz met on April 10 with former Prime Minister Son Sann and a representative of former Prince Norodom Sihanouk, leaders of two of the three counterrevolutionary Kampuchean armed groups.

The Reagan administration has also announced plans to begin sending direct and open aid to the two groups, which have thus far received U.S. backing through the pro-imperialist Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and through United Nations "relief" agencies.

In addition, on March 20, the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asia voted to provide \$5 million in direct U.S. funds to buy weapons for the groups led by Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk.

But the House subcommittee vote on the proposal, initiated by Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz, came nine days after Kampuchean government troops and their Vietnamese allies captured the last remaining counterrevolutionary base along Kampuchea's border with Thailand.

Their offensive began on November 18 with attacks on the camps controlled by supporters of Son Sann. After Son Sann's bases were captured, the Vietnamese and Kampuchean forces moved against the bases controlled by former dictator Pol Pot, and then against those run by Prince Sihanouk.

The last remaining counterrevolutionary base along the Thai border was captured on March 11.

Kampuchean and Vietnamese troops are digging in all along the border, a diplomatic source told *Intercontinental Press* in late March. They will remain in the border area to prevent the counterrevolutionaries, now licking their wounds in Thailand, from reentering Kampuchea when the dry season ends in May.

At the same time, the Kampuchean government has reiterated its offer to permit the counterrevolutionaries now in Thailand to return to Kampuchea and take part in the country's political life if they lay down their weapons.

The only figures excluded from the offer are former dictator Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, the two leaders of the Khmer Rouge forces.

While Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge ruled Kampuchea from 1975 to early 1979, several million Kampuchean perished, falling victim to mass executions, starvation, and disease.

Pol Pot's forces were driven from power in January 1979 by Kampuchean insurgents

backed by Vietnamese troops. Pol Pot and remnants of his army retreated into Thailand, where they were resupplied and rearmed by the right-wing Thai government and Peking.

In August 1979, the Kampuchean government sentenced Pol Pot and Ieng Sary to death in absentia on charges of genocide.

In discussions with Australia's foreign minister Bill Hayden in early March, Kampuchean official Hun Sen affirmed that all Khmer Rouge cadres except for Pol Pot and Ieng Sary would be allowed back under the terms of the amnesty.

However, the Kampuchean official placed a time limit on the amnesty offer for the first time. Hayden refused to disclose what the deadline was. But sources have told *Intercontinental Press* that the offer will expire on the last day of 1986. After that, the door will be closed to those presently taking part in the armed actions against the Kampuchean government.

The Kampuchean government has repeatedly proposed political solutions to the conflict along the Thai-Kampuchean border. Hun Sen, for example, stressed in a December 1984 interview with the Paris fortnightly *Afrique-Asie* that Sihanouk and Son Sann could play a role in Kampuchea if they break with Pol Pot.

More Viet troops leave

For the fourth consecutive year, Vietnam is withdrawing a large contingent of its forces from neighboring Kampuchea.

Vietnamese officials in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, announced in early April that this year's withdrawal will involve an infantry division, four engineering brigades, and three infantry brigades, totaling some 15,000 troops.

The latest withdrawal is in line with repeated pledges by Vietnamese and Kampuchean officials that as Kampuchea's armed forces gain in strength and experience and are able to play a larger role in Kampuchea's defense, Vietnamese troops will leave the country.

This year's withdrawal, reportedly the largest since the annual pull-outs began in 1982, reflects the severely weakened state of Kampuchean counterrevolutionary forces since they were driven from their sanctuaries along the border with Thailand during this year's dry-season offensive by the Kampuchean government forces and Vietnamese troops.

Kampuchean government policy, Hun Sen stated, is that "any person, whatever his past, who breaks with Pol Pot and respects the Constitution of the republic will enjoy all the rights of citizenship, in particular the right to vote and to run for election."

While the Kampuchean government tries to coax the supporters of Son Sann and Sihanouk out of their coalition with Pol Pot, the international backers of that coalition are working equally hard to keep it in place.

Sihanouk and Son Sann joined the coalition with Pol Pot in 1982 under intense pressure from Washington, Peking, and the ASEAN members, who needed a more palatable cover for their continued aid to the murderous Khmer Rouge, which provides the bulk of the anti-government guerrillas.

Sihanouk revealed in 1980 that President Carter's ambassador to Peking, Leonard Woodcock, "urged me to come to terms with Pol Pot. 'Only the Khmer Rouge,' said Woodcock, 'are strong enough to stand up to the Vietnamese.'"

At that time, Sihanouk rejected the suggestion. He recalled indignantly that Pol Pot's forces were "the murderers of my compatriots and even of my own children and grandchildren."

Yet two years later Sihanouk joined just such a coalition, lending whatever prestige he still had to the hated and discredited Khmer Rouge forces.

In an interview in the March 14 *New York Review of Books*, Sihanouk repeated his loathing for his coalition partner. He acknowledged: "it is not very clean to be with the Khmer Rouge. I feel very uncomfortable; I suffer very much. I have lost five children, fourteen grandchildren at the hands of the Khmer Rouge."

He remains in the coalition because his backers have warned that he will get no more money unless he stays with Pol Pot. In particular, Peking, which has provided the bulk of the weapons to the counterrevolutionaries and provides most of Sihanouk's financing, has insisted that the coalition remain intact.

Sihanouk told the interviewers: "Recently when Prime Minister Son Sann, Vice-President Khieu Samphan [of the Khmer Rouge], and myself met with strong man Deng Xiaoping on the occasion of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the People's Republic of China, Deng Xiaoping told us China will support and help only a tripartite coalition, not a bilateral coalition. Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, and the Khmer Rouge must not be wiped out."

Despite his personal revulsion at his alliance with the murderers of his children, Sihanouk remains with the Khmer Rouge.

As he candidly explained in the *New York Review of Books* interview, "I have no wealth. I now survive thanks to China. . . . [M]y wife and I have our clothes thanks to China and North Korean President Kim Il Sung. . . . I have a good life thanks to friends like Chou En-lai, the Chinese leadership since Mao Tse-tung, and President Kim Il Sung." □