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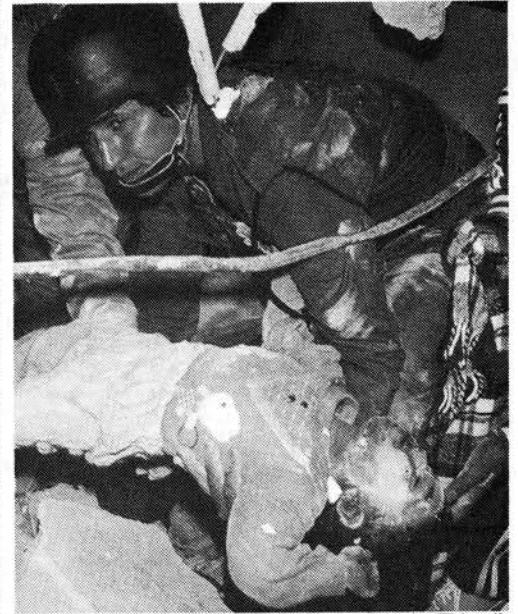
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LIBYA

Worldwide Condemnation of U.S. Terror Bombing



Mass protest in Rome.



Child's body removed from rubble in Tripoli.

Haiti

***Background to
Duvalier's Fall***

Report From Philippines

**Sugar Union on Negros Draws
Workers Into Political Life**

Healyite Myths About SWP History Refuted

U.S. terror bombing of Libya

By Ernest Harsch

In the biggest U.S. air strike since the end of the Vietnam War, U.S. bombers pounded Libya's two largest cities early in the morning of April 15.

The death and destruction were extensive in both Tripoli, the capital, and Benghazi. Libyan government officials reported that 37 Libyans were killed and nearly 100 wounded, the vast majority civilians. This latest act of U.S. aggression came just three weeks after an attack in the Gulf of Sidra, in which 56 Libyans perished.

Washington claims that it was striking Libya in "self-defense," in retaliation for supposed Libyan government support for "international terrorism." But the bombings of Tripoli and Benghazi further expose who the real terrorists are.

"And these bloody Americans say they don't hit civilian targets," Taher Mohamed Gubbia, whose Tripoli home was destroyed in the air attack, told a U.S. reporter. "Now you can differentiate between who are the terrorists and who are not."

Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi — whose year-old daughter was killed and two sons seriously injured in the U.S. bombing — said that President Reagan should be put on trial "as a war criminal and murderer of children." Qaddafi continued, "We must tell Reagan that he doesn't have to protect his children and his citizens. We will not kill your children. We are not like you. We do not bombard cities."

Qaddafi also indicated that his government remained unbowed and would not submit to U.S. dictates. "We are ready to die and we are ready to carry on fighting and defending our country," he said.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a crowd of thousands who rallied at a Tripoli cemetery April 18 to bury 20 of the bombing victims, four of them children. The coffins were draped in Libya's green flag, as mourners chanted, "Unity! Unity!" A funeral orator declared, "We are not afraid of the Air Force of America. We are not afraid of the 6th Fleet." The cemetery itself is symbolic — it stands on the site of the first battle between Libyans and invading Italian colonial forces in 1911.

Despite Washington's spurious justifications for the attack on Libya, much of the world saw it for what it really was: an unprovoked act of war against a sovereign people and country. The bombing raid was met with international outrage by peoples and governments throughout the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas (see article on page 268).

Sympathy for the Libyan people has been heightened by the obviously unequal nature of the conflict. On one side is a poor country of

just 3.5 million people. On the other is the world's mightiest imperialist power.

Attack in the night

The U.S. strike force deployed against Libya was massive: 18 F-111 fighter bombers, flown from bases in Britain; 15 A-6 navy attack bombers that struck from two aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean; plus more than 100 support planes, including aerial fuel tankers, communications and surveillance planes, jet fighters, electronic jamming planes, and helicopters.

The attack itself came in the middle of the night, at 2:00 a.m., when most Libyans were sound asleep.

Washington claimed its "surgical" strikes were aimed only at military targets, such as army camps and military airfields in and around the two cities. But its bombs rained down on residential neighborhoods, schools, farms, and other nonmilitary targets as well.

The neighborhood that suffered the greatest casualties was Bin Ashur, in Tripoli. Timothy Phelps of the *New York Newsday* reported:

... rescue workers and construction crews bulldozed through the rubble of homes and apartment buildings, looking for bodies.

One rescue worker walked to the back of his pickup truck and took out a plastic bag, from which he pulled the severed foot of a child.

"Write to your country, this is what the government does," he said with emotion. . . .

One of the demolished buildings, from which a dead 3-year-old girl was pulled later in the morning, was adjacent to the French Embassy, which was also damaged in the attack.

Other buildings in the area damaged by U.S. bombs included the embassies or diplomatic residences of Finland, Iran, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Romania, and Japan.

At first, U.S. officials attributed the bombings of residential areas to Libyan anti-aircraft missiles said to have fallen back to the ground. But some later admitted that was impossible, while still denying deliberate bombing of civilian neighborhoods.

The attack lasted only 12 minutes. Its speed, together with the use of sophisticated electronic jamming equipment, made the Libyan air defense less effective. Nevertheless, Washington, after many initial denials, finally admitted that one F-111 bomber was shot down, with the loss of the two U.S. military personnel aboard.

'We hoped we would get him'

A particular target of the U.S. bombers was Qaddafi's family residence in the El Azziziya army compound in Tripoli. More F-111's were directed against the compound than against any other single target.

Phelps reported in *Newsday* that one building in the sprawling compound — Qaddafi's

residence — "looked as though it had been singled out for special attention by American bombers." It was the only one, he reported, "that had sustained direct hits from the highly accurate U.S.-made laser-guided bombs."

Although Qaddafi himself was not injured, it was there that several of his children were killed or wounded.

Publicly, senior U.S. officials still maintain that they had no intention of assassinating Qaddafi. But speaking off the record, key officials have admitted that Qaddafi's death was a conscious goal.

"We hoped we would get him," one official involved in the planning of the attack told the *Washington Post*.

A "senior White House official," as he was identified, said to the *New York Times*, "We knew that that was his residence and that he perhaps might be there and members of his family." The official continued, "We were striking at him personally. . . . We were showing him that we could get people close to him . . . and that's why members of his family were hurt during this thing."

According to the *Washington Post*, officials of the National Security Council had even drafted a statement to be released in the event Qaddafi was killed, describing his death as "fortuitous."

As has been the case in every U.S. war since World War II, the White House launched its aggression against Libya without seeking a congressional declaration as required by the U.S. constitution. The U.S. rulers fear the debate that would be spurred by seeking such a declaration, not only in Congress, but throughout the country.

The 1973 War Powers Act only requires that members of Congress be consulted about U.S. acts of war. And some congressional leaders were informed about the impending attack on April 14, after the U.S. warplanes had already left Britain on their way to Libya. But none took any action to block Reagan's move.

In general, the White House initially found enthusiastic support in Congress, from both Republicans and Democrats.

But a few congressmen raised some criticisms and doubts about the action's effectiveness. And a few questioned whether Reagan's last-minute consultation did, in fact, comply with the terms of the War Powers Act. Concern has also been raised that the bombing of Qaddafi's personal residence could be a violation of a 1976 executive order prohibiting direct U.S. attempts to assassinate foreign leaders.

As more of the facts about the bombing raid have come out, news reporters and commentators have increasingly expressed skepticism of Washington's version of what happened.

The reaction among Washington's NATO allies has been far from enthusiastic. In Europe, only the British government gave its unreserved support for the bombing raid, along with approval for the F-111s to leave from U.S. bases in Britain. The French and Spanish governments refused to allow Washington to use their air space, forcing the planes to take a

circuitous route 2,400 miles longer than if permission had been granted.

Nevertheless, Washington is continuing to press its West European allies to take further actions against Libya, such as the imposition of economic sanctions and the expulsion of Libyan diplomats.

Washington is also openly threatening further direct U.S. military strikes.

On April 17 Secretary of State George Shultz became the first senior U.S. official to state for the record that one of Washington's aims is to bring about the overthrow of the Libyan government. "If a coup takes place, that's all to the good," Shultz declared.

Washington has circulated rumors about dissidence within the Libyan army and various coup attempts as part of its efforts to portray the Libyan government as an unpopular regime sitting on top of a discontented population. While it is difficult to tell what rifts may or may not exist within the military, foreign correspondents in Libya reported that they saw no signs of popular opposition. In fact, they described large outpourings of support in the wake of the bombing raid.

The 'terrorism' smoke screen

As part of its justification for further moves against Libya, Washington is continuing to push its "antiterrorism" propaganda campaign. It has accused the Libyan government of ordering numerous attacks against U.S. citizens and property.

The one incident that U.S. officials most cited as a pretext for the bombing of Libya was an April 5 explosion at a West German nightclub frequented by U.S. troops, in which two people, one of them a U.S. soldier, were killed. Washington claimed "irrefutable proof" of Libyan government involvement in this action. But *Time* magazine reported that West German intelligence officials, who were shown Washington's "proof," indicated that it "did not quite prove that Gaddafi had planned and ordered the attack."

Now, Washington is even citing *future* actions as justifications for its anti-Libya drive. In the first official announcement of the U.S. bombing raid, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said it was "an effort to prevent Qaddafi from making future attacks on us." By their very nature, such charges require no proof whatsoever.

Another element Washington has introduced is the concept of collective guilt, to justify punishing the Libyan people for the government's supposed crimes. A Voice of America broadcast to Libya during the U.S. bombing raid declared, "The Libyan people are responsible for Colonel Qaddafi and his actions. If you permit Colonel Qaddafi to continue with the present conflict, then you must also share some collective responsibility for his actions."

This U.S. "antiterrorism" drive is thoroughly hypocritical. It is Washington that is the greatest terrorist force in the world. The U.S. rulers have ordered heads of state to be assassinated and governments to be overthrown. They have backed brutal, reactionary

regimes like those in South Africa, Chile, El Salvador, Iran under the shah, and the Philippines under Marcos. They have organized terrorist bands, like those operating against the Angolan and Nicaraguan people, and then call these terrorists "freedom fighters."

Using the same twisted vocabulary, Washington routinely slaps the "terrorist" label on those peoples and governments that stand up to imperialist oppression and exploitation.

'We say no to the United States'

The real reason for Washington's anti-Libya drive has nothing to do with terrorism. It is a result of the U.S. rulers' political opposition to Libya's foreign and domestic policies. Since the Qaddafi government took power in 1969 — overthrowing a U.S.-backed monarchy — it has sought to lessen Libya's dependence on imperialism and has given support to liberation movements and oppressed peoples around the

globe.

In a speech a week before the U.S. bombing raid, Maj. Abdul Salam Jalloud, a key Libyan leader, pointed to these political differences. "The United States fights us because we say no to the United States and because we defy the United States and because we do not kneel," he said.

"The United States is hostile to the Arab masses; it is biased toward the Israelis, the kings, the capitalists, and the bourgeoisie. The revolution in Libya is biased toward the toiling popular masses. . . .

"The United States wants to liquidate the Palestinian question. We advocate the liberation of Palestine. . . . The United States wants to use Islam in its own service for reaction, exploitation, and oppression. We call for the Islam of freedom. . . .

"The United States is fighting us because we fight for the aims of our nation." □

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Editor: Doug Jenness.

Contributing Editors: Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, George Novack.

Managing Editor: Ernest Harsch.

Editorial Staff: Steve Craine, Will Reissner.

Business Manager: Patti Iiyama.

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British protests hit bombing

Broad sentiment against U.S. bases

By Alan Freeman

LONDON — Mass protests erupted throughout Britain within hours of Reagan's air strikes against Libya. It was the biggest immediate protest against a U.S. or British military action in many years.

By the evening of the day of the attack, April 15, there were protests in nearly all major British cities. More mass demonstrations were held in a number of cities on April 19.

The largest protest took place in London on April 19, where more than 10,000 people came together, on the initiative of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), in a highly militant demonstration, which at one point successfully blocked off London's main shopping street for more than two hours.

A clear mass current has emerged that wants all U.S. bases out of Britain and wants to end the 40-year partnership between British and U.S. imperialism that has served as a cornerstone of imperialist rule from 1945 onward.

A new public opinion survey indicated that 49 percent of the population opposes the presence of U.S. military bases in Britain. Previously the question of U.S. bases had been marginal to British politics.

In London, by noon on April 15, crowds had gathered outside the U.S. embassy and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's official residence at 10 Downing Street.

As several hundred mounted a vigil at 10 Downing Street by torchlight, 27 peace and political organizations were meeting in the House of Commons to form the "Campaign Against the War Threat." CND leaflets began flooding out, summoning people for the April 19 mass protest.

Opinion polls registered 69 percent of the British population against the bombing of Libya and 29 percent in favor.

The demonstration on April 19, built with only three days' notice, was huge — at least 10,000, mainly young people. Demonstrators blockaded Grosvenor Square, the site of the U.S. embassy, but were kept well away from the embassy itself by police and crash barriers.

There was no trace of anti-Libya hysteria among the protesters. Banners from CND mingled freely with those from Palestine solidarity groups, Arab student societies, and Central America solidarity campaigns.

Fastened to the railings of Grosvenor Square were large photographs of a Libyan child killed in the raid, with the question "Is this child a terrorist?"

Placards reading "Reagan is the Real Mad Man," "U.S. Bases Out," and "Thatcher is the Real Conspirator" were everywhere.

At 4:00 p.m. the protesters moved off to link

up with a rally in Hyde Park addressed by CND leaders, Labour Party Member of Parliament Tony Benn, and others.

On route the march passed Oxford Street, the city's main shopping thoroughfare, and there it stopped. For over two hours demonstrators blockaded the thoroughfare as traffic backed up for miles in both directions.

Police could not bring up transport to conduct mass arrests, so they decided to clear the peaceful demonstrators by force alone. Shocked witnesses saw police haul protesters out by their hair, ears, or necks and kick and punch them.

At 5:30 p.m. the police tried to move buses through the traffic. The driver of the front bus refused to move the vehicle on the grounds that the streets were not clear and it was a danger to public safety to drive forward.

Worldwide condemnations of raid

By Will Reissner

Throughout the world the April 15 U.S. bombing of Libya has been met with protests.

More than 50,000 people marched on the U.S. embassy in Athens, Greece, on April 15 in a protest organized by the Greek Student Federation, the country's two Communist parties, and several labor federations.

In Italy more than 100,000 people rallied in Rome and 80 other cities on April 16, and a second wave of demonstrations took place on April 19, as 10,000 people took to the streets in Rome and 15,000 in Milan.

In Khartoum, Sudan, some 10,000 gathered on April 16 to protest the bombing attack on neighboring Libya.

Uruguay's Senate voted April 16 to "categorically" condemn the U.S. raid on Libya as "damaging to international law and the norms of peaceful coexistence."

A Gallup poll indicated that 73 percent of the residents of Montevideo, the country's capital, opposed the U.S. raid.

The government of Ghana, in West Africa, issued a statement April 15 stating that the U.S. attack on Libya "should serve as a serious warning to all progressive and peace-loving countries of the ominous threat to international peace and security posed by the misguided and belligerent policies of the Reagan Administration."

In Barcelona, Spain, police reported that 10,000 people took part in a demonstration April 20 at the U.S. consulate. Protesters chanted slogans against British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as well as Reagan.

In Prague, Czechoslovakia, an April 17

A policeman climbed into the driver's seat but could not work the controls. Then, as demonstrators jeered the police, the driver disconnected the spark plugs and fuel feed and walked off.

Demonstrations also took place in most of the major cities in Britain, the largest being in Manchester on April 19, where 5,000 people marched through the city square on the initiative of Greater Manchester Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

National Union of Mineworkers leader Arthur Scargill, at a meeting of 1,000 people in South Wales, blasted the U.S. use of military bases in Britain "to bomb cities and towns in a foreign country on the pretext that they were challenging state terrorism." The April 18 meeting was organized by Women Against Pit Closures.

Scargill argued that U.S. financing of counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua shows that Reagan and his administration "are past masters in state terrorism." He declared that "the Labour Party, within 24 hours of taking office, should tell the United States to take its filthy bases and nuclear weapons back to their own country." □

demonstration of students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America took place at the U.S. embassy.

In Manila, the Philippines, a chanting crowd of about 1,000 people demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy on April 18. "If the U.S. can do it to Libya, it can do it to the Philippines," a speaker warned.

The U.S. embassy in Lagos, Nigeria, was closed to the public after students there protested the U.S. attack on Libya.

In Warsaw, Poland, Arab students demonstrated at the U.S. mission.

In Tunis, Tunisia, demonstrators staged protests April 16 and 17 against the Tunisian government's refusal to condemn the U.S. raid on neighboring Libya. Hundreds gathered April 16 to express their rage at what they described as a "cowardly regime — accomplices of the Americans."

All five of Tunisia's opposition political parties supported the protests.

On the Greek island of Crete, site of large U.S. military bases, demonstrators gathered in front of a missile range to hang and then burn an effigy of President Reagan.

In Vienna, Austria, 4,000 demonstrators also burned an effigy of Reagan on April 19.

In Cairo, 100 Egyptian lawyers burned U.S., British, and Israeli flags to protest the U.S. bombing raid.

The United Arab Emirates canceled a four-day trade exhibition scheduled for London to protest the Thatcher government's assistance to the attack against Libya.

In Pakistan, where the Reagan government is very unpopular due to its support for the dic-

tatorial regime of Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, thousands took part in demonstrations in Lahore, Karachi, and other cities.

In Karachi, protesters shouted for Pakistan to send its U.S.-built F-16 jets to "fight American terrorism" in Libya.

Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach announced that talks with the Reagan administration on returning the bodies of U.S. troops killed in Vietnam would be suspended while U.S. attacks on Libya continue.

Thach stated, "It will not help the MIA talks when brutal and inhumane acts are committed against a member of the Nonaligned Movement."

A delegation of foreign ministers from the Nonaligned Movement arrived in Tripoli on April 20 to express their movement's support of Libya "in the face of the unprovoked and blatant violations by the United States of [Libya's] territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence."

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of Cuba's Bay of Pigs victory in Havana on April 19, Cuban President Fidel Castro condemned the bombing of Libya as "brutal, shameful, criminal, and terrorist."

In West Germany demonstrations took place in more than 50 cities on the night of the U.S. air strikes against Libya, and larger actions were mounted the following day, April 16.

On April 19 up to 80,000 people took to the streets in West Germany. Many protests took place in small cities and towns where no previous organizing had taken place for the peace movement or anti-imperialist struggles.

A West German television poll indicated that 80 percent of those questioned were against the U.S. bombing of Libya.

Speaking on April 17 at a congress of the East German Communist Party, party leader Erich Honecker described the U.S. attack as a "barbaric bombardment of peaceful Libyan cities" and "an act of aggression that summons up justified shock and indignation."

Protests and demonstrations have also taken place in Israel, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Ireland, the Dominican Republic, and many other countries.

In the United States emergency protests took place in a number of cities. In Washington, D.C., 200 people picketed the White House. In Minneapolis, 400 demonstrated at the Federal Building. In New York, 400 picketed a military recruiting center. In Los Angeles, 800 people took part in a previously called demonstration April 15 against U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries and cheered condemnations of the U.S. bombing of Libya.

Rev. Jesse Jackson was one of the few prominent Democratic or Republican politicians to speak out against the bombing.

Jackson stated on April 18, "When our government funds terrorism in Angola . . . practices terrorism with murder manuals and mined harbors in Central America, ignores terrorism until one minute past midnight in the Philippines . . . then when the president condemns terrorism in the Middle East, he is not believable in the eyes of the world." □

Nicaragua

Contra aid vote delayed

U.S. House puts off decision to May

By Will Reissner

Through a series of complex parliamentary maneuvers, the U.S. House of Representatives has postponed until mid-May any action on providing additional funds to the Honduras- and Costa Rica-based counterrevolutionaries fighting Nicaragua's government.

The Reagan administration has asked for a \$100 million aid package for the *contras*, including direct military aid and what it describes as "nonlethal" assistance.

On March 27 the Senate passed a similar measure by a vote of 53 to 47, but it must be approved by the House as well before it can be implemented. The House had voted down the Reagan administration's proposal on March 20 by a 222 to 210 vote.

The latest round of parliamentary maneuvering in the House began on April 15, when that body voted 212 to 208 to attach any contra aid measure that is passed to a \$1.7 billion catchall appropriations bill the Reagan administration has threatened to veto.

The House then began considering three alternative contra aid proposals:

- The Reagan administration proposal, similar to the measure passed by the Senate, which would provide \$100 million in aid to the *contras*. Of that total, \$25 million would be released immediately and could be used for "defensive weapons," including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. The remaining \$75 million could not be released until after July 1.

- A measure introduced by Democrat David McCurdy, which would also provide \$100 million in military and nonmilitary aid. Of that total, \$30 million could be released to the *contras* after approval of the measure, but none of it could be used for weapons. The remaining \$70 million could be released only after a second vote by the Senate and House, after July 28.

- A proposal introduced by Democrat Lee Hamilton, which would provide \$27 million in "nonlethal" aid to so-called refugees from Nicaragua, most of whom are in contra military camps in Honduras.

The House, with the backing of the Democratic leadership, had been expected to approve the McCurdy proposal, which would then have become part of the appropriations bill submitted to Reagan sometime in the summer.

However, when the voting on the three measures took place on April 16, House Republicans maneuvered by voting in favor of a measure they actually oppose — the Hamilton proposal for \$27 million in "refugee" aid. It carried by a vote of 361 to 66.

Under the rules of the House, passage of this bill prevented consideration of the McCurdy

proposal.

Following the surprise passage of Hamilton's proposal, the House Democratic leaders then pulled it off the House floor.

The House Republicans have announced that they will now attempt to secure the necessary 218 signatures of House members to consider the administration's contra aid proposal as a separate bill.

Despite this setback to the Reagan administration's legislative proposal, the White House is not waiting for a congressional decision before providing additional funding to the counterrevolutionaries.

Reagan's recent hoax of a supposed Nicaraguan "invasion" of Honduras was used to rush \$20 million in emergency U.S. military aid to Honduras, much of which will be funneled through the Honduran military to the contra forces.

In addition, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has secretly funneled millions of dollars to the *contras* despite a congressional ban on providing CIA aid to them, according to a report in the April 14, 1986, *Washington Post*.

The restrictions on CIA participation in the contra war were put into effect in October 1984 after the CIA organized the mining of Nicaraguan ports and authored a contra training manual calling for political assassinations.

The CIA funding was in addition to \$27 million in "nonlethal" aid to the *contras* approved by Congress last year.

The Reagan administration has also been pressing the Honduran government to take a more direct part in the war against Nicaragua. Nicaragua's defense minister, Humberto Ortega, warned that "we are on the edge of a confrontation of armies in the coming months."

A leading Sandinista official, Carlos Fernando Chamorro Barrios, told a radio interviewer in Managua on April 16, just after the vote in the House of Representatives, that the vote "does not signify any relief for our people." He added, "This action only gives Congress a few more days to discuss ways to save the counterrevolution."

In the wake of the U.S. bombing of two Libyan cities in the early morning hours of April 14, President Reagan attempted to use the support of that attack by most House Democrats to boost the chances of passage of the contra aid package.

Reagan told the American Business Conference later that day: "I would remind the House voting this week that this arch-terrorist [Muammar el-Qaddafi] has sent \$400 million and an arsenal of weapons and advisers into Nicaragua to bring his war home to the United States." □

Background to Duvalier's ouster

New political winds in Caribbean inspired fight against tyranny

**By Harvey McArthur
and Margaret Jayko**

[Harvey McArthur and Margaret Jayko spent a week in Haiti in March as part of a reporting team of U.S. socialists. Jackie Floyd, national co-chairperson of the Young Socialist Alliance, also participated.]

[McArthur is part of *Intercontinental Press's* bureau in Managua, Nicaragua. Jayko is managing editor of the *Militant*, a socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

* * *

On January 31, Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier went on national television to declare that he was firmly in power and holding on as "firm as a monkey's tail." One week later, he was whisked away to exile in France aboard a U.S. Air Force C-141. The Haitian people had cut off the monkey's tail.

Prior to Duvalier's departure, Haiti had been swept by months of demonstrations and student strikes calling for his overthrow. Peasants and city poor had ransacked and burned government buildings in the cities of Gonaïves, Jacmel, Cap-Haïtien, and elsewhere.

In some cases, the army and police had refused to fire on the demonstrators. Even Duvalier's hated private police force, the Tontons Macoutes, began to lose their grip. In much of the country, they had fled or gone into hiding as the popular protests grew.

Haiti's Roman Catholic bishops supported the protests and opposed Duvalier's desperate attempts to hold on to power. Sixteen Protestant church leaders made a call for democratic government and respect for human rights. And even the conservative Association of Haitian Industries issued a statement in the final weeks before Duvalier's overthrow calling for a "democratic solution" and "respect for human rights."

In the face of this mounting opposition, the U.S. government, which had always supported Duvalier, finally backed off. On January 30 it said that it was suspending aid to the regime. The following day the White House announced — a bit prematurely — that Duvalier had gone into exile.

But one week later, it really was over. Haiti, after 29 years, was finally freed from the tyranny of the Duvalier family.

The collapse of the dynasty was unexpected. But it was not the result of a sudden and spontaneous uprising. It was the cumulative product of a series of economic, social, and political changes and struggles over several years that isolated Duvalier and led very broad layers of Haitian society, involving virtually all social classes and layers, to mobilize against his

regime. His overthrow was the result of a truly national struggle to get the Duvalier boot off the neck of the Haitian people.

To understand how Haiti got rid of this tyranny, it is first necessary to take a concrete look at what "Duvalierism" actually was.

Modern class development stunted

The three decades of Duvalier-family rule were an obstacle to social and economic progress in Haiti. The development of all modern social classes — workers, peasants, small merchants, capitalists — was stunted and retarded.

Francois Duvalier became president on Oct. 22, 1957. He immediately moved to eliminate any and all possible opposition to his rule. "Papa Doc" established a dynasty, declaring himself president-for-life and later passing this position on to his son, Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc"), in 1971.

The Duvaliers relied upon the dreaded Tontons Macoutes to back up their rule. The Macoutes were founded by Papa Doc, and his son retained them.

Recent estimates of the size of this private army range from 15,000 to upwards of 35,000 armed thugs. They were reinforced by a broad network of informers and collaborators, perhaps as many as 300,000 people in a country of 6 million. Many worked with the Macoutes out of fear or desperation for a job.

Leading Macoutes became government officials and local police chiefs. They were tax collectors and extortionists for the regime. Some received a salary, but most did not. They were expected to steal from peasants, merchants, workers, and market vendors.

The Macoutes arrested, tortured, and killed on the Duvaliers' orders. François Duvalier soon eliminated potential political rivals among the capitalists and landlords, crushed a nationwide student movement, destroyed the few existing unions, and purged the Catholic church hierarchy. His son continued in his bloody footsteps. In all, an estimated 50,000 people were murdered or disappeared during the three decades of Duvalierist rule.

A 'kleptocracy'

No one knows exactly how much money the Duvaliers and their cronies stole from the Haitian people. Estimates of Jean-Claude's "worth" run as high as US\$900 million.

The Duvaliers were neither big landowners in Haiti nor did they have large financial holdings in factories or industry. They amassed their fortune through control over the state apparatus itself. These parasites siphoned off large amounts of cash from taxes, foreign aid, bribes, pension payments, and extortion

money. The government didn't keep records on much of what it collected. A big chunk ended up in Duvalier's private bank accounts.

Corruption and extortion became the hallmark of the regime. This led a 1982 Canadian government report to dub the Duvalier administration a "kleptocracy."

Examples abound.

The March 18, 1986, *New York Times* reported, "Employees at a Government pension and Social Security fund announced this month that they were required to contribute large and varying sums to the palace and to 'the charities of the First Lady,' Michèle Duvalier."

Duvalier cronies headed government ministries and state-owned industries — another source of enrichment for the dictator. Duvalier received 50 cents for each sack of cement produced at the state-owned cement factory, and \$1 for every sack of flour milled at the country's only flour mill, also state-run.

On Dec. 3, 1980, the *Times* reported that "there is still no public accounting of 50 percent of the profits from the Régie de Tabac, the Government agency that collects taxes on everything that is sold, a sum that is thought to be as much as \$45 million a year.

"This money is believed to go to the Duvalier family and to support the militia, or Volunteers for National Security," the Tontons Macoutes. The sales taxes imposed by this agency were outrageously high.

Until his overthrow, the Haitian Central Bank permitted Duvalier to help himself to up to \$1 million every month, without accounting for the money.

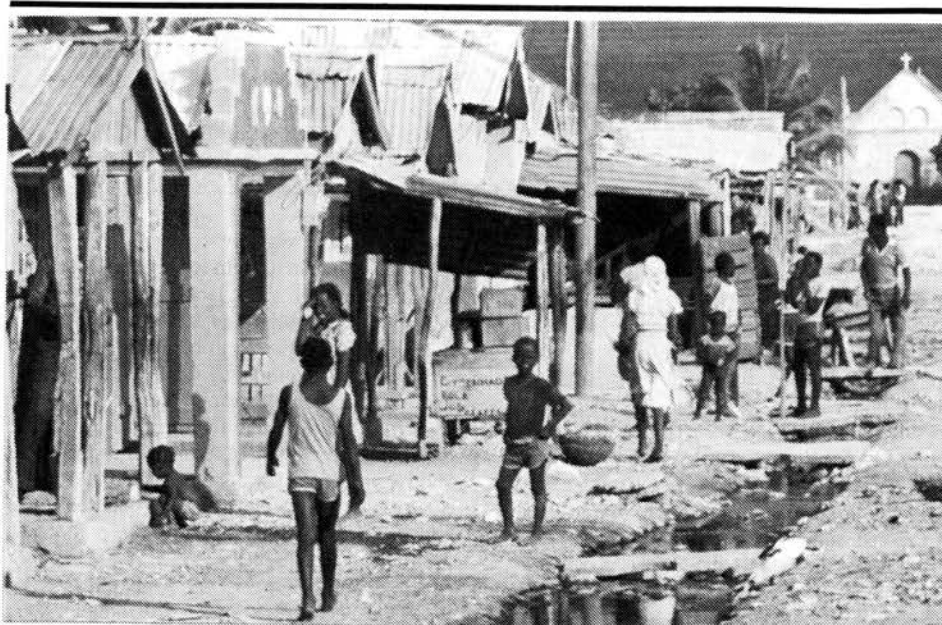
As a result of this massive theft of public funds and the high taxes, the prices of basic items widely used by workers and peasants have long been much higher in Haiti than elsewhere in the Caribbean.

"The cost of all these products was driven up at the expense of the consumer," said Claude Lévy, head of the Haitian Association of Manufacturers, "and then the profits were siphoned off."

The Duvaliers depended on foreign aid handouts to keep their government afloat. During the first six years of Papa Doc's rule, he received \$100 million from Washington. U.S. aid continued for the rest of his reign, amounting to from one-sixth to one-fifth of the annual government budget. The U.S. government backed Baby Doc also, turning over some \$50 million a year to his government, right up until the end.

Much of the money from imperialist governments and bankers went into Duvalier's pocket.

In December 1980, for example, the Inter-



Duvaliers grew rich while majority of Haitians lived in poverty.

national Monetary Fund granted Haiti a \$22 million loan. Twenty million of that sum disappeared within days after it reached Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital. It was never accounted for.

The Macoutes and Duvalier also profited from emergency relief aid rushed to Haiti in August 1980 when Hurricane Allen devastated the country's southern coast. Food and blankets were stolen by soldiers, police, and government officials — presumably to be sold on the black market.

The corruption was so widespread that even this large quantity of foreign aid offered little relief to the Haitian people. A 1982 U.S. government report concluded that conditions in Haiti "have actually regressed since the 1950s." U.S. agricultural programs, it admitted, failed to benefit even "a single group of small farmers."

The meager development and relief projects that were implemented were mostly undertaken by private and church agencies, not by the Haitian government. More than 300 such agencies operated in Haiti by 1985, the United Nations reported. They provided half the medical care, two-thirds of all the schools, and much of the scarce safe drinking water.

In addition to whatever fortune Duvalier is now sitting on in his villa on the French Riviera, there are the many millions more amassed by the president's father-in-law, Ernest Bennett, and other close friends of the regime. Bennett, a wealthy coffee exporter, became even wealthier after his daughter's 1980 marriage to Duvalier.

As a result of this wholesale robbery, Haiti was left with barely \$1 million in its treasury when Duvalier fled.

U.S. capitalists plunder Haiti

Duvalier and company weren't the only ones who profited from "Duvalierism." U.S.

capitalists also made big bucks.

In the mid-1960s, U.S. corporations dominated sugar and sisal production, copper and bauxite mining, and meat packing.

Altogether, U.S. companies controlled 40 percent of Haiti's exports by the early 1960s. They paid very low wages and almost no taxes. Reynolds Mining, for instance, only paid 2.4 percent in taxes on its bauxite mining operation in 1963. In 1982, when the bauxite ran out, Reynolds simply closed up shop, throwing thousands out of work and leaving Haiti with nothing but a large hole in the ground.

During the 1970s, Duvalier encouraged U.S. and other foreign corporations to open up new factories. They were guaranteed low wages, union-free conditions, and long-term tax exemptions.

As a result, 300 factories opened up in Haiti, employing 5,000 workers. They included electronic assembly, garment, toys, and sporting goods plants. Most Haitian workers receive less than the \$3-a-day official minimum wage. The goods produced by Haitian workers and the profits they generate go to fatten U.S. businessmen's bank accounts.

In exchange for Duvalier's cooperation with the U.S. corporations that exploit Haiti's natural resources and squeeze big profits from the labor of its workers and peasants, Washington provided weapons and training to Duvalier's military and police. The Leopards, a counter-insurgency unit of the army, notorious for its brutal methods, was set up in 1971. It was trained by U.S. advisers at bases in Panama.

Famine strikes the peasantry

While Duvalier and the U.S. exploiters prospered, Haitian society stagnated. The very survival of millions was threatened by the ruination of the peasants and the decrease in food production.

Three out of four Haitians live in rural areas. A handful of wealthy landowners dominate

Haitian farmland. One percent of them controls 60 percent of the land.

The World Bank estimates that 78 percent of the rural population lives at or below the "absolute poverty level." The overwhelming majority of peasants work tiny plots, with only the most rudimentary tools. The average plot size is about one acre. Some farmers work two or more widely separated plots as a way of spreading the risks of production. Still their total land holdings average only about an acre and a half — and this figure is declining.

More than 50 percent of the rural population own their own property, though the absence of a clear land registry system means that their holdings are never secure. Many peasants also engage in sharecropping, farming land belonging to someone else, to whom they must give half their production. There are also many agricultural workers, who own no land at all.

Haiti's chief export crop is coffee, which is cultivated by 400,000 peasants on steep mountain slopes. The high taxes that were a hallmark of Duvalierism hit these peasants very hard. Combined with rip-offs by middlemen and speculators who export the coffee — many of them cronies of Duvalier — these high costs forced some peasants to stop growing coffee. Consequently its production has declined.

U.S. imperialist intervention into agriculture, both through direct land ownership and through a variety of "aid" programs, increased under the Duvaliers. U.S. capitalists encouraged the cultivation of export crops at the expense of food production. This, combined with the necessity of peasants to sell, rather than consume, much of the food they produce, is one reason that 90 percent of all children in Haiti suffer from varying degrees of malnutrition.

Lack of government investment in sorely needed irrigation, mechanization, and fertilization all have contributed to the decline in agricultural output. It is estimated that, on the average, each peasant's production is declining by 2.5 percent every year. Today there is 36 percent less irrigated land in the country than there was in the mid-19th century.

The impoverished Haitian peasants get very low prices for their products. Only 3 percent have access to any source of credit.

Soil erosion: national disaster

Soil erosion in Haiti, due to deforestation, is a national disaster and getting worse each year. As much as 4 percent of Haiti's topsoil is washed away annually, according to recent studies. In the past two decades, 80 percent of Haiti's trees have been cut down, some for export by wealthy merchants and the rest for use by exploited peasants who have no other source of fuel.

The big landlords worked hand-in-hand with the Tontons Macoutes to wring more labor, taxes, and rent out of the peasants. Those who had a good piece of land stood in constant danger of losing it to a greedy Macoute or other Duvalier crony.

A famine broke out in 1974 and hundreds of

Haitians starved to death. Only quick shipments of food by international relief agencies prevented an even worse disaster. Haiti has become increasingly dependent on this food aid. For example, more than half the wheat consumed in the country is donated by the U.S. government.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants have left the countryside, looking for work and a future in the cities. Most now live in the vast shantytowns of Port-au-Prince. The capital city quadrupled in size in the last 20 years, growing from 250,000 in 1965 to approximately 1 million today. In a city with an unemployment rate of over 50 percent, only the distribution of food by private agencies prevents mass starvation.

One out of every six Haitians now lives outside the country, having opted to leave Haiti altogether to escape the political repression and to find a way to support themselves and their families.

The money sent back to relatives by those who find work in the United States, Canada, Latin America, or Europe amounted to some \$100 million by 1980.

Haiti's poverty, especially in the countryside, is often blamed on its high population density and lack of natural resources and fertile land. But a study of Haiti published by the United Nations in 1985 pointed out that "Haiti is a country of considerable potential. It can be relatively self-sufficient in food production." The problem is not a *natural* one but a *social* one — decades of imperialist domination combined with 29 years of Duvalier plunder and neglect.

New currents in the Caribbean

Despite Duvalier's repression and the omnipresent Tontons Macoutes, Haiti was not impervious to the winds of change and new currents stirring in the Caribbean by the 1970s. Haiti is *part of* the Caribbean and Latin America — the region of the world where the fight against imperialist domination and exploitation is today at center stage.

The 1959 Cuban revolution had been a big inspiration and impetus to anti-Duvalier forces. The fact that the neighboring people of Cuba were able to overthrow Duvalier's fellow dictator, Fulgencio Batista, gave hope to Haiti's opposition forces. The new Cuban government, led by Fidel Castro, gave material and political support to Haitian freedom fighters.

Most importantly, Cuba's example — of a people who broke imperialism's grip on their country, won the battle against illiteracy, disease, starvation, unemployment, and land hunger, and aided liberation fighters around the globe — was hated and feared by Duvalier and his U.S. backers. Because oppressed people everywhere are attracted to the Cuban revolution, the Duvaliers made virulent anti-communist propaganda — and laws — a key element in their system of rule.

In March 1979, the sister Caribbean people of Grenada, led by Maurice Bishop and his New Jewel Movement, overthrew tyrant Eric

Gairy and established a popular workers' and farmers' government. Until its overthrow in October 1983, the Grenada revolution was a beacon of hope for the peoples of the Caribbean, especially those who are Black.

The overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua just four months after Gairy's demise was also closely watched and cheered by the Haitian people. They followed the blow-by-blow accounts of the Sandinista-led insurrection on their radios. (Port-au-Prince is probably one of the few cities in the world that still has an avenue named after Somoza — a testament to Duvalier's close identification with that butcher of the Nicaraguan people.)

The Catholic church in Haiti was also not exempt from the effects that these revolutionary events were having on clergy and lay activists all over Latin America and the Caribbean. The great majority of Haitians are Catholics.

In 1966, the pope gave Duvalier the power to appoint Haitian bishops, thus bringing the top clergy under his direct control. By 1980, however, the church authorities began to speak out against government repression and the impoverishment of the Haitian masses.

Because of the years of severe repression against political parties, trade unions, student and peasant organizations, and other independent groups that made it very difficult if not impossible for them to function openly, the church became a central vehicle for organizing protests against Duvalier. Some of the clergy became prominent anti-Duvalier spokespeople. This also made the church a target of Macoute violence.

Even some elements of the capitalist class, who saw profits to be made in encouraging more U.S. investment as well as in developing some Haitian-owned industry, were frustrated by the extent of the arbitrary acts and parasitic functioning of the government. Roads, schools, adequate supplies of food and water — all were necessary to expand industrial production. These businessmen began to feel the need to end the worst corruption and give those who weren't part of the Duvalier clique a voice in government.

The U.S. administration of President James Carter, elected in 1976, put pressure on Duvalier to clean up at least some of the most blatant violations of human rights in order to make it easier to continue giving Haiti massive amounts of aid — and in order to head off possible revolutionary developments.

Duvalier 'liberalizes' the dictatorship

Faced with these pressures, Duvalier and his U.S. backers announced, with much fanfare, a "liberalization" in 1977.

Political parties, a free press, elections, union activity, an end to corruption, and freedom for political prisoners were proclaimed the order of the day.

Nothing, however, would be allowed to threaten Duvalier's right to remain president-for-life, and the regime intended that the reforms should remain largely on paper. Political repression was lessened, not ended.

Under the impact of international events,

and with this political opening, a new generation of young activists emerged in Haiti. Small left-wing groups developed — though they remained underground.

The United Party of Haitian Communists (PUCH), which was formed two decades earlier from a series of splits and regroupments in the workers' movement, was among those that functioned clandestinely.

Workers began to fight for higher wages and to organize unions. The labor federation, Independent Federation of Haitian Workers (CATH), was organized openly in May 1980.

Newspapers and radios reported on the misery of the peasants and the unemployed, criticized the corruption and repression of the government, and began to discuss solutions to Haiti's problems. Two small capitalist opposition parties — the Christian Democratic Party and Social Christian Party — were organized, the first open parties since 1957.

Some political prisoners were released — the first ever under the Duvalier dictatorship. The Haitian League for Human Rights was founded by Gérard Gourgue to expose repression and torture.

The rigidity of the Duvalier system was such that even this small opening posed a threat to the whole ruling structure. On Nov. 28, 1980, hundreds of labor and student activists, journalists, and political leaders were arrested. Many were tortured and beaten. Some were expelled from the country; others were thrown into Duvalier's prisons.

The unions were broken up, their supporters driven underground or arrested. Workers lost their jobs for suspected union sympathies. Outspoken newspapers and radio stations were closed.

Economic crisis hits hard

A severe economic crisis hit Haiti after 1980. The worldwide recession brought Haiti's small industrial expansion to a halt. The combination of a hurricane, drought, and epidemic of swine fever had a devastating effect on the already severely reduced agricultural production. The country's bauxite reserves gave out, ending mining operations in 1982. Tourism declined sharply.

By 1985, according to the report of the Pax Christi International mission, 50 percent of agricultural laborers and 65 percent of industrial workers were unemployed. Ten percent of the entire population lived by begging.

Duvalier's response was to call for more foreign aid and borrow heavily from U.S. and European banks. Grants and loans to the government increased from \$80 million in 1980 to \$120 million in 1984. This amounted to one-half the government's annual budget.

Haiti's foreign debt to imperialist bankers grew from \$266 million in 1980 to \$494 million in 1984.

In 1980, Duvalier married Michèle Bennett. She was the daughter of Ernest Bennett, a wealthy businessman whose interests included coffee and cocoa exports and importing a wide range of goods, including luxury cars. This brought a new group of capitalists into the

dynasty.

The Bennetts were part of the layer of Haitian businessmen who are mulattoes. Five percent of Haiti's population is mulatto, or lighter-skinned. They tend, on the whole, to be economically better off than the Black Haitian majority.

The marriage led to some frictions between the large Black landowners who traditionally were the Duvaliers' base of support and the Bennetts.

Ernest Bennett used his relationship to the dictator to shove aside competitors and enrich himself at the expense of other importers and capitalists.

Michèle Bennett — like Imelda Marcos of the Philippines — became a hated symbol of the corruption and extravagance of the regime. Haiti was rife with stories about the "First Lady's" obscenely expensive shopping trips to Europe.

Duvalier's growing isolation

Despite the brutality with which the "liberalization" was abruptly brought to an end, Duvalier could not keep the lid on things indefinitely. As Haiti's economic crisis worsened and his isolation increased, more sectors of the population were beginning to draw the conclusion that Duvalier must go. And they were beginning to gain the confidence to act on their convictions.

Priests and nuns began to organize Christian base communities among the peasants and city poor, which had as one of their purposes social and political action to improve the lives of the Haitian people. The Catholic hierarchy issued statements condemning the arrests of 1980 and protested subsequent repression against church, labor, and political activists. Radio Soleil, the Catholic church radio station, became a widely listened to voice of opposition to Duvalier.

In March 1983, Pope John Paul II visited Haiti. The pope publicly rebuked the government for "the injustice, the excessive inequality, the degradation of the quality of life, the misery, the hunger, the fear of many people" in Haiti. His declaration that "it is indeed necessary that things change" encouraged many church activists to step up their political involvement.

In the biggest wave of arrests after the 1980 crackdown, some 20 businessmen and professionals, most of them of Middle Eastern origin, were arrested in August 1982. They were questioned about some clandestine anti-Duvalier activities that had occurred. But the main reason for the arrests was that a layer of capitalists was beginning to openly denounce the corruption and incompetence of the government.

The previous month, economic affairs minister and former World Bank official Marc Bazin had been ousted from his office after trying for five months, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, to end some of the most glaring financial irregularities of the Duvalier administration.

In 1984 the public protests exploded in a

qualitatively new way, explicitly raising the idea of overthrowing Duvalier.

Gonaïves takes the lead

In May 1984 a popular rebellion broke out in Gonaïves against army brutality. Demonstrations demanded: "Down with Duvalier! Down with hunger! Down with misery!" Some 2,000 people from Gonaïves signed an open declaration calling for free presidential elections.

A group of mothers from Pétionville, a well-to-do suburb of Port-au-Prince, signed a public appeal supporting the Gonaïves declaration. They stated they were willing to risk their lives to "liberate our country from the empire of evil."

Alongside these public protests, small, clandestine groups distributed leaflets, exposing the crimes of the regime and calling for its overthrow.

These protests spread to other cities and parts of the countryside. Peasants demanded the return of land stolen from them. Angry crowds sacked food warehouses and government buildings before Duvalier's troops and Macoutes restored control.

In February 1985 tens of thousands of young people marched in demonstrations organized by the Catholic church as part of International Youth Year. They called for a better future for young people. In some cities, these actions also openly called for Duvalier's overthrow.

Opposition continued to mount. The Nov. 28, 1985, murder of three students by Duvalier's soldiers in Gonaïves unleashed the wave of anger and protests that finally forced Duvalier to flee the country Feb. 7, 1986.

Capitalists unprepared

Nobody was less prepared for Duvalier's exodus than the capitalists in Haiti and their backers in Washington. The mass upsurge that forced the Duvaliers to jump ship also did away with the Tontons Macoutes and destroyed much of the old government apparatus in towns and villages around the country. Since the central government had mainly served as an instrument of repression and robbery on Duvalier's behalf, the ouster of Duvalier and his cronies left a vacuum of governmental power, institutions, and authority.

The Haitian ruling class did not have time to organize an orderly transition. There was no credible bourgeois opposition party or politicians ready to be put in Duvalier's place. And Duvalier's departure fueled, rather than dampened, the rise of mass mobilizations and political organizations.

Duvalier named a six-member, military-dominated National Council of Government as he was running out the door. But this could only be a holding operation, until something substantial could be put together.

Its instability was displayed rather rapidly. A wave of antigovernment demonstrations and strikes led to the collapse of the Duvalier-appointed junta on March 21. The army immediately designated a three-person council as its replacement. The new ruling body included Gen. Henri Namphy and Col. William Regala,

the two remaining members of the first junta and high-ranking officers under Duvalier. The third member is Jacques François, an elderly Haitian diplomat.

Since then, however, even this arrangement has begun to disintegrate. The government has barely functioned except to make a few feeble proclamations of its good intentions and to repress demonstrations when the high command feared things might get totally out of control.

'Operasyon Dechoukay'

The popular uprising that drove out Duvalier is known in Haiti as *Operasyon Dechoukay* — Operation Uproot. Most Haitians want to continue this uprooting so they can make the fundamental changes necessary to develop their country in their own interests.

A central demand of the Haitian people is for an elected, civilian government to draft a new, democratic constitution. To elect a constituent assembly that really reflects the will of the people will require the legalization of all political parties, universal suffrage, the right of every exile to return home, and the unrestricted freedom to debate and discuss political ideas.

Because of the lack of any government initiative on burning social questions, private citizens have begun to jump into the breach. The Catholic bishops have announced they are organizing a literacy campaign — in Creole, the language spoken by all Haitians. Some 80 percent of Haiti's people can't read or write. The literacy campaign has gotten an enthusiastic response from Haitian students, many of whom plan to participate in the project.

Businesspeople, religious figures, and others have organized *Konbit Solidarité* — a national and international effort to raise money to rebuild the schools that were destroyed in the anti-Duvalier fight. Tens of thousands of Haitians have donated money and are helping to organize the collection.

Radio Soleil has called on youth around the country to form neighborhood committees to deal with the problems facing the workers and unemployed who live in urban slums. These committees are being formed and have begun to organize people to clean up the streets.

Crisis in countryside

How to solve the crisis in the countryside is now being broadly discussed in Haiti. Many peasants have begun to take back lands stolen from them by Macoutes. The large farms owned by big landowners — many of which lay idle — could be a source of much-needed fertile land for many poor peasants and agricultural workers. Small peasants also need irrigation, credit, tools, fertilizer, and better prices for their products, as well as food, drinking water, schools, medical care, and electricity. And a top priority of Haiti's government will have to be an emergency effort to halt and reverse the erosion of the soil.

In the cities, especially Port-au-Prince, emergency jobs, food, and housing are desperately needed.

One of the most deeply felt grievances

against the post-Duvalier ruling council is its failure to prosecute even a single one of Duvalier's henchmen for their crimes, which range from murder and torture to robbery and extortion. The demand to bring these thugs to justice is a popular one in Haiti today.

Within the struggle of the entire Haitian nation to develop after decades of Duvalierism, the independent organization of the workers and peasants — the only social classes that have the power and interest to free Haiti from imperialist domination and wretched poverty — is crucial. This is a right that has not yet been won.

Initial strikes and union-organizing efforts have been sometimes met with firings and other victimizations by the bosses and repression by the military. Duvalier's law that makes

it a crime punishable by death to be a communist is still on the books.

To finance both emergency food and medical aid, as well as longer-run projects, the imperialist bankers should cancel Haiti's debt. The borrowed money was largely appropriated by the Duvalier elite. Payments on the principal and interest simply transfer wealth created by Haiti's workers and peasants into the pockets of U.S. and West European businessmen.

And Washington, which propped up Duvalier and organized his getaway, should help the Haitian people recover the money he stole and still holds on to.

In addition, the U.S. government should provide massive emergency food and medical aid to the Haitian people with no strings attached. This would simply be a small repay-

ment for the billions that U.S. profiteers have stolen from this nation over the decades.

Washington, instead, has rushed emergency military aid to Haiti's generals, while maintaining a massive military presence in the Caribbean. The Haitian people don't need — and don't want — U.S. military intervention in their country, in any form.

The Haitian people, in their millions, are beginning to write a new chapter in the history of their country and of the Caribbean. Washington opposes and fears their entry onto the political stage. All opponents of U.S.-backed war and repression in the Americas, however — from Nicaragua to Grenada to the United States — have been encouraged and inspired by the struggle of their Haitian brothers and sisters. □

South Africa

Activists forge new organs of struggle

'Street committees' challenge regime's control of Black townships

By Ernest Harsch

For four days in February, fierce street clashes raged through Alexandra, a Black township on the edge of Johannesburg.

On one side were the rebellious residents, with youths in their front ranks. On the other were hundreds of police and troops equipped with clubs, tear gas, and guns, striving to reimpose the edicts of apartheid.

When the shooting stopped, several dozen Blacks lay dead. But the government did not emerge from this clash as the victor. Its authority and control over the township lay in tatters. All resident Black policemen and members of Pretoria's local Black municipal council had to be evacuated.

Anti-apartheid activists in Alexandra were jubilant. "We have made very great progress over the past two weeks," one youth told the liberal South African journalist Allister Sparks. "I think it can be said that we are now in control of Alexandra. The majority of the people are behind us. The police may control the streets, but we control the people."

These youths, Sparks commented, "are filling the vacuum of public influence if not yet of actual power. They are organising into street committees and they move from door to door. . . ."

What is taking place in Alexandra is under way in some other Black townships as well. New forms of local mass organization, commonly called "street committees," are emerging. In conjunction with other popular bodies, they help coordinate and direct the struggle against the hated apartheid system. They seek to deny the white minority regime day-to-day control over political and other activities in the townships.

While still a new development limited to

some parts of the country, this nevertheless reflects a significant deepening of the massive popular upheaval that has been rocking South Africa for more than a year and a half.

Making South Africa 'ungovernable'

To some extent, the formation of these street committees and the strengthening of other local township organizations has been a product of the campaign to make apartheid South Africa "ungovernable."

Key targets of this campaign have been Pretoria's community councils and Black local authorities, which function on a township level. Staffed by Black collaborators with the apartheid regime, these councils are responsible primarily for collecting rents and utility fees, issuing licenses, and carrying out other administrative tasks.

Provoked by sharp rent hikes imposed by these councils, residents of Black townships around the country have been actively mobilizing against them since late 1984. Several hundred councillors have been forced to resign under mass pressure, and some have been killed. Many municipal liquor outlets — a key source of revenue for the councils — have been burned down. Widespread rent and utility-fee boycotts have further dried up council funding.

The isolation and destruction of these councils has gone the furthest in the Vaal Triangle region south of Johannesburg and in the Eastern Cape. Attempts to fill council vacancies in the Vaal Triangle townships failed when no one came forward to run for the posts. According to the March 16 Johannesburg *Sunday Star*, "Fewer than half the 45 community councils operating in the Eastern Cape are fulfilling their duties and there are many vacan-

cies. The higher local authorities are either not functioning or have been severely hampered by constant attacks by their antagonists."

As in Alexandra, residents of other townships have driven out Black policemen as well. Often the police are only able to return in force for periodic sweeps. Some Black policemen have also resigned under pressure from community organizations.

As the government's effective administration and control in many townships ground to a halt, popular organizations began to take on more and more authority.

A defense against repression

Another factor influencing the greater emphasis on building up local township organizations has been the need to find new ways to resist Pretoria's sweeping repression.

When President Pieter Botha proclaimed a state of emergency over parts of the country in July 1985, hundreds of top anti-apartheid leaders and organizers were detained. Most of those picked up by the security police belonged to affiliates of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the 2-million-member anti-apartheid coalition that has been leading most of the mass mobilizations. The Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the UDF's high school student affiliate, was outlawed. The regime's aim was clearly to behead the mass movement in the hopes of undercutting it.

This crackdown was a blow. It suddenly removed a layer of the most experienced leaders and made the coordination of national actions more difficult. The UDF was forced to close down its national offices in Johannesburg for at time.

But imprisoned activists kept in touch with

each other through jail-cell study groups. They maintained contact with the movement outside through those who were released after brief spells of detention.

UDF leaders who managed to evade arrest developed newer, semiclandestine forms of functioning. "We have an elaborate system of communication with our executive, our activists, and our members in the community," declared Naseegh Jaffer, organizer of the UDF's interim executive committee in the Western Cape. "We began developing alternative methods of organisation before the state of emergency was declared. We have grown used to working under an effective state of emergency since the first major wave of detentions began in August."

During the seven months of the state of emergency — which was finally lifted in early March — UDF national and regional executive committees continued to meet. Detained members were temporarily replaced. "We have devised ways and means of operating that enable us to withstand extreme repression," Transvaal UDF General Secretary Mohammed Valli said. Although the UDF will take full advantage of the end of the state of emergency to conduct more public activities, Valli went on, "We won't go back to the way we were working before the state of emergency. Next time the state clamps down on us, they'll find it much more difficult to weaken us."

One of the changes in the UDF has been a greater decentralization of leadership structures, with activities being organized and coordinated more on the local and regional levels. This places greater responsibility on the township-based organizations — student and youth congresses, civic associations, parents' committees, trade unions, women's associations, and other groups. Hundreds of such organizations existed before the state of emergency was imposed, but new ones have been formed since then, particularly in smaller townships in more rural parts of the country. Many are affiliated to the UDF, but some are not.

The street committees emerged as part of this growth in township organization.

Street committees developed initially and

most rapidly in Black townships around Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Cradock, East London, and other cities in the Eastern Cape. It is no coincidence that this is also a region that has long been a stronghold of popular support for the outlawed African National Congress (ANC), the organization leading the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

Mandela's legacy

South African police and newspapers have commented on the similarity between today's committees and those originally projected more than 30 years ago as part of an ANC reorganization effort spearheaded by Nelson Mandela (who has been imprisoned by the apartheid regime since 1962).

Mandela first outlined his proposal for creating block committees at a September 1953 Transvaal provincial conference of the ANC, at a time when the ANC was still a legal organization. Popularly known as the "M-Plan," this called for the formation of ANC cells organized from the block level upward, with leaders elected at cell meetings.

Mandela told the conference participants, "The hard and strenuous tasks of recruiting members and strengthening our organisation through a house-to-house campaign in every locality must be done by you all. From now on the activity of Congressites [ANC members] must not be confined to speeches and resolutions. Their activities must find expression in wide scale work among the masses, work which will enable them to make the greatest possible contact with the working people."¹

Although the main goal of the "M-Plan" was to boost the ANC's mass membership and organization, it was also designed to strengthen the organization against government repression, in particular the possibility that it could be outlawed and forced underground.

The "M-Plan" was actually implemented in only a few areas and to a limited extent. The most success was achieved in Port Elizabeth.

1. This speech, entitled, "No Easy Walk to Freedom," is available in: Nelson Mandela, *The Struggle Is My Life* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1978).

This helped the ANC in the region better withstand Pretoria's 1960 crackdown, in which the ANC and other anti-apartheid groups were banned following the Sharpeville massacre. But even in Port Elizabeth much of the ANC's organization was broken up through mass arrests and detentions. Mandela, who operated clandestinely until his own capture, visited Port Elizabeth in April 1961 to try to reactivate the cell committees.

Later that year, Mandela and other ANC leaders launched Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) as the ANC's armed wing. Its first military actions were carried out on Dec. 16, 1961, in Port Elizabeth and several other cities. Over the next few years, Umkhonto fighters in Port Elizabeth led the way in the number of guerrilla actions against the apartheid regime. But then, for more than a decade, security police action succeeded in crushing most ANC and Umkhonto activity within the country.

As the ANC's support and prestige has grown once again over the course of the current popular upsurge, activists have looked back to see what they can learn from the experiences of its past struggles. This has been facilitated by the direct participation of former ANC members in the leadership of the UDF and some of its affiliates.

While today's street committees may have emerged anyway, without the previous experience of the ANC's "M-Plan," that legacy has certainly been a factor in the speed with which the committees have developed, particularly in the Eastern Cape.

One Eastern Cape UDF leader, Edgar Ngoyi, openly acknowledged that the street committees are based on the "M-Plan proposed by Nelson Mandela more than 30 years ago. The cells are to teach residents and to learn of their problems and ideas."

'Democracy for the people'

The first street committees were established in 1984 in Lingelihle, a township of 17,000 Blacks outside Cradock, in the Eastern Cape. The initiative came from Matthew Goniwe, a leader of the Cradock Residents Association (Cradora), a key UDF affiliate in the area. According to Goniwe, "Democracy for the people in Lingelihle should not be a vision of the future or an abstract ideal. It should be something real, something to give ordinary people the power to bring about changes."

Cradora, along with the Cradock Women's Organisation, divided Lingelihle into seven zones. About 40 activists were assigned to organize them. Meetings were held in every zone to elect leaders, with each household voting for a street representative. This resulted in the collapse of the regime's Lingelihle community council when all the council members resigned in November 1984.

Lingelihle's street committees survived the June 1985 death-squad killings of Goniwe and other key activists in the area. New leaders emerged to take their places.

Following the imposition of the state of emergency in the Johannesburg and Port



Black township near Cradock in the Eastern Cape. First street committees were formed in this area.

Elizabeth areas in July 1985, street committees spread further through the Eastern Cape. The organizers chose not to publicize their existence for several months.

Then at a Dec. 16, 1985, meeting in Port Elizabeth — which coincided with the 24th anniversary of the launching of Umkhonto we Sizwe's armed struggle — the existence of the street committees was publicly announced. Some 1,000 residents of Black townships in the Eastern Cape gathered to elect area committee members from the ranks of the local street committees. Among the speakers was A. Peter, who had belonged to the ANC when it was still legal.

With varying degrees of organization, similar committees have since spread to other parts of the country, including Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, near Pretoria, and Kagiso and Munsieville, near Krugersdorp, west of Johannesburg.

In Alexandra, 18 street committees had already been formed by the end of January, with activists aiming to set up one for each of the township's 44 blocks. They established a central coordinating organization called the Alexandra Action Committee. A key role in Alexandra's street committees is played by Moses Mayekiso, a leader of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, an affiliate of the recently formed Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

In a January 8 address, ANC leader Oliver Tambo commented on the importance of such committees. "In some areas of our country," he said, "having destroyed the puppet organs of government imposed on us by the apartheid regime, we have reached the situation where even the enemy has to deal with the democratic forces as the legitimate representatives of the people. The establishment of people's power in these areas, however rudimentary and precarious, is of great significance for the further advancement of our struggle."²

The 'comrades' organize

The March 3 *Sowetan*, a Black-run newspaper in Johannesburg, reported that all Black policemen, as well as community council members, have been driven out of Langa and KwaNobuhle townships, outside Uitenhage. "Because many activists are detained and subjected to alleged harassment once they become known to the police," the *Sowetan* reported, "community organisations have decided that street committees should run — more or less — the affairs of the townships. If a committee member is detained, another is selected to fill the vacuum. Anonymity is observed strictly."

These anonymous activists are commonly called the "comrades," or in the Eastern Cape by the Xhosa-language equivalent, *maqabane*. Most are in their teens and 20s.

Through the street committees, these "comrades" carry out a wide variety of activities. According to Mkhuseleli Jack, a Port Elizabeth youth and community leader, "The street and



Funeral near East London for victims of apartheid regime.

area committees are addressing specific problems arising from our situation. The consumer boycott of white businesses was conceived at such a meeting and it lasted for four months. At the moment we are tackling the presence of cops in the area and the education problem. The rent issues will be discussed soon."

The "comrades" play a key role in organizing demonstrations, marches, and mass funerals for victims of police shootings. They spread the word about protest actions, serve as marshals, and warn of approaching police contingents. In preparation for a mass funeral in Alexandra in early March, they went door-to-door to collect money from residents to pay for the catering and other funeral expenses.

These activists likewise enforce township decisions on Blacks employed in Pretoria's local administration. "I was invited to quit," the Alexandra community council's public relations officer stated at a rally in March, "and I quit. As you know, when the comrades ask, you listen."

People's courts

"People's courts" have been set up in a number of townships to administer popular justice and to fill the vacuum left by the flight of Black policemen. "Alexandra police station is no longer functioning and people say 'go and see the comrades,'" explained Patric Banda, a leader of the Alexandra Youth Congress.

Atteridgeville, outside Pretoria, now has 12 people's courts, with a higher appeals court known as the Advice Office. These courts hear criminal cases, matrimonial disputes, and cases involving alleged collaborators with the apartheid regime.

In Kagiso and Munsieville, according to a report in the Johannesburg *Sunday Star*, residents have commended the "comrades" for virtually eliminating rapes, murders, and similar serious misdeeds and "freely express gratitude

for what they see as their sterling work."

In the townships where they function, the street committees and people's courts have also helped put a check to "necklace" executions, in which accused collaborators have a burning tire filled with gasoline put around them. Such methods have at times led to errors and abuses and unnecessarily antagonized sections of the township communities.

During the Alexandra mass funeral, two informers caught with tape recorders in their bags were saved from an angry crowd by a group of marshals, who let them off with a reprimand. In Atteridgeville, a resident charged with "furthering the aims of the police" was acquitted by a people's court when his wife produced evidence that he was not in fact a policeman.

The street committees, where they have become firmly established, have also served to draw into more organized activity the *amabuthu* (Xhosa for "warriors"), the loose groups of teenagers and preteenagers who are often in the forefront of clashes with the police. While generally supportive of the UDF and ANC, these *amabuthu* had nevertheless previously functioned largely outside the direct control of township organizations.

Above all, the street committees have provided a means for promoting greater popular participation in the freedom struggle. Activists use them to "conscientise" community residents, the common term for raising their political awareness.

"When we have conscientised them all," one activist in Alexandra told a reporter, "then at a word from us we can stop all these factories with a strike or cripple the shops with a consumer boycott. That is how the struggle is going to be fought."

"The people shall govern," another Alexandra militant stated. "The time has come for us to learn to govern ourselves." □

2. For the full text of Tambo's address, see the February 24 *Intercontinental Press*.

A visit with sugar workers on Negros

Union draws workers into political life, advances fight for land

By Russell Johnson
and Deb Shnookal

BACOLOD CITY, Negros — On July 29, 1856, Nicholas Loney, a representative of the Manchester textile industry, sailed down the western coast of what he called “the gorgeous isle” of Negros toward the port of Iloilo, the prosperous textile center of the Philippines on neighboring Panay Island. The newly appointed British vice-consul in Iloilo pirated patterns used in the local hand-loom industry. These were used in Britain to mass-produce similar material in the Manchester cotton mills, which Loney then imported to the Philippines.

In this way, Loney destroyed the livelihoods of 80,000 Panay weavers in the space of a few years. But on the ruins of the textile industry the Englishmen built a new one — sugar.

Loney helped establish and finance a sugar plantation system on western Negros, supplying the new sugar mills with coal and machinery from England. Many former Iloilo textile merchants set themselves up as *hacenderos* (planters), after driving small farmers and tribespeople off the land. The displaced Panay weavers and their families followed their former masters to Negros to labor for them on the *haciendas*.

U.S. business interests also established themselves in the new industry, even while the Philippines was still a colony of backward Spain.

Through this process Negros Occidental emerged as the center of the Philippine sugar industry, involving as many as 450,000 wage workers with more than a million dependents. Most worked on the big haciendas and in the mills. Plantation workers lived on the hacienda and frequently became bound to their employers for life by incurring unpayable debts through borrowing from the hacendero to supplement their starvation-level wages.

While the sugar plantations constitute only about 1 percent of Philippine farms and less than 5 percent of all agricultural land (most small farmers grow rice, corn, and coconuts), sugar is central to the national economy. In fact, during the late 1970s it was the single largest export earner.

But today the sugar industry is in crisis and decline because of the world slump in sugar prices and the loss of a guaranteed quota for Philippine sugar on the U.S. market. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed and underemployed Negros sugar workers are existing in a state of total impoverishment and semistarvation, alongside thousands of acres of fertile, uncultivated sugar lands.

The biggest hacenderos, the “sugar ba-



Deb Shnookal/IF

Sugar workers in Negros Province.

rons,” play a pivotal role in Philippine politics. Two powerful cronies of ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Eduardo Cojuangco and Roberto Benedicto, for example, are both Negros sugar barons. Many organize private armies, often “legalized” as Civilian Home Defense Force militias, to maintain the subjugation of sugar workers and the toiling population as a whole. As provincial governors and town mayors, they control local patronage.

National Federation of Sugar Workers

More recently, a new national force has emerged out of the sugar plantations in opposition to the sugar barons — the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). Formed on Negros in 1971, largely on the initiative of activist Catholic clergy, the NFSW gave new organizational expression to a century-long tradition of struggle by sugar workers for justice on the land, democracy, and freedom from imperialist domination.

Now 80,000 strong and having spread its activities to Cebu, Luzon, and most other sugar-producing islands (with the exception of Mindanao), the NFSW was a central component in the founding of the militant May First Movement (KMU) national union federation in 1980. NFSW president Bobby Ortaliz is currently KMU general-secretary.

The NFSW has had to build itself in opposi-

tion to “yellow unionism” — organizations that were set up by, or that collaborated with, the Marcos dictatorship and the sugar bosses to try to block the independent organization of the workers. The largest of these, the Associated Labor Unions, affiliated to the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, claims 300,000 members. Others may consist only of a company union at a single sugar mill.

On Negros in particular, the NFSW has been central to the anti-Marcos struggle and the fight against military and landlord repression in the countryside through the broad, legal, anti-Marcos coalition, Bayan, and other organizations. And it has used its resources to help other groups of workers and peasants organize themselves to fight exploitation and repression.

The New People’s Army peasant guerrilla movement has also expanded rapidly on Negros since 1983, after the sugar barons unleashed their private armies, death squads, and the military in the countryside in an attempt to stop the organization of the sugar workers and peasants in face of a deepening economic crisis.

For all these reasons, a visit to Negros and its fighting sugar workers is an essential element to gaining a deeper understanding of the impact on the Philippine class struggle of the February 22–25 “people power revolution” in Manila, which overthrew the Marcos dictatorship and brought to power the government headed by Corazon Aquino.

During our reporting trip to the Philippines in March, we were able to spend three days on Negros as guests of the NFSW.

We learned about the experiences of the sugar workers at Hacienda Carmen, east of Bacolod City, toured much of the sugar lands to the south of the city, spoke with victims of military repression in the countryside, and interviewed NFSW Secretary-General Serge Cherniguin and President Bobby Ortaliz, who accompanied us for part of our visit.

Union headquarters

The Bacolod headquarters of the NFSW was a hive of activity when we arrived on March 17. Rented from an anti-Marcos political exile, the large two-story house is still being modified into a union headquarters. At the rear a group of workers were handcrafting office furniture from rough timber. The downstairs had already been converted into a bustling NFSW legal office, where sympathetic lawyers and legal advisers help union members facing the perpetual problems of police, military, and landlord harassment.

Upstairs in the union offices, sugar workers

and young student volunteers from Manila rub shoulders as they carry out the tasks of administering the union, assembling information for the foreign and local press, and welcoming a steady stream of visitors.

We met Bobby Ortaliz. Over a plate of boiled kamote (sweet potato) and bananas and a bottle of Pepsi, he told us something of the history of his union and of the problems confronting sugar workers. Sugar workers, he said, share the problems of the Philippine peasants as a whole — hunger, military repression, and exploitation by transnational corporations.

As many as 75 to 80 percent of these workers are undernourished and go to bed hungry at night. This has been exacerbated by the sugar crisis, he informed us. Hacenderos — plantation owners — have been exempted from paying the government minimum daily wage of 32 pesos (US\$1.50). Many sugar workers lucky enough to obtain work receive only half that.

In addition, the work is seasonal. The sugar season lasts about nine months, with most of the work finished after five. This means that sugar workers may have to fend for themselves without income for as much as six or seven months in a year.

The harvesting of the sugar cane was traditionally done by a separate group of workers — teams hired from the neighboring island of Panay by labor contractors. Known as “sacados,” these cane cutters were not paid until the end of the season. Thus they had to borrow at exorbitant interest rates from the contractor just to survive, Ortaliz explained.

Combined with other forms of cheating, this meant that at the end of the season the sacados received only a fraction of the amount paid to the contractor by the hacendero. However, he added, the sugar crisis has largely ended the system of importing laborers for cane-cutting.

Workers demand land

Because of the underemployment and low pay, we were told, the main concern of the sugar workers is land reform. They want access to sufficient land on the haciendas to enable them to grow enough rice and other food staples to feed themselves and their families the year round. In earlier years the union had initiated some efforts in Negros Occidental to establish food-growing cooperatives on unused lands. But they were driven off by landlord-instigated death squads.

These death squads, often taking the form of fanaticized religious sects, have massacred peasant activists in many parts of the Philippines. As part of their efforts to terrorize the rural population, many take names such as “Tadtad” (chop, chop) to signify their particular method of butchering their victims.

These death squads are a special target of the New People’s Army. Today, they are mainly concentrated on Mindanao, the southernmost island, where the peasant rebellion has been the deepest.

The “salvaging” of NFSW organizers, that is, their kidnap, torture, and murder by the



Sugar workers' hut at Hacienda Carmen.

Deb Shnooka/IP

military and other agents of the sugar barons, is a constant danger. As recently as January, three NFSW organizers were “salvaged” in the Himamaylan area of southern Negros Occidental. Last September in Escalante, the military and the private thugs of warlord and top Marcos crony, Armando Gustilo, fired on a demonstration of starving sugar workers and their supporters, killing 28.

We asked how the overthrow of Marcos through the “people power” uprising in Manila had affected conditions in the sugar lands. “Not very much yet,” Ortaliz replied. The military repression has continued largely unabated in the countryside. The sugar industry is in a historic decline. Aquino has pledged only to continue those land reforms that were begun in the Marcos era, which excluded the big sugar plantations.

Under Marcos’ “land reform,” the ownership of the plantations became more and more concentrated in the hands of Benedicto, Cojuangco, and other Marcos cronies. This only deepened the exploitation of sugar workers, driving thousands off the land altogether.

Negros remains, as it was once described by Bishop Fortich of Bacolod, a “social volcano,” Ortaliz noted.

The NFSW president suggested we spend the night at one of the haciendas organized by the union as the best way to learn about the life and conditions of the Negros sugar workers first hand.

Hacienda Carmen

After about an hour’s drive we arrived at Hacienda Carmen, two kilometers down a bumpy dirt road from the town of Murcia. All the way from Bacolod we passed field after field of sugar cane at different stages of maturity. The roads were littered with cane spilled from overloaded trucks. The air was thick with the sickly sweet smell of the fertilizer made from sugar cane roughage.

It was late afternoon when we reached the hacienda. There were only a few adults about. We were greeted by many friendly children, who emerged from the little wooden huts that

stood on stilts along a narrow pathway. The children were noticeably small, frail, and undernourished. Even the youngest showed signs of serious tooth decay, the product of easing hunger pangs by chewing on sugar cane.

Shortly, a large truck pulled up at the plantation. About 30 men and women climbed out of the back. Rudy, one of the NFSW organizers at Hacienda Carmen, introduced himself. They had been into Bacalod, he explained, to participate in a rally outside the Ministry of Labor and Employment offices. The NFSW supports the demand by ministry employees that the regional director, Felisada Batebonia, be fired.

Similar demonstrations are taking place all over the Philippines, as workers respond in their own way to a call made by President Aquino to continue “people power” against pro-Marcos functionaries who are trying to hang on to their positions, especially in the provinces, despite the departure of their mentor. In this case in Bacolod the workers’ action was successful. The regional director, an ally of the sugar bosses, was replaced a day or two later.

In the fading afternoon light, Rudy showed us around the village. “This hacienda is consolidated,” he explained. Everyone in the 56 families who work here, men and women, belongs to the NFSW and pays monthly dues of three pesos. Through struggle, he continued, a certain working relationship has been established with the hacendero. So far, there have been no “salvagings” of organizers here.

We stopped at the house of Teresita, who is currently the only woman among nine NFSW organizers at this hacienda. A group of workers gathered. Teresita invited us all inside. Around a plate of kamote we discussed sugar workers’ conditions and their views on the overthrow of Marcos.

Conditions are very tough, they explained. Traditionally, everyone born on the hacienda has the right to work on it. But now there is not enough work to go around, and many work only three days a week. Those working on a daily rate earn 26 pesos (\$1.25) for an eight-hour day. But many who are weeding or per-

forming other tasks on a piecemeal basis have to work through the heat of the day for 10 or 11 hours to get the same meager amount. They cannot go on living on this, they explained. Rice alone costs a family more than 160 pesos a week. They cannot eat the pigs and chickens we had seen underneath their houses. They must sell them at the town market in order to buy the rice and small salted dried fish that are the basis of their diet. "Maybe once a year we eat a chicken," one of them commented.

The paradox of slowly starving to death in such beautiful and fertile countryside is obvious. That's why the NFSW is fighting for sugar workers to gain access to idle lands, they explained, for gardens and to grow rice. On Hacienda Carmen, this year the hacendero has for the first time been persuaded to let them grow rice on several acres of land. The NFSW organizes this as a cooperative village effort. But it is still not enough to feed them all.

Impact of Marcos' overthrow

We discussed the "snap revolution" of February 22-25, which overthrew Marcos. The NFSW, as an affiliate of the KMU and Bayan, supported their call for boycotting the presidential election. But the village itself was split 50-50 over the question, we were told. About half boycotted the election, while the other half voted for Aquino.

Marcos organizers were in the district before the election. They paid 50 pesos (\$2.50) for a vote. Some villagers took the money, they said, but then voted for Aquino.

We asked whether they thought things would improve now that Marcos was gone. They weren't sure. The big problems sugar workers face are those of low salaries, militarization of the countryside, and landlessness. They do not know whether Aquino will do anything about these.

"Cory can't break the Marcos dictatorship without calling on the people," Rudy said, referring to the continuing influence of pro-Marcos elements within the military and in the provinces. "Cory can't do it. But the unions can."

The struggle of the Filipino people is against "imperialism, capitalism, and feudalism," Rudy stated. "We have to take these on, one by one."

"Taking on feudalism" to Rudy means the task of breaking the power of the big landowners who dominate rural economic and political life. Under colonial rule, strong central government never emerged in the Philippines. Instead, the country was divided into virtually self-supporting fiefdoms in which landowners enriched themselves through claiming the lion's share of their tenant farmers' crops and demanding unpaid labor services from them. They enforced this with private armies. On the large capitalist sugar plantations employing wage labor, sugar workers were tied to their masters by a system of debt peonage.

In more recent years rents, mortgages, monopoly price-gouging, and wage labor have tended to replace debt peonage and sharecropping as the basis of landlord exploitation

of the rural toilers. Much of Philippine industry and banking is owned by this landed oligarchy in conjunction with foreign capital.

The group gathered in Teresita's house was interested in learning about how workers live and organize elsewhere in the world. They were encouraged to hear that the national union federations in Australia and New Zealand have recognized their federation, the KMU. They were also aware that Marcos could not have survived so long without the backing of the U.S. government and its imperialist allies.

We discussed the question of aid, and explained how socialist Cuba aids many nations exploited by imperialism. Cuba gives aid in forms that corrupt governments cannot steal for themselves, we pointed out. It sends doctors and teachers who live among the peasants in the countryside. The Hacienda Carmen workers could relate to this. The nearest medical care for them is the hospital in Bacolod City. There is a private Catholic high school in nearby Murcia. But only two children from the village can afford to attend it. From an early age children must help their parents earn their meager salaries by toiling alongside them in the sugar fields.

After a couple of hours of conversation, our party moved back to another house to continue the conversation over a dinner of rice and dried fish and a jar of water (there were no glasses). We then stretched out on mats for the night.

Primitive working conditions

On the following morning the village was astir before 5:00 a.m., for work begins at six o'clock. After drinking sweet coffee and eating a breakfast of rice and dried fish, we were taken to see the rice paddies cultivated by the village. On our way we passed groups of sugar workers who had already begun their workday.

Conditions on this hacienda are primitive. The weeding and fertilizing is done by hand by teams of women. To protect themselves from insects and abrasions, the workers must clothe themselves from head to toe, and then toil under the blazing sun. Most plowing is done with caribao (buffalo) owned by the villagers. Young boys must spend their day grazing these animals.

This 400-acre plantation requires more than 100 workers. A Queensland, Australia, sugar planter, we reflected, would farm the same area with only one helper.

Dading, a young sugar worker, was assigned to take us back to Bacolod. We were joined by his sister, who works among the women on the haciendas and in the squatters' shantytowns about Murcia, giving advice about family planning and other health problems.

She escorted us into one of the shantytowns to show us the terrible conditions the squatters must live in. Most are the families of displaced sugar workers driven into the towns by the sugar depression to seek work or to escape military and warlord terror in areas where there is strong support for the NPA guerrillas.

Throughout our visit to Hacienda Carmen

we had been struck by the role of women and their relative self-confidence. Women held all kinds of responsibilities in the union and in the village. Many participated in political discussions with us and articulated their views confidently. Conversely, it was not unusual to see men in the village helping with household chores like cooking and washing or looking after children.

In part, we felt, this reflected education by the NFSW on women's equality, as well as the political influence of the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines in the countryside. One-third of the NFSW's 90-odd organizers nationally are women, according to Bobby Ortaliz.

But this also reflects deep social changes affecting the role of women throughout Philippine society. It is a product of the hacienda system uprooting traditional life in the countryside, proletarianizing the working population, and drawing women into modern economic life and political struggle alongside men.

On the surface, village life in the Philippines — thatched huts, chickens and pigs roaming between the houses, coconut and banana groves, and taro and sweet potato patches — seemed very similar to life in the tribal villages of the Pacific islands further to the east. But the physically smaller stature and markedly more undernourished appearance of the Filipino peasant compared with the Pacific Islander underscore deeper differences in the forms of land ownership and social organization and the level of exploitation.

Of the 58 million Filipinos, about 6 million still maintain a tribal village existence on ancestral land, mostly in the mountain areas of Luzon, Negros, and other islands and in the Muslim areas of Mindanao. But the overwhelming majority are descendants of people who were uprooted from their tribal villages and subjected to direct and brutal exploitation during the centuries of Spanish colonial rule that began in the 1500s. This is reflected in the Spanish surnames borne by most urban and rural Filipinos today. U.S. imperialist domination since the beginning of this century and the penetration of agribusiness into the countryside have deepened this process.

Today, in contrast to many of the Philippines' Pacific and Asian neighbors, relations in rural villages here are not regulated by hereditary chiefly authority or by communal ties to the land. To the contrary, in hundreds of villages like that of the sugar workers of Hacienda Carmen, democratic organizations forged by the workers and peasants in struggle, like the NFSW, are the major influence over social and political life, a trend that the rural toilers are fighting to deepen and extend in the post-Marcos period.

As the fighting women and men of Hacienda Carmen exemplify, this is bringing the Filipino peasantry a new-found dignity and confidence and a growing determination to advance their fight for justice on the land as part of the struggle for a truly democratic and independent Philippines. □

Answering Healyite myths about SWP

A genuine political discussion can take place only with facts

By Doug Jenness

The public discussion on the political and organizational degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain that has been opened up by supporters of *Workers Press* is a welcome development. It is particularly so coming in conjunction with the explicit repudiation of the 10-year agent-baiting campaign conducted by the WRP and its U.S. supporters in the Workers League against the U.S. Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International.¹

The repudiation of this provocative course was a necessary step toward having the WRP and its views taken seriously as a legitimate part of the workers' movement and as a participant in the political debates taking place among revolutionists today.

The public discussion was kicked off by the publication of an article in the February 7 issue of *Workers Press* by WRP National Secretary Michael Banda, titled "Twenty-seven reasons why the International Committee should be buried forthwith and the Fourth International built."²

An editorial note stated that Banda's article had "not yet been discussed on the Central Committee of the Party. It is part of the public discussion that we are holding on the history of our movement."

While taking his distance from Gerry Healy and criticizing many positions of the WRP in the past, Banda uses a great deal of space to denounce positions of the SWP and the Fourth International.

Banda cites numerous examples of the SWP and Fourth International's "capitulation," "betrayal," and "revisionism." These accusations are all asserted; no evidence is offered to substantiate them. Banda apparently assumes his readers will accept them as true. He has probably come to believe they are true himself.

Even though in his article he is distancing himself from the now disgraced Healy, Banda repeats the central pillars of the Healyite mythology about the SWP and the Fourth In-

ternational.

Now that the WRP has recognized that the SWP has not been taken over by U.S. and Soviet government police agents, it will have to begin to respond politically to the views of the SWP on the discussions going on among revolutionists today. An early step will have to be throwing overboard the Healyite litany about the SWP and insisting on dealing with facts.

Nearly every sentence in Banda's article has some distortion or misstatement of the truth. If we examine closely a few of the biggest myths about the SWP repeated by Banda, we can see that his assertions crumble at the first touch.

A 'disgusting accommodation'?

Banda charges that in 1934-35 James P. Cannon, a founder and longtime leader of the SWP, made a "disgusting accommodation to Norman Thomas and the U.S. Socialist Party."

Banda is apparently referring to the 1936-37 period, when the Bolshevik-Leninists in the United States entered the Socialist Party in order to influence and win leftward-moving forces in that organization to communism.

We are left in the dark about whether Banda thinks the entry itself was an unwarranted accommodation or whether it was its implementation that resulted in abominable concessions.

Let's look at the record to see what was involved.

In 1934 the deepening class struggle in Western Europe and North America led to a growing political radicalization and to renewed growth of the social democratic parties — especially their left wings and youth groups.

The International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninist), which continued to fight for the revolutionary communist program in the face of the growing Stalinization of the Communist International, called on its national sections to orient toward these left-moving layers. On Oct. 14-16, 1934, an International Executive Committee meeting of the ICL adopted a resolution approving the French section's entry into the French Socialist Party. This "French turn" was subsequently carried out by other sections in Europe as well.

The ICL's U.S. section, the Communist League of America, began carrying out this turn to non-Stalinist political forces by consummating a fusion in December 1934 with the American Workers Party. This group, headed by A.J. Muste, had won some respect in the labor movement through its leadership in the Toledo Auto Lite strike earlier that year. The new organization was called the Workers Party.

Even before this fusion was finalized, a de-

bate had begun inside the ranks of the U.S. movement on the French turn. This heated discussion lasted for most of 1935 and ended in a split.

Party leader Hugo Oehler and his followers vehemently opposed the French turn. They said it abandoned the perspective of building an independent revolutionary party and that joining a section of the Second International was a violation of principle. Muste also opposed entry into the SP and formed a bloc with Oehler.

At first a majority of the WP members favored opposition to the French turn and to paying more attention to the SP in the United States. But by the October 1935 National Committee meeting, Cannon and Max Shachtman won a majority in favor of the French turn.

The Oehlerites couldn't accept the majority decision and broke party discipline. They were expelled shortly after the October meeting. Muste broke with the Oehlerites over their flouting of the party's organizational policies.³

'Sectarian cancer'

Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary leader who was the central leader in the ICL, contributed to the debate in the WP. He strongly opposed the Oehler group's hidebound sectarianism. In a letter to the WP National Committee on Aug. 12, 1935, Trotsky argued that this sectarianism "is a cancer which threatens the activity of the WP, which paralyzes it, envenoms discussions, and prevents courageous steps forward in the life of the workers' organizations."⁴

In early 1936 new openings developed in the SP that made entry a serious possibility. The WP national convention in February 1936 voted to approve this course, and within a few weeks all WP members had joined the SP. It was not a formal organizational fusion; all WP members joined as individuals. Moreover, the WP members were required to give up their weekly paper, the *New Militant*.

Soon after they entered the SP, however, they were able to advance their revolutionary communist perspective through two SP publications — *Socialist Appeal*, a monthly pub-

3. For an account of the debate and split with the Oehlerites and the entry into the Socialist Party, see *The History of American Trotskyism*, by James P. Cannon (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972).

It is available from Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10014; 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL, England; and P.O. Box 37, Leichhardt, Sydney, NSW 2040, Australia.

4. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), pp. 70-73.

1. *Workers Press* is a weekly published in London by the wing of the WRP that broke from longtime WRP cult figure Gerry Healy in October 1985. For an account of this split, see "Shattering of a British sect: the politics behind the Workers Revolutionary Party's degeneration," by Doug Jenness, in *Intercontinental Press*, Dec. 2, 1985.

Articles and documents repudiating the Healyite slander campaign from the February 7 issue of *Workers Press* were reprinted in the March 10 issue of *IP*. They appeared with an article, "Giant blow to agent-baiting campaign: 'Workers Press' repudiates Healy's big lie," by Doug Jenness.

2. Banda's article was reprinted in the March 24, 1986, issue of *IP*.

lished in Chicago, and *Labor Action*, a weekly put out in San Francisco.

The influence of the *Socialist Appeal* faction grew, and in early 1937 a national conference of *Socialist Appeal* supporters was held that established a new nationwide left wing in the SP.

In response to this the right wing in the party leadership attempted to expel the *Appeal* supporters at the March convention. They failed, but the convention voted in favor of Norman Thomas' motion to ban internal newspapers and to dissolve all caucuses. This prohibition was aimed at *Socialist Appeal*, as there were no other internal organs of any consequence. The party leadership wanted to gag all discussion of the Spanish Civil War, especially criticism of the popular front government in Spain, whose policies they had embraced.

Lacking their magazine, the leaders of the *Appeal* group communicated with their supporters by circulating copies of "personal" letters.

Trotsky became convinced that the Fourth Internationalists in the SP were accepting the restrictions imposed on them and might be headed toward a long-term entry perspective. In May he sent Cannon and Shachtman a note criticizing two documents written by Shachtman that stated the SP as a whole was moving in a revolutionary direction.

This "whole line is nothing but a 'critical' adaptation to centrism," Trotsky warned.

"It is impossible to lull oneself with the illusion of 'conquering' the party," he continued. "The attitude of passive adaptation threatens, on the contrary, the loss of the members of your own faction. I will not say that the entry into the Socialist Party was a mistake in itself, but the weakness and bad composition of the party gave very limited possibilities to this maneuver and demand from us a new orientation and a new policy." By "bad composition" Trotsky was referring to the SP's predominantly petty-bourgeois membership.

"I hope," he said, "that it is not too late to find the correct line without inner crises and damage for the Fourth International."⁵

Soon after, a meeting of the leadership of the *Appeal* faction was held, and a fight was mapped out to break through the SP leadership's gag rules in order to once again openly present a revolutionary perspective. The party leadership responded with a wave of expulsions.

The left-wing branches began publishing *Socialist Appeal* again in August. At a convention of the expelled left-wing branches on Dec. 31, 1937-Jan. 1, 1938, the Socialist Workers Party was formed.

The Bolshevik-Leninists emerged from the SP with more than twice the numbers they had when they entered and won a decisive majority of the Young People's Socialist League. Moreover, this rich experience helped them strengthen their program and concretize its application. The SWP played a central role in founding the Fourth International in September 1938 and, despite reactionary legislation that

forced it to disaffiliate from the International in 1940, has continued to help build it.

In a discussion in Mexico in October 1937 in which he evaluated the entry operation, Trotsky stated that we can count it "as a success." He noted that it particularly facilitated the effort to establish the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, which helped organize the commission of inquiry on Joseph Stalin's purge trials and his slanders against Trotsky.

He then added that "some tactical mistakes" had been made, including "unnecessary concessions" such as giving up the *Socialist Appeal*.

But, he said, "it would be fantastic to ask from the leadership that they commit no errors. What we ask is to correct errors in time, so that the errors don't become fatal.

"If the dissolution of the caucus and the abandonment of the paper had continued for a long time, it would have meant the death of our tendency. It retreated to win a breathing spell, and when it realized that there was nothing to be gained and everything to be lost it corrected its errors. I consider it an error but it can only be considered as a test of the strength of the offensive, of the plans of the leaders. And a leadership which corrects its errors in time is a good leadership."⁶

This objective approach is a far cry from Banda's rantings about Cannon's "disgusting accommodation."

Capitulation to 'Left-Rooseveltianism'?

Banda asserts that Trotsky came into conflict with Cannon "in the famous discussion on the capitulation of the SWP to Left-Rooseveltianism and their refusal to consider the U.S. Communist Party as a legitimate part of the working class."

Apparently this incident is so "famous" that Banda didn't consider it necessary to offer readers any details. So we'll just have to guess that he's referring to discussions between Trotsky and several leaders of the SWP in June 1940 in connection with the tactics for the U.S. presidential elections that year.⁷

The background to these discussions is described in *Teamster Bureaucracy* by Farrell Dobbs. Dobbs, a longtime leader of the SWP, was a central figure in the Minneapolis Teamster strikes in 1934 and the over-the-road organizing drive that followed.⁸

In early 1940 Trotsky had proposed to the SWP leadership that the party field its own ticket in the presidential race. Parallel with that action a proposal should be made, Trotsky argued, that the labor movement put up its own presidential ticket.

6. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1936-37*, pp. 483-87.

7. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp. 251-89.

8. *Teamster Bureaucracy* is the last volume in a four-volume account by Farrell Dobbs of the Teamsters union in the Midwest in the 1930s. Other volumes in this series published by Monad Press are *Teamster Rebellion*, *Teamster Power*, and *Teamster Politics*.

The SWP leadership, Dobbs stated, "agreed that his proposals were good ones, but in the existing situation other matters got in the way of carrying them out."

The principal difficulty Dobbs noted was the small size and limited financial resources of the party. To mount a national election campaign, which the party had never done before, would have required an all-out effort. This was complicated, however, by a major split in the party in the spring of 1940 and the efforts required to reconsolidate the organization.

So when a delegation of SWP leaders that included Cannon, Dobbs, Joseph Hansen, and Sam Gordon met with Trotsky in June no initiatives had been taken on his proposals.

Trotsky accepted that it was no longer practical for the SWP to run its own ticket. But it was still advantageous, he said, for the party to find a way to actively participate in the elections.

Lacking its own slate, Trotsky argued, the SWP had to choose between urging a vote for Earl Browder, who headed the Communist Party's presidential ticket, and Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party's candidate for president. The greatest political opportunities, Trotsky suggested, lay with urging a vote for Browder.

The SWP delegation did not favor this tactic. According to Dobbs, "We felt that it would run into indignation among anti-Stalinist militants in the trade unions."

Trotsky argued that the SWP representatives were adapting to pro-Roosevelt trade union officials with whom the party was working. The SWP leaders had outlined "a trade union policy, not a Bolshevik policy," he said.

Compromise reached

After hours of discussion, with no agreement on Trotsky's proposal, a compromise was reached. An approach would be made to the CP workers through proposals for united front activities against the imperialist preparations for war and in defense of workers' rights. A propaganda campaign would be conducted for the nomination of a labor ticket in the presidential election. Dobbs described how these proposals were implemented by the SWP.

Regarding the compromise, Dobbs pointed out, "There was no question of principle at stake. Our differences centered on nothing more than a matter of tactics, and even though the Browder candidacy was an important matter, disagreements of this kind were not uncommon in hammering out plans for day-to-day activity."

Dobbs continued,

Concerning the outcome of the June 1940 discussion, the founder of the Fourth International showed full understanding of his responsibilities toward us as leaders of a national section. Trotsky knew how costly it could be for the movement if he light-mindedly used his great authority in a way that would undermine our ability to carry out the leadership tasks assigned to us by the SWP membership. Therefore, even though confident of his correctness on the Browder issue, Trotsky was careful to avoid doing anything that would imply a break with us. Instead

5. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1936-37* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), pp. 306-7.

he took the initiative in proposing a compromise.

Viewing the issue in retrospect, Dobbs stated that the SWP should have accepted Trotsky's proposal. "Not because there was at the time serious danger of party comrades succumbing to the trade union milieu," he said. "They passed that test with flying colors when the SWP came under severe attack in 1941. A tendency did exist, though, to give 'practical' concerns undue weight in considering our approach to political tasks in the mass movement, and I believe the Browder tactic could have been helpful in correcting that shortcoming."

A current in workers' movement

Banda's assertion that the SWP leaders rejected consideration of the U.S. CP as "a legitimate part of the working class" is unclear. If he means that the SWP delegation argued that the CP was not a current in the working-class movement and should not be defended against the government and the right wing, then he's dead wrong. None of the SWP leaders argued this. In fact they argued the opposite.

For example, during the discussion Cannon criticized the Social Democrats, who held that the Stalinists are not part of the working class. He explained that "the crassest expression of this tendency is exhibited in the American Labor Party in New York. They regard the Stalinists not as a working class party but as an agency of a foreign power." This judgment was used, he said, to deny defense to the CP when attacked.

The SWP leadership's approach was also shown by its acceptance of Trotsky's proposal for attempting to initiate united front activities with the CP. Several months after the discussion with Trotsky an SWP National Committee meeting adopted a report by Cannon implementing this proposal.⁹

However, if Banda means that the SWP leaders viewed the Stalinists as a current of the workers' movement whose political program and petty-bourgeois bureaucratic practice did not represent the consistent interests of the working class — a current that needs to be politically combated — then he's right. In that sense the SWP didn't see *Stalinism* as a "legitimate" part of the workers' movement.

'Greatest betrayal'

By attempting to create the impression that the SWP leadership had a proclivity to adapt to the likes of Norman Thomas and pro-Democratic Party labor officials, Banda sets the stage for what he dubs "the greatest betrayal of Trotskyism."

This, he claims, was the defense policy of the SWP in the 1941 Minneapolis trial that led to the jailing of 18 party and union leaders. "The strategy and tactics of revolutionary defeatism were shamelessly abandoned by Cannon, Hansen, and Novack in favour of a semi-

defencist policy," Banda contends. Moreover, this "criminal betrayal was endorsed by the International Executive Committee (IEC) and the International Secretariat (IS)," leading bodies of the Fourth International.

He adds that Cannon's court testimony, published in *Socialism on Trial*, "became the gospel for world Trotskyists and the basis for further revisions of Trotskyism after the war."¹⁰

This is a very grave charge, and if true would have been disastrous for the SWP and the Fourth International. But Banda simply asserts it. He produces no explanation of how the SWP betrayed Marxism or on what questions it took a "semi-defencist" stand.

The only clue to what he's getting at is his statement that Grandizo Munis was the sole voice in the Fourth International to challenge the SWP's policy. In the context of his article one can only assume that Banda finds merit in Munis' criticisms.

Munis was a Spanish Fourth Internationalist who was living in exile in Mexico at the time of the trial. After the 18 SWP defendants were sentenced on Dec. 8, 1941, Munis drafted a criticism from an ultraleft standpoint of the SWP's defense policy. He charged that during the trial the defendants abandoned the revolutionary perspective and tailored their testimony to what they thought would most favorably influence the judge and jury. (Several years later Munis abandoned the position that the Soviet Union is a workers' state and broke from the Fourth International.)

The entire text of Munis' document and an answer by Cannon were published as a pamphlet in 1942 by the SWP. It is currently available as an appendix to *Socialism on Trial*, the verbatim testimony of Cannon at the trial.

We don't have the space here to summarize that entire debate. Nor is that necessary to prove Banda's charge false.

Let's just take one example related to Banda's allegation that the SWP leaders favored a "semi-defencist" policy.

Munis charged that the SWP leaders were "platonic opponents of the war" and limited themselves "to statements and propaganda, written or verbal, without action of any kind."

He chastised Cannon for allegedly "disauthoriz[ing] agitation and protests" in the military forces. "Revolutionary action in time of war," he stated, "is absolutely impossible without obstructing in a greater or lesser degree the military activities. Therefore, the principle of revolutionary defeatism, which the American party and the International have and cannot renounce." He particularly condemned the defendants for not using their courtroom testimony to defend sabotage in the armed forces.

What the court record showed

Cannon responded by observing that, contrary to Munis' assertion, the SWP defended

the right of agitation and protest in the army "as a not too hasty reading of the testimony will convince anyone who is interested. What we 'disauthorize' is futile and suicidal individual acts of insubordination and obstruction by members of our small party, acts which could only isolate them from the soldier mass under the given conditions and operate against the aim of winning over the majority. That is not the same thing as 'disauthorizing agitation and protests in the army.'"

In his reply to Munis Cannon also quoted an excerpt from his testimony during the prosecutor's interrogation:

Q: Now, on June 29, 1940, the *Socialist Appeal* published this from the report of the *Manifesto of the Fourth International*: "Independently of the course of the war, we fulfill our basic task: We explain to the workers the irreconcilability between their interests and the interest of blood-thirsty capitalism; we mobilize the toilers against imperialism; we propagate the unity of the workers in all warring and neutral countries; we call for the fraternization of workers and soldiers within each country, and of soldiers with soldiers on the opposite side of the battlefield; we mobilize the women and youth against the war; we carry on consistent, persistent, tireless preparation of the revolution — in the factories, in the mills, in the villages, in the barracks, at the front and in the fleet." You want the soldiers to do that, don't you?

A: Yes, I think that is a summation of the idea, for the soldiers and everybody to do that. That is the way to put an end to the slaughter.

Cannon then asks, "In the face of these quotations from the court record one is reasonably entitled to ask: What does Comrade Munis want of us? What more needs to be said before the capitalist court or in a popular propagandistic exposition anywhere?"

And what does Banda want of Cannon and the other SWP leaders of that time?

The conduct of the SWP defendants during the trial was exemplary. They didn't waver in face of the stupendous war fever that was mounting in the United States. They steadfastly held to the Leninist position of revolutionary opposition to and defeat of the imperialist government in their own country.

It was with good reason that Fourth Internationalists in other countries read and admired *Socialism on Trial* and still do today.

'Most significant revision'

From the "greatest betrayal of Trotskyism" the SWP moved on to what Banda labels the party's "most significant revision in the immediate post-war period." This, he asserts, was "Cannon's 1946 American Theses which was a continuation of his national-defencist orientation covered up in seemingly revolutionary terms. It apotheosised American exceptionalism and under the guise of projecting a unique American road to socialism wrote off the European socialist revolution and with it the collective theoretical collaboration in continuing Trotsky's work and concretising its historical prognosis."

The "Theses on the American Revolution" were adopted by the November 1946 SWP national convention to reaffirm the perspective of the American socialist revolution and the need

9. James P. Cannon, *Speeches to the Party* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp. 315-22.

10. James P. Cannon, *Socialism on Trial* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973).

for a revolutionary Marxist party to lead the working class to power.¹¹ This perspective was challenged by a minority in the SWP led by Felix Morrow, which saw no hope of the U.S. workers developing on the revolutionary road.

Contrary to Banda's mythology, the "Theses" did not outline an exceptional path for American socialism. In fact, they were written precisely to *reaffirm* the revolutionary perspective in the United States in the period coming out of World War II and to reject "American exceptionalism."

They declared that the United States "is a component part of the world capitalist system and is subject to the same general laws. It suffers from the same incurable diseases and is destined to share the same fate.

"The overwhelming preponderance of American imperialism does not exempt it from the decay of world capitalism, but on the contrary acts to involve it more deeply, inextricably, and hopelessly. U.S. capitalism can no more escape from the revolutionary consequences of world capitalist decay than the older European capitalist powers."

This last sentence scarcely sounds like the delegates to the SWP's 1946 convention wrote off the socialist revolution in Europe, as Banda contends.

The "Theses" also described the dominant world position of U.S. imperialism as a result of the outcome of World War II. The resolution stated that this fact meant "the role of America in the world is decisive."

The "Theses" continued, "Should the European and colonial revolutions, now on the order of the day, precede in point of time the culmination of the struggle in the U.S., they would immediately be confronted with the necessity of defending their conquests against the economic and military assaults of the American imperialist monster."

The revolution in the United States, the "Theses" stated, was decisive for putting an end to the outlived capitalist system as a whole. This was simply presenting the facts about the relative strengths of the imperialist countries. It was not a unique American road to socialism.

The "Theses" pointed out that "American imperialism rests increasingly on the foundations of world economy, in sharp contrast to the situation prevailing before the First World War, when it rested primarily on the internal market — the source of its previous successes and equilibrium. But the world foundation is today shot through with insoluble contradictions; it suffers from chronic dislocations and is mined with revolutionary powder kegs."

This shift in U.S. imperialism's position in the world underlined the interconnection between the class struggle inside the United States and the world revolution.

The notion that these "Theses" somehow led

11. The "Theses on the American Revolution" and two reports on them are in *The Struggle for Socialism in the 'American Century'* by James P. Cannon (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977).

the SWP to abandon theoretical collaboration with Fourth Internationalists in Europe or anywhere else, as Banda claims, is absurd.

Execution of the Rosenbergs

The most scurrilous charge Banda makes is that Cannon and the SWP, in adapting to left Democrats in the United States, kept "a shameless and inscrutable silence on the Rosenberg executions."

Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were charged with being spies who passed the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviet government. They were tried and convicted in March 1951 and executed in New York on June 19, 1953, victims of U.S. imperialism's witch-hunt.

The June 8, 1953, issue of the *Militant* ran a front-page editorial headlined: "Demand Witch-Burners Halt Legal Murder of Rosenbergs."

It stated: "A terrible and irreversible injustice may soon take place in the Rosenberg case. Representatives of all sectors of the nation have rallied to the defense of the Rosenbergs, but labor has not yet been heard from. And the labor movement is the only power strong enough to stay the hand of the executioner."

The next week the *Militant* featured a front-page article titled: "World Protest Rises in Effort to Save Couple."

The June 22 issue reported that the U.S. Supreme Court overruled a stay issued by Supreme Court Justice William Douglas 36 hours before the scheduled execution. This article was headlined: "Government Demands Blood, Court Dooms the Rosenbergs."

The following week, after the Rosenbergs had been executed in the electric chair, the *Militant* front page carried a report titled "Revulsion Sweeps World at Murder of Rosenbergs."

Although the SWP condemned this monstrous frame-up, SWP members in most cities were excluded by the CP from participation in the defense campaign in the period leading up to the executions.

Later in the 1950s, however, the SWP was able to participate actively in the nationwide Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell. Sobell, who was convicted along with the Rosenbergs, was sentenced to a 30-year jail term in Alcatraz federal prison. After Sobell's release was finally won in 1969, he spoke at a number of rallies in defense of the SWP against government harassment.

Banda didn't even trouble himself to leaf through the *Militants* for that period. He just casually jotted down what he remembered from his instruction in the Healyite School of Slander and Miseducation.

Defending the CP

In the same paragraph where Banda makes the erroneous charge about the Rosenberg executions, he claims that "Cannon's articles on Stalinism reveal an appalling political indifference to the persecution of the U.S. Communist Party." They confirm, he contends, the charge

that Cannon "never considered the CP a legitimate part of the working class." Banda characterizes this alleged default as a "cowardly abstention."

Cannon wrote many articles on Stalinism, but Banda typically doesn't cite a specific one that expressed indifference to the victimization of the U.S. Communist Party.

Let's look at the record.

Parallel to launching the "cold war" following World War II, the U.S. ruling class initiated a witch-hunt to purge communists, socialists, and other leftists from the unions, government jobs, private industry, schools, and so forth. This drive was given considerable impetus by President Harry Truman's "loyalty oath," which all government employees were required to sign.

The SWP fought against this reactionary drive and defended all of its victims. Most liberals, Social Democrats, and trade union officials, however, buckled to the intense pressure of this ruling-class witch-hunt and joined it in the name of combating "totalitarian communism."

Cannon wrote a series of articles in the *Militant* in 1947 that strongly condemned this capitulation and presented an alternative course to it.

The articles, published in the pamphlet "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism" shortly after they appeared in the paper, explained that workers should oppose the reactionary policies of the Stalinist CP but should fight to the utmost the ruling-class attacks against the CP.¹² Contrary to Banda's assertions, the purpose of the articles was to counter the disease of Stalinophobia that was sweeping the labor movement, including the left, in the United States at the time.

The SWP, Cannon noted, had fought Stalinism "unceasingly and consistently for a very long time. But we have no place in the present 'all-inclusive' united front against American Stalinism.

"We can find no point of agreement," he continued, "with the campaign conducted by the political representatives of American capitalism in Washington, with the support of its agents in the labor movement and its lackeys in the literary and academic world. We fight Stalinism from a different standpoint."

Cannon argued that the problem of Stalinist policies that betrayed communism and the interests of workers in the class struggle was an internal problem for the working class. He criticized those who argue that the CP "is not a working class organization and not a tendency in the labor movement." They use this argument, he said, to justify taking a "different attitude toward the Communist Party, or to those trade unions or other workers' organizations under its control, when they find themselves in

12. Cannon's articles on Stalinism were serialized in the *Militant* between April 5 and May 31, 1947, and then published as a pamphlet by Pioneer Publishers in July 1947. They have been reprinted in *The Struggle for Socialism in the 'American Century'*, pp. 345-90.

clashes with the capitalist class or its governmental agencies."

Cannon explained that this approach "requires an absurd, subjectively motivated denial of reality."

"Stalinism," he continued, "is a new phenomenon of the last quarter of a century, and is unique in many ways. But this does not change the essential fact that it is a tendency in the labor movement. It is rooted in the trade unions and wields influence over a section of the progressive workers. That is precisely the reason that it is such a great problem and such a great obstacle to the emancipation struggle of the workers. In our opinion, it is impossible to wage an effective struggle against Stalinism without proceeding from this premise. Stalinism is an *internal problem* of the labor movement which, like every other internal problem, only the workers can solve."

So once again we see that Banda's assertion that the SWP never considered the CP a current in the working class is false.

In early 1949, 11 leaders of the CP were tried in federal court under the Smith Act, the same unconstitutional, anti-"sedition" law that was used to frame up the 18 SWP defendants in 1941.

The SWP strongly condemned this victimization. In a speech at a protest meeting in New York on Feb. 4, 1949, Cannon declared the trial "a frame-up." He stated that "workers' organizations, who have reason for neither love nor gratitude toward the Stalinists, have a vital interest in protesting against their prosecution in this particular case."

"The freedom to 'advocate' any doctrine," he added, "including revolution, is basic to free speech and democracy. This trial strikes at the very roots of these democratic rights of all workers' organizations."¹³

During the trial, which lasted many months, SWP leader Dobbs was assigned to attend the trial and write weekly articles for the *Militant*.

This was scarcely indifference to the persecution of the CP.

Even if Banda were to make a serious investigation of the record, he would not be able to produce a single case where the SWP has been indifferent to the persecution of the CP. The precept that an injury against one organization in the labor movement is an injury against all has been a guiding principle for the SWP since its founding.

The Korean War

Banda then proceeds to charge that "it wasn't accidental either that in the early stages of the Korean War the *Militant* carried a third camp position and that Cannon's intervention in this episode was more in the nature of a pacifist-moral outrage against the war than a revolutionary-defeatist position."

In June 1950 the U.S. rulers launched a war of aggression against the people of Korea. U.S. forces had already been active for several years in supporting President Syngman Rhee's

Burnt Offering



The above cartoon by Laura Gray appeared in the June 29, 1953, "Militant."

reign of terror against a left-wing guerrilla movement in South Korea in which 100,000 Koreans had been killed.

In North Korea capitalist-landlord political rule had been overturned after World War II, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea established in 1948.

When North Korean troops moved into South Korea on June 25, 1950, Washington used this as a pretext for launching a full-scale war against the Korean people. President Truman used this "invasion" to whip up support at home and rally "national unity" for reinstating the draft, sending tens of thousands of GIs to Korea, and stepping up the attack on democratic rights and the labor movement in the United States.

The *Militant's* immediate response was to urge U.S. working people to oppose Washington's military intervention and demand it withdraw its troops.

A front-page article by John G. Wright in the July 3, 1950, issue stated:

"The 'calculated risk' taken by the American imperialists in connection with the Korean events has at a single stroke revealed their true character. They have acted in a way that leaves no doubt about their immediate and predatory aims."

Wright urged that U.S. working people must force the U.S. imperialists "to keep their hands off Korea."

Another article explained how President Truman went over the heads of Congress in launching the war, using the ruse that it was only a "police action." In the entire three years of the war it was never officially declared by Congress.

The *Militant's* coverage also immediately began hitting at the "undeclared war" against U.S. working people at home, as the government and the employers imposed greater restrictions on democratic rights and harsher antilabor measures.

The July 10 issue carried an article sharply criticizing the support for Washington's war by most labor officials, liberals, and progres-

sives as well as the weak-kneed criticism of the war by the *National Guardian* (now the *Guardian*).

The SWP's initial response then was to unequivocally characterize Truman's intervention as an imperialist aggression, to call on the working class to aim its fire at the warmakers in Washington, and to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

This stance had absolutely nothing to do with "third-campism."

The *Militant* also exposed the repressive nature of the capitalist-landlord regime in the South and reported favorably the large-scale desertions from its army. However, it did not recognize at first that, in addition to the national struggle against imperialist oppression, a civil war was occurring in Korea in which the stakes were establishing a workers' state throughout the entire peninsula. U.S. imperialism was intervening, and had been for a considerable time before the war began, to try to prevent this and if possible reestablish capitalist rule in all of Korea.

Following a meeting of the SWP Political Committee on July 11, this error was corrected in the party press. To help clarify the party's line, a letter addressed to President Truman and members of Congress, signed by SWP National Secretary Cannon, was run in the July 31 *Militant*.¹⁴

This apparently was the "intervention" by Cannon that Banda dismisses as nothing more than a "pacifist-moral outrage."

Admittedly the letter contains a great deal of "moral outrage." But what's wrong with that? Are Marxists above expressing moral anger, especially when directed against such a morally outrageous action as Washington's war against the Korean people?

On the pacifist charge, however, Banda is dead wrong. There isn't an ounce of it in Cannon's letter or anything else he ever wrote.

The letter explained that the struggle in Korea was a civil war, that "a class war has been unfolding in Korea." On one side, Cannon said, "are the Korean workers, peasants and student youth. On the other are the Korean landlords, usurers, capitalists and their police and political agents."

The North Korean regime, he wrote, was mobilizing popular support and taking progressive measures in the areas it won.

In this civil war Cannon clearly supported the working class and peasants and the North Korean government. Promoting the victory of one side in a civil war is not pacifism.

Moreover, Cannon called for the withdrawal of "all American armed forces." In the context of the Korean War this would have meant a defeat for the reactionary forces and imperialist domination and a victory for the majority of Korean people. This defeatist line was not pacifist either.

Banda's article has a long section aimed at refuting Healy's position on Algeria in the

13. James P. Cannon, *Speeches for Socialism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), pp. 133-42.

14. James P. Cannon, *Notebook of an Agitator* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp. 185-87.

1950s and 1960s. In a casual reference he claims that Healy's sectarian line of opposition to the National Liberation Front (FLN) led by Ben Bella was forged "with the connivance of Cannon."

What are the facts?

The armed struggle for Algerian independence began in 1954, and as it grew stronger throughout the mid-1950s the principal theme of the *Militant's* coverage was support to the national liberation movement against the French colonialists.

Soon after the independence war began, a major split occurred in the forces leading the armed struggle. The two main groups were the Algerian National Movement (MNA), headed by Messali Hadj, and the FLN, in which Ben Bella was a prominent leader. The *Militant* supported both against French imperialism. Its initial coverage also favored the MNA against the FLN. The MNA openly called for socialism, unlike the FLN, which presented itself as a revolutionary anti-imperialist organization.

The major criticism of the FLN to appear in the *Militant* was a series of signed articles on Algeria in December 1957 and January 1958 by Shane Mage (under the pen name Philip Magri).

In response Sherry Mangan, on behalf of Fourth Internationalists in Europe who were active in the Algerian solidarity movement in France, sent a letter that successfully refuted the underlying assumptions of Mage's articles. He documented the FLN's growing influence in the independence struggle and the MNA's adaptation to French colonialism despite its radical posture.

Mangan's letter was printed for the information of the members of the SWP, and the Mage articles were the last in the *Militant* to side with the MNA against the FLN. The FLN continued to demonstrate that it was the real leadership of the liberation struggle, which it led to the winning of independence in 1962.

The Healy-led organization in Britain, which had been more aggressive in backing the MNA, abandoned this support later. The Healyites continued their hostile attitude toward the FLN and took a sectarian stand toward the Algerian revolution.

The extent to which there was a deepening divergence between the SWP and the Healyites on the colonial revolution was demonstrated most clearly just a year after Mangan's letter was published when totally opposite stands were taken on the Cuban revolution. The SWP embraced the revolution and its leadership and began absorbing the lessons of this experience. The Healyites, however, recoiled from it, refusing to recognize that a revolution had occurred.

Bending to Zionism?

There are also many distortions and inaccuracies in Banda's account of the Fourth International. A few of these were answered in the April 7 issue of *IP*.¹⁵ However, there is one

we didn't take up that requires an answer.

Banda asserts that at its second congress, in April 1948, the Fourth International "did not oppose the creation of the Zionist enclave" in Palestine or "call for its overthrow."

The congress, he claims, "called disarmingly for the restriction of immigration, a demand readily supported by Stalinists and Labour Lefts!"

In a slanderous charge he asserts that the delegates to the congress bowed to the "Zionist proclivities" of Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International from Belgium.

What did the delegates at the second congress actually say?

They approved a resolution on the "Struggles of the Colonial Peoples and the World Revolution" that included a paragraph on Palestine. It stated:

The Fourth International rejects as utopian and reactionary the "Zionist solution," of the Jewish question. It declares that a total renunciation of Zionism is the *sine qua non* condition for the merging of Jewish workers' struggles with the social, national and liberationist struggles of the Arab toilers. It declares that to demand Jewish immigration into Palestine is thoroughly reactionary just as it is reactionary to call for immigration of any oppressor people into colonial countries in general. It holds that the question of immigration as well as the relations between Jews and Arabs can be decided adequately only after imperialism has been ousted by a freely elected Constituent Assembly with full rights for the Jews as a national minority.¹⁶

The resolution clearly states its opposition to the "Zionist solution," that is, the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

When this document was adopted, however, Israel did not yet officially exist. The United Nations had voted in November 1947 to partition Palestine, which was still governed by Britain, into Jewish and Arab states. This was to become effective with the withdrawal of British troops in May 1948.

The Fourth International's counter to this — a "freely elected constituent assembly" in which the Jewish minority could participate with full rights — was a timely proposal. Under the British Mandate the Zionists had campaigned for an elected assembly in which Jews and Arabs would have equal representation, irrespective of population.

Under British rule the Zionists had also fought for unrestricted Jewish immigration. With the end of World War II an international campaign was mounted by the Zionist organizations to immediately admit several hundred thousand Jewish refugees and displaced persons from Europe. Arabs strongly resisted this and forced their British overseers to place some limits on immigration. However, with the proclamation of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, all restrictions on Jewish immigration were lifted.

The Fourth International's opposition to

ers Press' must face up to lessons of Cuban revolution," by Doug Jenness, in the April 7, 1986, issue of *IP*.

16. *Fourth International*, July 1948, p. 157.

Jewish immigration, when the Zionists were pressing to remove all barriers and the Arab population was campaigning to prevent further immigration, corresponded to an immediate task of the time.

Far from being "disarming," as Banda contends, this demand helped arm the revolutionary vanguard to intervene effectively on a central question not only in Palestine, but in the workers' movement in Europe and North America. That this demand may have also been backed by Stalinists and Labour Lefts is not an objective criterion for criticizing the Fourth International's support for it. It wouldn't be the first time that revolutionary fighters and reformists happened to support the same demand on a specific issue.

There are other issues related to the struggle in Palestine that the brief section in the 1948 resolution could have taken up. Maybe it should have. But whatever one thinks about that, one thing is clear: what was said was not bending to Zionism. And Banda's accusation against Mandel lies exposed for the smear that it is.

Members of the WRP and others may have different views about the SWP's past and present policies. Fine. We can debate them. But we insist that a precondition for a serious discussion is to start with the facts.

One of the victims of the Healyite agent-baiting campaign has been the WRP membership, which has been cut off from the facts about the SWP and therefore from objectively evaluating the SWP's political views.

WRP leader David Bruce, in fact, pointed out in a review of *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International* (Monad Press: New York, 1984), reprinted in the April 21 *IP*, that Healyite policy had been "not to acknowledge any publishing activities under the auspices of the American Socialist Workers Party."

This underlines that much of the documentary record of the SWP's activities and positions that has been published in the past 20 years, including writings of Cannon, Dobbs, and Hansen currently in print, was hidden from the WRP membership.

The WRP has now taken the first step to break out of its isolation from genuine political discussion. But to move forward it will be necessary to break from repeating slanders and myths about the SWP and the Fourth International and examine the facts that are readily available. □

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15. See "Debate on the Fourth International: 'Work-

Why Thatcher fears a united Ireland

Interview with British Labour Party activist

[Martin Collins, a leader of the Labour Committee on Ireland, affiliated to the British Labour Party, recently toured six cities in the United States to build support for an end to British rule in Northern Ireland and for Ireland's reunification.

[Collins is the editor of the Labour Committee's magazine *Labour & Ireland** and is a columnist for the British weekly *Socialist Action*. He also edited *Ireland After Britain*, a book of essays by leaders of the Irish freedom struggle and the prowithdrawal wing of the British Labour Party.

[The following interview with Collins took place in New York on April 3.]

* * *

Question. Why does the British government remain in Northern Ireland?

Answer. If you just focus on that question there is no reasonable answer. Economically, politically, and socially, continued British rule in the north of Ireland is a disaster.

Economically, London has to pour in money hand over fist, with no profits being made.

Politically, Britain's role in Northern Ireland has been discredited around the world, and there is no political solution in sight.

To make sense of it you have to ask why Britain divided Ireland in 1921 and why it requires that division to continue.

Britain partitioned Ireland in 1921 because it could no longer maintain its colonial rule over the whole country. The partition came after the 1916 Rising, after the 1918 elections to the British Parliament (the last democratic election held in all 32 counties of Ireland) in which 70 percent of the people voted for the proindependence candidates of Sinn Féin, and after the so-called Black and Tan War for Ireland's freedom.

British influence in Ireland could only be preserved by arming and encouraging the Loyalists in the North to form a separate six-county rump state with a guaranteed link to Britain.

The partition in 1921 had a profound effect in the 26 counties of the South, where direct British rule ended, as well as in the North. The partition aborted the process of democratic revolution that was taking place in Ireland, and through the partition the British insured that the business class and the Catholic church remained in power in the South.

Economically, British capitalists still have

vast direct investments in Ireland as a whole, particularly in the financial and banking sector in the South. London also acts as guardian of international imperialist interests in Ireland, in particular U.S. capital.

Strategically, the official neutrality of the 26-county state cuts across the NATO military alliance and the unity of the Western European capitalist states. During the 1982 British war against Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, Irish objections made it impossible for the European Common Market to impose sanctions against Argentina.

The British government wants an ally on its western flank and worries about Irish neutrality and the possibility of Ireland escaping British political hegemony.

Politically, the British ruling class worries about what would happen in Ireland if Britain withdrew from the North and Ireland was reunified. Britain has never voluntarily withdrawn from a colony unless there was a government in place to serve British interests.

Before Britain would agree to a united Ireland it would want to see the Republican movement smashed, the organized working class beaten back, institutions of the church strengthened to preserve the social structure of Irish society, and a foreign policy sympathetic to the Western imperialists.

The Dublin government is unable at present to provide such guarantees to the British. Until a Dublin government can, Britain will keep its alliance with the Loyalists and keep Ireland divided in order to protect its own interests and those of U.S. imperialism.

Q. What threat would a united Ireland pose to Britain?

A. Any government of a united Ireland would face formidable problems upon a British withdrawal and would have to take radical measures to solve those problems.

First, the new government would confront the problem of the Loyalists in the North — 1 million people who would be the potential source of counterrevolution.

The Loyalists built their state in the North on the basis of discrimination. But the government of the new Ireland would have to have a policy against discrimination, not only because that is the tradition of the Republican movement.

If the new government tried to take "Protestant" jobs and give them to Catholics or "Protestant" houses and give them to Catholics, or if it said it would be independent of Britain but subordinate to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, that would be a recipe for a civil war that could last for generations.

A government of a united Ireland would have to develop a massive program of jobs for the great majority of the population, housing and services for the great majority, secular education.

But how could a massive program of jobs, housing, and social services be financed?

The economy in the North is completely propped up by the British, with the highest level of state expenditures per capita in Western Europe. Each job at the Harland and Wolff shipyard, for example, requires a subsidy of over £2,000 per year by London. Harland and Wolff, the biggest employer of Protestants, has an almost exclusively Protestant work force.

In the South, the economic situation most closely parallels countries like Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. The South has the highest per capita foreign debt in the world.

The recent proposed U.S. aid package of \$250 million over five years would only pay one month of interest charges on Dublin's debt.

So any economic program to meet the needs of Ireland's working people immediately runs up against the problem of the foreign debt. The best way to address that problem would be to repudiate the debt, along the lines of the proposal Cuba is making.

Britain's concern is not just losing a few of its interests in a united Ireland. James Prior, formerly Britain's secretary of state for Northern Ireland, raised the specter of a united Ireland becoming "a Cuba on Britain's doorstep."

Whether Prior's statement was meant to scare off Irish-Americans from helping the Irish Republican Army or whether it was a serious thought, it is significant that he raised this concern.

In fact, none of the present political forces in the South could control developments in a newly united Ireland. The three major parties — Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Irish Labour Party — are products of partition and would not exist in their present form if partition were ended. All are extremely threatened by the national liberation struggle.

The instability of the political system in the South was shown in a recent development. Two members of the Irish Parliament from the Fianna Fáil party recently broke and set up a group called the Progressive Democrats. Within three months of its formation, this new grouping had the support of 25 percent of the southern electorate in the opinion polls, which shows just how unstable the political mechanisms of the Dublin state are.

A number of factors threaten the political and social stability of the 26-county state. For

*For subscription information write to Labour Committee on Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX, England.

one thing, it has the youngest population in Western Europe, with half the population under 25. In addition, it is an increasingly urbanized society, which affects the framework of social stability. In the past Ireland had a very rural population. Today one-third of the population lives in the Dublin area.

In addition, there is a political consciousness dating from the 1916 Rising and based in a revolutionary struggle for democracy. The vast majority still favor a united Ireland, and support a neutral foreign policy, independent of NATO.

People in the 26 counties view neutrality as a gain of the war of independence from Britain and oppose attempts to undercut it.

Adding to the instability, from the point of view of the British ruling class and the Irish establishment, is the fact that the Irish working class is the most heavily unionized in Western Europe.

Moreover, because the Irish working class is divided between two states and because Ireland is an oppressed, semicolonial country, the trade unions do not have the kind of entrenched bureaucracy you find in the Western imperialist countries. As a result, motion in the ranks of Irish labor can be very quickly translated into action.

For example, when the Irish government recently tried to introduce a 6 percent value-added tax on shoes, the leather workers' union threatened to strike if the measure passed. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions promised to turn it into a general strike. In a matter of hours the central government caved in and took the tax off shoes.

In Britain or the United States you don't get this feeling of the direct impact of the unions on government policies.

This potential for radical change leads the British government to fear a united Ireland.

Q. What is your view of the Anglo-Irish Accord signed in November 1985?

A. I see the accord as the product of Anglo-American discussion more than Anglo-Irish discussion.

Through the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, a pro-NATO think tank on international affairs, the Americans presented a number of proposals for changes in the British government's policy on Ireland.

The report argued that the British government cannot win the war in the north of Ireland militarily and warned that London could not get by much longer without a political overview of the situation.

The Americans raised doubts that the British could withstand another political offensive of the scope of the 1981 H-Block hunger strike mobilizations, which had a tremendous impact not only in the north of Ireland, but in the South, in England, and throughout the world.

British reliance on the Social Democratic and Labour Party [SDLP], a "moderate" nationalist formation in Northern Ireland, was no longer enough to maintain control over the nationalist community, the Americans argued,



Marc Lichtman/FP

Martin Collins, of Labour Committee on Ireland, speaking in New York City.

and London had to find a way of bringing the Dublin government into the picture.

But to bring in Dublin, the report said, the British had to make political concessions about how the North is run.

A period of discussions between London and the Dublin government led to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Accord. For the first time, and in direct contradiction to the 26-county constitution, a government in Dublin accepted the 1921 partition and the British presence in the North.

What was surprising was how few political concessions Margaret Thatcher had to make to get [Irish Prime Minister] Garret FitzGerald's signature on the agreement.

At present, the British government directly rules the six counties from London. Under the Anglo-Irish Accord, London hopes to govern the north of Ireland by establishing a six-county governmental body, which would bring together moderate elements of the Loyalist community (if they exist) and of the nationalist camp.

The idea is to get them together in an institution that seemingly provides an element of local democracy to do what the British government wants.

But if Britain cannot divide the Loyalists or the nationalists enough to involve their moderate wings in such an arrangement, then the rulers in London and Dublin will get together in an "Intergovernmental Conference" to discuss the affairs of the North.

For the first time, the Dublin government has a mechanism through which to make suggestions to the British on how to run the North.

But the agreement clearly states that while the Dublin government can make suggestions, and the British government will in good faith look at those suggestions, sovereignty and power rest solely with Britain.

None of these options provide for any real improvement in the situation in the North. The

agreement is a device to get the British through another three or four years and give them time to try to divide both the Loyalist and nationalist communities.

It is also a public-relations program aimed at convincing the world that Britain presented a new political initiative, which must have some merit because it has the Dublin government's backing.

Q. Is the accord seen by people in the South as the beginning of a solution?

A. Many people feel that the accord might provide a hope for peace and reunification and should be given a chance.

But I doubt that this feeling will last long because the accord does not deal with the central issues of Irish politics or the roots of the injustice in the North. It does not solve the issues of British use of plastic bullets, nonjury courts, the oppressive role of the British Army, the sectarian police force, discrimination against Catholics.

There are also some illusions about the accord among nationalists in the North, where the nationalist people have lived under military occupation for six decades.

When someone comes along and says here's progress, many people are prepared to give it a try.

This attitude was reflected, for example, in the voting in the January elections in Northern Ireland for the British Parliament. The vote for Sinn Féin, the party that supports the struggle of the Irish Republican Army, dropped by 6 percent, after a string of steadily rising vote totals. The nationalist vote for the SDLP, which backs the accord, rose.

Q. Why are the Loyalists opposed to the accord, since it maintains British rule?

A. The Loyalists do not worry that the accord threatens their link with Britain or the continuation of partition. They fear that the British ruling class, by allowing the Dublin government to make suggestions on how the North is ruled, will be pressured into undermining Protestant privileges in the North.

Q. How has British Prime Minister Thatcher reacted to the protests?

A. Officially she condemned the violence of the Loyalist protests. Behind the scenes, I believe, she is very pleased by the Loyalist reaction.

She can use the protests as a club against Dublin, and she hopes to use the divisions among Loyalist politicians regarding the protests as a way of securing the cooperation of a wing of Loyalist politicians.

Q. Has there ever been a mass movement in Britain for withdrawal from Ireland?

A. The biggest mass movement was in the time of Marx and Engels, when half a million people demonstrated in London to get Britain out of Ireland.

In the mid-1970s, the Troops Out Move-

ment emerged, which did a wonderful job informing people about the injustice of the British occupation of Northern Ireland and the regime of terror in the jails and the streets there.

The Troops Out Movement raised, for the first time, the twin demands of immediate British withdrawal from the North and self-determination for the Irish people.

But it was the impact of the 1981 hunger strike in Northern Ireland that made it possible to get a much broader hearing. Bobby Sands' election to the British Parliament while on hunger strike, and his subsequent death, were a shock to British society.

The British had been constantly assured that the IRA were nothing more than "Mafia god-fathers," terrorists without any support. Yet Bobby Sands was elected to the British Parliament in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, with more votes than Margaret Thatcher polled in her constituency.

This exposed the lie of the propaganda machine, and people began to see there was more to the situation in Northern Ireland than they had thought.

The hunger strike also activated important segments of the Irish community in Britain. The Irish in Britain had been cowed by the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 and were politically dominated by the Dublin embassy in London.

At present, opinion polls show that 53 percent of the British people favor withdrawal from Ireland. But it is still difficult to create a mass movement because the sentiment for withdrawal is very confused.

That is not surprising considering the scope of the British propaganda campaign and the difficulty for proponents of British withdrawal to get their views known.

For example, the Prevention of Terrorism Act was not passed to prevent terrorism, but to instill a climate of fear and hostility in Britain toward the Irish.

Some 7,000 Irish people in Britain have been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but only 2 percent were ever brought up on any charges. The PTA is simply a device to portray Irish people as automatically suspect and suspicious.

Recently the British government announced that it had uncovered an IRA plot to bomb British seaside resorts because an Irishman on a train had been arrested with a piece of paper in his pocket listing a number of seaside towns.

Although the supposed IRA bombing blitz was a hoax, British police went to guest houses and hotels in the towns asking, "Is anyone Irish staying or working here? Have you heard anyone with an Irish accent discussing politics?" The aim was to make every Irish person automatically suspect.

One thing that has limited the possibility of building a mass movement for withdrawal has been the role of the trade union leaders, who base themselves on the gains of empire.

We in the Labour Committee on Ireland are working to build support in the trade unions and the Labour Party for British withdrawal from Ireland and the right of the Irish people to

self-determination.

Q. How does the Labour Committee on Ireland function and what are its aims?

A. We have a membership of around 500 people, including 12 members of the British Parliament and 6 members of the European Parliament.

The committee campaigns within the labor movement on a whole range of democratic rights and civil liberties issues, and we publish a magazine called *Labour & Ireland*.

With the interest in Ireland generated in Britain by the hunger strike, the influence of the committee has grown markedly. We've managed to set the agenda of the debate and discussion on Ireland inside the Labour Party and provide leadership for a wing of the party that supports British withdrawal.

We have brought leaders of Sinn Féin to speak to meetings at trade union and Labour Party conferences.

Partially because of our efforts, the leadership of the Labour Party now supports reunification of Ireland as the only long-term solution to the situation there.

The Labour Party has also begun to take positions on a series of democratic and civil liberties issues pertaining to the question of Ireland — opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, to the use of plastic bullets, to strip searching of women political prisoners, to use of nonjury Diplock courts in Northern Ireland.

The central role of the Labour Party in British politics enables us to use our base in the Labour Party to help build a much broader movement in support of British political and military withdrawal from Ireland.

I don't feel, however, that the Labour Party as such can be transformed into an anti-im-

perialist party supporting the Irish in their battle against British imperialism.

The Labour Party is a procapitalist party, although one that is based on the trade union movement. The right wing would split the Labour Party before it would let the party become an obstacle to capitalism in Britain.

But through our focus on the Labour Party we are able to bring the Irish question to broader segments of British society, particularly in the trade unions themselves.

In addition, we have an autonomous women's group, Women for Ireland, which campaigns for the same goals as the Labour Committee on Ireland and focuses its efforts toward the feminist and women's movement in Britain.

Women for Ireland has stressed a campaign against the strip searching of women political prisoners in Northern Ireland and its extension to Brixton jail in London.

Q. What is the function of the strip searching of Irish women political prisoners?

A. The brutal and abusive practice of strip searching women prisoners has nothing to do with security because the women are not smuggling weapons into jail in their bodies.

Rather it is a weapon of sexual terrorism against women, a British warning to them that if they get involved in the nationalist struggle they will regularly be subjected to a most brutal form of sexual harassment, taking place every week, every month, for the entire time they are in prison.

Each time the British adopt a particular tactic in Northern Ireland there is always a political reason for it.

In the early 1970s the British tried to discourage nationalists from taking part in politi-

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cal demonstrations. To that end, British troops cold-bloodedly opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Derry on Bloody Sunday, Jan. 30, 1972, killing 13 people and wounding 29, one of whom later died.

Because of the international uproar, including the burning of the British embassy in Dublin, the British government switched to a new form of intimidation — plastic bullets.

The plastic bullet is four and a half inches long, one and a half inches in diameter, and hard as wood, and it has a muzzle velocity of 600 miles per hour. Fired into a crowd, a dance hall, a group of kids on a corner, it is lethal.

The message is that if you take part in demonstrations or hang out with other nationalists,

you could be the target of plastic bullets and could be killed.

The same thing is involved in strip searching. Women played a key role in leading the hunger strike support movement. Britain had to find a way of directly intimidating nationalist women who are getting involved in the political movement.

If you get involved in the nationalist struggle, there is a good chance you will land in jail at some point, because that is the reality of Northern Ireland.

Strip searching warns women that when you land in prison, you will be subjected to brutal, dehumanizing sexual harassment, so don't break out of your traditional role as home-

maker to get involved in politics.

It is an attempt by the British authorities to hold women's sex over them as a means of trying to isolate the movement from the nationalist community.

Q. Has that been successful?

A. None of the British intimidation tactics have been successful because the nationalist struggle is so deeply rooted and flows out of the collective consciousness of the Catholic population.

The sectarian state in the North has proven itself irreformable, and Catholics have learned that the only way to get justice and civil rights is by completing the struggle for national independence for Ireland. □

FEATURES

Behind the sharp decline in oil prices

Market shake-up exposes vulnerability of OPEC

By Steve Craine

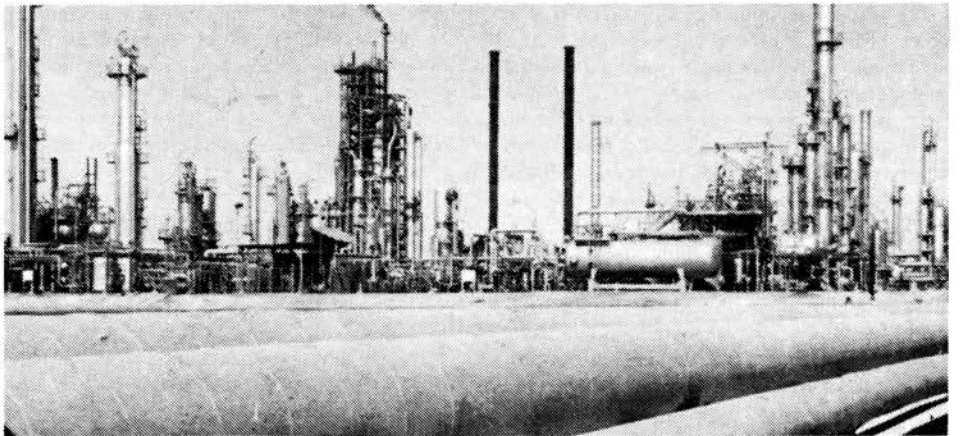
The recent rapid drop of oil prices, accelerated by the decision of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to end production quotas and allow competitive pricing, has led to a lot of crowing in imperialist circles about the demise of OPEC. The U.S. magazine *Business Week* claimed "cheering can be heard all over the globe."

The organization of oil-producing semicolonial countries has long been used as a whipping boy for the economic troubles of the advanced capitalist countries. Over the past 12 years of high oil prices, OPEC was accused of causing inflation and recession and undermining the national security of the most powerful imperialist countries in the world. In the United States all Americans, from exploited workers and farmers to billionaire corporations like Exxon and Chase Manhattan Bank, were portrayed as the victims of rich "oil-sheiks."

The scope of the recent turnaround in international oil markets began to appear in late 1985 with a gradual erosion of prices. Once the official OPEC price of \$28 per barrel was abandoned in December, sale prices of all grades of crude oil tumbled. Since then oil has sold for as little as \$10 for a 42-gallon barrel, with further decreases possible. In six months prices slipped back to 1974 levels.

In a December 10 editorial entitled "After OPEC," the *New York Times* called the price collapse "just desert for a greedy cartel." The fate of the "once-mighty OPEC," the *Times* editors added, was proof of the "capacity of the industrialized world to resist economic strangulation."

In a sense this point is correct. Imperialism has many ways of defeating challenges from commodity producers in the semicolonial world, even when the commodity they produce is as critical to advanced capitalist economies as oil.



Refinery in Middle East. Vast majority of world's refining capacity is owned by U.S. and European monopolies.

But the implicit assumption of this *Times* editorial and other big-business commentaries on the oil market is wrong. OPEC *never* really threatened imperialist domination of the petroleum industry, international finance, or the world capitalist economy as a whole as the imperialist propagandists asserted. The recent developments in the international oil market simply confirm that this has always been the case.

Oil-rich but underdeveloped

The oil exporting countries were and remain relatively weak players in a game controlled by the ruling families in the imperialist countries. Many of these oil-rich but underdeveloped countries banded together as OPEC in 1960 to try to strengthen their hand in the fight for a greater share of the value of their natural resources, which had been plundered without limitation for decades.

The post-World War II anticolonial upsurge had pressed for political independence in the former colonies and for greater national con-

trol over natural resources in all countries exploited by imperialism. In the Middle East and some other countries, a key demand of the oppressed was to take over foreign oil holdings. As oil fields were nationalized, the governments of these countries gained more of a role in the production and marketing of their oil. This is what made the formation of OPEC, as an association of state-run oil industries, possible.

The 13 member governments of OPEC,* and to a certain extent their people, benefited from this united effort to redress the effects of imperialist domination of the petroleum industry. The formation of OPEC, along with other political and economic developments, especially in the mid-1970s, contributed to boosting oil incomes in countries such as Saudi

*Members are: Algeria, Ecuador, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.

Arabia, the Gulf states, Iran, and Libya.

But it did not and could not lay the basis for creating new imperialist or even "subimperialist" powers or overthrow old ones. Control of the industry and international marketing of its products remains firmly in the hands of the same few U.S. and European monopolies that dominated the industry before the advent of OPEC.

OPEC took the rap for the oil shortages and big price increases of the 1970s. But the substantial price hikes of that period could not have happened without the major U.S. energy trusts favoring them. At the very time that the U.S. oil companies and their mouthpieces were blaming the Arab oil embargo for shortages in Europe and the United States, these same U.S. companies were capping wells, reducing refinery output, and hiding stockpiles to induce shortages and drive up prices.

The first big price increase, in 1973-74, was pushed through in the wake of the 1973 Middle East war and the Arab embargo against allies of Israel. It was coupled with a racist, anti-Arab campaign in the United States.

The second major price jump came after the Iranian revolution of 1979. Here, too, the rhetoric about Americans being held hostage to greedy Middle Eastern barbarians was played to the hilt to deflect responsibility from the profiteering oil corporations.

In fact, the revolutionary rise of nationalism throughout the region, of which the Iranian revolution was a part, was beginning to make the old ways of imperialist profit-making unworkable.

Under pliant proimperialist regimes like those of the shah of Iran until 1979 or King Idris of Libya until 1969, U.S. corporations could take unlimited amounts of oil for only minimal royalties. Since Middle Eastern production costs are the lowest in the world, even with prices of \$3 per barrel, which was the pre-

vailing price before 1973, these oil giants made superprofits. And the modest royalties that were paid to Middle Eastern governments were sufficient to keep small local ruling classes living in the lap of luxury and favorably disposed to maintaining the relationship.

As the Middle Eastern governments moved to secure a larger share of the value of their oil, foreign oil companies needed to pass these added costs on to the consumers in the form of higher prices.

At the same time, the giant imperialist corporations needed higher world prices in order to make profitable their big investments in more expensive operations like off-shore wells, shale oil extraction, and new methods of recovering oil from marginal fields. In the U.S. market, furthermore, the monopoly corporations were in a battle against the so-called independent retailers of gasoline, which were underselling the major distributors at the pump.

The oil scare of 1973-74 not only forced the acceptance of higher consumer prices, but undercut objections to such environmentally questionable projects as the pumping of huge amounts of oil across the Alaskan wilderness and stepped up off-shore drilling, especially in the North Sea. The construction of nuclear-powered electric plants received a boost for the same reason. These measures were defended as necessary to "national security" by exaggerating OPEC's power over world oil sources.

North Sea, Alaskan, and Mexican wells (which had also been uneconomical until the price increases of the 1970s) are now producing 8 million barrels a day. Total OPEC output as of August 1985 averaged 15.7 million barrels a day.

This new oil has undermined OPEC's share of world production. From 64 percent of world production (excluding the Soviet Union and

other workers' states) in 1973, OPEC's share dropped to only 37 percent in 1985.

Henry Jacoby, a professor of management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote in the January 26 *New York Times* that "few predicted [in the early 1970s] the increased flow of non-OPEC oil from a price-induced drilling boom. As a result, the cartel overshot badly in setting crude prices. . . ."

With these new producers coming on the scene, along with reduced demand due to oil-saving austerity measures and general stagnation in the major capitalist economies, OPEC was forced to cut back its own production in order to avoid flooding the market and driving down prices. Since the producers' consortium has no control over nonmember production in Mexico, Britain, Norway, or the United States, it became the "swing producer" in the international market. That is, it was OPEC that repeatedly trimmed its output to prevent a ruinous glut on the market.

So as non-OPEC sources kept pumping, OPEC itself was cutting back. By 1985 the member countries were producing about half as many barrels per day as during their peak, in December 1976.

Strains within OPEC

By mid-1985 this situation had become clearly untenable. And differences among member governments over how to respond were pulling OPEC apart. In a series of meetings of members' oil ministers in the second half of the year, the organization began removing obstacles to free pricing and production.

These steps were pushed especially by the Saudi Arabian government. Saudi Arabia has by far the largest known reserves in the world — some 170 billion barrels of good-quality, easily extracted oil, or about 23 percent of the world's total.

Within OPEC Saudi Arabia had been the "swing producer," playing the same role relative to other members that OPEC as a whole had been doing on the world market. In the attempt to shore up sagging prices, the Saudis had sacrificed a bigger portion of their market share than any other producer. While other OPEC members continued to meet their established production quotas, Saudi production shrank from an annual average of 10 million barrels per day in 1980 to only 2 million in 1984.

Allowing prices to fluctuate again after many years of fighting to keep them high represented a victory for Saudi policy-makers over those of several other important OPEC members.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates have tremendous oil reserves and relatively small populations. They could more easily bear long-term cuts in production without having to be concerned to maximize immediate returns.

Leading the fight within OPEC last year for keeping prices high to maximize current income were Algeria and Iran. These countries all have large, relatively poor populations and are badly in need of foreign exchange. The Ira-

Norwegian oil strike halts all production

The complete shutdown of Norwegian petroleum and gas production by a strike beginning April 6 gave a very short-lived boost to sagging oil prices on the world market.

One day after North Sea oil workers went out, prices jumped to their highest point in six weeks. But by the following day prices were down again in one of the biggest one-day declines since January. Even the loss of Norway's daily output of 900,000 barrels of crude oil made no lasting impact on the over-supplied market.

The strike began when oil companies rejected the demands of 670 food service workers for a 28 percent pay increase to bring their wage rates in line with those of other offshore oil workers. All other production workers on the North Sea oil rigs immediately joined the food service employees' strike.

The oil workers' union has charged that the government encouraged the oil companies' hard-line stance, because depressed prices make a shutdown at this time relatively less costly.

Workers in the engineering, chemical, textile, building, and hotel industries were locked out on April 8 when their employers broke off contract negotiations. With more than 100,000 workers out, the strike is now one of the largest in Norway since the 1930s.

The conservative-led coalition government is trying to introduce an austerity package of higher taxes and reduced social services to compensate for losses of oil revenues. Oil and gas exports had accounted for 40 percent of Norway's exports and more than 20 percent of government revenues. This year's oil tax collections are expected to be less than one-third the US\$6.8 billion received in 1985.

nian government faces the additional problem of having to defend itself from the imperialist-backed war by the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. The Libyan government has sided with Iran on the issue of oil prices partly because of its support of Iran in the war.

Before the OPEC ministers agreed to abandon imposed price structures, official rates were already being undercut by a number of member countries secretly selling below the agreed prices.

In a July ministers' meeting, an understanding was reached to stop such "malpractices" as barter deals and hidden discounts. But this agreement proved as unenforceable as had earlier ones, and these practices continued. The Saudi government contended that it was being forced to subsidize widespread cheating on the part of its OPEC partners.

By the October OPEC meeting, Saudi Oil Minister Ahmed Zaki Yamani admitted that his government, too, had unilaterally increased its production.

Much of the additional 1 million barrels a day being pumped by the Saudis was sold below OPEC prices by means of "net-back" deals. Under such arrangements, the sale price of crude oil is determined by the market value of the refined product at the time of its final sale, months later. Thus the purchaser (in most cases a big U.S. or European oil company) is guaranteed a certain net profit regardless of market fluctuations, and the burden of falling prices is assumed by the crude oil producer.

OPEC decides to defend its market share

The final collapse of OPEC-regulated pricing came in December, when the ministers decided to adopt the Saudi strategy to defend OPEC's market share despite the objections of the delegations from Iran, Algeria, and Libya. Both production quotas and minimum prices were junked, with the resulting precipitous drop in prices for OPEC and non-OPEC oil alike. Since last year, Saudi Arabian production has shot up by 100 percent.

The 1985-86 price collapse does not change the reality of what OPEC is or was. It only exposes the fiction propagated by U.S. oil interests that OPEC had a stranglehold on oil prices and thereby kept the rest of the world at its mercy.

Paul MacAvoy, dean of the Graduate School of Management at the University of Rochester in New York, admitted in a discussion article in the *New York Times* in December that "it is becoming clear that [OPEC] never really controlled the world crude oil market. Rather, market forces were the dominant factor all along."

What were these market forces, and who profited from and controlled them? Over the past 12 years, who gained the most from the high market price of petroleum?

Imperialist control

An investigation of the workings of the world oil market cannot stop with the question of where petroleum reserves lie or with the price of crude oil. Despite the nationalization

of most of the Middle Eastern oil fields, the rest of the process of producing and marketing petroleum products is as much as ever monopolized by huge U.S. and European firms. OPEC members still have to sell their crude to the same few imperialist concerns that formerly owned the wells.

The fact is that OPEC has very little in the way of "downstream" facilities. In the area of transportation, the 226 oil tankers registered in all OPEC countries combined represented only 4 percent of the world's tanker fleet in 1984. Their oil-carrying capacity amounted to only about the same percentage. More tankers, carrying more tonnage, were registered in the United States alone than in all the OPEC countries combined. And hundreds more U.S.-owned vessels are registered in such countries as Liberia (with a total of 729 tankers) and Panama (478), which nominally have the largest and third-largest fleets in the world respectively. Japan, Norway, Greece, and Britain also each had more oil tankers than the combined OPEC total in 1984.

An even more important control point in the production chain from underground reserves to usable consumer products is the refining process. Here, too, the dominance of the imperialist corporations is overwhelming. As of the end of 1973, when the price boom was just starting, only 4.4 percent of the capitalist world's refineries and 5.2 percent of total refining capacity were in the Middle Eastern OPEC countries.

High illiteracy plagues Latin America

By Rafael Perez Pereira

[The following article is taken from the March 2 issue of *Granma Weekly Review*, published by the Cuban Communist Party in Havana.]

* * *

Almost 25 years after the Alliance for Progress came in as the United States' formula for economic and social development designed to combat the Cuban Revolution, the problems the formula was supposed to solve in Latin America and the Caribbean — illiteracy among them — still plague the area.

Through successive U.S. administrations — John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, James Carter, and Ronald Reagan — many other White House programs have come to naught.

Even Washington has admitted that Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative is inoperative.

The DPA news agency of the Federal Republic of Germany recently conducted a survey on the problem of illiteracy in Latin America based on reports from correspondents in 16 countries of the area.

The result was an overall illiteracy rate of 21.6 percent. The survey included some of the most serious cases — for example, Guatemala, with a rate of 56.6 percent — yet leaves out

After 11 years of high prices and a much-touted construction boom in the oil-exporting countries, by 1984 all OPEC countries owned only about 11 percent of the capitalist world's refining capacity. And the 1984 figure also includes refineries in non-Middle Eastern member states such as Indonesia, Venezuela, and Nigeria.

Lastly, the marketing of petroleum products takes place primarily in the imperialist countries and under the control of the major oil companies. Increased production costs imposed by the producers of crude oil can be and are passed on to consumers, maintaining the profits of the owners of the imperialist oil concerns. U.S. companies have the additional advantage of direct tax deductions to compensate for any royalties paid to foreign governments.

At the stages of transportation, refining, marketing, and distribution, the U.S. oil majors are in a position to greatly influence the "market forces" that determine the price of petroleum and its products.

During the height of the oil scare in the United States in 1974, John Lichtblau, head of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation, noted, "The oil companies are being circumscribed, but they are willing to work under any conditions in which they can make money." And he predicted, "By 1985 the companies will still be the major transporters, refiners, and marketers of oil in the world."

What was then an insider's view is obvious to everyone today. □

many other countries, among them Haiti. Haiti has a population of 5 million, of which 3 million cannot read or write and about 1.5 million have no more than a first-grade education. The situation of the Haitian people is a tragic one that has become more evident since the overthrow of Duvalier.

According to UNESCO statistics, there were 90 million illiterate persons in Latin America in 1984, but the figure is viewed as conservative.

The DPA figure (21.6 percent) is far below the over 40 percent that has been estimated for the area.

It is impossible to know the exact number of illiterates in Latin America, but these DPA figures are bound to arouse the interest of readers in *Our America* and people the world over who are concerned about our rights, aspirations, and problems.

Cuba's illiteracy rate is known all over the world. In the Literacy Campaign, begun in 1961, a total of 707,000 adults were taught how to read and write in a year's time. In 1958, Cuba had a population of 6.5 million, 1 million of whom were illiterate. In 1958, the illiteracy rate among persons between 10 and 49 was 22.3 percent. By 1985, the figure had been reduced to 1.9 percent and only 1 percent among the younger age group. □

Origins of new book 'Fidel on Religion'

Brazilian priest discusses his interview with Castro

By Paulo R. Schilling

[The following interview is reprinted from the December 1985 issue of the English-language edition of *Prisma*, a monthly magazine published by Prensa Latina in Havana, Cuba.]

* * *

Frei Betto is a well-known figure in the progressive Catholic church in Brazil. A Dominican priest, he opposed the former military dictatorship and was jailed for four years for his espousal of the "option for the poor" encouraged by the Second Vatican Council.

Betto is also one of the organisers of the ecclesiastical base communities which have sprouted in Brazil. There are now 150,000, gathering together over 3 million people. His parish is the industrial town of São Bernardo do Campo, just south of São Paulo, a stronghold of the Brazilian trade union movement.

His pastoral work, however, has transcended the borders of Brazil, to Nicaragua, which he visits two or three times a year to help develop the country's peasant ecclesiastical communities.

Managua was where he first met Cuban leader Fidel Castro, at the celebrations in 1980 to mark the first anniversary of the Sandinista revolution.

He has since made several trips to Cuba, building a good relationship with Cuban leaders and intellectuals and maintaining close contact with the Catholic church.

Frei Betto long wanted to have a discussion with the Cuban president on religion because in his view Marxist and Christian unity was essential to Latin American and Caribbean liberation.

The opportunity finally presented itself last May. The discussion, which lasted 23 hours, divided into four sessions, resulted in the book, *Fidel and Religion — Talks With Frei Betto** which has become a best-seller in Brazil.

Prisma decided to interview the priest whose book represents a landmark in Latin America's revolutionary history.

Question. Let's talk about your book, which in one week sold out four editions in Brazil.

Answer. The first international edition was published in Brazil on October 8 to coincide with the death of our beloved "Che" (Guevara). Its success shows how much interest there is in the subject despite a partial press and newspaper boycott, with not even a mention of

the book.

Q. That much vaunted "free press" . . .

A. That's right the so-called "free press." I'd first like to explain how the book came about.

It began like this. In 1980 I was invited by Father Miguel D'Escoto (now foreign minister) to take part in the festivities for the first anniversary of the Sandinista revolution. D'Escoto called me to the house of Sergio Ramírez (now vice-president). There were many people there of different political persuasions. Later Fidel arrived.

The Commander took the opportunity to see people separately in the library. I went in last as I had nothing in particular to say to him. But Fidel was interested, as he had heard from D'Escoto about my work in the base communities and in a working-class parish in Brazil.

We talked for two hours about the church in Brazil and Latin America which Fidel was interested in. At the same time we touched on the relationship between Marxism and Christianity and revolutionaries and Christians.

I asked questions about the state of the church in Cuba and on relations between the state and the Catholic church. At the time I saw three options and wanted to know Cuba's position.

Q. What were the three options?

A. The first: to persecute religion and the church and make it disappear from social life. I think this is the best way of confirming imperialist propaganda that socialism and communism do not respect people's religious beliefs. It also backs up the view that there is an anthropological agreement between Christianity and capitalism and an anthropological antagonism between Christianity and socialism.

The second option would be to keep the church marginal, to "ghettoise" it, with no persecution but without giving it much room to take part in social life. That would also be playing into the enemy's hands because a marginalised church in a socialist state would be a potential nucleus for the growth of counterrevolutionaries.

The third would be to help the church to be part of the construction of a socialist society.

Q. What was Fidel's reaction?

A. Fidel with characteristic sincerity said that I was right and he had never looked at the problem that way. He said: We needed to facilitate the latter because you are right, the only real consistent political option is to involve Christians in building a socialist society.

At the end of the conversation he invited me to Cuba. As I had been jailed for political reasons twice in Brazil, once for four years, I didn't really feel it was safe to make the trip and then quietly go back to work in Brazil where there was still a military dictatorship.

Q. At the time it was a whole "subversive" adventure for Brazilians to visit socialist Cuba. On our return we could be bearers of revolution.

A. Exactly. So I waited for a better opportunity, a collective trip that would arouse less suspicion. The occasion arose in September 1981 when the first Congress of Intellectuals for the Sovereignty of the Peoples of Our America was held in Cuba. About 30 Brazilians were invited, including me.

When we arrived in Havana it seemed a bit odd. There were only two Christians and some very perplexed Communist comrades wondering what two Christians were going to do in Cuba and what a Dominican friar was able to do at this sort of congress.

On the other hand, I was surprised at the friendly reception we got in Havana. During the congress I made contact with two Cuban government bodies concerned with the church and religion in Latin America, the CEA or Study Centre on America and something like the present Religious Affairs Office. They invited me to a series of talks on the church and religion in Latin America, similar to those they had already had with other liberation theologians, priests passing through Cuba. I was one more.

The talks usually took place in the mornings at the meeting. They were very useful and pushed the debate along.

But the time available was inadequate for such important questions. I had the chance to illustrate how an ecclesiastical base community works, how we read the Bible, because all that was something really new. I also explained how we made an analysis of capitalist society, with the aid of Marxism, but without clashing with our Christian faith.

That was a great novelty. I made one observation: I had the impression, at least at that time, though not today, that as far as religion and the church were concerned, the Communist Party and the church in Cuba were stuck in 1959. Interest was aroused with the Sandinista revolution when for the first time in history Christians were part of the revolutionary struggle.

Q. This innovative aspect of the Sandinista revolution must be one of the main reasons why the imperialists hate it so much, why the Reagan government is so brutal in its attempts

*A Spanish-language edition of the book was published in 1985 by the Publications Office of the Council of State in Havana. — IP

to get a counterrevolution going.

A. Christian involvement in the Sandinista revolution was not political involvement but recognition of the right to struggle. That is, there are priests in the Nicaraguan government not because the church politically represents an important section of the population but because these Christians took part in the liberation.

In Cuba people confirmed that view. Minister Armando Hart, who was present at all the interviews in the book, told me: "When I knew that priests were in the Sandinista government I wondered whether they were not real Christians or not real revolutionaries. Later I saw that they are truly Christians and revolutionaries."

Hart's view is a very good reflection of how we frequently lose sight of reality and of the opening of new opportunities in Latin America for political and religious positions to converge.

I would say that there is a specific type of Christian who is absolutely incompatible with a particular type of a Marxist, that is, dogmatic Christians and dogmatic Marxists.

There is also a particular way of taking Jesus' message which is absolutely compatible with Marxist-Leninist tenets, that is, to be revolutionary. That is the point of contact.

A revolutionary is a revolutionary through his or her practice, independent of whether he or she is considered Christian or Communist. Besides, these labels should be related to the fact that we have Christians who are cohorts of the bourgeoisie as well as Communists and Communist Parties in alliance and making pacts with the bourgeoisie.

Q. Betto, tell us about Christianity's revolutionary origins and potential from the historic point of view.

A. A Christian is a revolutionary in that his or her faith is based on fraternity. That is, the monotheism of the ancient East or Asia was a highly subversive thing because it set up one god, a god of the poor, in a society with many gods. This was like saying, "If there is one god, our father, we are all brothers, therefore there is no reason for any difference between us."

Do you know that was the conclusion the Hebrews drew when they were freed from slavery in Egypt and entered Palestine while the other peoples continued worshipping their Pharaohs', landowners' gods and the small gods of slaves and peasants. From time to time, a group emerges that is monotheist. Monotheism emerged as a great socialist idea of the time.

You have to remember that Engels in several of his works called attention to the importance of primitive Christianity, particularly in a book of the same name.

I recently found another article written by Engels. It is a prologue he wrote in 1895 for Marx's *Class Struggles in France 1848-50* in which he takes a positive view of Christianity.

Religion is not always the opium of the

masses. Religion in specific circumstances, historic moments, and social formations can be as much the opium of the masses as not.

In the 19th century Germany Marx studies, it was the opium of the masses.

Q. In a book I wrote in exile in 1973 about Monseigneur Helder Camara, the former bishop of Olinda and Recife, I quoted something particularly fitting he said. It went, "If Marx had in his time seen a church continuing in Christ's footsteps, if he had lived with Christians who loved the truth, if he had lived in the era of the Second Vatican Council, which took up the best sayings and teachings of a theology based on earthly realities, he wouldn't have presented religion as the opium of the masses and the church as alienated and alienating."

A. That definition is perfect because Marx had a specific position and therefore a dialectical one. He was not prejudiced about religion but he analysed it in a given social situation. He proved that religion like the family, university, and political parties are facets of oppression and liberation. It is interesting to see Marx's scientific rigour, because he spoke of religion and not God. Religion is a social and cultural thing which can be analysed scientifically like the family.

Q. As a Marxist, I think that your reasoning is perfect. But going back to the history of the interview that became a book . . .

A. When the first round of talks ended in September 1981, the party comrades asked if I wanted to continue analysing the questions of church and religion in Latin America.

I told them, "Look I'm basically a churchman and cannot give an individual reply." I think for me it was important to come back to the island, not just to help the party but as a helper of the Catholic church in Cuba. I wanted to get along with Cuban bishops. If they agreed to the request I would return with pleasure.

They understood my request to the letter and put me in contact with the Cuban church. I took part in a meeting with all the bishops, and the Papal Nuncio, in February 1983.

Unofficially, as my work was never exactly official — neither do I pretend it was — I did my job. I began to make frequent trips to Cuba with a view to talks with the party and also my brothers in the church.

Q. In a way you were encouraging a détente between Cuban state and church which for several reasons had begun in 1980?

A. I made about three or four trips a year on average. However, as he wasn't at the reception for intellectuals in 1981, I never met with Fidel Castro again, and I didn't even seek a meeting as I was aware of how much work he had, and all the problems.

Finally, the editor of the Brasiliense publishing house, Caio Graco, hearing of my trips to Cuba and about to launch a series of short books for young people, proposed I try and get

an interview with Fidel, with the idea of a young Brazilian audience — there are 64 million people under 19.

I thought it was a good idea and made the proposal through a Cuban agency.

I later learned that there is a queue of potential interviewers wanting to speak to Fidel Castro. In February 1985 I was invited by the Casa de las Américas to judge a literary contest. The Commander learned I was there and invited me for a talk.

That talk became three, a total of nine hours. The subject matter was just religion, mainly the impact of Leonardo Boff, one of the fore-runners of "Liberation Theology." Fidel was very interested in the matter. Our last conversation was the morning before I left for Brazil. I had to be at the airport at 7:00 a.m. and we talked from midnight to 6:00 a.m.

I confess I was surprised at the Commander's clarity and the depth in which he analysed the religious question. I asked if he would say the things in an interview. He replied, "There's no reason why not, no problem, we can think concretely about it." So we fixed a date — May — to conduct the interview. He wanted to be prepared, to read up on Liberation Theology, as well as the pope's speeches, and I could not extend my stay in Cuba. So we fixed it two and a half months ahead.

In May I returned ready for the interview with journalist Joelmir Betting, Brazil's foremost economic commentator. As Joelmir only had one and a half weeks, I waited for the chance to conduct the interview. It came the day he left and the U.S. began transmitting Radio Martí, an absurd provocation using the name of Cuba's national hero.

Because of all the problems surrounding this, the Commander warned it might be difficult to give the interview. We would have to fix a new date and I would have to wait a few more days. There was no guarantee the interview would ever come off. I felt like the fisherman in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* with the prospect of catching a shark. I fought so as not to lose the opportunity.

I pressed for the interview a lot, but the Commander said, "No, I have no time to read all the bibliography I got on Liberation Theology, I don't feel ready, I would like you to give me a few days more." I continued to press, and as I had brought a batch of 63 questions, Fidel asked me to read out the first ones. I read him the first five, the ones on his religious upbringing, his family, mother and father, prayers, religious ceremonies, about his parents' beliefs, religion in the countryside, where he was born and grew up, etc.

Well the fact was that they weren't intellectual questions but ones that required no massive background information but more an opening up of the heart, talking about experience. So we began our talks. There were 23 hours of interview done in four parts. They were taped by the Commander's staff, transcribed and matched against the original. There were no cuts, no suppression of anything. Only one problem, which is common when

something is taped and later transcribed arose. Owing to my Spanish there were some doubts about the questions. An example: instead of "capitalist Father Christmas" it became "fatalist Father Christmas."

I later translated the book into Portuguese and the result was good. Why? Because it is the first time in history that a head of state of a socialist country has spoken openly and in detail about his own life, his childhood, schooling, friends, etc. Fidel recounted all his childhood, the 12 years he spent in Catholic colleges, his love of sport, how he got into politics, Marxism, the student struggle at university, his affiliation to the Orthodox Party, his break with it, the preparations for the Moncada Barracks assault, the fiasco, prison, exile in Mexico, the Granma expedition, meeting Che Guevara, landing in Cuba, the repression, the beginning of the guerrilla struggle in the Sierra, the impasses, the advances, the guerrilla victory, the first revolutionary laws, his resignation as prime minister, his return to government, relations with the church, the

Girón [Bay of Pigs] invasion, the socialist nature of the revolution, the founding of the Communist Party in 1965. . . .

Q. To sum up, the book is a history of the Cuban revolution as told by the man who has the most knowledge and most authority to tell it . . .

A. Yes, in effect. It is a round-up of the revolution from statements by Fidel himself. It is the first time a Socialist head of state, first secretary of a Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, has spoken on religion. There is no historical precedent. It is also the way he speaks. That is, he doesn't simply interpret the religious question as a politician who is considering a politically and socially important phenomenon in Latin America. No, he is analysing the problem from two different angles.

First as a question of principle, of whether people have the right to follow a religious belief; the church has the right to its space; and Christians have the right to join up as revolu-

tionaries, to build a future for our America.

He also speaks from his experience as a pupil at a religious school for so many years, that is, the subject is familiar to him because of his own upbringing. All the critical analyses he makes of religion are from someone who wants to rescue the revolutionary essence of Christianity, the church in the early centuries, and like Marx and Engels did, he also compares that crucial and liberating experience for Christians with the recent experience of Communists in the sense that Christian martyrs can be compared to Communist martyrs under capitalist regimes.

To sum up, the book is absolutely unedited because of its autobiographical treatment and the manner of tackling the religious subject matter. Fidel also analyses the problem of the foreign debt. He gives a beautiful picture of two of the main figures beloved of the Cuban revolution: Ernesto Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos. The book's importance is obvious, especially in the huge interest it has generated among publishing houses abroad. □

DOCUMENTS

Declaration of Guyane's anticolonial party

PNPG fights for independence from France

[In November 1985 the Guyanese People's National Party (PNPG) publicly announced its existence. Until that time, Guyane (often called French Guiana) was the only French "overseas department" that did not have a proindependence party. (See article in the Feb. 24, 1986, *Intercontinental Press*.)

Guyane is a colony on the northeast coast of South America. Its population of 73,000 is composed mostly of descendants of indigenous peoples and African slaves. There is also a French settler community. The colony has been kept extremely underdeveloped economically, while the French government maintains a rocket-launching center there.

[The following declaration was issued by the PNPG on Nov. 16, 1985, when it announced its existence. The text has been taken from the February 1986 issue of the *CIGGM Bulletin*, a bimonthly published in Paris by the Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique Information Center. The footnote and translation from the French are by *Intercontinental Press*.]

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The creation of the Guyanese People's National Party on April 28, 1985, after more than 18 months of consultations and discussions is the logical and, as it were, natural outcome of the development over more than a decade of the national independence idea and current in Guyane.

It arose from the imperative and urgent need to rally all those who consider themselves part of this Guyanese national current around and

within a political structure, such as a party.

This will be one of the basic tasks of the Guyanese People's National Party.

Moreover, the women and men of this country are also demanding of us answers and proposals that address their immediate, concrete, and day-to-day interests, needs, and concerns.

Be assured that everything that concerns our people also arouses the concern of the Guyanese People's National Party and that it will make known its proposals and work to

them.

Just as various peoples in the past built the French nation, just as yesterday the European emigrants overcame their different languages, customs, and histories to build the nation of the United States of America, just as the Brazilian nation was built — today it rests on us to affirm the existence of the Guyanese nation, uncertain of itself and its future, but nevertheless present and alive.

French policy — because it follows a colonial logic of maintaining what they believe to be the perpetual domination and subjugation of Guyane — carries within it dangerous germs that will surely create the conditions for an inescapable racial confrontation in the future.

It is therefore not enough to simply place communities that have nothing or almost nothing in common alongside each other or even face to face in order to play at a so-called harmony among the people.

If Guyane should be multiracial and multiethnic — and we, for our part, favor brotherhood among men and peoples — this can never be realized under the guidance of a policy that promotes the "tribalization" of communities, that deepens differences, that favors some at the expense of others, that gives precedence to special interests, and that denies the Guyanese people their legitimate and inalienable rights.

In reality, people unite only for a great purpose. Nations are always built in struggle against domination and subjugation, not through submission to colonialism.

We have no choice but to build our nation

around the specific communities of this country and bring to life what is today no more than a demagogic myth about the so-called "Guyanese melting pot."

That is the goal and calling of our party.

Our party's role, through its struggle for independence, is to genuinely promote a process of national integration and formation, based exclusively on the political will for emancipation, sovereignty, and progress.

It is in the struggle for independence, and only through and due to this struggle, that we are going to assemble all those among us who have made a choice for Guyane — a choice of national existence and emancipation.

When that happens, what will be important will not be the ethnic, national, or racial origins of the inhabitants of this country, but only this willingness to struggle for a sovereign, free, and independent nation.

What this finally comes down to is the individual and personal choice that each woman and man will have to make regarding the Guyanese nation's struggle to live.

That is the national character of our party.

Our party is also a people's party, because it bases its struggle on achieving an alliance of all social classes and forces in conflict with colonial interests, as well as on a union of all those who reject continued dependence on the French state.

Victory will be possible only through popular unity and national unity.

Nevertheless, because the values of the Guyanese People's National Party are those of social justice, a just redistribution of the national wealth, and sovereignty, we will be constantly vigilant against exploiting elements or those tied to antinational interests.

Our struggle must not serve to turn this country, once it is free, into a private preserve or springboard for some political, economic, or administrative caste, whatever it may be.

As for the question of the country's economic development, that is a major concern for the Guyanese People's National Party.

But it must be said that we will not cover over our political demands in the name of some vague hope for development.

Like all Guyanese, we strongly desire our country's development, but we will not accept *anything and everything* in the name of development.

If, as is claimed today, development means that all economic activities and sectors should fall into the hands of the settlers, whatever their qualifications;

If economic development means that the Guyanese people must simply be dispossessed of their country, as in New Caledonia;

If development means, in addition, that the workers must be underpaid, undertrained, and held in contempt by employers whose racist arrogance betrays the mentality of adventurers in a conquered country;

If this is development, then we must reject it.

For our party, development that means injustice toward the workers, the plunder of our resources, the theft and waste of our wealth,

the alienation of our land, such development must therefore be fought. And we will fight it.

In economic matters, as in the social, political, and cultural spheres, we can say that against the colonial course and interests we must counterpose our own course and safeguard our interests.

Our course as nationalists is a course of emancipation, dignity, justice, responsibility, and sovereignty.

Thus all those who agree with this course and share these aims are connected to us in our struggle.

We therefore invite them to join with us to define and carry out a concrete and realistic path toward economic, social, and cultural development, based on the political choice and aspiration for emancipation, with a view toward the future attainment of independence.

This is precisely the key question posed by decentralization.* What should we do with this

*The regional decentralization policy was adopted in 1982 by the French government of President François Mitterrand. It extends a greater degree of local self-government to France's domestic departments and to its colonies through the establishment of

decentralization, which amounts to neither sovereignty, nor a solution to the problems of the Guyanese people, nor a final "de facto state," nor a definitive political, judicial, and administrative framework?

Nor is it by any means an adequate political condition for economic, cultural, and scientific development. But we agree that, for the moment, decentralization can provide a framework for action. The framework is certainly limited, but it must be utilized for the benefit of the interests and needs of our country and population.

It is an instrument that, if used properly, can offer some opportunities to ensure the setting up of the country's necessary infrastructure, both in the present and, above all, with a view toward a sovereign future.

This is how we understand decentralization. This is how we will use it, bearing in mind that it is necessary to begin preparing now for independence. □

elected regional councils. Three current leaders of the PNP — Alain Michel, Jean-Jules Fernand, and Guy Lamaze — were elected to Guyane's council in 1982, as candidates of the Union of Guyanese Workers (UTG), the colony's largest union federation.

10 AND 20 YEARS AGO



May 3, 1976

Many of the sixteen Philippine political prisoners who staged a hunger strike from January to March had been tortured, according to a report from Manila published in the March issue of the Tokyo *Ampo: Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*. The report, dated March 4, was compiled in part from information obtained by the Task Force on Detainees of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines.

All but two of the sixteen hunger strikers had been arrested by the Ferdinand Marcos regime in December 1974. Ten of them were tortured by electric shock, cigarette burns, and beatings.

The sixteen, led by Father Ed de la Torre, launched a hunger strike January 5 at Camp Olivas, Pampanga, demanding better treatment and the right to bail. Despite protests by relatives of the prisoners, as well as by Amnesty International, the Marcos regime refused to grant the hunger strikers' demands. On March 11 four of them collapsed from weakness and the twelve others said that they would discontinue the protest.

Between December 1975 and January 1976, at least 115 persons were known to have been arrested, not including the 194 strikers at Atlantic Gulf & Pacific who were detained briefly. Of the 115, 43 have since been released.

The report also cited three cases of rape of

women political prisoners and the torture of Perla Simonod, who was charged with being a member of the New People's Army (Bagong Hukbong Bayan). Simonod, who was pregnant, had a block of ice placed on her stomach. She suffered a miscarriage as a result.

The report named six political figures who were murdered by the Marcos regime during the past five years.

WORLD OUTLOOK

PERSPECTIVE MONDIALE

(Predecessor of Intercontinental Press)

April 22, 1966

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., announced April 13 that the executive board of the organization had adopted a resolution at a meeting in Miami calling on the Johnson administration to abandon the south Vietnam military junta and consider withdrawing from the country.

The Rev. King told a press conference that the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was "rapidly degenerating into a sordid military adventure." He said, "It is imperative to end a war that has played havoc with our domestic destinies."

Although King has previously questioned the U.S. role in Vietnam, this was the first time that the SCLC came out as an organization against the war. Among the civil-rights organizations, only the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had previously taken a militant stand against Johnson's escalation of the war.

Thousands denounce U.S. war moves

Nationwide demonstrations protest aid to 'contras,' bombing of Libya

By Harvey McArthur

MANAGUA — Hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans — organized through their unions, neighborhood committees, women's organizations, or youth groups — marched throughout the country April 16 to denounce Washington's war against Nicaragua and the U.S. bombing of Libya.

The demonstrations were originally called by the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), Nicaragua's largest union federation, to protest the proposed \$100 million in aid for U.S.-backed mercenaries in this country. After the U.S. bombardment of Libya, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) called on all the mass organizations of the revolution to turn out the biggest mobilization possible in every city and town across the country. Special emphasis was placed on organizing in neighborhoods through the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDSs).

Neighborhood rallies were held throughout Nicaragua on the night of April 15. With bonfires, fireworks, and Uncle Sam effigies, they were reminiscent of the neighborhood organizing carried out during the fight against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza.

Large demonstrations occurred April 16 in areas threatened by mercenary attacks: San Carlos in the south; Ocotol, Somoto, and Jalapa in the north; and Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic Coast.

Sandinistas say that for many towns these were the biggest demonstrations in years. Workers, students, peasants, women, professionals, and government and health workers marched in contingents under the banners of their organizations. Thousands of peasants brandishing machetes came from outlying areas to join marchers in Jinotega, Estelí, Matagalpa, and Rivas.

One of the biggest marches, 30,000-strong, was organized in León.

Humberto Gutiérrez, organization secretary of the CST in León, told this reporter that the mobilization there was combined with educational meetings in workplaces during the week before the march. The CST organized 150 meetings and 48 general assemblies in its 56 local unions, he said. Workers discussed the attacks on Libya and the \$100 million proposed for the U.S.-backed mercenaries.

"We say to our government that if [the U.S.] government is declaring war on us, we want more and better arms," Gutiérrez explained. "The *contras* are getting ground-to-air missiles, and we should get more sophisticated weapons, too."

Speakers at many rallies called for more



1983 demonstration in Managua against U.S. maneuvers in Honduras.

arms and more military training. (Hundreds of thousands of Nicaragua's workers and peasants are already armed and organized by the army, militias, reserves, and peasant self-help cooperatives. Some speakers and individual workers stressed the need to incorporate women in the defense in greater numbers, including in special units in the army and the reserves.

Here in Managua, workers marched in contingents from their factories late in the afternoon of April 16 to a rally in the center of the industrial district. Many workers wore their militia or reserve uniforms. A large number of women participated, especially from textile plants. Many marchers were young; the Sandinista Youth led most of the chants.

Some marchers carried hand-lettered signs reading: "Three million Nicaraguans will defeat your \$100 million," "Libya will win," "Nicaragua will survive," and "United we will win."

Some 10,000 workers and high school students gathered around a speakers' platform formed by placing two Coca-Cola delivery trucks back-to-back across the road. They were addressed by a young army volunteer; Lucío Jiménez, CST general secretary; and María Ramírez, president of the Federation of Secondary Students.

"We, the students, are going to ask the Sandinista Front to propose new ways to integrate us in the defense," Ramírez said. Many male students were already in the army, she explained. But new steps could be taken. "For example, to organize special combat units, made up primarily of women, in defense of the capital," she said.

"The same with the people's militias," said Ramírez. "The working class and the students must unite to fight the aggression."

Simultaneously, other students, government

workers, and members of CDSs were also rallying in other parts of the city. All the marchers converged at the Plaza of the Nonaligned Movement.

There, Carlos Carrión, FSLN political secretary for the Managua region, told the crowd that the bombing of Libya was meant "to send a message that at any moment [the U.S. government] could also bomb Nicaragua." The discussion in the U.S. Congress also "sends us a message," he explained. "The U.S. government is determined to destroy the revolution."

This situation "marks the difference between yesterday and today" for Nicaragua, Carrión said. Nicaraguans are going to confront enormous difficulties in the war and with the economy, he explained. They'll have to work harder and fight harder to defend their homeland and their freedom. The crowd responded with chants of "People's power!" and "One single army!"

"There are no middle positions in this battle," Carrión said. "Either you are with the people, with the nation, with the defense of the revolution, or you are with Ronald Reagan and the enemies of the people."

Carrión urged the demonstrators to go on an educational campaign to explain the difficult situation facing the country and the tasks it poses.

"We must convince those who have not yet been convinced. And those who are going to run away, let them run," he concluded to applause.

Carrión also urged the marchers to continue their demonstrations and to organize house-to-house educational discussions. An immediate goal is to build a massive turnout for the CST-called May Day rallies planned all over Nicaragua. FSLN leaders are predicting at least 150,000 at the Managua rally alone for May Day. □