

INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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Chernobyl Accident Grim Reminder of Nuclear Hazards

London demonstrators oppose British reactors. Sign notes accidents in British, U.S., Soviet nuclear plants.



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Sugar workers on island of Negros.

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Chernobyl: grim reminder of nuclear hazards

By Doug Jenness

The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union is a grim reminder of the unavoidable hazards of nuclear power. It has sparked renewed efforts by antinuclear forces to shut down nuclear power plants in Western Europe and North America.

Judging from official Soviet statements, the accident 60 miles north of Kiev in the Ukraine was a very grave one. According to Soviet officials, at least two people have died so far as a result of the accident. Of the 197 people hospitalized, 49 were treated and released and 18 are reported to be in serious condition. Moscow's acceptance of an offer of help from prominent U.S. specialists on radiation-related injuries indicates that some of the victims may be suffering from heavy doses of radiation.

A May 6 Tass dispatch stated that an explosion on April 25 destroyed part of the structure housing the reactor, and a fire broke out, with flames reaching a height of 100 feet. Radioactivity was discharged into the atmosphere.

Soviet officials say that the other three reactors at the Chernobyl plant were immediately shut down. Reactors similar in design to those at the Chernobyl plant, which supply half of the 12 percent of Soviet electricity derived from nuclear power, have also been closed in other parts of the Soviet Union.

Pripyat, the town closest to the crippled reactor, and three other nearby towns have been evacuated. Altogether nearly 50,000 people have left the area.

The May 6 dispatch affirmed that the area was still too radioactive for residents to return. Soviet officials had earlier reported that water reservoirs near the plant were contaminated.

Tass didn't say whether the fire had been put out yet. On May 2 a top Soviet official, Boris Yeltsin, had announced that damage-control workers were still attempting to extinguish the fire and reduce emissions of radioactivity.

The full extent of radiation contamination in the Soviet Union has not been reported, and it will be a while before the scope of its long-term effects on people, farm animals, and croplands can be determined.

Scientists in many nearby countries — both in Eastern and Western Europe — have reported higher than normal amounts of radiation as a result of the accident at Chernobyl. The Polish government said that radiation in some areas there reached levels as much as 500 times higher than normal.

The Polish government announced emergency measures including a ban on sales of milk from grass-fed cows in some provinces. Poles under 16 years of age were provided doses of sodium iodide to help prevent

contamination.

Nearly all of Western Europe was affected to some extent, and parts of Sweden, West Germany, and Finland recorded radiation levels hundreds of times above normal. In Italy the government banned sales of leafy vegetables and consumption of milk by children.

Anti-Soviet campaign

Overall, the response to the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl by government officials and the news media in North America and Western Europe has been unconscionable. They have cynically preyed on justified fears of nuclear radiation to feed their anti-Soviet propaganda. They ravenously grabbed rumors, speculation, and unconfirmed information and reported them as facts. The more sensationalist of the capitalist dailies ran inflammatory headlines day after day based on totally unsubstantiated "hot tips."

Among the more scandalous was the rumor that at least 2,000 people had died in the accident. The single source for this "information" was an unidentified resident of Kiev allegedly contacted by telephone by the New York-based United Press International. UPI decided to release this unconfirmed scoop, and news agencies throughout the world ran with it. Hundreds of millions heard, saw, and read it reported as a fact.

After a few days went by, with no confirmation of this report and Moscow's continued insistence that it was false, most — although not all — news media and government officials stopped repeating this erroneous figure. But the damage had been done.

Another choice news flash was that accidents had occurred at not just one, but two, of the Chernobyl plant's four reactors. This claim was based on a U.S. spy satellite photo. Shortly after this had been broadcast to the world, many U.S. officials conceded that it was inaccurate and that the Soviet report of damage at only one reactor was probably correct.

The anti-Soviet campaign reached such levels of hysteria that at times some commentators seemed to be gloating about the USSR's misfortune. One U.S. politician, Senator Steven Symms of Idaho, even declared, "It's too bad it didn't happen closer to the Kremlin."

And the big grain merchants have not hidden their hopes that they will profit from increased sales if Soviet croplands have been severely contaminated.

One of the central aims of the anti-Soviet campaign is to divert attention from the dangers of nuclear plants in operation in Western Europe and North America.

Government officials and the nuclear industry assert that reactors are dangerous in the Soviet Union, but safe in the capitalist countries. The evidence cited against Soviet nuclear power includes inadequate containment structures, use of graphite cores, plants located near densely populated areas, and poor evacuation procedures. Moreover, the Soviet government has been charged with a cover-up of the accident.

But the bitter truth is that each and every charge against Soviet reactors can be turned right around on nuclear plants in the United States and Western Europe.

In the United States, for example, most nuclear plants are located near big population centers, including New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Some 3 million people live within 10 miles of a nuclear reactor.

At least 140,000 people lived within a 10-mile radius of the Three Mile Island plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where a partial meltdown occurred in 1979. Hundreds of thousands more lived in the same part of the state. One town was only 500 yards from the plant.

Of the 115 large commercial and military nuclear reactors in the United States, nine lack containment structures or use graphite cores. Eight of these are used for research or production of weapons-grade plutonium. They are expected to be operating at full tilt with the Reagan administration's recent announcement that U.S. nuclear weapons tests are to be stepped up.

More important, however, is the fact that containment buildings and alternatives to graphite cores are not safe either. The accident at Three Mile Island proved that. When radioactive water in the containment building reached the level of a sump pump, the water was automatically pumped into another building, which was neither watertight nor vapor tight. More than 400,000 gallons of radioactive water were dumped into the Susquehanna River.

In a complete meltdown, the nuclear fuel would keep on generating heat and burn itself right through the reactor walls and the containment building.

Hypocritical

Complaints about Soviet evacuation procedures are particularly hypocritical. Soviet officials say that an evacuation zone of 18 miles was established around the damaged plant. In the United States, however, federal regulations only call for evacuation within 10 miles, and many nuclear industry officials are pressing to reduce that to two miles. During the Three Mile Island accident, no evacuation was organized at all, and bewildered residents were given conflicting reports about whether or not they should leave the area.

Criticisms by U.S. officials of Moscow's reporting of the accident truly reek of self-righteousness. From its outset the development of nuclear power in the United States has been cloaked in secrecy. For years U.S. officials

even denied that there was any danger from radioactive fallout created by atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons! But the outrageously high rate of cancer deaths in parts of Utah and Nevada where nuclear testing was conducted in the 1950s is the bitter fruit of that lie.

After the accident at Three Mile Island, a major grievance of the residents in the area was that they had been lied to about the potential hazards of the nearby plant. They had repeatedly been told that nuclear energy was cleaner than coal. Moreover, during the accident itself, they were fed lies about what was happening at the plant, including the seriousness of the accident and the emergency measures that should be taken.

Seven years after that accident — and four years after the plant's owner, Metropolitan Edison Co., pleaded guilty or no contest to criminal charges that it used inadequate and falsified tests — the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is still holding hearings on the company's misconduct.

The NRC, the government agency charged with supervising the nuclear industry, is in fact dominated by the private owners of that industry.

The April 8, 1986, *Washington Post* quoted a former NRC commissioner to the effect that, "There has been too much of a closeness with industry," and that the current debate is over "the authority to label a lie what's really a lie."

According to the same article, a former prosecutor for the Justice Department complained that NRC officials "don't want criminal cases to be brought, and they're willing to do almost anything to see that that doesn't occur."

Currently the NRC is even attempting to exempt itself from the Sunshine Act, which states that federal agencies are supposed to conduct public business in public and not behind closed doors.

With the mismanagement, profiteering, and mounting list of accidents that are associated with the nuclear industry, it's no wonder the NRC wants to keep the shades lowered on its activities.

The *New York Times* editors admitted March 14, 1986, that, "Despite the lesson of Three Mile Island, hair-raising examples of not-so-good management continue. In 1983, at New Jersey's Salem 2 plant, the emergency shutdown system failed twice within a week. A 1985 incident at the Davis-Besse plant in Ohio was a near-repeat of that at Three Mile Island."

The *Times* could have added the accident at the Kerr-McGee uranium-processing plant in Gore, Oklahoma, in January 1986. An over-filled cylinder of radioactive material burst after being improperly heated, killing one worker and hospitalizing 100 others.

Moreover, since one of the two reactors at the Three Mile Island plant resumed operation last October, two accidents have already occurred in which scores of workers have been contaminated by radioactive substances.

And it isn't any better in other capitalist countries that use nuclear power. On April 30 U.S. Senator John Glenn announced that the General Accounting Office drew up a classi-

fied report last year on 151 "significant nuclear safety accidents" between 1971 and 1984 in 14 "Western countries." In making the report "public," however, Glenn deleted the list of accidents by country, type, and date. This information remains classified.

Despite the insistence of government officials and nuclear industry spokespersons that U.S. and West European nuclear power plants are safe, the fact is that nuclear generation of electricity — unlike the use of coal and other fossil fuels — cannot be made safe, at least not at the present level of technology. Even if no accidents ever occur in nuclear plants, there is currently no method of safely disposing of the

mounting tons of lethal nuclear wastes.

The Chernobyl disaster, like the earlier one at Three Mile Island, has given the whole world a glimpse of the horrifying reality that a truly catastrophic accident is possible. Tens of thousands *could* be killed by a nuclear meltdown, and cities and farms could be contaminated for years.

This most recent accident has awakened a renewed sense of urgency in the antinuclear movements in North America and Western Europe. It has reaffirmed once again that the only way to stop the hazards of nuclear energy is to immediately shut down nuclear power plants once and for all. □

— IN THIS ISSUE —

Closing news date: May 6, 1986

LIBYA	300	U.S. allies join anti-Libya crusade — by Ernest Harsch
NICARAGUA	302	FSLN discusses party-building — by Cindy Jaquith
GREECE	303	Antigovernment protests mount — by Bobbis Misailides and Argiris Malapanis
SOUTH KOREA	304	Long history of mass revolts — by Will Reissner
FRANCE	307	LCR activist jailed — by Will Reissner
SOUTH AFRICA	308	More whites reject apartheid — by Ernest Harsch
PHILIPPINES	310	Repression continues in "sugarland" — by Deb Shnookal and Russell Johnson
	311	Military harasses fishing town — by Deb Shnookal
SOUTH PACIFIC	312	Independence forces harassed — by Neil Jarden
PARAGUAY	313	Stroessner faces protests — by Rafael Pérez Pereira
AUSTRALIA	317	Working farmers and the capitalist crisis — by Ron Poulsen
	325	Forum on Philippines organized — by Nita Keig
USA	328	Protests hit war drive — by Steve Craine
DOCUMENTS	301	Cuba condemns U.S. bombing of Libya
	314	Tomás Borge on Nicaragua's democracy
	326	Debate on situation in Nicaragua — by Jean-Pierre Reil and Hubert Sandor

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U.S. allies join anti-Libyan crusade

Expel Libyan diplomats, students from Western Europe

By Ernest Harsch

A week after the murderous U.S. bombing of Libya, President Reagan bluntly threatened further aggression. If the Libyan government does not change its policies, Reagan told a forum sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington April 23, "we will act again."

Meanwhile, Washington's European allies were taking new measures of their own against Libya. On April 21 the 12 foreign ministers of the European Economic Community (EEC) agreed to expel some Libyan diplomats from their countries. Like the direct U.S. military attack against Libya, this was done under the hypocritical guise of fighting "terrorism."

Within days, the governments of Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg had announced the expulsion of dozens of Libyan officials.

But their actions were not confined to diplomats. All Libyans became subject to greater surveillance, tighter restrictions, and possible expulsion.

The British government of Margaret Thatcher — which had openly applauded the U.S. bombing of Libya and gave permission for the bombers to fly from NATO bases in Britain — announced a day after the EEC decision that it had arrested 22 Libyan students, and promptly expelled them. It made no pretense that the students had been implicated in any alleged terrorist actions or plans. The grounds it gave for the expulsions were strictly political — that the students were active supporters of the Libyan government of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Their expulsion, Home Secretary Douglas Hurd told the House of Commons, "is a clear sign that we are determined to get rid of troublemakers."

A few days later, the Thatcher government also curtailed the studies of more than 200 Libyan aviation students, saying it would deport them if they refused to leave.

Among the 11 Libyans expelled from Spain, eight were teachers or students.

'Suspicious-looking Arabs'

The French government stepped up its racist harassment and intimidation of all Arabs in France, many of whom are immigrant workers. According to a report in the May 5 New York weekly *Time* magazine, the French authorities empowered the police "to conduct spot searches of suspicious-looking young Arabs."

Such actions are clearly directed not only against Libya. As Washington is doing within the United States itself, the West European rul-

ers are using the "antiterrorism" pretext to further restrict democratic rights in their own countries.

Responding to the expulsions of Libyans from Western Europe, the Libyan Foreign Ministry stated April 23, "The EEC countries, instead of denouncing the ugly aggression mounted by the United States against a small people, have announced political measures which complement this military aggression."

Those measures, the statement went on, included "the use of the veto at the Security Council to obstruct the adoption of a resolution condemning the aggression." This was a reference to the April 21 vote in the United Nations Security Council, in which the U.S., British, and French representatives vetoed a resolution that had been passed 9 to 5 condemning the U.S. bombing of Libya. (The Danish and Australian representatives, who have no veto powers, had also voted against the resolution.)

Pressure from Washington

To an extent, such measures by the West European governments come in response to concerted U.S. pressure over recent months to get them to more openly join Washington's anti-Libya crusade. But they also have their own reasons for doing so.

Like Washington, the West European powers are hostile to the progressive and anti-imperialist measures undertaken in Libya since the 1969 overthrow of the corrupt monarchy of King Idris. British as well as U.S. military bases were closed down by the Qaddafi government, and European banks and oil companies were among the foreign enterprises affected by Libyan nationalizations.

The British and French rulers have often expressed alarm over Libyan support for anti-imperialist forces in some of their former African colonies and have taken action to counter such support. Most recently, hundreds of French commandos were rushed to Chad, on Libya's southern border, to help prop up the pro-imperialist regime of Hissène Habré, who is confronted by a significant guerrilla movement aided by Libya.

While the West European powers generally share Washington's goal of bringing down the Qaddafi government, most differ to one degree or another over how best to attain that goal. Their specific interests and political considerations are not identical to those of Washington. Some must confront mass movements — encompassing trade unions, workers' parties, student organizations, and church groups — opposed to the presence of U.S. bases or the placement of U.S. nuclear missiles in Western Europe. Some have extensive trade and other

economic relations with Arab countries, including Libya itself.

Because of such considerations, most EEC governments either took their distance from the U.S. bombing of Libya or made some mild criticisms of it.

In Western Europe, only the Thatcher government came out fully behind Washington's air strike. This has sparked some of the sharpest protests against the U.S. attack in any West European country, directed not only against Washington but also against the British government itself.

Placards at an April 19 demonstration of 10,000 in London proclaimed, "Reagan is the real mad man," "U.S. bases out," and "Thatcher is the real conspirator." Tony Benn, a leader of the Labour Party's left wing, also called for the closing of U.S. bases in Britain. Eric Heffer, a key Labour Party member of Parliament, declared in the House of Commons that Reagan is "one of the biggest international terrorists alive today."

Such views have now "gained a new acceptance" among the British population as a whole, the April 26 *New York Times* reported.

Paris favored 'all-out' attack

In contrast, there were relatively few public protests in France against the U.S. raid, and public opinion polls revealed less criticism of it than in most other West European countries. Polls at the same time showed strong support for the French government's decision to refuse permission to the U.S. bombers to fly over French territory to get to Libya.

The response in France reflects the political shift to the right in that country over the past two years or so. One indication of that shift was the victory of rightist candidates in the March 16 parliamentary elections. Although Socialist Party leader François Mitterrand remains president, Jacques Chirac, the leader of the rightist coalition that won the vote, became prime minister and named a new cabinet.

Paris' decision to bar U.S. bombers from French airspace did not mark opposition to imperialist military action against Libya, but simply a tactical disagreement over that particular raid. On April 21 Reagan declared that some of the West European governments had urged an "all out" attack against Libya. White House aides specifically named the French government as one of those.

The following day, French government officials confirmed this, stating that they had favored "a more ambitious and hard-hitting action against Libya than the one carried out last week by the United States," as the *New York Times* summarized their views. They criticized

the U.S. air strike on the grounds that it was too limited to actually bring down the Qaddafi government. One told the *Times*, "If the United States had been ready to do something to change the situation in Libya, we would have approved."

Following Reagan's April 21 remarks, one White House official indicated that Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany and Prime Minister Bettino Craxi of Italy also "favored stronger military action" against Libya. Both governments denied that was the case.

At the time of the U.S. bombing raid, the Italian government was particularly critical of it. Italy, which had ruled Libya as a direct colony until World War II, still has some \$4 billion in trade with that country. But those economic links did not prevent Rome from expelling several Libyan diplomats from Italy and even arresting a former diplomat April 20 on "suspicion" of plotting terrorist actions.

Greece holds back

The Greek government of Andreas Papandreou also publicly criticized the U.S. air strike. Although it then voted for the EEC resolution calling for diplomatic sanctions against Libya, it has so far declined to implement that decision.

Papandreou told parliament April 23 that any Greek action against Libyan diplomats depended upon "national circumstances" and the presentation of tangible proof of Libyan involvement in terrorism. He said it was contradictory for Washington to denounce alleged Libyan terrorism without proof while condoning the actions of the military junta in Chile, where "state terrorism has exceeded all limits." Papandreou reiterated his condemnation of the U.S. attack on Libya as "a blow against international legality."

Greece has extensive economic relations with Arab countries and has recently established closer ties with Libya. Papandreou has also been under pressure from the massive opposition within Greece to the continued presence of U.S.-run NATO bases.

Washington has expressed some displeasure at the Papandreou government's criticisms and its reluctance to implement the EEC sanctions.

At the three-day summit conference of major imperialist powers that opened in Tokyo May 4, U.S. officials continued their drive to elicit greater allied action against Libya. In direct talks with Italy's Craxi, Reagan urged him to adopt a range of anti-Libyan economic sanctions. The seven summit participants — from the United States, Japan, Britain, West Germany, France, Italy, and Canada — also issued a general declaration pledging greater coordinated action against "terrorism."

Besides pressing its allies to move more forcefully against Libya, Washington is continuing to threaten further military action of its own. A third U.S. aircraft carrier, the *Enterprise*, has been ordered into the Mediterranean from the Indian Ocean, joining the two aircraft carriers that were already near Libya's shores. Although the Egyptian regime generally prohibits nuclear-powered ships from passing

through the Suez Canal, it gave permission for the *Enterprise* to do so.

On April 27 Secretary of State George Shultz also indicated there would be stepped-up covert action against Libya. Without going into detail, he said such action was "certainly intended to be disruptive."

Reagan has made it clear in several recent statements that Libya is not the only target of Washington's "antiterrorism" drive. Interviewed by newspaper columnists in Washington April 23, Reagan was specifically asked if

he would order similar attacks against Syria or Iran. He affirmed that was a possibility.

A week earlier, in the immediate wake of the bombing raid against Libya, Reagan sought to directly link his anti-Libya crusade to the U.S. backing for the mercenary war against Nicaragua. He charged that Qaddafi "has sent \$400 million and an arsenal of weapons and advisers into Nicaragua."

Clearly, Washington's campaign of terror is directed against any government or liberation movement that dares defy imperialist dictates. □

DOCUMENTS

Cuba condemns bombing of Libya

Recalls lessons of U.S. defeat at Bay of Pigs

[The following statement by the Cuban government was broadcast on Cuban television on the evening of April 15. This translation appeared in the April 16 issue of the *Daily Report* of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce.]

* * *

In a piratical action that again shows both its absolute contempt for the norms of international law and for peaceful coexistence between states and the absence of a minimum respect for the moral principles that should rule the conduct of all governments, President Reagan, the leader of state terrorism, yesterday launched a brutal attack against the Libyan people, making use of his most sophisticated military means.

With his habitual cynicism and in an outrageous attempt to justify it, the top American spokesman asserted that the action was directed against military objectives. Their lack of truthfulness was revealed when it was shown that the Yankee attacks affected civilian installations in Tripoli, in which foreign citizens reside.

U.S. television has made it possible to view the scope of aggression against civilian buildings. Libyan sources have confirmed that the residence of the chief of the Libyan revolution, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, was one of the objectives of that insane aggression.

When he informed international public opinion, boasting of his actions and asserting they will be repeated if the United States considers it necessary, President Reagan invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter. Nothing could be more insulting to the international community than this jeering, not only at the spirit but at the letter of the Charter, of which Article 51 explicitly consecrates the right of legitimate individual or collective defense in case of armed attack against a member of the United Nations.

The unequivocal absence of any military aggression against the United States makes sterile all Reagan's attempts to find judicial support for his sinister aggression. Thus it is

explicable that the White House has found it impossible to obtain the support of its NATO allies, who not only repudiated his action but also prohibited the aggressor Yankee aircraft from flying over their territories, forcing the United States Air Force in this way to fly an unexpected route and refuel its aircraft in flight.

To British shame, only the government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher continued showing its unconditional support of Washington, returning to the Reagan government the aid Britain received when, betraying its pledges to the so-called TIAR [Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty], the United States supported the Malvinas Islands adventure, distinguished by the same treachery and identical brutality.

Although yesterday's intolerable action was not needed to confirm it, with this action Reagan has ratified his evident decision to convert himself into the promoter of the worst state of terrorism, manifested in his support of the counterrevolutionary Somozaist bands in Nicaragua and in his additional demand for \$100 million in arms for these bands and the abolition of the Clark Amendment, with the declared intention of using the counterrevolutionary bands of Jonas Savimbi to further U.S. policy in southern Africa, which Washington manipulates against the Angolan revolution.

The U.S. president, who has not hesitated in declaring himself the strategic ally of Israel and in ratifying Israel's continuous attacks against Arab nations, presents himself to the U.S. public as protector of his supposedly endangered security.

His avalanche of propaganda may be capable of winning for him the temporary support of the deceived U.S. people. But in the long run, truth will win out, and Reagan will once again be unmasked as the representative of his policy of military supremacy, force, and diktat, which, if it does not lead as dramatically as appears to be possible to a catastrophe that would affect the entire world, will make him pass into history among the worst representa-

tives of the big stick policy and barbarity.

The response of the international community shows its rejection of Reagan's decision to disregard all civilized mechanisms, proclaiming himself judge and jury of international law, which he does not respect.

A few hours before his despicable attack, the EEC [European Economic Community] had requested a political and diplomatic solution for the Mediterranean. But Reagan, the protector of counterrevolutionary terrorists, accuses other states of terrorist acts and, like his kin in the Ku Klux Klan of the South, gives himself the right to place the blame arbitrarily and unilaterally, and hand out punishments that not even the UN Security Council would order.

Once again, this policy toward Libya is in contrast with his attitude in cases of proven criminality such as the crimes the racist regime of South Africa commits, which crimes have merited the condemnation of the United Nations.

The Nonaligned Movement, representing all

underdeveloped countries that belong to the movement, has repudiated this unheard-of act and has demanded that the United States be condemned by the UN Security Council. All the world's nations that aspire to true peace and solid international security should support this action.

The government of the Republic of Cuba, by condemning with all its energy the aggression of the Reagan administration against Libya, expresses its dedicated solidarity with the Libyan people and their leader Muammar el-Qaddafi, and salutes the firmness they have shown in confronting the savagery of the U.S. leaders. The attitude of meting out justice oneself, which is incredible at this stage of human development, will only provoke greater confrontations and more bloodshed.

Today, 25 years after the bombing of the Cuban airports prior to the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, Cuba recalls that the lessons of that first defeat of imperialism in Latin America is that no one, no matter how powerful, can turn back the course of history. □

Nicaragua

Sandinistas discuss party-building

Interior Ministry magazine stresses unity, leadership

By Cindy Jaquith

MANAGUA — How to build the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) as a party was the theme of the March issue of *Bocay* magazine, published by the Political Directorate of Nicaragua's Ministry of the Interior (MINT).

Bocay takes its name from a small town in northern Nicaragua where, in the early 1960s, the FSLN attempted to set up one of its first guerrilla fronts against the Somoza dictatorship.

Today, *Bocay* is a magazine aimed at the young men and women of the MINT, as well as at a broader audience of working people in Nicaragua. The March issue coincided with the First Evaluation Assembly of the MINT section of the FSLN and therefore focused on the question of party-building.

Bocay quoted Tomás Borge, who is a Commander of the Revolution, head of the MINT, and a member of the FSLN National Directorate, on what kind of party Sandinistas should strive to construct: "In short, we have proposed building an organized revolutionary party, guided by scientific principles, conscious of its leading role, with high morals and a clear political strategy, permeated with the idea that it doesn't limit itself to the fight for reforms, but that it is gathering strength and energy in preparation for the complete elimination of exploitation and economic dependence for the revolutionary passage to a new society."

Borge also said, "It is a historic obligation to

build a strong party. The party will be strong to the degree that it has a single will and is capable of carrying out homogeneous action. This is only possible on the basis of unity, democracy, and party discipline."

The editorial in the March issue centered on the importance of party unity and recalled the period in the late 1970s when there was a deep split in the FSLN. "The FSLN was a monolithic organization, but unfortunately there was a point along the way when it divided into three tendencies," the editorial stated. "Because of the maturity of our leaders, however, we realized that dividing the Sandinista Front meant condemning the Nicaraguan people to defeat, as well as killing the only real political plan to take revolutionary power in Latin America and Central America at that time. Therefore, we united, not only for the Nicaraguan people, but also for the Central American and Latin American revolution. . . . Once there was unity in the FSLN, Somoza and his clique were only able to hang on to power a few more months."

Today, the editorial continued, "in these difficult moments for our country caused by imperialist aggression, unity continues to be the magic word, the charm, needed to keep winning and overcoming difficult turning points along the way without compromising the strategic objectives of our Sandinista People's Revolution."

In a major interview in the magazine, Guerrilla and Brigade Commander Omar Cabezas,

chief of the MINT's Political Directorate and coordinator of the FSLN's Party Leadership Committee there, took up some of the questions the March FSLN assembly was to address.

Among the questions, Cabezas said, was the pace and caliber of recruitment to the FSLN. "We have to discuss and make a decision about the growth of the Sandinista Front in 1986," he explained. "Some people think that we've been growing too fast and that we have to stop because it could affect the quality of our organization. Others think we should keep on growing."

Cabezas also announced a change in the leadership committee of the FSLN at the MINT. "The National Directorate of the FSLN," he explained, "decided to restructure the Party Leadership Committee (CDP), which had been made up of commanders of the revolution Tomás Borge [who was coordinator of the CDP] and Luis Carrión, in addition to commanders René Vivas, Lenín Cerna, Doris Tijerino, and myself.

"This [change] was due to the fact that this was the only leadership committee of the FSLN that was headed by two members of the National Directorate. Naturally they carried out party work in the [CDP], but objectively it was more appropriate for commanders Borge and Carrión to do so in the higher body, which is the National Directorate. In addition, it was decided to take the two off the CDP because their many assignments, more than ours, made it impossible for them to attend all the meetings."

The current members of the CDP, Cabezas said, are himself, René Vivas, Doris Tijerino, Lenín Cerna, Manuel Calderón, Walter Ferrey, and Manuel Rivas. He predicted "substantial changes" in the party's work at the ministry.

Cabezas said the FSLN assembly would also discuss the party youth organization, the Sandinista Youth — July 19 (JS-19). In a separate interview, Lt. Raúl Valdivia, head of the JS-19 at the MINT, talked to *Bocay* about some of the questions being discussed by that organization.

"Lt. Valdivia," wrote *Bocay*, "clearly affirms that the leadership of the Sandinista Youth must not be substituted for by party leadership, but rather must be seen as a transmission belt for experience.

"Let there be openness in the FSLN toward the initiatives that JS-19 raises; let this be projected in the development of the Sandinista Youth instead of mechanically carrying out the tasks of the base committees of the FSLN because that would undercut the creative ability of the ranks of the JS-19."

Other articles in the March *Bocay* took up International Women's Day and the cultural activities of MINT members. This year the MINT will sponsor an exhibition of paintings by MINT workers and a poetry and short story contest on the themes of police and security work. □

Antigovernment protests mount

Workers, farmers wage fight against austerity drive

By Bobbis Misailides
and Argiris Malapanis

In the most massive general strike since the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government was elected five years ago, working people brought Greece to a standstill on April 7. This action was held in the face of a major strikebreaking and scare campaign conducted by the government.

The strike was the third 24-hour work stoppage in the country since last October, when Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou announced a package of austerity measures aimed at unloading the problems of Greek capitalism onto the shoulders of working people.

The measures included the cancellation of the cost-of-living wage adjustments (known as ATA) for the last quarter of 1985 and a 50 percent cut in the ATA for the first quarter of 1986. Prices during the same period have increased by 10 percent.

Wage increases larger than the ones dictated by the government were outlawed. The government also suspended collective bargaining for two years and slashed social services, including health care and education, by an estimated US\$1.13 billion.

Moreover, additional taxes of 3 to 10 percent were imposed on farmers and small businesses.

A general strike on Nov. 4, 1985, protested these severe belt-tightening measures. That action was followed by mobilizations that led to a second 24-hour general strike on February 27 in defense of ATA and collective bargaining. It also denounced government interference in the unions.

The PASOK government has used every strikebreaking weapon at its disposal to try to hold back the workers' upsurge. With the backing of the courts it has declared every strike illegal and arrested, fired, and fined dozens of strikers.

Bus and truck drivers; shipyard, hospital, electrical, telephone, and rail workers; and workers in 45 "problem" companies (nationalized companies operating at a deficit) defied these attacks and went out on strike in March.

On March 21, in a speech to parliament, Minister of Labor Evangelos Giannopoulos warned that "the strikes have political motives" and "law and order will be put into effect." A committee composed of half the members of the Council of Ministries was formed to oversee the enforcement of the austerity measures and to deal with the growing strike movement.

Since last November when the courts appointed a new leadership for the General Con-

federation of Greek Workers (GSEE) that accepted the government's austerity measures, the government has intensified its efforts to wipe out the unions' independence. These antiunion steps included organizing a split in the GSEE.

The appointed leadership of the GSEE, under court order, organized the 23rd congress of the union confederation to "solve the crisis in the union movement and elect a new leadership." Rigged elections were held, and non-existent unions were registered and allowed to take part in the congress to give a majority of delegates to the progovernment forces within the GSEE.

The congress, which began on April 4, registered the completion of the government's split operation. The government's main supporters at the congress were leaders of the Panhellenic Trade Union Movement (PASKE), which is affiliated to the PASOK party.

The congress was a fiasco. The majority of union delegates did not participate or left the meeting when it began. Most of these delegates are affiliated to the Greek Fighting Union Movement—Supporters (ESAK-S), which has ties with the Communist Party of Greece (KKE); the Renewed Workers Front (AEM), which is associated with the Communist Party of Greece—Interior (KKE-Interior); or the Socialist Workers Trade Union Movement (SWTM), a new group of unionists expelled from PASKE for their opposition to the austerity measures.

Giannopoulos himself opened the congress, and a leadership was elected composed entirely of members of PASKE. When the court-appointed and now "elected" president of GSEE, Georgios Raftopoulos, was asked by a reporter if this leadership can be legitimate, he responded, "the leadership will be viable, productive, and effective."

According to the April 7 issue of the daily *Rizospastis*, ESAK-S, AEM, and SWTM, which represent the big majority of the country's unionized workers, have formed a Coordinating Committee of Struggle. Its goal is "to fight for the democratization of GSEE, and coordinate the struggle at all levels for the consistent defense of the gains and rights of working people."

On April 7 tens of thousands of workers poured into the streets of Athens and most other major cities.

In a fighting mood, workers chanted their main demands: "Bread, jobs, no to unemployment," "No to inflation and unemployment," "The crisis should be paid for by the oligarchy," "We want collective bargaining," "Hands off our unions," and "For a GSEE of

workers, not scabs."

The strike was supported by 16 union federations, 30 labor councils, and hundreds of union locals. Participation in the strike was well over 80 percent.

Farmers' associations in 13 provinces organized tractorcades and rallies in cities across the country on the same day. In many cities they participated with their banners in contingents at union rallies. They demanded a decent income from their produce and opposed forced cutbacks in planting of certain crops demanded by the Common Market.

The farmers' participation in the general strike was preceded by several mobilizations in March against the government's austerity measures. The most important occurred on March 21, when 10,000 farmers attempted to march from Gianitsa, a small farm town in the northern part of Greece, to Thessaloniki, the country's second-largest city.

The police blocked the roads a few miles north of Thessaloniki with bulldozers and police buses. They used tear gas to disperse the farmers, preventing them from breaking through the roadblocks to continue their march. Clashes between farmers and police continued all day.

Dozens of farmers were arrested and several cops were hospitalized. A PASOK parliamentary deputy who attempted to speak to the farmers was almost lynched.

Six hundred thousand small shopowners and handicraftsmen also joined the April 7 strike by shutting down their shops in virtually all major cities in the country.

Papandreou's government has announced huge increases in military spending at the same time that it is axing social programs and cutting wages. It has purchased dozens of F-16 and Mirage fighter jets, radar, and other equipment to "modernize" its army, as the prime minister puts it.

The government has also started negotiations with Washington over the future of the four U.S. military bases in Greece. The lease for the bases expires in 1988 and the U.S. administration has been on a drive to renew it. On March 25 U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz visited Athens to initiate talks with Papandreou's government over the future of the bases.

While Shultz and Papandreou expressed their satisfaction after the secret talks, 70,000 people protested outside the parliament in Athens on March 27.

The major slogans at the rally, which was called by student groups, unions, and peace organizations, were: "Out with the murderous U.S. bases now," "No negotiations with Shultz," and "Hands off Libya."

Outraged by the U.S. terror bombing of Libya on April 14, well over 50,000 people marched outside the U.S. embassy in Athens. The protest was called by the National Student Federation of Greece, both the Communist Parties, and several unions. Tens of thousands also marched in Piraeus, Thessaloniki, and Patrai. □

A long history of mass revolts

Present protests demand direct presidential elections

By Will Reissner

South Korean riot police, wielding clubs and spraying tear gas, broke up a May 3 mass rally in Inchon demanding direct presidential elections.

Demonstrators fought back, using rocks and bottles filled with gasoline. Fighting between protesters and police raged for hours in the streets of the port city, 20 miles west of South Korea's capital, Seoul.

Since early March, well over 100,000 people have taken part in mass demonstrations in provincial cities across South Korea demanding direct presidential elections.

Slogans such as "down with the military dictatorship" and "down with the government" have echoed in the streets of Pusan, Kwangju, Taegu, Taejon, Chongju, and other cities.

In addition, tens of thousands of students at campuses throughout South Korea have demonstrated in favor of direct presidential elections.

On April 28, two young men set themselves on fire when South Korean police moved in to break up an antigovernment demonstration at Seoul National University. More than 9,000 students at 11 colleges around the country took part in antigovernment protests that day.

The previous day riot police firing tear gas dispersed more than 1,000 students in Chongju following an opposition rally demanding direct elections.

Under the constitution imposed by South Korea's current president, Chun Doo Hwan, after he seized power in a 1980 military coup, a new head of state is to be chosen in 1988 by a 5,000-member electoral college.

Opponents of Chun's dictatorship fear that the indirect election will lead to the selection of Chun's handpicked successor. They have been organizing the mass rallies to support collection of 10 million signatures on a petition demanding direct presidential elections in 1987. South Korea has 40 million people.

The Chun regime responded to the announcement of the petition campaign in February with a wave of arrests and police raids. Hundreds of activists were placed under house arrest.

But the repression was unable to break the movement, as seen in the succession of mass demonstrations throughout South Korea in March and April. Particularly worrisome to Chun have been warnings by opposition figures that the South Korean dictator may end up as "another Marcos," a reference to the ousted dictator of the Philippines.

The current protests reflect the continued inability of Washington and its local allies to establish stable forms of political rule in South

Korea.

Since the U.S.-imposed partition of Korea in 1945, South Korea has been ruled by a succession of U.S.-backed civilian and military dictatorships, each of which has been driven from power by mass protests or ousted by a military coup.

Long struggle

The struggle of the Korean people for self-determination and democratic rights dates back to the end of the 19th century, a time when the imperialist powers were carving the world into colonies.

Both Japan and tsarist Russia had their own colonial designs on the Korean Peninsula. But with the victory of Japanese forces in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, Japan established a "protectorate" over Korea.

For five years Koreans waged fierce armed resistance against Japanese occupation forces, but the revolt was put down, and Korea became a formal Japanese colony in 1910.

Japanese imperialist rule was marked by wholesale theft of Korean-owned land. Lands and forests owned communally by villages or family clans were seized and sold to Japanese settlers. Korean landowners were required to register their land holdings with the colonial authorities. Many peasants who failed to report were then deprived of their land.

The Japanese colonial government encouraged Japanese capitalists to invest in business ventures in Korea, while barring Koreans from entering those fields.

The colonial administration also suppressed schooling in the Korean language and the teaching of Korean history. Koreans were denied freedom of assembly and association, as well as freedom of speech and press.

Resistance to colonial rule

On March 1, 1919, at a rally in Seoul, a declaration of independence from Japan was read. This sparked a wave of proindependence demonstrations throughout Korea, with an estimated 2 million people taking part in the activities.

The colonial authorities responded with bloody repression. Some 23,000 Koreans were killed or wounded and 47,000 were arrested.

Despite this repression, nationalist activities continued to take place underground. In 1926 a mass rally against Japanese rule was organized in Seoul, and on Nov. 11, 1926, a nationwide student uprising against Japanese rule began in the city of Kwangju.

As the Japanese imperialists began to extend their rule into China, beginning in 1931, Japanese rule in Korea became even harsher.

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and World War II in 1941, Tokyo attempted to politically and culturally obliterate the Korean nation.

All Koreans were forced to practice the Shinto religion and take Japanese names. All newspapers and magazines published in the Korean language were banned.

Hundreds of thousands of Koreans were drafted into the Japanese armed forces or work brigades in mines, factories, and military bases.

By 1942, some 80 percent of the forests and 25 percent of the arable land was Japanese-owned, often by finance companies rather than individuals.

During the Japanese colonial period, some industrialization took place in Korea, particularly in the extractive industries. Coal and iron ore were mined for use by industries in Japan. Magnesite, graphite, mica, cobalt, and boron mines were also established. In addition, some chemical, metallurgical, and textile factories were set up, and lumbering and food processing industries were established or expanded.

As a result, by the end of Japanese rule in 1945 there were about 420,000 industrial workers in Korea, making up about 5 percent of the work force. But 95 percent of industry was Japanese-owned, and four-fifths of all the finished goods consumed in Korea were still imported from Japan.

Early Communist movement

In the 1920s a Communist movement was formed in Korea. Its early history was turbulent, and on four occasions in the 1920s the party had to be reestablished after having been infiltrated and destroyed by the Japanese secret police. The early Communist movement was also wracked by factional struggles.

Nevertheless, as Dae-Sook Suh noted in *The Korean Communist Movement 1918-1948*, in the pre-World War II period the Communists "succeeded in wresting control of the Korean revolution from the Nationalists; they planted a deep core of Communist influence among the Korean people." The first contingents of Communist-led guerrillas were established in 1930.

On Aug. 8, 1945, the Soviet Union, at the urging of Washington, entered the war against Japan, and the following day, Soviet troops crossed into northern Korea.

Under the terms of the Soviet-U.S. agreement on Soviet entry into the Pacific war, Soviet troops in Korea moved only as far south as the 38th parallel, while U.S. troops were to occupy Korea south of that line.

The Japanese surrendered on Sept. 2, 1945. Four days later, on September 6, an indepen-

dent government of Korea was set up, based on anti-Japanese resistance committees. These committees had already disarmed the Japanese troops in the south, freed the political prisoners, and established a functioning administration throughout the country.

Washington thwarts united Korea

U.S. troops landed in southern Korea on Sept. 8, 1945, two days after the formal establishment of the People's Republic of Korea by a broad array of forces from all over Korea meeting in Seoul.

The People's Republic, headed by Lyuh Woon Hyung (whose name is now more generally rendered as Yo Un-hyong), had established local committees to maintain order on both sides of the 38th parallel.

When U.S. troops landed, the People's Republic offered its services to the U.S. command. But while the Soviets had recognized the new government and allowed the local committees to function north of the 38th parallel, the U.S. military commander, Lt. Gen. John Hodge, refused to accept that government. He declared that the U.S. Army Military Government, which did not have a single member who spoke the Korean language, was the "only government" in the south.

Washington quickly set up an occupation administration staffed with figures who had collaborated with the Japanese during the war.

Syngman Rhee returns

In October 1945 the U.S. authorities brought Syngman Rhee back to Korea as their prime candidate to consolidate U.S. control over the southern half of the now divided peninsula.

Rhee, a conservative émigré politician, had spent the war years in Washington. In fact, between 1904 and 1945, Rhee had been in Korea only during the years 1910-12, and had spent the rest of that time in the United States.

When the U.S. authorities set up their first Korean administration in February 1946, the so-called Representative Democratic Council was headed by Rhee.

This administration was filled with far-rightists and former Japanese collaborators and initiated a reign of terror against peasants protesting the lack of a land reform like the one under way in the north and workers who were bitter that the Japanese-owned factories had been turned over to Korean profiteers.

One U.S. Army Military Government officer at the time boasted to Mark Gayn of the *Chicago Sun* that Syngman Rhee's forces "put all the possible opposition in jail, or drive it into the hills. . . . You can't beat the machine. It includes everybody in power, from the village cop and the landlord to the provincial governor.

"The machine is the same we found when we got here. For our purposes it's an ideal setup. It's organized military fashion. All you have to do is push the button, and somewhere some cop begins skull cracking. They've been learning the business under the Japs for thirty-five years. Why should anyone expect them to



Tens of thousands rally in Taegu, April 5.

unlearn all they know now?"

Among those murdered was Lyuh Woon Hyung, killed in July 1947.

Resistance to U.S.-imposed regime

The imposition of Syngman Rhee on the people in southern Korea was met with massive popular resistance. Gayn reported in the *Chicago Sun* that the uprisings in late 1946 were "a full-scale revolution, which must have involved hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people."

On Aug. 15, 1948, the partition of Korea was formalized when the U.S. Army Military Government turned over power in the south to a Republic of Korea, headed by Rhee.

Weeks later, on Sept. 9, 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was established in the north, with Kim Il Sung at its head. Kim had been a leader of the armed resistance to Japanese colonial rule.

Resistance to the Syngman Rhee dictatorship in the south continued after Korea's division. A 500-member U.S. Military Advisory Group began to build and train a 98,000-man South Korean army.

By the time the Korean War broke out in 1950, some 100,000 people had been killed in guerrilla fighting in South Korea.

Korean War

The growing opposition to Syngman Rhee's regime and the DPRK's support for this struggle led Rhee to threaten invasion of North Korea. The military buildup in the south showed that this was not an idle threat. Moreover, the South Korean forces were increasingly instigating provocations along the border.

In response to these threats North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950. The South Korean army, hit with major desertions, virtually collapsed. Within three days, North Korean troops had entered the

capital of the south, Seoul, and by early August, South Korean and U.S. troops had been pushed out of all of Korea except for a tiny beachhead around the port of Pusan in the southeastern tip of the peninsula.

As Roy Appleman wrote in an official U.S. Army history, Syngman Rhee's army simply "disintegrated."

A former member of the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea, Alfred Crofts, acknowledged that "millions of South Koreans welcomed the prospect of unification, even on Communist terms. They had suffered police brutality, intellectual repression and political purge. Few felt much incentive to fight for profiteers or to die for Syngman Rhee."

The conflict took on the character of a civil war, with uprisings throughout South Korea against the Rhee regime, even before Northern troops approached an area.

The Rhee dictatorship, however, was saved by a full-scale invasion of U.S. troops and firepower, which turned the military situation around.

Taking advantage of the Soviet Union's boycott of the United Nations in protest against the exclusion of the People's Republic of China from that body, the U.S. government and its allies were able to push through a resolution creating a UN unified command in South Korea, with U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur as UN commander-in-chief.

Eventually 16 countries sent token forces to take part in the "UN Command," although the bulk of the troops, money, and arms came from the United States.

By mid-September 1950, U.S. troops had been landed at Inchon, far behind Korean lines, and by October 1 they had reached the boundary between North and South Korea. The U.S. troops continued to push north, taking Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, on October 20.

On Nov. 24, 1950, U.S. troops were ordered into an offensive designed to reach the Yalu River, the border between North Korea and the People's Republic of China. The Chinese government, fearing that the advancing force would continue into China, ordered its troops into the war, and within a few days the U.S. forces were in full retreat and were driven back to a point 30 miles south of Seoul.

By March 1951 the U.S. and South Korean forces had fought their way back up to the 38th parallel, and from that time on the war remained stalemated until an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953.

Washington fought the war in Korea with unimaginable brutality. U.S. air power, which was virtually unchallenged throughout the war, pulverized North and South Korea in the first months of the fighting.

No bombing targets left

Gen. Emmet O'Donnell, head of the U.S. Bomber Command in the Far East, told a Senate committee, "The entire, almost the entire Korean peninsula is just a terrible mess. Everything is destroyed. There is nothing left standing worthy of the name. . . . Just before

the Chinese came in [November 1950] we were grounded. There were no more targets in Korea."

Whole villages were burned to the ground as suspected "enemy" outposts. Napalm was dropped on civilian populations.

Korean casualties in the war are estimated at 3.8 million. Some 33,629 U.S. troops were killed, along with 3,194 other "UN forces."

In 1954, shortly after the armistice that ended the fighting in Korea, Syngman Rhee had himself elected president for life by the National Assembly.

But like a more recent "president for life," Haiti's "Baby Doc" Duvalier, Rhee was unable to remain in office until his natural days were over.

In April 1960 giant student demonstrations protesting Rhee's claim to have won 90 percent of the vote in elections the previous month brought South Korea to the brink of open civil war and forced Rhee to flee to exile in Hawaii, where he died in 1965.

New military regime

During a brief nine-month interlude, South

Korea had a parliamentary government. But a military junta took power on May 16, 1961, dissolving the National Assembly and banning dissident political activity.

South Korea was placed under martial law and ruled by a Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, headed by Maj. Gen. Park Chung Hee. Park had served in the Japanese army prior to the end of colonial rule.

Under General Park, South Korea adopted its present economic orientation, under which the military rulers determine priorities for development, assign privately owned conglomerates to develop those areas with massive government aid, and insure that their products are competitive on world markets by preventing workers from organizing to improve their wages and living conditions.

Huge foreign loans are taken out to purchase Japanese machinery and processed raw materials for the new industries, which then take advantage of the abysmal wages of South Korean workers to sell their products cheaply abroad, especially in the United States, which takes 35 percent of South Korea's exports.

With the advantages of huge, low-interest government loans and protection from compe-

tion, a handful of these conglomerates came to dominate the economy. The combined net sales of the top 30 conglomerates amounted to fully three-quarters of South Korea's total output of goods and services in 1983.

These giant corporations, however, are staggering, as Shim Jae Hoon notes in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "under the load of an astronomically high amount of unpaid — and perhaps unpayable — debts."

In the process of attempting to industrialize, South Korea has become one of the semicolonial world's biggest debtors, owing the bankers in New York, Tokyo, and other imperialist centers some US\$47 billion.

In order to make more than \$6.7 billion per year in loan repayments to foreign bankers, South Korea's rulers must continually squeeze down the living standards of South Korea's workers and farmers.

Despite the pervasive repression, South Korean society has periodically exploded in unrest as grievances accumulate.

Coup against Park

It was just such an explosion that led to the end for Park Chung Hee. In October 1979 thousands of students and youth in Pusan, South Korea's second-largest city, took to the streets demanding the ouster of the Park Chung Hee dictatorship. In clashes with police, a number of police posts were destroyed. In the same month in Masan, students, joined by factory workers, stormed police and government offices. The protests then spread to Kwangju, Ulsan, and Taegu.

The growing protests triggered a palace coup, in which Park and five of his bodyguards were killed. The new military regime attempted to quell the unrest by promising to move toward civilian rule and ease up on repression.

But this promise did not end the unrest. The masses of workers and students saw an opportunity to press even harder for their long-suppressed demands. Throughout early 1980, South Korea was swept by sit-down strikes, slowdowns, and other labor actions. Many of these strikes were successful and inspired students to press their demands for democratization.

By May 14 and 15, 1980, student-led protests had reached huge proportions. More than 50,000 people marched in Seoul, and tens of thousands more demonstrated in Taegu, Kwangju, Suwon, and Incheon, calling for an end to martial law and the ouster of the military from the government.

Confronted by this rising tide of protests, Chun and the military cracked down with brutal force.

After weeks of mounting protests and strikes in Seoul, Taegu, Sabuk, and other cities, on May 18, 1980, the military authorities closed all universities, banned all political gatherings and strikes, imposed press censorship, and extended martial law throughout the country.

Hundreds of activists, political figures, and student leaders were arrested and taken to secret detention centers.

But in Kwangju, with a population of

Castro visits North Korea

During a March 8–11 visit to North Korea, Cuban President Fidel Castro reaffirmed his government's support for Korea's reunification and for the joint hosting of the 1988 Olympic Games by North and South Korea.

The Cuban leader, on his first visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also thanked the people of North Korea for their military assistance to Cuba.

While in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, Castro and North Korean President Kim Il Sung signed a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between their two countries, to promote cooperation in a wide range of fields.

In a speech to a March 11 mass rally in Pyongyang, Castro stated, "Cuba firmly maintains that there is only one Korea," and pledged support for "the wise policy of peaceful reunification of the homeland proclaimed by President Kim Il Sung and the Workers' Party of Korea, supported by all the Korean people."

Castro denounced the awarding of the 1988 Summer Olympics to Seoul, South Korea, describing this decision as an attempt "to perpetuate the division of the Korean nation."

The Cuban leader, who was the first to propose that the 1988 Games be cohosted by North and South Korea, a proposal later endorsed by the North Korean government, told the Pyongyang rally, "Our country will spare no effort in . . . defending all the Korean people's legitimate right to share the Games in a climate of national unity and

dignity."

Castro thanked North Korea for "having provided us a few months ago — on the basis of favorable credits and at cost — with 100,000 rifles and tens of millions of shells" to bolster "our people's efforts to strengthen the defense of our country, which is also being threatened by the U.S. imperialists."

Cuba's enhanced strength, he stated, contributes "to Korea's strength, to socialism's strength, and to the strength of all the other forces of the world revolutionary and progressive movement."

North Korean President Kim Il Sung told the Pyongyang rally that the U.S.–South Korean "Team Spirit '86" war games in South Korea, in which 200,000 troops took part, are a "dress rehearsal, a dry run for nuclear war aimed at a first strike against the northern part of our republic."

Kim added that the maneuvers "are an open challenge to our peace initiative" and "throw cold water on North-South dialogue."

He also warned that "if the 24th Olympics are held in Seoul in spite of the opposition by many countries," this would "lead to a division in the Olympic movement." Kim added, "We insist that they be cosponsored by North and South Korea."

The North Korean president also blasted "the acts of aggression and intervention by U.S. imperialism against Nicaragua and other Central American and Caribbean countries."

800,000, the people rose up and seized control of the city in the most massive political uprising since the end of the Korean War.

Kwangju uprising

Protests in Kwangju began on May 18, the day martial law was announced. Daily demonstrations grew in size and were viciously attacked by police and army troops.

On May 21 as many as 200,000 people surged through the streets. Police fled as residents armed themselves with iron bars, knives, and other makeshift weapons. Then they seized weapons from police stations, several armories, and a military vehicle factory.

Twenty-one police stations and 13 government buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. Thousands of people — including miners armed with explosives — flocked into the city from surrounding areas.

By nightfall the police and troops had been driven from the city, but not before killing more than 100 demonstrators.

On May 22, the day after the insurrection, 100,000 residents gathered in Kwangju's central plaza to discuss their demands — Chun Doo Hwan's ouster, the freeing of 900 people who had been arrested, compensation for the families of those killed and wounded, amnesty for all insurgents, and the keeping of troops out of the city.

From the city of Kwangju the insurrection spread to other parts of South Cholla Province. The port of Mokpo and the towns of Hwasun and Polkyo were under rebel control by May 22, and uprisings were reported in a dozen other towns.

Regime strikes back

The regime struck back on May 27, when South Korean paratroopers and infantrymen, using tanks, helicopters, machine guns, and assault weapons, recaptured the city's government building after a fierce three-hour gun battle.

Hundreds of Kwangju residents were killed by the rampaging South Korean troops, some of whom stomped on the faces of those left dead in order to make identification of the bodies more difficult.

The U.S. military, with some 40,000 troops permanently stationed in South Korea, was directly complicit in the Kwangju massacre. The South Korean troops that reoccupied that city were under the combined U.S.-South Korean command headed by U.S. Gen. John Wickham, and it was Wickham who released nearly 8,000 South Korean troops to put down the Kwangju rebellion.

Although Chun Doo Hwan was able to crush the Kwangju uprising and brutally silence open expression of the demand for democratic rights and civilian government, that silence did not reflect acceptance of the military regime.

In the present round of mass demonstrations for direct presidential elections, one of the biggest rallies thus far has taken place in Kwangju.

On March 30 more than 50,000 residents of that city gathered in the downtown plaza that

has come to be known as "Democracy Square," where they heard opposition leader Kim Young Sam state that "to achieve democracy is the only way to soothe the souls of the victims of the Kwangju incident" of 1980.

"Democracy Square" had been the site of the mass demonstrations and meetings in May 1980.

France

LCR activist jailed

Campaign seeks freedom for Martine Toulotte

By Will Reissner

Martine Toulotte, a member of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR — French section of the Fourth International) in Grenoble, was arrested February 21 on charges of "harboring criminals." Since her arrest she has been held in prison despite a broad campaign demanding her freedom.

Toulotte is charged with having given shelter four years ago to alleged members of the Lebanese Revolutionary Armed Factions, an organization that the government accuses of carrying out terrorist actions.

None of the alleged members of the Lebanese group were under suspicion for any offenses at the time Toulotte was in contact with them. Last year judicial authorities had questioned her extensively about her relationship to the Lebanese, and she assumed the matter was dead.

Toulotte, a native of Grenoble who works for the municipal government there, has been an activist for two decades. During the 1968 general strike that rocked France, she took part in the work stoppage by Grenoble municipal employees.

Later she became a leading figure in the women's rights struggle and is a participant in the French Movement for Family Planning, the Women's Center, and the International Coordinating Committee of Women Against Repression.

Toulotte has also actively participated in committees in solidarity with the Haitian people, the Palestinians, the Chilean and Argentine movements resisting dictatorship, and the struggle of the Kanak people of New Caledonia for independence from France.

An active trade unionist, she is national secretary of the city agencies branch of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT).

In recent years, much of her activity has focused on building the national movement against racism in France, and she helped organize the national marches against racism in 1983, 1984, and 1985.

Hundreds of people in the Grenoble area have signed petitions calling for her immediate release from pretrial detention. The petition notes that as a native of the area who has been

As the tide of protests continues to mount, Chun Doo Hwan can hardly avoid reflecting on the fate of his predecessors Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee.

And Chun and the Korean opposition forces are each drawing their own lessons from the overthrow of the Marcos tyranny in the nearby Philippines. □



MARTINE TOULOTTE

employed in the same job for more than 15 years, and as the mother of three children living at home, there is no reason to believe that Toulotte would disappear if released.

An appeal signed by more than 600 people in Grenoble noted "we are taken aback that Martine Thibaud-Toulotte has been charged and are indignant that she is being kept under detention. We are shocked by the quick amalgam the press has made between her activities and terrorist actions.

"We have known Martine for years," the appeal states, "and have often valued her devotion, generosity, availability, and her sense of solidarity both for the big and the day-to-day causes."

The appeal adds, "she is charged with having offered hospitality to alleged members of the Lebanese Revolutionary Armed Factions at a time when they were not under suspicion for any of the acts they are accused of today."

Messages of solidarity can be sent to Martine Toulotte in prison. They should be addressed to: Martine Toulotte, no. d'écrou 16891K, Maison d'arrêt de Fleury-Mérogis, 91700 Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois, France.

Protests against her continued incarceration should be addressed to: Monsieur le Procureur de la République Jéol, 4 boulevard du Palais, 75004 Paris, France. □

More whites reject apartheid

Join UDF, campaign against military conscription

By Ernest Harsch

"The real interests of the majority of white South Africans do not lie in the system of racial domination and national oppression. White South Africans have an important role to play now in the endeavour to achieve a non-racial and democratic society."

That affirmation was contained in a joint communiqué issued by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), the main white university students' group, and the outlawed African National Congress (ANC), which is leading the struggle for a democratic South Africa. Delegations from the two groups met in Harare, Zimbabwe, in late March.

A little more than a week later, on April 9, some 2,000 whites packed into Johannesburg's City Hall to hear — and applaud — similar statements from a range of speakers. The rally was organized by the United Democratic Front (UDF), the broad anti-apartheid coalition that has been in the forefront of the current popular upheaval.

Both events highlight a significant political trend in South Africa — the growing readiness of whites to support and participate in the anti-apartheid struggle spearheaded by the oppressed Black majority. These still make up a small percentage of the total white population, but their numbers are increasing.

Disillusionment with apartheid

The fact that more whites are willing to openly side with Black aspirations weakens one of the political and ideological props of the apartheid regime in Pretoria: its claim to represent the interests of the "white nation."

The apartheid rulers have long put forward the myth that all of South Africa's nearly 5 million whites have a direct stake in the preservation of a system that keeps 28 million Blacks in a state of perpetual servitude and denies them their most basic rights. Pretoria's propaganda apparatus, the segregated school system, and sections of the religious hierarchy have spared no effort to brainwash whites into believing that they are superior to Blacks and that only continued white minority rule can protect them from the "Black menace."

But behind Pretoria's apparent monolith of white support lie very real social, class, and political divisions. Under the impact of the advancing freedom struggle, some of those divisions have been brought to the surface, and the political thinking of many whites has been thrown into turmoil. Pretoria's inability thus far to either undermine the popular upsurge through minor reforms or crush it with massive repression has shaken whites' confidence in the future of apartheid. More of them are open

to new ideas.

This has been reflected in several surveys over the past year. A poll published in the Sept. 1, 1985, London *Sunday Times* found that of those whites asked, 63 percent did not think the apartheid system would last another 10 years. About 51 percent thought it possible for South Africa to be ruled by a joint government of whites and Blacks.

A survey conducted by the government-appointed Human Sciences Research Council and published in the Jan. 19, 1986, Johannesburg *Sunday Times* concluded that as of October 1985 just over 56 percent of whites favored at least limited African parliamentary representation. Seven months earlier, in March 1985, 52 percent had been for Africans' continued exclusion from parliament. Between March and October 1985, those whites who thought the regime's pace of reforms was too slow increased from 16.3 percent to 37.6 percent, while those who thought it was too fast fell from 33 percent to 16.2 percent.

The most far-sighted whites have gone beyond simply looking toward reforms in the apartheid system. Some have joined the struggle to bring that system down.

Their participation has been facilitated by the perspective put forward by the most influential political current among Blacks, that which supports the Freedom Charter. Originally drafted in 1955 and championed by the ANC, the Freedom Charter calls for the establishment of a democratic, nonracial South Africa, in which there will be equal rights for everyone, Black or white.

Some whites have directly joined the ANC, either in exile or within South Africa itself. One indication of this has been a series of trials in recent years in which several white ANC activists, who had functioned as part of the ANC's clandestine organization inside the country, were sentenced to prison terms. In February a young white who was sentenced to nine years for "treason" admitted in court that he was a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the ANC's armed wing.

Whites have become active in a wide range of legal organizations as well. Many of the democratic trade unions, while predominantly Black in composition, are also open to white membership. In some of these unions whites play important advisory and leadership roles.

'We must get involved'

The main channel for white participation in the anti-apartheid struggle has been the United Democratic Front. Founded in August 1983, the UDF now has 600 affiliates, with a combined membership of some 2 million. The

overwhelming majority are Black, but some predominantly white organizations belong to the UDF as well. Among these are the NUSAS and the Black Sash, a mainly white women's group. Some individual white activists also hold UDF leadership positions.

Early this year, the UDF mapped out a "call to whites" campaign. At one UDF workshop, some 80 delegates from six regions of the country met to discuss ways to strengthen the UDF's presence in white areas.

The April 9 rally in Johannesburg was the first major public action in this campaign. The hall was bedecked with a yellow and black banner demanding, "Release Mandela," referring to Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned leader of the ANC.

Speakers from several UDF affiliates addressed the crowd, including Beyers Naudé, the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

The keynote speaker was Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, who just a few weeks earlier had resigned as leader of the Progressive Federal Party, the main white liberal opposition party in parliament, citing as his reason disillusionment with efforts to bring about reform through parliament.

"We must get involved in seeing that apartheid is abolished and in reconstructing a new South Africa," Slabbert told the Johannesburg rally. Anti-apartheid whites, he said, had a role to play in persuading "other whites to come to terms with a fully nonracial, democratic South Africa."

Murphy Morobe, the national publicity secretary of the UDF, also spoke. He told the crowd that whites were vital in the struggle against the apartheid regime. He said that the UDF would welcome their participation even if "by doing so we open ourselves to criticism that we are embracing the sons and daughters of our oppressors."

This was an implicit reference to the stance of groups like the Azanian People's Organisation and the National Forum Committee that reject the nonracial perspective of the Freedom Charter and oppose white participation in the anti-apartheid struggle.

Support for one-person, one-vote

Some of the predominantly white groups active in the UDF also participated in the formation in late 1985 of a new grouping called Concerned Citizens. Among its affiliates are the NUSAS, Black Sash, Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee, and Detainees' Parents Support Committee, which provides assistance to political prisoners and their families.

"Apartheid, a system which deprives the majority of — among other things — political representation, only results in social conflict," Concerned Citizens declared. "The only way to achieve lasting peace is for all the people to decide their own future through one-person-one-vote in a united South Africa."

NUSAS itself has provided an important forum for anti-apartheid activists at the white universities. Although NUSAS is based primarily on the English-speaking campuses, it has also won some support among Afrikaans students. (Afrikaners, descended from the early Dutch settlers, make up just over half of South Africa's white population.)

Before sending its eight-member delegation to meet with the ANC in Zimbabwe, the NUSAS leadership organized a series of meetings on the campuses affiliated to it, to poll its membership on the move. Of the 10,000 students on those campuses, 95 percent voted in favor of holding the talks.

"For the first time in our lives," NUSAS President Brendan Barry said after the discussions in Zimbabwe, "we got a full picture of what the ANC is, what its positions are and what its hopes are." Barry announced that the NUSAS delegation members would hold public meetings to report back on the discussions with the ANC.

On April 16, two weeks after the NUSAS delegation met with the ANC, four representatives of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference traveled to Lusaka, Zambia, for talks with ANC President Oliver Tambo and other ANC leaders. In a joint communiqué, the two groups affirmed their "common commitment to bring a speedy end to the evil system of apartheid and to transform South Africa into a united, democratic and nonracial country." They recognized "that apartheid cannot be reformed but must be ended in its entirety." The delegations "also agreed that the Catholic Church has a responsibility to mobilise its white adherents, not only to reject apartheid but also to act against it."

Anticonscription campaign

One of the apartheid regime's policies that touches many young whites directly is conscription into the military. Beginning at the age of 18, all able-bodied white males are obliged to serve two years in the South African Defence Force (SADF), followed by periodic call-ups and reserve duty.

Each year several thousand white youths simply fail to appear for induction into the SADF when they are called up, and several thousand more leave the country to avoid the draft.

Some of them oppose military service on religious grounds. Since the government first set up a board to grant alternative service to "qualified" religious objectors in 1984, nearly 800 have applied for objector status. Some who have been turned down by the board have chosen jail terms instead of induction. A few objectors have also sought to challenge conscription on political grounds, arguing that they could not fight for an unjust political system.

With the aim of better organizing this anti-draft sentiment, a July 1983 conference of the Black Sash women's group called for the launching of a campaign to oppose military conscription. The next year, more than 40 church, student, and civil rights groups — including NUSAS and several UDF area committees — joined to found the End Conscription Campaign (ECC).

The ECC opposed conscription, it declared, because, "Young men are conscripted to maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia, and to wage war against neighbouring countries. Young men are conscripted to assist in the implementation and defence of apartheid policies."

Opposition to military conscription mounted further after Pretoria began sending troops into Black townships in October 1984 to help the police put down the popular rebellions.

The ECC organized numerous protests around the country, including public meetings, demonstrations, vigils, peace concerts, and leafleting actions. It has also organized young whites to help provide first-aid classes, build child-care centers, and carry out other projects in Black townships, in cooperation with local Black community organizations.

The ECC's largest actions were a July 1985 "Peace Festival" in Johannesburg which drew 2,000 participants and a demonstration in Cape Town on Oct. 7, 1985, to mark the first an-

niversary of the sending of SADF units into the Black townships. The latter action, organized under the slogan, "Troops Out of the Townships," attracted a crowd of 4,000, the bulk of them white.

In February 1986 the ECC held a conference to map out further actions. The conference speakers reflected some of the thinking among this layer of activists.

"After my time in the army," one speaker told the conference, "I wonder who the enemy really is. We should really get out of Angola, Namibia, the townships and wherever else the SADF is waging apartheid wars."

Another speaker declared, "I know that when Americans in their millions stood up and said 'no' to a handful of warmongers in the Pentagon, the slaughter in Vietnam stopped. I think if more whites did the same in South Africa the slaughter would stop here too."

Although apartheid censorship makes it impossible to gauge the impact of political ferment within the ranks of the armed forces themselves, there have been a number of known cases of desertion, insubordination, and sabotage by SADF troops.

A 1984 meeting of South African military intelligence officers in Namibia expressed alarm about "the negative attitudes of certain national servicemen." The officers also blamed a fire at the Walvis Bay military base in Namibia on several troops "incited by a White ANC-inclined national serviceman." □

Mercenary plot against Ghana uncovered

A ship flying the Ghanaian flag broke down near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in mid-March. When Brazilian police boarded the ship, they discovered six tons of weapons and ammunition. They promptly arrested the crew — 10 Argentines and 8 U.S. citizens.

The story behind the ship, the *Nobistor*, soon unraveled. It turned out to be part of a plot by Ghanaian counterrevolutionaries to overthrow the radical government of Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings — the latest in a series of imperialist-backed coup attempts and mercenary invasions of that West African country.

The *Nobistor*, which was registered in Panama and was flying the Ghanaian flag illegally, was packed with machine guns, rifles, pistols, grenades, and other equipment that had been purchased in Argentina. Also found on board were maps and instructions for attacks on several targets in Accra, Ghana's capital, including the airport, radio station, telecommunications center, police stations, and military installations.

The Argentine captain of the ship, Eduardo Gilardoni, admitted at a news conference in Brazil after his arrest that the arms had been purchased on behalf of Godfrey Osei, a rightist Ghanaian businessman implicated in earlier attempts to overthrow the Rawlings government. Osei is believed to currently reside in the United States.

At the same news conference, one of the eight arrested U.S. citizens, John Early, acknowledged that they were mercenaries recruited through advertisements in *Soldier of Fortune*, a magazine published in Boulder, Colorado.

The *Nobistor* crew also revealed that their ship had intended to link up in the South Atlantic with another vessel carrying 80 Ghanaian counterrevolutionaries.

The Ghanaian government dispatched its foreign minister to Brazil with a message from Rawlings to Brazilian President José Sarney. The Ghanaian authorities have publicly requested that the 18 either be tried in Brazil or handed over to Ghana for trial. The Ghanaian government radio has accused the mercenaries of "working in close collaboration with certain foreign intelligence agencies and powers."

The news of the *Nobistor* affair in Ghana has served to heighten popular opposition to U.S. policies. During April alone there have been several demonstrations to protest U.S. attacks on Libya and U.S. aid to Angolan and Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary forces. □

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Repression continues in 'sugarland'

Sugar workers' union organizes fight, inspires peasants

By Deb Shnookal and Russell Johnson

KABANKALAN, Negros — His name is Mario Prado. Pale and extremely nervous, the young sugar worker was brought from his cell to meet with us and representatives of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW). The deep cut above his eye, he told us, was from a basketball accident. When told we are foreign press correspondents, the hard-eyed plainclothes police officer tried to reassure us by saying that four political detainees from the Kabankalan jail were released following the new Aquino government's general amnesty for political prisoners.

"To be a member of the National Federation of Sugar Workers makes you immediately suspect as a 'subversive,'" union President Bobby Ortaliz had explained to us on our trip here from Bacolod City. Prado described to us how he had been arrested a few days earlier, on March 15, after a police informer accused him of being part of the New People's Army (NPA). Because the amnesty bans detention on political charges, Prado was released. But he was rearrested the next day, along with three fishermen "NPA suspects," and charged with the theft of a gun from an hacendero (sugar planter) three years ago.

The military uses bogus criminal charges like these to circumvent the amnesty and to maintain its political repression, especially in the rural provinces. A visit to Negros Occidental in mid-March as the guests of the NFSW made it clear to us that the effects of the "people power revolution" in Manila February 22-25 have yet to be felt in "sugarland," as this province is called.

During our visit to the Integrated National Police headquarters here, Serge Cherniguin, NFSW secretary-general, and two local union organizers noted down the details of Prado's case and reassured him that a lawyer from Bayan, the New Patriotic Alliance, had already been put on his case. The young sugar worker was then taken back to his tiny, stinking cell — a concrete cage about eight feet square, which contained no furniture and only a couple of filthy rags to cover the concrete floor. The wife and child of another prisoner were asleep outside another cell.

Negros Occidental is a stronghold of both the NFSW and the NPA. It has also been the scene of brutal military repression. As recently as January this year three NFSW organizers, including the local union president, were murdered near Kabankalan.

Cherniguin and Ortaliz, both of whom accompanied us on our trip through "sugarland," told us that an estimated 25 sugar work-

ers, including 12 organizers, had been killed in the last two years alone on the island of Negros. Cherniguin commented with a wry smile that the military in the area often joked that the next bodies to be found floating in the river would be his or Ortaliz's.

'Sandinista van'

We traveled from Bacolod City, the capital of Negros Occidental Province, in the NFSW's "Sandinista van" — a new van painted red and black and adorned with FSLN stickers from Nicaragua. As we drove across the sugar plantations of some of ex-President Ferdinand Marcos' cronies, Ortaliz pointed out that not so long ago such a trip would have been inviting "salvaging" — that is, kidnapping, torture, and murder — by the military or the private goon squads of wealthy planters.

Our first stop was La Carlota, the birthplace in 1971 of the NFSW. Ortaliz and Cherniguin explained that the union was organized primarily by priests and seminary students in its early years. Now, Ortaliz said proudly, the union is run by the sugar workers themselves.

The Columban religious order, based in the town of Himamaylan, has played a particularly important role among the sugar workers, exposing the corruption and crimes of the planters. This has led to their harassment by local officials and the military. The most famous incident was the frame-up of Australian priest Father Brian Gore and the "Negros Nine" for the murder of the mayor of Kabankalan in 1982. Under the pressure of an international outcry, the three priests and six lay workers were finally released in 1984. (For an interview with Brian Gore see *Intercontinental Press*, Dec. 16, 1985.)

The Columbans actively supported the prolonged strike at the La Carlota sugar mill in 1981-82. La Carlota is the third-largest mill on the island, employing 2,500 to 3,000 workers. The strike arose out of the NFSW's attempt to extend its organization from the plantation workers to the mill workers. The picket lines became the scene of pitched battles between strikers and the police and military, who used tear gas, water cannon, truncheons, and poison chemicals to terrorize the militants. During one such confrontation Bacolod Bishop Fortich asked: "What do we have here, El Salvador?"

The strike was lost, and 190 NFSW members remain blacklisted at La Carlota to this day. The local Ministry of Labor and Employment arbitrators refuse to rule on their case. The NFSW continues to demand the ouster of these officials.

La Carlota sugar mill is situated in the midst

of the huge plantations owned by Marcos cronies Eduardo Cojuangco and Roberto Benedicto. The fields on these plantations are tractor-plowed and watered by modern irrigation sprinkler systems. Power lines carrying electricity from a geothermal plant built with New Zealand aid stretch across these lands. But the sugar workers have not benefited with increased access to running water or electricity, Cherniguin pointed out.

Cojuangco and Benedicto managed to get their hands on more than 25,000 and 12,000 acres, respectively, of prime Negros agricultural land. During the Marcos regime, Cojuangco, a close relative of President Corazon Aquino, had gained a monopoly of the marketing of copra, the Philippines' main agricultural product, which earned him the title of the "Coconut King."

Benedicto (the "Sugar Czar") seized control over the sugar industry through his position as head of the sugar marketing commission and by having the debts of the planters transferred to his bank, the Philippine National Bank. Both Cojuangco and Benedicto fled the Philippines with Marcos.

'Social volcano'

The volatility of Negros "sugarland," which Bishop Fortich once described as a "social volcano," is evident in the way the hacenderos barricade their homesteads like small forts dotting the countryside. We passed several such fortified compounds, surrounded by 10-foot-high walls with gun slots and barbed wire. The planters keep not just their farm machinery but also their own private armies inside these compounds.

Their fears are not entirely unfounded considering the hacenderos' exploitation and brutal repression of the sugar workers. For example, we passed some cleared land that Ortaliz pointed out had once been a sugar workers' village. Benedicto had foreclosed on the bankrupt planter, seized the land, and driven the workers away by leveling their homes.

Interspersed with the broad sugar plantations are rice paddies, corn fields, coconut trees, and in the tidal estuaries, fish ponds. Much of this farming is done by small peasants. According to Ortaliz, rice and fish farming were traditionally complementary and more or less self-sufficient.

However, during Marcos' "green revolution," hybrid strains of rice and corn were introduced that required seed, fertilizer, and pesticides supplied by transnational corporations. Consequent pollution destroyed many of the fish ponds. Today, thanks to the transnationals and the single-crop (sugar) agriculture, the fer-



Deb Shnookal/IP

Sugar workers' union leaders Serge Cherniguin and Bobby Ortaliz.

tile island of Negros is unable to feed itself and must import food from elsewhere.

Ortaliz and Cherniguin explained how the NFSW is today extending its organization beyond sugar workers. They said that the union had always given assistance to other groups of workers and peasants in struggle, as our visit to the fishing village of Bagacay showed. (See accompanying article.)

The union executive, they said, had just decided to transform itself into a general union for all agricultural workers on Negros and to open its doors to government and other urban workers. This had become possible, they said, when the Aquino government removed the ban on government workers forming unions and taking strike action. This broadening out was also necessitated by what they saw as the historic decline of the sugar industry.

Repression is fierce

The stronger the NFSW has become, however, the more fierce the repression. Political or union activity can be relatively open in the towns, Ortaliz said, but in the countryside it is much harder.

The NPA prevails in many sugar areas in Negros Occidental. The military uses terror and intimidation to try to deter peasants and sugar workers from supporting the guerrillas. For example, they limit the amount of rice any single family from the mountain areas can buy at the market at one time, supposedly to stop them from supplying the guerrillas with food.

Ortaliz and Cherniguin explained that in many places where the NPA is strong, the NFSW organization collapses. Sometimes this happens when the best union organizers join the rebels or because the sugar workers think that the NPA can best deal with a recalcitrant landlord. For example, the NPA collects taxes from hacenderos and punishes injustices they commit. This can lead sugar workers to rely on the guerrillas rather than their own organization as the most effective means to defend their interests, Ortaliz pointed out.

The "people power revolution" has not yet shaken many of the institutions of the Marcos regime on Negros. For the military it is just

"business as usual," as our visit to the Kabankalan police headquarters and the treatment of Mario Prado revealed. While in Kabankalan we learned of a military raid the week before on the fishing village of Bagacay, where the people were terrorized under the guise of a search for "subversives." On March 17 a "suspected NPA" had been shot in Suay, a town further south.

On the other hand, a number of new town mayors and local officials have been appointed from among those Bayan members who did not support the boycott of the February 7 election and participated in the Aquino campaign. These appointments apparently angered some local supporters of UNIDO, the electoral coalition that ran Aquino for president. Ortaliz and Cherniguin commented favorably on this development and expressed their hopes that it might mean the shift of control over the police

from the military to the town administrations.

For Ortaliz and Cherniguin the Aquino government's biggest challenge will be how it is able to handle the military. "We welcome the good, but are prepared for the worst," said Cherniguin.

The NFSW is keenly aware of the importance of international solidarity. Cherniguin had just returned from a trip to Canada, where he had been making arrangements for an international conference of sugar workers to be hosted by the NFSW April 27-30 as part of this year's May Day celebrations in the Philippines.

Social crisis and ferment run deep on Negros. The strength of the NFSW reflects the growing consciousness and organization of the rural masses. Marcos and his cronies met the land hunger of the peasants with military and paramilitary terror. This terror cannot be lifted and democracy extended to the countryside without a land reform that cuts into the power of the landed oligarchy. Their power remains the central element in the new regime being consolidated behind the personal authority of Aquino. And without the lifting of the terror and the disarming of the "warlord" landowners, the peasant rebellion will necessarily continue.

Our visit to Negros made it clear to us that the militant sugar workers will be at the center of the struggle to resolve this crisis in the interests of the peasant masses. Moreover, the NFSW will be a key vehicle for working out how to utilize the political openings created by the overthrow of Marcos to deepen and extend democratic rights, purge the pro-Marcos officials from their positions, and create the best conditions for advancing the struggle toward a workers' and peasants' government in the Philippines. □

Military harasses fishing town

Residents forge close links with sugar workers

By Deb Shnookal

BACOLOD CITY, Negros — The land around the tiny fishing village of Bagacay is flat, dry, and treeless. The sugar cane fields of Negros Occidental reach from the mountains right down to the sea. Little wooden huts on stilts are clustered beside the mouth of a small river which has been dammed up to make fish ponds. Pigs and chickens forage in the shade under the houses, while children play among the outrigger canoes.

This apparently peaceful village, however, has become yet another target of marauding military forces.

On March 9, Rodolfo, one of the fishermen, was awakened at 10:30 p.m. by a ruckus in the house next door. Then 30 military men from the national police and private goon squads burst into his home, claiming they were looking for "strangers." All they found were

Rodolfo's nine sleeping children.

This is not the first instance of military harassment of these fishing families. Last year the military made a surprise raid on the village, once again under the guise of looking for "subversives." They terrorized the villagers by firing their rifles into the air, and the people fled. The next day the local chief of police came and lectured them about "subversive activity and democracy."

These incidents were related to us when we visited Bagacay on March 19 along with Serge Cherniguin and other organizers from the National Sugar Workers Federation.

The village is organized by the Federation of Small Fishermen of Negros, to which both the women and men belong. The Federation is affiliated to the New Patriotic Alliance (Bayan), the mass left-wing organization, and has close links with the sugar workers' union, which is assisting them with a project to diversify their

production. The villagers are also constructing a communal fish trap.

Bagacay is haunted by extreme poverty. Was their life getting better or worse? we asked. "Worse!" they replied in unison. The sea is being depleted by big commercial trawlers, against which the small fishing people cannot compete.

The villagers must sell most of their catch of fish and tiny shrimps to buy rice in the market, and they still can't afford to eat three meals a day. Because the land is so dry, they can't grow vegetables to eat. Fresh drinking water must be brought by boat from up the river. The nearest elementary school is two kilometers away.

The numerous children of Bagacay are small, thin, and undernourished. Cherniguin pointed out that living in such conditions, these children have very little motivation to attend school.

Bagacay was settled 50 years ago by cane cutters brought by labor contractors from the island of Panay. The land where they built their houses was rented for a small annual fee from a plantation owner.

This life of poverty is now made harder with the harassment by the military. The women are afraid when the men go out to fish, fearing further attacks. Nevertheless, they are far from prepared to passively accept their fate.

Lina, an older woman, explained that the 36 families of the village had made a petition to local authorities and the Aquino government in Manila to let them know what the military was doing here. Did they expect a better hearing from the new government? Smiles and "we don't know" was the response.

We discussed the election. Some had voted for Aquino. Some had boycotted. A few who were not members of the Federation of Small Fishermen had voted for Marcos, they said. For the people of Bagacay, life continues much as before, as the March 9 raid showed.

Why does the military pay such attention to the peaceful little village of Bagacay? They assured us they have few problems with their landlord, as they do pay their rent. One thing is obvious: despite the grinding poverty, the organization, morale, and community spirit among the fishing people is quite striking, as is the role of women as community leaders. This fighting spirit is strengthened by their links with the National Federation of Sugar Workers, which is more than just a union. It is an important political force in "sugarland."

One small example illustrates the solidarity between the sugar workers and the fishing folk of Bagacay. We noticed that Rodolfo paid special loving attention to a small baby boy and assumed that the child was probably his youngest and favorite. However, we were told later that Rodolfo had adopted the boy into his already large family when the baby's father, an organizer with the sugar workers' union, was "salvaged" by the military.

The identification and links of the fishing people of Bagacay with the militant union expresses their self-confidence, organization, and social consciousness. □

South Pacific

Independence forces harassed

Bombings in New Caledonia, frame-ups in Tahiti

By Neil Jarden

[The following article is reprinted from the March 28 issue of *Socialist Action*, a fortnightly newspaper published in Auckland, New Zealand, that reflects the views of the Socialist Action League, New Zealand section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

Elections to the French parliament have brought about the defeat of the Socialist Party government and the coming to office of a new conservative government led by Jacques Chirac. But this does not signify any fundamental changes to the colonialist policies of France towards the South Pacific.

Both the previous "left" government and the new "centre-right" one support France's nuclear weapons testing and oppose moves towards independence for New Caledonia and Tahiti. Both have taken the attitude that the only unfortunate thing about the murderous *Rainbow Warrior* bombing was that some of the French military officers responsible got caught.

Prime Minister Chirac, while having stated that France "owes apologies and compensation to New Zealand" for the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing, has also threatened stepped-up trade retaliation against imports from New Zealand if the imprisoned French terrorists are not released. French authorities in fact began blocking trade from New Zealand into both France and New Caledonia prior to the elections.

An interview with a French Socialist Party member of the European Parliament, Louis Eyraud, which appeared in the *Evening Post* on November 27, showed that the stance of the Socialist Party does not differ fundamentally from that of Chirac's party. In Eyraud's view, "most French people" believed that the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* was a "good thing" because the Greenpeace organisation was involving itself in "issues that should not concern it" and therefore should be "stopped by any means."

Eyraud also repeated anticommunist arguments about the "Soviet threat" in the Pacific. "My question to New Zealanders is 'would you rather have the French here or the Russians?'"

For his part, François Mitterrand (who continues in office as president despite his party's defeat in the parliamentary elections) declared in a book published in February that the *Rainbow Warrior* affair "does not engage our country morally" and cannot be used as an "argument to make it stop patrolling the atolls and give up testing." He added that, although France's presence in the Pacific "evidently bothers a lot of people," it will not be reduced

but rather stepped up through the building of planned air force and naval bases in New Caledonia.

Fears of an impending massacre of Kanak independence activists have been expressed in the weekly newspaper of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), *Bwenando*. This follows a series of recent right-wing bomb attacks, including a number directed against white participants in the independence movement.

Two leaders of the Kanak Socialist Party (PSK), Norbert Caffa and Jacques Violette, have had bombs placed in their cars. In December Caffa's car was blown up; the bomb in Violette's car did not go off. Caffa also had his house destroyed by a bomb on January 17, and on March 2 he received a phone call (his number is unlisted) telling him that if he remained in the territory after March 14 he would be a "dead man."

Another French FLNKS leader, Jean-Jacques Bourdinat, also had a bomb destroy part of his home. Two months earlier a bomb had been thrown at the same house but caused little damage.

A prominent French academic, Professor Jean Guiart, explained some of the dangers in the present situation in a recent letter to the New Zealand National Council of Churches. An attack on Kanaks living on the west coast of the island had been planned by right-wing forces, he charged. "A group of men — partly of local European descent, partly introduced into the country from outside — are organising themselves for an armed coup and an attempt to make the Kanaks keep quiet through a local massacre."

Guiart described the general situation in the territory: "Each settler has from 5 to 10 American automatic carbines hanging from his walls, ready to shoot, and groups of armed European white men have been patrolling at night . . . all European cars being at any time stacked with guns and revolvers."

These right-wing terrorist gangs in New Caledonia are not a force which exists independently of French imperialism. They are protected by the French police and backed up by the full might of the French military. If France withdrew, their ability to carry out their attacks would be qualitatively weakened. In fact, their forces would be greatly reduced, as many of them would depart along with the French flag.

Meanwhile, in France's other major Pacific colony, French Polynesia (Tahiti), harassment of proindependence and antinuclear forces continues. Oscar Temaru, leader of the Polynesian Liberation Front (FLP), recently

spoke at a conference of the Green Party in West Germany. He told them: "In 1939, the French came to search out my father to defend France against the Germans. Today, I come to Germany to seek help in freeing us from French occupation."

Temaru's appeal led to furious denunciation by pro-French forces in Tahiti, including an appeal to Mitterrand by French Polynesian President Gaston Flosse (now French "Secretary of State for the South Pacific") for "exemplary punishment" of the "traitor." But authorities could find nothing to charge Temaru with, other than a breach of regulations committed when, last year, he took a sick day off work from his job as a customs inspector and used the time to take a boat out to welcome the Greenpeace vessels protesting against nuclear testing at Moruroa.

Another prominent Tahitian independence activist, Charlie Ching, was sentenced late last year to two years' imprisonment on trumped-up charges after organising an antinuclear demonstration. Ching was seized during the protest and then held in "preventive custody" for five months before eventually being charged under an archaic French law directed against "economic crimes."

Following up on their expulsion of Maori rights activist Eva Rickard from French Polynesia last year, the authorities issued a similar notice of banishment to Auckland peace activist Annie Maignot in March. A member of Le Groupe, which organised protests against French goods following the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing, Maignot had given a speech at a 1,500-strong rally organised by Oscar Temaru in Faa'a. Temaru is mayor Faa'a, Tahiti's largest town.

Independence forces increased their strength in the French Polynesian assembly in elections which were held at the same time as the French parliamentary poll. In the 41-seat assembly, the proindependence party Ia Mana te Nunaa retained its three seats, while the FLP gained two seats for the first time. All together, the proindependence parties almost doubled their share of the vote to win a combined total of 20 percent.

Despite its "differences" with the French government, brought about by the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing and the imprisonment of the captured agents Mafart and Prieur, the New Zealand government continues to emphasise its support for the French presence in the Pacific.

Upon Chirac's becoming prime minister of France, [New Zealand Prime Minister] David Lange sent him a telegram of congratulations. Acting Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer welcomed Gaston Flosse's appointment to the new post of French secretary of state for the South Pacific, noting, "We look forward to working with him in the expectation that the new government in France will make a constructive contribution to developments in the region."

Clearly the Lange government views its French counterpart as a valuable ally in policing the South Pacific in the mutual interests of big business in both countries. □

Paraguay

Stroessner faces protests

Washington worried antidictatorial struggle will deepen

By Rafael Pérez Pereira

[The following article is taken from the April 13 issue of *Granma Weekly Review*, published by the Cuban Communist Party in Havana.]

* * *

Over the past few weeks, Paraguay, the scene of one of the most anachronistic and bloodthirsty dictatorships in the Western Hemisphere, has been in the limelight due to increasing opposition to Alfredo Stroessner's regime.

Manifestations of opposition, which are joined by wider and wider sectors in the country, including those characterized by a more moderate position vis-à-vis the regime, coincide with the worsening of Paraguay's economic and social situation.

The foreign debt and the huge expenditure earmarked for the armed forces and police have now become intolerable burdens for the nation, whose export income is shrinking, as in most of the Third World.

That's why the need for political change in Paraguay is the order of the day.

In the past little while, particularly after dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier fled Haiti, signs of a so-called democratic opening surfaced in Paraguay, whose regime, together with Pinochet's in Chile, is now more isolated and internationally discredited following the disappearance of the military regimes of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

Although the Stroessner regime has at no time changed its policy and the structure of the system remains as closed as ever, some political revival and hopes for change have entered the picture.

This is how the National Accord came into being. It groups together the political opposition sectors and has a program for transition to democracy. The essential features of the program are forming a transition government, drafting a new Constitution, and democratic general elections.

The Catholic church announced that it supported the plan for a democratic opening in Paraguay and in fact became the main sponsor of dialogue. Many other sectors, who are far from radical, have also voiced their support for the plan that will try to find a solution to the national crisis, something the Stroessner regime has not been able to do.

Concerned about the radicalization of the anti-Stroessner struggle and the danger of revolutionary outbreaks, some of the U.S. media are in favor of the need for and the feasibility of the changes put forth in the National Accord's program.

The movement toward transition picked up

strength during the first months of the year, a period during which the Stroessner regime, despite its longstanding intransigence and opposition to change, chose to behave in a cautious and discreet manner.

But early in April dictator Stroessner decided that the time had come to stifle the slightest hope for political change. In his annual message to Congress, he branded as illegal and subversive all the political activity carried out in favor of talks for a democratic opening. He charged that the National Accord was made up of "resentful people and deserters," and turned down any moves to draft a new Constitution in lieu of the one he enacted in 1967. Furthermore, he flatly rejected any changes in the electoral system in force since he came to power over three decades ago.

The extremely harsh statements made by Stroessner included attacks on the Catholic church and the press.

Paraguay's main problem, in Stroessner's opinion, is not a democratic opening or a solution to the economic crisis and its serious social consequences, but precisely slamming the door on any changes, however peaceful and moderate.

Were the government to show any weakness on the demands for change, he warned, the opposition would end up taking over political power and using it.

"The country is living in peace and freedom," said the tyrant, "and we will not weaken or back down."

Stroessner's statements on the so-called democratic opening evidenced the deep divisions within the regime itself, since he said that no one should be surprised if many of his longtime collaborators found themselves "on the street." The absence in the halls of Congress of the representatives of the opposition Radical Liberal Party (PLR) shows that the lack of confidence in the regime is growing by the day.

Stroessner's political approach for the '80s is the same as that of the '50s, when at the time of Eisenhower's Republican administration and the cold war diplomacy of John Foster Dulles, he became their choice to rule Paraguay. Even though such an approach doesn't make Washington too comfortable at present, mainly because of the danger of a radical response from the masses, it is basically to its liking since its foreign policy goals then and now are, as everybody knows, exactly the same.

Stroessner's latest statement completely rules out talks, and so the prospects must inevitably be of a different nature.

This is why Paraguay will continue to draw the attention of world public opinion. □

Borge on Nicaragua's democracy

'Our people raising new banner in struggle of indigenous peoples'

[In March 1986 Tomás Borge, a leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua, made a tour of Peru and Brazil, where he met with government leaders and addressed a number of public meetings.

[Borge, a member of the FSLN's National Directorate and minister of the interior, headed an official FSLN delegation that also included Commander Doris Tijerino, Nicaragua's chief of police.

[In Peru, Borge met with President Alan García and was honored at a rally of 4,000 members of the ruling APRA party. He also met with Peruvian activists in solidarity with Nicaragua and parliamentary representatives of the United Left (IU).

[Borge spoke to several thousand people at an outdoor concert and to a rally of children in a Lima shantytown.

[In Brazil, in addition to meeting with President José Sarney, Borge was a featured speaker at the Latin American Congress of Sociologists.

[Below, we are printing the opening section of his address to the sociologists' gathering. The text is taken from the March 15 issue of the Nicaraguan daily *El Nuevo Diario*. The translation from Spanish and the subheadings are by *Intercontinental Press*.

[In the second half of his speech, not reprinted here, the Sandinista leader took up the current escalation of the U.S. mercenary war against Nicaragua and the demand by President Ronald Reagan for \$100 million in aid to the mercenaries.

["The approval of these funds," said Borge, "would mean the end of the negotiations in Central America, the encouragement of those sectors that refuse to recognize the benefits of peace, a stimulus to the mercenary army that is currently in the process of irreversible demoralization, and — what is most serious — the prelude to direct intervention of U.S. troops in Nicaragua."

["To defend the revolution and its principles," Borge declared, the Nicaraguan people "are ready to make any sacrifice, even if Nicaragua sacrifices itself and must be turned into a desert of ashes and blood."

[He pointed out, however, that "Nicaragua is not Grenada. There the marines occupied a grain of sand in the sea, torn apart by internal contradictions, with a people disarmed and abandoned by discord.

["In Nicaragua the people are armed. The revolutionary leadership is firmly united around its principles. We have the fortune to have a relatively expansive geography, crisscrossed by wide rivers and untamed volcanoes. We have, and I hope these Yankee criminals remember it, the same mountains where San-

dino smashed the U.S. Army with his fist of marble.

["We can assure the world and especially the people of Central America and Latin America that we are going to struggle to keep the intervention from happening. Naturally, we would pay a very high price. It's estimated that at least 300,000 Nicaraguans would die. We are going to defeat that intervention politically and militarily if it comes, even if our country for many years afterwards is covered with wounds, even if it's only to become the first shovelful of soil thrown on the agony and death of U.S. imperialism."

[In the section of his speech reproduced below, Borge takes up the slander that Nicaragua is undemocratic. He also deals at length with one of the key democratic questions facing the Sandinista revolution, the national question on the country's Atlantic Coast. Borge, who is president of Nicaragua's National Autonomy Commission, explains how the Sandinistas corrected initial errors on the Coast, leading to the autonomy plan now under way there.]

* * *

Dear university comrades of Brazil, comrade sociologists:

I thought that just as they had already slandered me as being a poet, they were also going to slander me as a sociologist, because actually, we didn't have time during the revolutionary struggle, in everyday life, to learn revolutionary theory and political science in depth. Perhaps that's fortunate.

I come, dear comrades, from a land of volcanoes; a land famous for its lakes, one of which is an inland sea but with fresh water; a land renowned for its poets, who have created a republic of songbirds; a land known for the rivers of blood that course through its history and for its 3 million shy and rebellious Mestizos, Indians, and Blacks, who inhabit a fascinating geography of 50,000 square miles. They are the active elements of a revolution that has evoked both gut hatred and the conscious and passionate love and solidarity of all the peoples of the world.

One day not so far off in historical terms, Nicaragua will receive universal recognition for its ever more indisputable democracy.

And it's Nicaragua's democracy that I'm going to speak to you about this afternoon. But, what kind of democracy am I going to talk to you about? To explain it in our terms, I'll say that Sandinista democracy is made in the image and likeness of the Nicaraguan people. It is the totality of the reflections of their historical experience.

And what is democracy, for us? Who and

what constitutes our democratic process?

What is the concept and the historical subject of Sandinista democracy? I won't make comparisons between our democracy and the democracies of different ideological continents. Let me simply state that in Nicaragua there is a real, active, obvious participation by the people in decision-making.

In the land of Sandino, we have a people who consciously organize both the forms and the results of their productive capacity, who pluck the strings of their guitar to sing out their poverty, their bullet-proof and lie-proof happiness, their heroism.

I speak of a democracy attacked by the biggest empire in the world, and whose fight for survival, as President and Commander of the Revolution Comrade Daniel Ortega recalled recently, has cost the Nicaraguan people 23,832 victims from 1980 to January 1986. Of these, 13,930 have died; 4,500, at a very minimum, were wounded — many of them mutilated; 3,691 kidnapped; as well as 7,600 orphaned and more than 120,000 displaced.

If we take the total number of dead in Nicaragua resulting from the war and compare it in terms of the size and population of the country with the population of the United States or Brazil, we find that the number of deaths we have suffered would be like 1,031,000 deaths in the United States or 536,000 in Brazil.

Democracy in throes of combat

That's why we can state that never in history has such will and fulfillment of democracy been seen in the throes of combat. A democracy in war, or rather, a democracy in spite of the war.

A democracy where there are a million students, even though they have tattered socks and knee patches; where a million women and men are organized in the Sandinista Workers Federation, in the Rural Workers Association, in the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers, in the Sandinista Youth, in the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association, in the Sandinista Defense Committees — just to name the most important organizations and not including the other trade unions and organizations that correspond ideologically to the different currents on the broad compass of political multipartyism.

At present, there are 1,200 trade unions in Nicaragua. In Somoza's time there were 148. In that epoch, organizations of youth and women didn't exist. Peasants who tried to organize were skinned alive.

The people, dear comrades, made democracy possible by destroying the military dictatorship of the Somozas in an insurrectional fire, as you know. For six years the people

have joined in on programs for their own health and education, not just to confront illiteracy — which was quickly demolished by a national campaign — and to eradicate the numerous endemic diseases like gastroenteritis, measles, and polio that were a death sentence to more than 200 out of every 1,000 children, but also to develop ambitious and far-reaching social programs.

Freedom and social justice

Our democracy is the democracy of freedom and social justice — a phrase that's been uttered many times in Latin America and would be trite except for the fact that it's backed up by deeds and, because there is no other way of saying it, democracy that has made truth and probability possible.

Sandinista democracy is giving out the land — 1.7 million hectares [4.2 million acres] have been distributed. And tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of hectares will continue to be handed over to individual peasants, agrarian reform enterprises, and agricultural workers, in a country with 5.6 million hectares of farms.

In the middle of a war of aggression, Sandinista democracy allocates 11 percent of its budget to health and education, while the other Central American countries spend an average of 5 percent. This is despite the fact that Nicaragua is forced to allocate more than 40 percent of its budget for defense and, unlike those brother countries, we have had the hard historic obligation of paying the price of a revolutionary war and the price of a foreign attack on us.

The organized people's access to political power and to economic and cultural wealth also defines our democracy. Representatives of the mass organizations participate in the parliament — what we call there the National Assembly — discussing and approving laws. Organized working people take part in the National Council of Agrarian Reform. Right now, the 1986 Economic Plan is being discussed in the mass organizations.

Discussing constitution

And beginning in March, all the socioeconomic sectors in the country will discuss the draft constitution in town meetings, as we call them. After a broad and lengthy period of work, the constitution was formally presented on February 21, the anniversary of Sandino's assassination, by the president of the National Assembly, Commander of the Revolution and member of the National Directorate, Carlos Núñez. The Atlantic Coast Autonomy proposal is being discussed in similar broad, people's consultations.

Tens of thousands of youth participate in Patriotic Military Service, the Reserve Military Service, the People's Militias, the Volunteer Police, the Literacy Brigades, the Health Brigades, the Student Production Battalions, the Volunteer Brigades to pick coffee and cotton and the Environmental Improvement Brigades.

Is this or is this not democracy? There is no



TOMÁS BORGE

more radical or consistent way to be democratic than the Sandinista slogan: "All Arms to the People." All arms to the people to defend our land and to hand out, as we have done and as we have said previously, 300,000 rifles — that is, one rifle for every 10 inhabitants. Furthermore, I repeat, the reason we haven't given out more rifles is that we only have 300,000. If someone in some of the governments that accuse us of being antidemocratic wants to test *their* democracy, why don't they do what we did and give arms to the people? (*prolonged ovation*)

Democracy is when the means to create poetry, art, and music are the legal property and dominion of the people. Democracy is when the daughters of peasants come to the city, not to become prostitutes, but to start dance lessons, sewing lessons, or to join combat units.

Democracy is the Face the People meetings, the deeply humanitarian open prison system. It is nonconformity and complaints spoken out loud, without fear.

Democracy means providing more than 6 million school primers and textbooks and more than 2 million books so the people's aspirations for knowledge are met. And this in a country, I repeat, that has just 3 million inhabitants.

Democracy means assimilating the lesson that you don't have to be an Indian to defend the cause of the Indians; that you don't have to be a peasant or a woman to defend the cause of

the peasants or the women — that it's enough to be a revolutionary.

Recognizing errors

Democracy is the ability of our revolutionary leadership — the National Directorate of the Sandinista Front, the highest leadership body in our country — to recognize errors and limitations when faced with legitimate questioning.

However, there are errors that, even though costly, can be explained, and this seminar seems an opportune context to speak directly about these errors and the responses to them. And I am going to refer to perhaps the most striking of them — our response to the ethnic problem.

It is true that our revolution began in the mountains. It is also true that in the end the people's struggle exploded in the cities of Nicaragua's Pacific Coast: Managua, León, Estelí, Masaya, Matagalpa, which won the right to be considered heroic cities.

And after taking power, in what was a process of difficult return, we went back to the damp mountains, to the river banks, to the peasants' world in the interior of the country, and to the indigenous peoples and communities of the Atlantic Coast.

This historic, objective reason is why for a time the interrelation between class analysis and the ethnic question was obscured. We arrived on the Atlantic Coast where the Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas, Garífonos, Mestizos, and Creoles live, offering them the culture of the Pacific, without, of course, negating the culture of the Atlantic. But we did so without the right tact, without the wisdom only experience brings, and we hurt the feelings of those who had always been scorned.

Began with good faith

From the beginning, we struggled — with all the good faith a revolutionary is capable of — in support of the ethnic minorities. We did so with the aim of national unity and to overcome backwardness and discord. We looked for a way to shape the multifaceted and dynamic identity of our people.

By providing examples, dear comrades, dear friends, we can bring reality to life. So let's delve deeper into this example, which is a historic event whose outlines can be clearly seen in the bright light of day.

We will also speak about how we approached solving something that, like it or not, had become a real drama.

To understand the contradictions of the revolution on the Atlantic Coast, you would have to go back to their origins — to the incubation of Nicaragua's socioeconomic structures, whose formation was marked by geographic and economic division imposed through cunning and bloodbath by the Spanish and English colonizers. While Spain shattered the social structures of the Pacific Indian tribes — above all through the use of violence — England, largely through cunning, used the same aboriginal sociopolitical structures to rule indirectly,

but firmly, through relations of unequal trade.

The Spanish colonization didn't have the courage to get to the Atlantic. It stayed on the Pacific. By contrast, at the end of the 17th century, the English Crown, in its fight to control trade in the Caribbean, ended up establishing a protectorate in the [Atlantic] region. This protectorate was dissolved in 1894 with the political and geographical recovery of the Atlantic by the Nicaraguan nation-state.

After 1909 and beginning with the U.S. interventions and the Somozaist dictatorship, the possibility of integrating the Atlantic Coast into the country's domestic market was closed off.

The decline of the Spanish Empire and the U.S. war of independence marked a new chapter in this extraordinary story. Internationally the contradiction then shifted to the one between the growing expansionism of the United States and the British Empire. And internally it shifted to the contradiction between the incipient oligarchic state, born out of independence from Spain, and the English Crown.

The period from 1821 — the date of the Spanish colony's independence — to 1850 was characterized by continuous civil strife, which undermined the economy inherited from colonialism and contributed to the political weakness of the ruling propertied classes in confronting U.S. and British interests.

The plan for an interoceanic canal on Nicaragua's territory, using the Río San Juan, one of our country's biggest rivers, in the southern part of the Atlantic zone, left its sinister mark on our history.

Clayton-Bulwer Treaty

In 1850 England and the United States were trying to overcome their conflicts and differences, so they signed what was known as the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. According to the treaty, Great Britain recognized Nicaragua's sovereignty over territory occupied by Miskito Indians and — with a hypocrisy whose perseverance Shakespeare neglected to forecast — committed itself to end the protectorate of the Kingdom of the Miskitos. The Miskito reservation was formed in the Atlantic, under the supposed sovereignty of Nicaragua.

Remember, or as I'll explain, the Atlantic Coast makes up nearly half of Nicaraguan territory, while just 10 percent of our population lives there.

Within the reservation, the Indians would enjoy self-government in accordance with their own customs.

On the other hand, the Miskito Indians had the dubious right to incorporate themselves into the Nicaraguan Republic at any time. In practice, the result of the treaty was that the real power over the territory of the Miskito reservation reverted to the structures set up by the king and businessmen of the neighboring Caribbean islands, chiefly Jamaicans, thereby strengthening British influence and Miskito hegemony over the other indigenous groups.

I hope I'm not contradicted by our illustrious ambassador, Jorge Jenkin, who is an expert on this matter. The reincorporation in

1894 of the Miskito Kingdom was in essence the beginning of the Pacific's hegemony over the Atlantic region, which maintained, without subtlety and with total disdain, the isolation between the two regions, between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

U.S. Marines

The world crisis in the 1930s once again affected relations between those two regions. The flashing light of the differences between political parties who were fighting — as many parties on this continent do — over the favors of the U.S. government culminated, as you know, in the landing for the umpteenth time, of the U.S. Marines in 1926, against whom, that very year, General Augusto César Sandino and the Army for the Defense of National Sovereignty rose up in arms.

The Somozaist regime granted concessions to U.S. businesses in exchange for a few gold nuggets extracted from the minerals of the Atlantic.

In this way, socioeconomic, political, and linguistic differences were established in the Nicaraguan population on the Atlantic, which continue to this day and which the Liberal and Conservative governments and the Somozaist dictatorship, far from resolving, kept intact and fed.

At the time of the triumph of the Sandinista People's Revolution, the majority of companies established on the Atlantic Coast had been abandoned, semidestroyed, decapitalized, baptized in English, with scarcely a perspective of overcoming their ancient sorrows.

Unemployment, the scarcity of basic products, the surprised eyes, the infrastructural dislocation — it wasn't just physical separation, but also the absence of an economic connection between the enclave of the Atlantic Coast and the rest of the national economy.

Ethnic problem

But the main problem that the revolution encounters in this zone is unique in the country. It is the problem I referred to earlier: the ethnic problem.

The revolution, with its principles of people's democracy, nationalism, and anti-imperialism, detonated the inherited and dormant contradictions, which would be expressed in the form of conflict.

Transforming that contradictory reality of exploitation and separation into the real incorporation of the Atlantic Coast in the national life is the revolution's most complex challenge, its most attractive challenge.

Our first steps in search of solutions, which were frequently elusive, like the fish in the Río Coco, make up part of the process of learning that reality.

Our hunch that we could resolve the problems with strategic investments over the medium and long term led to big, unfinished projects, which remain necessary, like the deep-water port at El Bluff. In addition, dear comrades, we wanted to mechanically apply the experience of the Pacific, repeating the

same organizational forms, which were artificial in the Atlantic.

We offered the proximity of the rivers of milk and honey that remain an inseparable part of our strategic dreams, and, at the same time, the U.S. government, squeezing the last drop from our subjective judgments, impatiently organized the military response. The imperialist enemy hitched its wagon to our inexperience and the legitimate demands of the Indians, which we had not been able to fully understand.

The revolution legitimized an indigenous organization known as MISURASATA, which exhibited a supposed desire to become part of the revolution. Later we learned that their goal was not linked to the perspectives of the Nicaraguan social formation, but to a separatist perspective based on a historico-cultural interpretation and the conditions of their region.

In general, the social groups on the Atlantic exhibited a level of political consciousness that matched their experience and the development of their productive forces.

Didn't understand Indians' demands

When we didn't understand the demands that the Indians raised — we didn't even speak their language, nor do I think we have yet learned it, although we have some comrades studying these languages — we believed that in all cases and everywhere they were advocating counterrevolution. We then learned that one of the MISURASATA leaders had been a security agent under Somoza, and he was arrested.

Keep in mind that in Nicaragua, having been a Somozaist security agent provokes the hatred of the people. It is a serious crime, and we made the error of freeing him when we believed we had done strategic patriotic educational work with him.

But this man immediately went to Honduras to organize a counterrevolutionary movement. He was supported by the CIA — whose strategic objective has been to weaken the entire revolution by manipulating many lines of attack and I believe, in particular, manipulating ethnic demands.

The harm was done; the revolution had placed confidence in MISURASATA, which controlled the indigenous communities, claiming credit for the achievements that the revolution had made, and an armed uprising was then backed by diverse Miskito sectors.

That is how we responded with weapons to a violent action that started a new zone of conflict. For their own security, we moved whole communities from the edge of the Río Coco — the biggest river in Nicaragua, on the border with Honduras — to new settlements where better conditions of life existed.

The Miskitos, however, from their first sunrise on lands that were strange to them, dreamed of returning to the turbulent waters of the Río Coco.

The resettlements were manipulated — and surely you've heard talk of them — with deliberate obscenity in Europe and the United States

and even in Latin America.

Knowledge of the reality based on local experiences led us to do a profound review of the situation and to change our policy.

New policies

With this new perspective, the revolution developed actions and policies among the peoples and communities with the aim of finding peaceful solutions. Amnesty was decreed. Conversations took place between the government and the Miskitos and Sumos who had risen up in arms. And above all, we began the plan that revived the hopes and opened the door in the consciousness of the nation — the plan that took up the historic demand of autonomy.

And armed groups have been invited to participate in the current process of consultations about autonomy. In June 1985, as a result of this process, a basic document called "Principles and Policies," drawn up by the National Autonomy Commission, was approved.

The indigenous peoples and communities of the Atlantic Coast — and it was the logical and

natural response — elected their delegates for the regional and zonal commissions that discuss the principles of autonomy.

Even those indigenous sectors that are skeptical about the plan have recognized — publicly — that only within the framework of the revolution could the opening have developed for the peoples of the Atlantic Coast to raise their demands.

Autonomy proposal

What does the plan consist of? What is the Autonomy Plan? In the basic document, autonomy is defined as "the effective exercise of the historic rights of the indigenous peoples and communities of the Atlantic Coast within the framework of national unity and the principles and policies of the Sandinista People's Revolution."

This government will create autonomous regions where the different ethnic groups that live there can exercise their historic rights and enjoy to the utmost the real possibility of autonomous decisions over those aspects that are defined by the law. The autonomy is for all

the ethnic groups equally, without privileges for one or another. The Autonomy Plan rejects any relapse into racial meanness.

The basic document proposes that each ethnic group elect its own representatives to a regional assembly, and the assembly, in turn, will elect a regional executive committee, which will represent the region before the central government.

Our people, comrades of the university, are raising a new banner in the struggle of the indigenous peoples of the Americas — from the Iroquois to the Mapuches, from the Mayas to the Quechuas — so that in line with the conditions of their own surroundings, they can win the equality that has been denied them.

The Sandinista People's Revolution is taking on the historic challenge of placing itself — with modesty but without inhibitions — in the forefront of the just struggles of the indigenous peoples of the world. With the Autonomy Plan, Nicaragua is coming forward to answer the ethnic question as it has never been answered before in the Americas. (Applause) □

Australia

Working farmers and the capitalist crisis

Response of farmers' organizations reflects class divisions in countryside

By Ron Poulsen

[The following article is based on a talk presented in December 1985 to a conference of the Socialist Action League in New Zealand and in January 1986 at an educational weekend organized by Australian supporters of the Fourth International in Sydney, Australia. Poulsen is a longtime leader of the Fourth International in Australia.]

[All dollar figures cited in the article refer to Australian dollars, which are currently valued at about US\$0.72.]

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Family farmers in many sectors of Australian agriculture today are facing the worst rural slump since the Great Depression years of the 1930s. For some the disaster is even graver as it follows on the heels of the costliest natural disaster to hit Australia, the widespread and extremely severe drought which was at its height in 1982-83. This drought still persists in some areas of western and central Australia today.

Over the past two years, and particularly in 1985, this rural crisis has led to what the bourgeois press has described as "a revolt by the bush." The depth of the crisis is shown by the growing wave of farmers' struggles and protest demonstrations, which led to 1985 being called "the year of the angry farmer."

It began in 1984 with 4,000 rice growers rallying in the Riverina region of southern New

South Wales. They were protesting at their desperate plight due to the depressed state of the industry. Then it was the turn of the cane growers. About 1,000 travelled in a "cane train" protest from North Queensland to Brisbane to confront Labor Party Prime Minister Bob Hawke, just before the November 1984 federal elections, to demand government help for the crisis-stricken cane-coast.

In the early part of 1985, it was Victoria's dairy farmers who hit the headlines with their repeated blockades of milk supplies to the state capital, Melbourne. In what was dubbed "the milk war," as many as 3,000 dairymen and women, with majority support from the state's 12,000 dairy producers, and driven by the desperation of impoverishment, launched militant pickets at processing plants. In these historically unprecedented actions, dairy farmers battled the state police in efforts to stop milk tankers breaking their blockade, at times succeeding in drying up Melbourne's milk supply. They held angry mass demonstrations in Melbourne and the Australian federal capital, Canberra, to demand that state and federal governments assist them to gain a living income for their labor by raising the price they receive for milk production.

These were followed mid-year by farmers' demonstrations around the country, which gathered in size in opposition to proposed new government taxes (both capital gains and indirect), high interest rates, and spiralling farm

costs. In early June, with struggling wheat farmers to the forefront, as many as 10,000 marched through the capital of Western Australia, Perth. Then up to 17,000 placard waving farmers and rural businesspeople took to the streets of South Australia's capital, Adelaide. This was followed by a march of over 30,000 farmers in Melbourne, bringing the inner city to a standstill — the numbers boosted by the closure of most stock sales for the day. Numerous other farmer rallies have been held in provincial towns and rural centres across the country.

Canberra rally

These rallies culminated in one of the largest demonstrations ever outside Parliament House, Canberra, coinciding with the opening of a government-sponsored "tax summit" on July 1. This national gathering of country people was estimated at up to 45,000. Some came by private or chartered planes and some came on horseback. Fleets of buses brought many across thousands of kilometres. A cavalcade of trucks demonstrated the similar concerns of owner-driver truckies.

Farmers had been mobilised from every corner of the country — from the Western Australian wheat belt, from North Queensland sugar farms, from New South Wales rice and cotton farms, from sprawling Northern Territory and Queensland cattle stations, from the sheep runs of Victoria's Mallee country, and

from the orchards of Tasmania.

Just as varied were the class stratifications amongst this huge assemblage of country people. Smiling millionaire pastoralists rubbed shoulders with angry dairy herders facing an uphill battle for survival. It is not surprising then that their demands and concerns were varied, although most were directed at the Hawke Labor government. While they came in response to the call of the big capitalist farmers at the head of the National Farmers Federation (NFF), the sheer weight of numbers reflected the depth of the crisis facing family farmers.

Historically unprecedented

This upsurge of farmer militancy is unprecedented in Australia, even compared to the other periods of farm protest movements in the 1930s or, to a lesser extent, in the early 1970s. But not everyone in the "rural community" is being hit by this crisis in the same way. In fact, just the opposite is true. As in every capitalist slump, the rich, as the saying goes, get richer and the poor get poorer.

For a majority of farmers it will be a battle to hold on, and, for some, there is no way out other than to sell up and leave the land. But for those who lose, there are others who profit. The business journals are announcing that this is an excellent opportunity to buy up extra farms, expand commercial operations, and prepare for a profit bonanza.

Nor is this crisis peculiar to Australian farming. The crisis in agriculture extends throughout the capitalist world. Family farmers are also facing bankruptcy in countries as diverse as India and the United States, Fiji and Sweden, Portugal and New Zealand. There, too, the class contradictions of the countryside are being exposed and sharpened by the crisis.

These class contradictions were evident in the different farmer protests that took place in Australia during the past year, although this reality was overlooked, not only by the capitalist media, but also by most commentators on the left.

Dairy farmers' pickets

The dairy industry in Australia has always been one with a relatively high number of small, low-income farms. Because of a growing world glut of milk, Victorian dairy farmers supplying milk for manufacturing and export have been hardest hit by rising costs which have increasingly outweighed returns. By early 1985, a litre of milk, which cost them on average 13 cents to produce, brought a return of only 12 cents. The restructuring of this industry through the current crisis of overproduction could send as many as 5,000 dairy-farming families to the wall.

This layer of working farmers, driven by desperation, launched the most militant and hard-fought battle for survival so far in Australian farm history. They were led by "rebel" groupings responding to the concerns of working farmers and frustrated at the inaction of the leadership of the traditional organisation — the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, which represented more-established interests.

The "rebel" dairymen and women took direct action to defend their immediate interests. They called for an eight cents per litre price rise for milk for the manufacturing market, a doubling of the butterfat price, and a national milk marketing plan which would put all dairy producers around the country on an equal footing. Although some were unfortunately drawn for a time behind protectionist protests that were encouraged by milk processing companies against the "dumping" of European Economic Community (EEC) dairy products, the struggle of these dairy farmers was totally progressive.

In the midst of their battles with the Cain state Labor government and its cops, public support was given to the embattled farmers by the Builders Laborers Federation and by the Food Preservers Union, themselves under employer and government attack. This showed the way for workers and working farmers to link up against the capitalist economic offensive.

Capitalist misleadership

However, the country-wide farmer protests mobilised by the traditional farmers' organisations were of a more contradictory nature. The major farmers' organisation, the National Farmers Federation, formed in 1979, is dominated by the big capitalist farmers, but it has been forced to adopt a more militant profile because of the depth of the crisis now hitting working farmers.

For the Canberra protest, the NFF mobilised farmers across the class spectrum, while focusing the demonstration solely on the Hawke Labor government, thus obscuring the deeper cause of the crisis — overproduction caused by the unplanned capitalist system — and directing attention away from those directly profiting from the toil of working farmers — the banks and agribusiness monopolies. The NFF leadership hoped to mobilise dissatisfied exploited farmers behind the anti-working-class offensive of the capitalist rulers.

Not long after the Canberra demonstration, the NFF plunged into its next battle — spearheading an attack through the bosses' courts against the meat workers' union and its pickets to defend union award conditions against undermining by contract labor at the remote Northern Territory abattoir at Mudginberri.

Because the crisis has hit while Labor Party governments are in office at a federal and state level, the NFF has been able to exploit the anger of family farmers to draw them more firmly behind the lead of the big capitalist farmers. Unlike during the three decades of capitalist boom that followed World War Two, the approach of the ruling class has not been to grant government subsidies to farmers across the board (which, in any case, chiefly benefited the rich farmers). Instead, the new tack of the NFF officials is to try to offset small farmer unrest by calling for an end to spiralling costs, which they blame chiefly on the Labor governments, and by blaming high wages for diminished farm profitability. This dovetails in

with the deepening anti-working-class offensive of the capitalist rulers.

Uneven rural depression

Because Australian agriculture has become more diversified, particularly in the post-war period, and because the current slump is not yet as dramatic and universal as the crash of 1929, the crisis, which is essentially one of overproduction for world markets, has hit the rural industries unevenly. Within these sectors, the unevenness is increased by the differing impact on poor and rich farmers. For example, in the cropping industries, the bottom 12.5 percent of farmers will have a negative income (that is, run at a loss) of \$54,500 on average in 1985–86. By comparison, the top 12.5 percent will average the opposite extreme of an income of \$53,600! This shows the wide disparity between wealthy big capitalist farms and impoverished and indebted small farms.

But although this unevenness is obscured behind statistical averages, figures from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) still paint a staggering picture of the plight on most family farms. In 1984–85, average farm incomes fell by 14 percent after inflation to around \$7,000. This is only one-third of the average income of wage and salary earners (although this is also inflated by a tiny minority of high salaries). Even more devastating is the BAE's prediction that in 1985–86 the fall will be even greater at around 20 percent!

Behind this slump is the cost-price squeeze, as depressed world and domestic market prices have been overtaken by spiralling farm production costs. Again according to the BAE, over the past five years farm costs have increased on average three times faster than the rise in farm-gate returns. Freight costs rose by 47 percent over the five-year period, machinery and parts went up 48 percent, electricity rates up 64 percent, government rates and taxes rose by 70 percent, and, most crippling of all for indebted farmers, interest rates have leapt by 80 percent since the start of the decade.

By 1995, while the outlook for returns from glutted world markets looks bleak, input costs on the average farm are expected to have doubled again!

The lion's share of these higher farm costs are attributable to, along with the banks, the highly profitable farm-supply and processing and marketing sectors — all dominated by agribusiness monopolies and the big pastoral firms, as we shall see later.

World market glutted

The instability of world market prices is a major factor in the ups and downs of rural income in Australia, as between 60 percent and 70 percent of agricultural production is for export. Ninety-four percent of wool and the vast majority of wheat is destined for overseas markets, as is 75 percent of the sugar and up to three-quarters of the beef and sheepmeat produced in Australia.

While the quantity of rural exports has risen over the past few decades, their overall share



Part of demonstration of 45,000 farmers at Canberra, July 1985.

of the value of Australia's exports has slipped from 80 percent in the 1950s to about 46 percent today. This is due partly to falling prices, but largely to the greater proportion of minerals and, to a lesser extent, of manufactured goods that are exported.

World markets are currently glutted with mountains of surplus dairy produce, sugar and grain, and often meat. And while millions of humanity starve or are malnourished, particularly in the famine- and poverty-stricken areas of the underdeveloped world, and malnutrition is on the rise even in the imperialist countries, the profitable market for food is shrinking. This is the irrational logic of unplanned production for profit on the capitalist market and of the inevitable crises of "overproduction" generated by it.

This is the root cause of falling prices, increased competition, and shattered livelihoods for working farmers worldwide. Government subsidised "dumping" of surplus produce at cost price and below, or the introduction of tariffs against "foreign" imports, whether by the EEC, the United States administration, or by the Australian government, only serve to exacerbate this into a full-scale trade war. It is only the ruling capitalist families that profit by this nationalist course, while at the same time attempting to polarise working farmers against fellow working people abroad, as well as against wage workers at home.

Growing debt burden

The inevitable result of rising costs and falling prices for poverty-stricken family farmers is increased bank overdrafts and higher debts to the big pastoralist houses. Many had already inherited high indebtedness from the drought years, when many farm incomes fell to zero while unpaid family labor leapt by a massive 41 percent! In the past year, as the prime rate of interest for Australian farmers has risen from 13.5 percent to in some cases over 20

percent, finance capital increased by \$290 million (or about \$1,700 per farm) the amount owed in interest alone.

Total rural indebtedness now stands at \$6.5 billion and is expected to rise by another 11 percent this financial year. For the past five years, drought and slump have turned the rural sector into a net borrower, but this is no problem for the banks, as borrowing is still a small proportion of total assets. They know they will get their pound of flesh!

Lending money to farmers right now, as in every acute rural recession, means higher profits one way or the other, so there is a scramble for the spoils. The four largest trading banks — the Commonwealth, Westpac, ANZ, and the National Bank — have 60 percent of the lending market between them, while the largest pastoral firm, Elders IXL, is set to turn its rural financial network into a fully fledged banking operation too.

For many working farmers, the growing burden of debt has forced them to face the bitter prospect of selling up. As many as half of Australia's horticultural and sugar producers, 10 percent of dairy and sheepmeat producers, at least 20 percent of rice growers, and 7 percent of grain growers were considered "at risk" by banks in mid-1984, and the situation has worsened since. All in all, one in five of the country's farmers is in serious financial trouble, and at least one in 20 is not expected to be able to "trade out" of difficulties.

That means that of the 174,000 farming establishments in the country, about 35,000 family farmers face severe indebtedness. Almost 10,000 are predicted to "go to the wall," as the banks force them to sell up, while still others will be forced to sell part of their properties or switch to alternative production, such as from dairying to beef.

As more "For Sale" signs go up, property prices have already slipped by an average of 10 percent, meaning less for those farmers forced

to sell out to pay off debts. While the banks have denied forcing land sales, even NFF director Andrew Robb has admitted, "We've seen a few of the letters they're sending out — and they're twisting producers' arms pretty hard."

Farm foreclosures in Australia, while not yet quite of the extensive proportions of those in the U.S., have begun to strike some districts hard. Worst hit is the Western Australian wheat belt where 2,000 farms are set up for sale (about half due to bank pressure), while property values have fallen between 20 and 40 percent. A thousand more would sell "for a reasonable offer." As many as 4,500, or one-third of the state's farms altogether, would get out "at the right price." This includes not only so-called marginal farms, but also viable farms whose incomes have slumped below a tolerable level even for farm families "accustomed" to austerity.

In October, mortgagee auctions from forced sales reached almost one a day in Western Australia. In one rowdy demonstration, 200 farmers bid from every corner of the room in an effort to disrupt the sale. To let off the pressure, the Western Australian Labor government began talking of a six-week moratorium on forced sales and a voluntary reserve price scheme.

These actions have been echoed in Gippsland, Victoria, where rebel dairy farmers plan similar disruption of forced sales. The Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, in response, has been forced to call for a three-year halt to forced sales and a 4 percent ceiling on interest rates.

Many grassroots cane growers in North Queensland are calling for similar moves by their leadership.

For isolated farmers who can see no other way out, this situation leads to desperate actions. More than one has already begun talking

of shootouts with local bank representatives. On Victoria's smaller dairy farms, there have already been at least seven suicides by farmers unable to contemplate being separated from their plot of land.

Decline in number of farms

For over 100 years, and particularly in the first 60 years of this century, the prevailing push has been for "closer settlement" of the land, as with the Soldier Settlers' Act after World War Two. But in the last three decades, coinciding more or less with the post-war industrialisation of Australia, that trend has been decisively reversed, with 36,000 farmers leaving the land. The long-term process of "rationalisation" of farm holdings has developed, accelerated in times of rural recession, both through market mechanisms and through intervention by the capitalist state.

At the time of the 1921 census, 37 percent of the population lived in country areas and 43 percent in the main cities. By 1976, the rural population had declined to 14 percent while the metropolitan population had expanded to 65 percent. In a parallel fashion, in 1933, 20 percent of the work force was engaged in agriculture, whereas today that figure is less than 7 percent. Despite its relatively large agricultural output, this population shift to the major cities has turned Australia into one of the most heavily urbanised countries in the world.

In 1954 there were 265,000 farms, but this has fallen below 180,000 in the three decades since, with one-third of farmers forced to quit the land and half the labor force being put out of work.

The current farm crisis will tend to speed up this trend. Already rural poverty is relatively higher than that of the cities, while the rate of unemployment is twice as high in rural areas. Hardest hit are country youth who drift off the land into the rural towns, and increasingly now into the cities, in search of jobs.

As it is the younger and, in particular, newly established farmers who have taken the most risks and who are often deepest in debt, they will make up a large part of the 10,000 who could be forced to leave the land. Already the average age of Australian farmers is rising. A year ago it was 57, now it is 58!

Women bear double burden

A great part of the strain on low-income farming families is borne by women, with their double burden as housewives and as farm workers, and most often as farm and household bookkeepers as well. Forty years ago there were 23 men for every woman employed in agriculture, but now women represent one-third of the paid work force! In addition, 90 percent of farm wives work manually on the family farm — the majority unpaid. Nor is it now unusual to find women managing their own farms. In 1978 there were 7,000 around Australia. A high proportion of women are also amongst those forced to seek off-farm jobs to supplement falling farm incomes.

These facts demonstrate that the labor of women is making a significant and rising con-

tribution to Australian agriculture, and to the coffers of the banks and agribusiness, and they help explain why a significant number of "rebel" farm leaders are women.

In addition, a considerable number of immigrant workers have settled as farmers, especially on the Queensland cane coast and in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area along the border of Victoria and New South Wales. A large proportion are Italian immigrants, but there are also numerous Greek, Yugoslav, and British settlers. Many of these more recently established immigrant farmers are, for instance, amongst the sugar producers who are being driven to the wall in the current crisis.

The crisis in farming also affects the network of decentralised processing industries, and small rural businesses and services as well. In recent years, the closure of small abattoirs in 100 or so towns across the country has led to the lay-off of up to 10,000 workers, with as many as 25,000 eventually being affected. The smaller fertiliser, seed, and agricultural machinery dealers are now facing hard times, as are many retail stores and other services. Today one-third of small rural towns are in irreversible decline.

On the land, the trend, along with mechanisation, has been towards larger farms, built up most often by buying out failing adjacent farms. The slogan "Get big or get out!" has reappeared on the rural scene today.

Bipartisan government policies

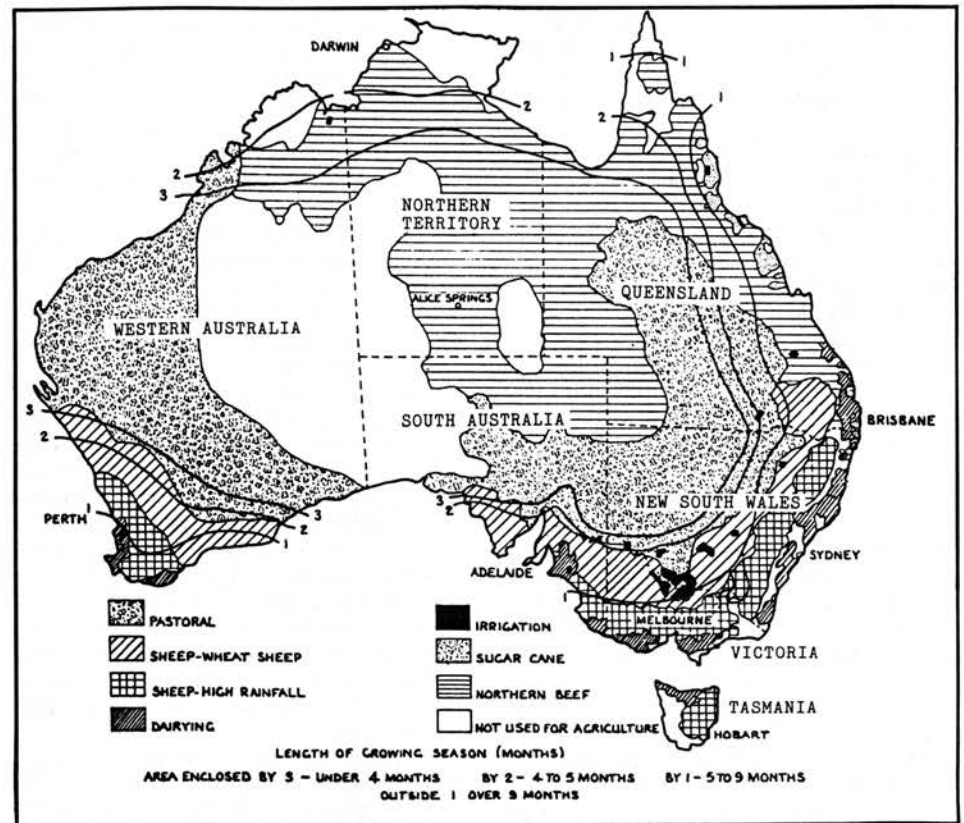
Historically there has been a bipartisan government policy between Liberal/National Country coalition governments and Labor gov-

ernments towards "rural restructuring" in such times of rural depression, although the ruling class has most often left it to the Australian Labor Party (ALP) leadership, electorally more immune from small farmer pressure, to carry such programmes through.

This was blatantly admitted by the former minister for agriculture in the Whitlam Labor government. Following the defeat of the Whitlam government in 1975, Senator Wriedt commented on the decision of his government to phase out the subsidy to the dairy industry: "Despite the harsh words spoken against the ALP's rural policy during the last election campaign, the current government has set about changing little of it. It's obvious to me that they were glad we removed the dairy bounty and revamped the marketing boards [to reduce the representation of farm organisations]. Both were politically more difficult to achieve for the Country Party. Labor made it easy for them."

From wheat farming in the 1930s, to dairying in the late 1960s and early 1970s and again today, there has been the offer of government financial assistance for "rehabilitation." One of the main purposes has been to enable more successful farmers to enlarge their holdings while easing the displaced farmers off the land. Carry-on assistance and, in extreme cases, household support has been granted to struggling farmers — the latter in effect being unemployment benefits while the affected families decide whether to leave the land or not.

Debt rescheduling is another form that government assistance has taken. In reality it has



encouraged farmers to go into longer-term debt, from which the banks and pastoral companies ultimately profit.

While these schemes purport to be for the welfare of individual farming families, they are a form of intervention by the capitalist state to ensure the efficiency of agricultural production for those who profit most from it.

Today, in the Victorian dairy industry, it is the national plan of Federal Minister for Primary Industry John Kerin which is designed to give the final push to up to 5,000 dairy families to quit the land, or at least dairying. His restructuring recommendations for the sugar industry could be the last straw for up to 4,000 out of 7,000 sugar growers on the edge of bankruptcy.

Left fails test

Faced with the explosion of farmers' protests in recent months, the majority of groups on the left in Australia have leapt to simplistic schemas which can be easily fitted into their economist or sectarian dogmas. The Communist Party of Australia, drawn by its reformist "Euro-Communist" politics and by its political support to the Hawke Labor government, sees in the farmers' protests only a right-wing threat, failing to distinguish between working farmers in revolt and the right-wing leadership of the NFF. Both the other Stalinist parties, the Maoist Communist Party Marxist-Leninist and the Moscow-aligned Socialist Party of Australia make the opposite error, viewing *all* farmers as a virtually undifferentiated ally of workers in what they regard not as an imperialist but as a neocolonial country!

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP — the former section of the Fourth International in Australia, which quit the International in 1985 following a sectarian degeneration) also does not distinguish the different class forces in the "farm revolt." Instead, it explains the direction given to protests by the NFF as the result merely of influence by "conservative political parties." The SWP gives virtual blanket support to *all* farmers within an anti-Labor framework at times indistinguishable from the right wing, rather than supporting working farmers within an anticapitalist framework.

Virtually all these currents make the confident prediction that family farms are being totally displaced by big corporate farms which use only wage labor. This of course would greatly simplify any need to make an effort to analyse, and relate to, the various class forces in the countryside, but it bears little relation to the actual trend in capitalist agriculture, or to the actual number of family farms today.

Rural class structure

To begin with, well over three-quarters — and as many as 90 percent according to some statistics — of the farming establishments in Australia are today run by family farmers, most of whom work on their farms themselves, whether or not they hire outside labor. The proportion, at least of legal family partnerships, varies in different industries, ranging from 47 percent in beef grazing, to 72 percent

in sugar growing, and over 90 percent in dairying.

To grasp the full significance of family farmers, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the whole class structure of Australian agriculture.

At the top of the pyramid are the owners of finance capital in Australia. This layer of ruling capitalist families draws off immense wealth from the sweat and toil of working farmers through high interest rates and indebtedness to the banks, as we have seen already. In conjunction with the banks, the other major sector of big exploiters in agriculture consists of the gamut of giant pastoral firms and big trading, food processing, and manufacturing monopolies known as agribusiness. The agribusiness monopolies exploit both the non-monopoly sector of agriculture, the actual producers on the land — in the main, family farmers — and their own wage workers.

Then there is the big capitalist sector in agriculture — the larger landholders, graziers, and capitalist farmers, often referred to as "the squattocracy" after those who "squatted" on or carved out the best lands for themselves at the fringes of the early British penal colony. Along with the expansive corporate-owned farms, these employ the greater part of the rural wage-labor force.

Medium capitalist farmers also hire permanent wage labor, but themselves work on their farms as well.

Smaller farmers hire only seasonal or contract labor, or else no outside labor at all, and rely heavily or entirely on family labor.

Lower-income family farmers are forced to rely on off-farm employment or to "share farm" for richer farmers. Thousands from among this layer will be forced by the current crisis into the ranks of the rural or urban proletariat, dispossessed of their land altogether.

Agribusiness

The monopoly stranglehold of agribusiness over Australian farming has been lucidly detailed in a new book by Sarah Sargent called *The Foodmakers*.

Sargent aptly calls the handful of giant pastoral houses Australia's new rural oligarchy, as their power has long displaced the squattocracy. They supply farmers with everything from machinery, spare parts, seeds, and agrochemicals, to household goods. They control the trading of three of agriculture's most valuable commodities — wool, sheep, and beef cattle. As well as owning their own huge farms and big feedlots, it is through their hands that most rural properties are bought and sold.

In addition to their brokering, servicing, and farming activities, they are rising forces in insurance and banking and "run shipping operations, overseas trading companies, and a range of businesses related to and outside the rural industries, like wool and leather manufacturing, food processing, travel agencies, whitegoods manufacturing, and television, radio and newspaper enterprises."

With this complex vertical and horizontal integration, two of the major firms — Elders

IXL and Dalgety-Farmers — predominate in many sectors of Australia's rural economy. This position has enabled them to compete directly with banking capital.

In 1982, during the worst drought recorded in Australian history, Elders IXL lifted its profits for the last half of the year by 78 percent, while its financial division grew by a phenomenal 120 percent as farmers were forced to go more heavily into debt. Elders IXL now also controls one-fifth of the lucrative \$100-million-a-year farm insurance market.

On top of its banking role, Elders is also emerging as a major international trading company. It already operates in 32 countries, with three-quarters of its work force overseas. In 1981, Elders' international division handled \$1.2 billion in rural exports — 15 percent of Australia's rural exports or 6 percent of the country's total exports.

Long since ceasing to be "family firms," the ownership and control of these pastoral giants was drawn, in the latest round of takeovers and mergers, into the main concentrations of finance capital in Australia. Agribusiness, which mushroomed in Australia during the post-war boom, has now been gathered under the control of Australia's ruling families. Elders IXL, already the 10th largest publicly listed company in Australia, is well on the way to becoming the country's largest corporation by the year 2000 — the stated ambition of chief executive John Elliot.

With their monopoly, or at least oligopoly, control of the supply of most farm inputs and trading outlets for most farm produce, the agribusinesses are the price makers, while the independent commodity producers on the land are simply forced to take the prices offered. The net result is that it is surplus value drawn by this unequal exchange from the labor of working farmers that is contributing to this spectacular new expansion of agribusiness.

Sargent's book also exposes the stranglehold of big business in the agrochemical field and the monopoly control of food processing that has emerged in the current crisis.

For instance, the Adelaide Steamship Company first entered the food industry only in 1981, to emerge within a few years as Australia's largest food corporation. As of April 1986, its top ranking will be assumed by a new, giant food conglomerate, following a major trans-Tasman merger of food-processing firms. The New Zealand-based Goodman Group is to merge with two Australian-based companies, Fielder Gillespie Davis and the larger Allied Mills, to form the biggest food group in Australia and New Zealand. The new company will have major interests in the processing of wheat and vegetable oil products — such as flour, bread, stock feed, margarine, etc. — as well as in poultry and other consumer foodstuffs. It will have assets worth well over \$1 billion and an expected annual profit of at least \$100 million.

Elders IXL and the New Zealand food monopoly Watties (themselves both partially owned by the new group) are major share-

holders in this giant Australasian food company, each controlling around 11 to 12 percent.

Capitalist farmers

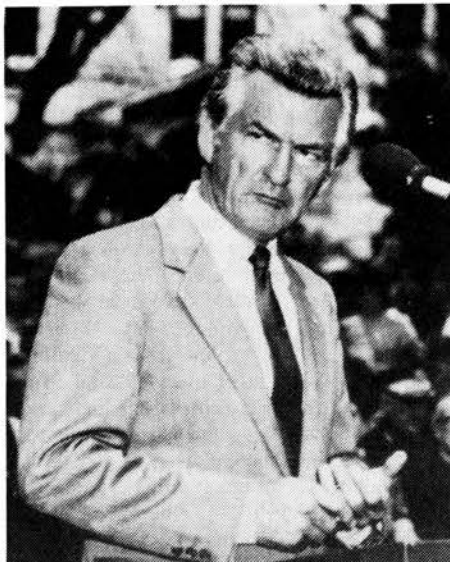
Some agribusinesses are more directly involved in agricultural production — but only in the more profitable areas. Such is the Sydney-based Australian Agricultural Company (one of the original agribusinesses in Australia), which today spans 13 major properties ranging from sheep runs and cattle stations to irrigated wheat, fodder crop, and soybean farms. During the recent drought, the AAC sold off those of its farms with less than desired profits, but it is always in the market for farms with greater potential profitability. Chief owner of the AAC, multimillionaire tycoon John Kalbetzer, owns one of the largest beef herds in the country — over 300,000 head of cattle. His manager summed up their ruthless and exploitative approach to agriculture as a capitalist business: "We are not in farming for the fun of it. Our philosophy is to make the highest possible profit like any other company."

Wealthy capitalist graziers and farmers are next on the scale. These big farmers are the ones who are able to qualify for tax incentives like investment allowances on new equipment, which are beyond the range of smaller farmers. The size of these farms and the degree of mechanisation mean economies of scale and bulk production methods which are impossible for small farms. Many such large farms produce a range of commodities as insurance against price and seasonal fluctuations, an additional advantage over specialised small farms. The bulk of the farm work force is hired by these big capitalist landholders and is the source of their profits. Consequently, these wealthy exploiters are the most ardent farmer opponents of the union movement.

Another category of exploiting farmers are the "Pit St.," "Collins St.," and "North Terrace" farmers — high-income business executives or professionals taking advantage of tax-free capital gains through land speculation or of tax deductions through "land development." These absentee landowners are able to channel their high off-farm incomes into buying up tracts of land, often denying poorer local farmers the chance to buy an adjacent scrub block for minor expansion, and forcing up the prices of land and contracting services.

Family farmers

Precise figures are difficult to establish on the number of capitalist farmers because of the overlap of categories. Middle farmers — those who both hire wage labor and themselves work their farms — come under the categories of both farm employers and family farmers. However, in the current crisis, it appears that if a minority of middle farmers are becoming more successful capitalist farmers, relying more on the exploitation of their labor force, a majority are not, and many are being forced to rely more heavily on family labor. This is corroborated by statistics from the Bureau of Ag-



Labor Party Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

ricultural Economics which show that over the past three decades there has been a growing, not a lessening, trend towards "owner-operated properties run [only] with the help of family labor."

And it is consistent with statistics showing that in this same period the number of employers (capitalist farmers) and self-employed (family farmers) fell by 35 percent, whereas the fall in the agricultural work force — 47 percent — was much larger, almost halving. Although much of this fall is due to greater mechanisation and a decrease in the number of farms, a significant part of it can be attributed to the decline in the number of laborers hired on family farms.

One difficulty in generalising an overall picture is the variation depending on land use. As the BAE says: "Most Australian rural holdings are operated by the farmer, assisted in varying degrees by members of his family. This is particularly so in the dairy industry, where few farmers hire labor outside the family, and is especially the case for sharefarmers, of which there are significant numbers in the dairy industry. In the wheat-sheep and pastoral zones, permanent hired labor is required on many of the larger properties. Casual and temporary labor is also hired as occasion demands and is particularly important in some industries, [such as] for grain harvesting, fruit picking, mustering and shearing."

With declining farm incomes, off-farm employment has risen from 20 percent in 1977-78 to 30 percent today. This applies mostly to the farmers with the smallest holdings, and about half of this percentage are employed elsewhere in agriculture. In other words, 15 percent of small family farmers are also exploited as wage laborers on bigger farms. The figure is boosted further by other family members working away from the farm as well. In the beef industry, about 2,000 very large pastoral zone farms hire the bulk of the numbers of

stockmen and other laborers, while 74 percent of beef farms in the high rainfall zones rely on some form of off-farm income.

A class of tenant farmers leasing land from absentee landlords does not really exist in Australia except in two special cases. One is family farmers leasing all or part of nearby properties, especially for grazing purposes. The other is sharefarming, which is quite common, especially in certain industries. The proportion of sharefarmers ranges from upwards of 10 percent in dairying and 14 percent in wheat farming, to 25 percent in some potato-growing districts and nearly 70 percent in some tobacco-growing regions.

While sharefarming has been portrayed as a "stepping stone to farm ownership," the reality is somewhat different. Today, in conditions of crisis, the pressure is for the portion of the returns going to the sharefarmer, as against the landholder, to fall.

A different category is contract farming, which is especially rife in the poultry industry. Until recently there were three monopolies. Today only two — Inghams and Amatil — control almost 90 percent of chicken meat marketing. Chicken farmers toil under probably the most oppressive conditions of any in Australia. While these farmers "own" their chicken sheds, it is the monopolies which supply the day-old chicks and the feed and veterinary supplies and which market the end products. At no stage do the farmers own the chickens, which are raised under contract. They are forced to take the meagre prices dictated by Inghams and Amatil, out of which have to be paid overheads and living expenses.

Farm workers

Lastly, there are about 150,000 farm workers in Australia. These include itinerant or seasonal workers (whose numbers have declined sharply in recent years with greater mechanisation) and a pastoral labor force of 45,000 (made up of 25,000 station hands and 20,000 shearers), largely employed on the big sheep and cattle properties or by contract. Many thousands more are employed in the extensive grain-growing belts, either seasonally, permanently, or under contract, or as contractors throughout agriculture. These agricultural laborers are among the most exploited layers of the working class, and their wages and conditions are coming under heavier attack by the big farm employers attempting to boost their profits in this crisis.

The most heavily exploited, in fact super-exploited, layer of the rural work force has always been Aboriginal seasonal workers, chiefly on the vast pastoral properties of the semi-arid "outback" in the Northern Territory and in northwest Western Australia. For Aboriginal communities living on parts of these huge cattle stations, jobs as stockmen or as female domestic servants are the only ones available. It was only as recently as 1968 that union award wages and conditions were at least legally extended to black workers in the pastoral industry. Up until then, the infamous and racist paternalism of payment-in-kind pre-

dominated — “a handful of food rations and tobacco.” Cash wages, where paid, amounted to less than one-fifth that of white workers.

Legally enforceable award rates plus greater fencing and mechanised mustering of stock has cut into even this underemployment of black workers discriminated against and deprived of job skills and education available to white workers. As a result, this seasonal employment has fallen from over half to less than one-quarter of the employable adults in these Aboriginal communities. Similar oppressive conditions affect mainly women and children from black communities employed in the hand harvesting of crops like cotton and peanuts in some areas of New South Wales and Queensland.

Yet it is the 3,000 farm jobs held by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (according to the 1981 census) that make up the main private sector employment for a total black population of over 200,000! These Aboriginal stockmen, however, still form a significant part of the pastoral work force in the Northern Territory—Kimberley region. And it has been strikes by many of these black workers over the last two decades, particularly in the Victoria River district, that have been the main driving force behind recent land rights victories there. As a result, over a dozen large pastoral properties in central and northern Australia have been turned over to black community ownership and control, where cattle raising has been combined with more traditional modes of Aboriginal life.

All the above categories of farmers and farm ownership go to make up the 174,000 farming establishments in Australia today. These employ a total of 384,000 people ranging from hired workers to family farmers and sharefarmers, or 6 percent of the Australian work force of 5.6 million.

These farms range enormously in size and productivity, as well as in terms of the classes of farmers involved. The average farm area in Australia is nearly 3,000 hectares, very much larger than in Europe and 15 times the U.S. average of 200 hectares. This figure is inflated by the less than 1 percent of all farms which occupy about 60 percent of farm land — the few hundred huge pastoral leases of over 50,000 hectares, and some of over a million hectares, in the semi-arid interior and north. But even without these, the average of the remainder is about 1,000 hectares, and one in four farms is still larger than 800 hectares, compared with about one in 20 in the United States.

The average livestock carrying capacity is about one-fifth that of the United States on average, and wheat yields are only one-quarter those of northwestern Europe and half those of the U.S. For this reason, Australian farms with the same production levels as their European or American counterparts have to be much larger. Farms towards the coast, and especially in the southeast, are on more fertile land with higher rainfall and hence are considerably smaller.

The larger or more productive farms tend to be dominated by capitalist farmers and, in gen-

eral, some 70 percent of each farm product is produced by less than 35 percent of farms in the industry. This, plus the trend to farm concentration and mechanisation and the increase in average farm size, has given rise to the speculation about the disappearance of the family farmer.

However, the real trends of the rationalisation of rural industry can only be understood by looking at the overall social relations in agricultural production.

In a recent editorial entitled “Changes on the Farm,” the *Australian Financial Review* gave advice to its readers on “reduced profitability on the farm and moves towards greater concentration in the more profitable industries beyond the farm gate.” Profitability in Australian farming, except in isolated pockets, is constantly declining, the big-business paper warned, while in agribusiness, which contributes “between 20 and 35 percent to GDP . . . healthy profits can still be made.”

“Like it or not, Australian farmers have to realise that their industries have been undergoing a structural change. In contrast, agricultural companies [the most significant and profitable of which are, according to the *Financial Review*, Elders IXL, Adelaide Steamship, and Amatil] have foreseen the change, substantially directed the transformation and, more importantly, have profited from it!”

In fact, the extension of corporate farming today is largely limited to areas of intensive farming such as lotfeeding or else to areas of very high capital returns in some irrigated regions where the growing environment can be controlled to a larger degree. The main areas are pigs, poultry, vegetables, grapes, and cotton.

While there is greater profitability in the monopolised rural industry sector beyond the farm gate than in corporate farming, the extraction of surplus value occurs by a different means within the highly competitive sector of family farming.

Debt slavery

When the labor of *all* members of farming families (which doesn't show up in most statistics) is taken into account, along with the extremely long hours worked, then it is clear that the greater part of *labor time* involved in Australian agriculture is contributed by family farmers. These working farmers, who produce the majority of farm produce, are independent commodity producers exploited by the ruling capitalist families largely through the medium of debt slavery rather than wage slavery. For the banks and agribusiness, there is no profitable reason to displace this central (and more disguised) form of exploitation of labor on the land.

As one finance company representative put it in a farm journal recently, “Even if the banks installed their own managers, they couldn't run these farms with the efficiency and dedication of the owner-operator.”

The “efficiency” of family farming for the banks is that these farmers take most of the risks — of seasonal failures and uncertain

prices, high interest rates and taxes, and rising production costs. Because the farm is at least nominally theirs, all the family members put in enormous amounts of time and effort in production, working from sunup to sundown, often every day of the week. For these working farmers, the farm returns are simply the indirect wages of their labor and not, as for the capitalist farmers, a profit on their investments.

Many observers have also mistaken the process of expansion in farm size as leading to the demise of the family farm. But the “rationalisation” that is taking place is one that is taking place both in the capitalist farming sector and *within* the family farm sector.

The increasing size of farms has been brought about by the leap in farm mechanisation and the development of new plant and stock breeding, leading to higher farm productivity and increased competition. What constitutes a “living area” for family farms today is appreciably greater than 30 years ago. Another result is that the new generation of farmers today have to be generally more skilled and better educated than their predecessors.

The process of land concentration has been accelerated by the periods of slump in the rural economy. Not only capitalist farmers, but also working farmers, are forced to try to expand their acreage under production. This leads to overuse of the soils on family farms, unless it is possible to buy or lease neighboring farms or plots, simply in order to try to raise production and secure a decent income. And the increase in farm size, because it occurs alongside greater mechanisation, has been accompanied not by an increase but a decrease in the number of farm workers.

Behind the rationalisation in farm holdings is a growing pressure for increased exploitation of all forms of farm labor. Many middle farmers are being driven further into the ranks of exploited farmers. Family farmers are being forced to work harder and longer, or to try to find additional off-farm jobs, and those who cannot stave off bankruptcy are driven off the land altogether.

The family farm, and the burdens on it of interest and mortgages by the banks and monopoly pricing by agribusiness, is a central pillar of the exploitative social relations of production under advanced capitalism in the countryside. It will take a revolutionary alliance of working farmers with the proletariat of town and country to eradicate, *not* family farms, but this oppressive weight of capitalist exploitation.

National Farmers Federation

While the different farmer organisations in Australia have always been run by those with the most time, money, and political influence and ties — the squattocracy and gentlemen capitalist farmers — there hasn't been until recently a prominent national organisation uniting these bodies.

However, the National Farmers Federation, formed as a Canberra-based umbrella group in 1979, has come to the fore during the last half

decade of growing farm crisis. It now claims a membership of most of Australia's farm owners, and there is talk of making membership of the NFF and its constituent organisations compulsory for farmers. Ironically, this talk has come from vociferous opponents of compulsory unionism for wage workers.

The NFF's president, Cambridge-educated Ian McLaclan, was once considered a rising star in the Liberal Party, thought likely to follow in his father's footsteps to become party president. His family happens to own the largest sheep run in the world — Commonwealth Hill station in South Australia — where Australia's largest flock of over 300,000 head of sheep roams across more than 100,000 square kilometres. Among other things, McLaclan serves on the board of directors of Elders IXL. Quite a handy connection when it comes to coordinating the policies and campaigns of the NFF with the stakes of the largest agribusiness in the country!

McLaclan's entry into political action came in 1978 when he led farmers to break the ban on live sheep exports by the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU) by loading the sheep themselves. At the 1985 mass rally in Canberra, he laid out the NFF plan that there would be other opportunities like this when farmers would be called on to take action.

Meat workers targeted

The "opportunity" was not long in coming. The provocation by the boss of the remote Mudginberri abattoir in the Northern Territory in using contract labor to bust the award conditions of the meat workers' union probably had McLaclan's support from its inception. The NFF immediately plunged into this new confrontation with the AMIEU, ploughing over \$100,000 into the legal battle to help cripple the union.

The NFF has also launched two multimillion-dollar funds. One aims at corporate sponsorship for a massive publicity campaign through the media, entitled "Our Country," to put across the image that it is the whole country community that is in crisis and appealing to nationalist sentiments. The other is an even more overtly political National Fighting Fund to cover the campaign at Mudginberri and future actions like it. Mass meetings of farmers in rural towns across Australia have been held by the NFF, taking advantage of the crisis hitting working farmers to raise funds for this purpose.

Playing a key part in all this is Rick Farley, described as the NFF's new troubleshooter and political tactician. Farley comes from the breakaway militant Cattleman's Union and has been pushing for a new rural-based conservative party. The Canberra rally he sees as "round one in the lead up to the next [Federal] elections" in which this party could be "a wild card like the NDP [Nuclear Disarmament Party] was at the last elections," by contesting marginal seats in rural electorates against all the major parties. There is a certain parallel with the NDP, in that it would also be used to

channel radical dissatisfaction with government policies back into electoralism, but the big farmers behind the NFF envisage a more "fighting" campaign against the labor movement!

With the emerging rural crisis has come a growing dissatisfaction with the National Country Party, which has always posed as representing country people in general, while serving the interests of big business in agriculture and now increasingly in mining. The current leadership of the NFF, in distancing itself from the traditional "country" party, has in fact adopted policies more aligned with the senior coalition party, the Liberals, especially over "deregulation" of the labor market, opposition to government taxes on business, and against tariffs which affect farm costs. Its chief importance for the ruling class is to remuster small-farmer support behind the squattocracy and capitalist farmers to serve the big capitalists' anti-working-class offensive.

Despite the bipartisan policies on the restructuring of rural industry of Labor and the Liberal-National coalition, the union base of the ALP makes Labor governments a preferable vehicle for the ruling class to carry out these moves against small farmers. Today, the federal and most state governments are formed by the Labor Party. With these administering the attacks on family farmers' livelihoods, it has been a simple matter for the NFF leadership to give all the major farmer demonstrations an anti-Labor direction. However, dissatisfaction is also mounting against the Bjelke-Petersen National Party government in Queensland due to its rejecting federal assistance from Canberra tied to state assistance for stricken cane farmers.

The pro-capitalist Labor leadership perpetuates the classless myth of "the rural community" and inevitably panders to the divisions which the ruling class is always trying to deepen between family farmers and wage workers. A few years ago the then opposition leader, Bill Hayden, at a rural conference, expressed his sympathy to farmers at the high wages bill they faced (even though only a minority actually hire workers)! This echoes the capitalist lies which point the blame at the small producers on the land for high food prices in the cities and against unionised workers for falling farm incomes.

Aided by a similar line taken by most leaders of the union movement, the big landholders at the head of the NFF have set out to claim the mantle of representing the bush. McLaclan presents it as "I am not here [in Canberra] because I am a rich grazier, a poor grazier, or any other sort of grazier — we are for us."

Although it is not in their interests, there are large numbers of working people, both in the cities and on the land, who still believe at this stage that the "us" McLaclan refers to is all farmers, rather than the rural rich. And the NFF is launching a major publicity campaign to reinforce that illusion. The NFF hopes to use the threat of further political action by poverty-stricken working farmers to force across-the-board government concessions which will

chiefly benefit the wealthy capitalist landholders.

At the same time, any minimal concessions that the NFF appears to win for desperate farming families can help bring them behind the growing ruling-class assaults on the union movement and its wages and conditions. In the midst of rural depression which has turned working farmers into a volatile force, this is the cross-class rural alliance that McLaclan and his friends have set out to build. Above all, they hope to avert a class polarisation between exploiters and exploited *within* the countryside.

This new political turbulence, bred by the rural slump, is also providing fresh audiences to which far-right organisations such as the League of Rights preach their anti-working-class gospel. Demagogy against "big business," demands against "big government," and more concrete proposals for action against "big unions" are gaining a greater hearing at least amongst some rural small businesspeople and more isolated farmers.

Worker-farmer alliance needed

But the broadest trend amongst the ranks of family farmers, suffering greater exploitation and even loss of their land, is for urgent political action in defence of their livelihoods. It is the concerns of these working farmers in their now desperate battle for survival that are the mainspring of the "rebel" farmer groupings, some of which were mentioned earlier. It is to this base of the farmer protest movement, as against the big capitalist farmers at the head of the NFF, that the orientation for a worker-farmer alliance needs to be directed.

The possibilities for this orientation will open up more, the longer that family farmers are forced to bear the brunt of the capitalist crisis of overproduction and the accompanying ruling-class offensive to extract greater profits from the toilers on the land. This will widen the gap between the exploited rural producers and the big capitalist exploiters (who are already trying to rein in rural militancy).

This will also draw out the distinction between exploiters and exploited amongst family farmers. Those whose chief stake is in exploiting wage labor will consciously come behind the lead of the big capitalist farmers. On the other hand, working farmers, forced to rely more heavily than ever on family labor and off-the-farm jobs, have much more in common with the working class and, with the correct approach by class-conscious workers, can be drawn over time to the cause of the proletariat.

As the worker-farmer alliance grows in the course of the struggle, it will be possible to neutralise some middle farmers who still exploit some wage labor but are themselves more heavily burdened as working farmers. This can enhance the relationship of class forces in the countryside and more generally.

It is up to class-conscious workers to take the lead in forging this alliance by reaching out to struggling family farmers and supporting their just demands. From this starting point it is possible to realistically advance the perspec-

tive of workers and farmers taking governmental power in order to transform society in the interests of working people.

The best aid to concretely explain this perspective is the example of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. Even though these have occurred in conditions different to advanced capitalism, they provide a striking demonstration of how this worker-farmer alliance can advance the struggle for power and of the character of this voluntary alliance of the producers that is vital as a firm basis for the transition to socialism.

Unions must champion farmers' needs

The starting point for this alliance is for the labor movement to champion the demands of small farmers that they be able to meet growing costs, keep their machinery repaired and up to date, and make a living income for their families. No working farmers, any more than workers in the cities, should be suffering from below poverty-level incomes, and the threat of being dispossessed of machinery and land should be lifted immediately.

This income support should be financed by heavily taxing agribusiness and the banks — the chief profiteers at the expense of country working people. Rising consumer prices should be checked against meagre rural returns by price committees of working people, and by industrial unions and working farmers' organisations fighting to open the books of the banks and the big farm supply, food processing, and marketing monopolies.

Working farmers should be extended full credit and interest-free loans for covering production costs, seasonal failures, and land, equipment, or stock improvement. It is these sorts of demands directed at benefiting working farmers, not the rich farmers, which will point in the direction of solving the rural crisis facing the toilers on the land.

It will be through the experience of joint struggles with the union movement for these demands that working farmers will come to more fully understand who their class allies are and who the real enemy is.

Demands for a permanent debt moratorium and for nationalisation of the banks and corporate middlemen will arise as the struggle develops. These point towards the need for the workers and farmers to overturn capitalist rule, establish a government of, by, and for the producers of town and countryside, and expropriate the ruling families and their vast holdings — the product of the exploitation of farm and industrial labor for generations.

The path of such a workers' and farmers' government is already broadly shown by the revolutionary governments in power in Nicaragua and Cuba. A workers' and farmers' government in a developed, food exporting country like Australia would be able to extend immediate food aid, as well as more important long-term scientific and technical training and cooperation for agricultural development throughout the underdeveloped countries of the world. By means of a rationally planned

economy, it would be able to insure working farmers against violent seasonal fluctuations and especially to overcome the intensified competition that is currently pitting farmers and farm products from Australia against those of other food exporting countries.

Australia

Report from the Philippines

Forum organized by newly formed Socialist League

By Nita Keig

SYDNEY — Two socialist activists, just returned from three weeks in the Philippines, gave a firsthand report here April 5 of the "people power revolution" that toppled the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

Deb Shnookal, a member of the newly formed Socialist League in Australia, presented the background to the February 22–25 mass upsurge in Manila. "The real turning point was not the February election but the mass explosion in the streets that took place after the assassination of Benigno Aquino in August 1983," she said. Shnookal described the discussions and debate that are sweeping through the Philippine Communist Party and other left-wing organizations as a result of the popular revolutionary upsurge that shattered schemas and cut through preconceptions held by many on the left.

Russell Johnson, a leader of the Socialist Action League in New Zealand, the section of the Fourth International in that country, sketched the economic and social conditions in the Philippines resulting from the legacy of colonial domination by Spain and later imperialist oppression by the United States. He pointed out that Spanish colonialism had largely uprooted traditional Filipino tribal society. In this century, imperialist rule has bolstered capitalist exploitation of labor in city

and countryside.

As the rural crisis gives rise to deepening class differentiation in the countryside, it is this fighting perspective, in alliance with other working people both here and overseas, that offers the only real solution for working farmers. □

The discussion took up the questions of whether or not the overthrow of Marcos had been a product of a military coup "made in the USA"; the nature and role of the Catholic church; and the discussion within the Communist Party of the Philippines over the tactic of left-wing forces in boycotting the February elections.

The forum was the first public event held by the Socialist League. The league is a new organization of supporters of the Fourth International in Australia, founded at the end of March out of a national meeting called to discuss the rebuilding of the Fourth International in Australia. The former section of the International, the Socialist Workers Party, split from the world organization in 1985.

A central part of the Socialist League's leadership is made up of the leaders who were purged from the SWP in 1983 for opposing the SWP leadership's course of taking the organization away from working-class politics and out of the Fourth International. The goal of the Socialist League is to rebuild a section of the Fourth International in Australia.

Further Socialist League forums on the revolution in the Philippines are being scheduled in several cities in Australia. □

Publications on Australian SWP's split

A special 32-page supplement issue of *International Viewpoint*, a fortnightly published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, has been published devoted to the August 1985 split of the Australian Socialist Workers Party from the Fourth International. It carries an article by Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International from Belgium, titled, "In Defence of the Fourth International — against the split of the Australian Socialist Workers Party."

Copies of the issue can be ordered from: Pathfinder Press, 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10014, for US\$1.50.

It is also available for £0.80 from *Internationa-*

l Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France.

An Education for Socialists publication, "The Split of the Australian Socialist Workers Party National Committee from the Fourth International," is also available. It contains documentary material related to the split. It also includes an article by *Intercontinental Press* editor Doug Jenness on the degeneration of the Australian SWP, which presents a different evaluation from that of Mandel.

The Education for Socialists publication can be ordered from: Pathfinder Press, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014 (\$4); 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL, England; or P.O. Box 37 Leichhardt, Sydney, NSW 2040, Australia.

Debate on situation in Nicaragua

A response to open letter of Czechoslovak civil rights activists

By Jean-Pierre Riel
and Hubert Sandor

[The following article is reprinted from the March 31 issue of *Inprecor*, a French-language fortnightly magazine published in Paris under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.

[The article was also published in issue no. 2 of the Czech-language *Inprekor*, as part of a series of articles on the situation in Nicaragua. One of those articles was an "Open Letter to the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega," sent Dec. 1, 1985, by 10 Czechoslovak figures who have been involved in human rights fights in their own country. Some of them had also signed statements defending Nicaragua against U.S. aggression.

[In the "Open Letter," they expressed concern with some measures the Nicaraguan government adopted following the establishment of the state of emergency in October 1985. The full text of the "Open Letter" and a critical response to it by Doug Jenness were printed in *Intercontinental Press*, March 24, 1986.

[Bracketed material in the text was inserted by the editors of *Inprecor*.]

* * *

In the countries of so-called "real socialism," they always refer to Nicaragua as "a small country exposed to imperialist aggression and fighting for its dignity," etc. But who really cares about it? Who has the intellectual courage to ask whether, despite the official propaganda, it isn't in fact true that this is a small country strangled by the American government and "fighting for its dignity"?

Who now have the simple courage not to limit themselves to introspection, but rather to try to act to correct what appears to be bad and, in so doing, to encroach on the regime's private preserve: its monopoly over politics?

Ten Czechoslovak citizens had that courage in the letter we are publishing below. We are making this letter known because it raises real questions and is of interest to all those in the world who support the revolution in Nicaragua.

Political democracy is not a balm for the spirit

We state first of all that we are in agreement with the basic points of the letter:

- Yes, "the fight for human dignity and freedom, the fight for social justice, and the fight for equal rights of peoples and nations are one and the same struggle: the emancipatory battles in Eastern Europe and Latin America are part and parcel alike of that struggle."

- Yes, too, to the idea that the main strength



Michael Baumann/IP

Mass funeral for 17 members of Sandinista Youth killed by counterrevolutionaries.

of a revolution lies in the conscious mobilization of its "free supporters."

- Yes, also, to the assessment that any internal evolution that implies a negation of the ideals, under the pretext of "saving" the revolution, can only lead sooner or later to the demobilization of the population and the establishment of a bureaucratic dictatorship, a "new system of repression and manipulation."

We are convinced, based on the record of Stalinism, that industrialization and the satisfaction of the needs of a society that starts out neocolonialized and largely backward are accomplished at a considerable price in material, human, cultural, and political terms if the state apparatus is left uncontrolled.

In other words, in our view economic and political democracy is not simply a balm for the spirit — something good for the developed countries.

Democracy is certainly difficult to achieve in the "backward" countries, but it is also urgent. Even if it cannot fully exist in a society that is still poor and where there is inequality on the social and cultural planes, democratization of all aspects of people's daily life, their growing, collective and individual responsibility, must guide the acts and measures undertaken by a revolutionary government.

We are convinced that this is a revolution's best defense against its internal and external enemies.

Nicaragua: a country at war

But we also fully recognize the right of such a society to defend itself against its aggressors. All the so-called developed and democratic societies have censored calls for desertion during wartime [such calls were made by the magazine of the Nicaraguan bishops, which was prohibited by the government].

In defense of the laws recently enacted by the government of Nicaragua, Jean Ziegler,

representing the Socialist International, pointed to the draconian legal measures [prohibition of the right to strike and the right of assembly] carried out by his country, Switzerland, during the last world war, even though it was officially neutral.

Before discussing in detail this or that measure adopted by the government of Nicaragua, we therefore feel it is indispensable to point out that Nicaragua is at war. And not solely against an armed external intervention: the real maintenance of forms of mixed economy allows speculators to use the formidable weapon of money, when that is rare and mobilized for the front. Radio Católica was not closed for stating that "freedom is a great gift from God," but rather for repeatedly broadcasting homilies against military service.

Radio Católica's "pacifist" propaganda ought not bring down any administrative repression, but only on one condition: that the others, the contras, also limit themselves to propaganda. But the contras wage war, not sermons. In this respect there is a division of labor, within the perspective of developing a real civil war.

Overall, our disagreement with the text of the "Open Letter to the President of the Republic of Nicaragua" is undoubtedly more a question of a concrete evaluation of the situation in Nicaragua than a disagreement over principles.

The state of emergency is not, or is barely, applied in Nicaragua, which still lives within the framework of a pluralism of the press and the media that is quite remarkable for a poor country, and one at war. This is, moreover, a country that, in contrast to Vietnam for example, is very largely open to the activities of international commissions of inquiry from all sides.

Sticks to beat themselves with?

No one of good faith can, in the present cir-

cumstances, deny the Sandinista government the right to decree the state of emergency, that is, certain forms of limiting freedoms, including, therefore, prohibiting strikes or meetings. But at the same time, the independent organization and free mobilization of the actors of the revolution is the only solution not only to establish a future society that is worth the trouble, but also to win the war now.

This raises a terrible, almost insoluble, difficulty. Was it necessary to make such a general formulation of the prohibition of the right to assembly and the right to strike, a formulation that in the hands of a Stalinist regime would surely mean the death of the revolution? Even though it is used only as a threat against the supporters of the counterrevolution. All the reports that we have seen confirm that thus far that is how it has been. But from the vantage point of external support, the Sandinista government has provided sticks with which to be beaten, making defense of their regime more difficult in the countries where the struggle for the rights of man is an essential precondition for gaining support.

The Nicaraguan revolution does not seem to us to be threatened at present by a bureaucratic dictatorial course. And it needs to defend itself, including with arms. It can find its best defense in the mobilization of the social layers that suffered misery under the Somozaist dic-

tatorship. And we should not hide the fact that this mobilization is ever more difficult due to the growing difficulties of daily life. This involves choices and therefore conflicts not only with the segment of the population that ardently hopes for a social and political order that would perpetuate their privileges and that finds hypocritical support in the "free world," but also with layers of the common people who are weary of so many privations.

For its very defense, the revolution will have to deepen, not repress, democratic rights. It is true that the measures recently taken provide the legal possibility for such repression. But to judge the Sandinista regime on the basis of that possibility is as dangerous as judging the regime of the late Stalin by the constitution that he bestowed on the people and which, as everyone knows, was "the most democratic in the world."

The American strategy in Nicaragua is clear:

to maintain an economic blockade and the military harassment, so that the population's material gains are reduced to nothing, and then to brandish the weapon of democracy while praying that a segment of the population grows tired and awaits the aid of "the American big brother."

There it is. All this means that on the basis of a common philosophy the signers of the Open Letter, starting from their experience in Eastern Europe, shine another light on what is happening in Nicaragua.

We feel that their light is useful for ours, because history teaches that in the name of the struggle against immediate dangers, the risk is great of mortgaging the future. Even so, you must fight for there to be a future. We are convinced that this is the thrust of the present struggle of the Sandinistas, even if they have made errors and may make more of them in the future. □

10 AND 20 YEARS AGO



May 17, 1976

A new trial of Korean dissidents who have demanded democratic rights began in Seoul May 4. Eighteen leading oppositionists are charged with what the Park Chung Hee dictatorship has called a "nation-ruining plot" and "a premeditated and organized act with a clear-cut intention of overthrowing the government."

The "crime" in question occurred in March when a statement calling for the restoration of democracy and the resignation of Park was read during an ecumenical mass in Seoul's Myongdong Cathedral. Under an emergency measure decreed by Park a year ago, it is a crime punishable by a minimum of one year in prison to express any opposition to the regime.

Among those on trial are Kim Dae Jung, who narrowly lost to Park in the 1971 presidential election; Yun Po Sun, a former president; Lee Tai Young, South Korea's first woman lawyer; and Chyung Yil Hyung, a former foreign minister.

The Park regime packed the courtroom with secret police, while outside about 200 persons staged a sit-down demonstration in support of the defendants.

WORLD OUTLOOK

PERSPECTIVE MONDIALE

(Predecessor of *Intercontinental Press*)

May 6, 1966

LONDON — Reports appearing in the April 24 *Observer* indicate that the apparent calm that prevailed inside Rhodesia at the time of the [Nov. 11, 1965] Unilateral Declaration of Independence [UDI] by the Smith regime was

in fact only the result of an efficient censorship. The report by the Commonwealth correspondent opens with "Reports of proceedings in the Rhodesian courts made it clear that there has been considerably more active African opposition to the Rhodesian rebel regime than has been allowed to show through censorship regulations."

Several incidents and court proceedings are reported, and significantly these are only now being dealt with, despite the fact that most of them relate to last November. Attacks on crops, cattle and farm buildings seem to have been numerous.

Bearing in mind that Rhodesia is a largely agricultural economy, these attacks should not be seen as of little importance. One individual case was reported: "A former hospital orderly, Amos Tshuma, was jailed for eight years at Bulawayo for burning down a European women's club." He was quoted as saying: "This was the only thing I could do to show my disgust for Smith's U.D.I."

However, more important as an indication of the opposition of the Rhodesian Africans is a report of an army mutiny at the time of UDI. This was reported as follows: "It is clearly established that there was a mutiny among soldiers of the Rhodesian African Rifles immediately after U.D.I. The mutineers were recently courtmartialled at Llewellyn Barracks, Bulawayo. The number of men involved is hard to establish, the figure varying between 110-120."

That such a mutiny took place is an indication of the isolated position of the Smith regime, and indeed of the majority of the white population. Army and police are notoriously the last section in the colonial world to defect from imperialism, being selected and trained for loyalty to the white regime. Given this fact, the mutiny indicates the tremendous pressure that must be generating under the surface calm in Rhodesia.

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Widespread protests hit war drive

Activists in hundreds of cities link 'contra' aid, apartheid

By Steve Craine

In the past few months, tens of thousands of people across the United States have demonstrated against Washington's policies in Central America and South Africa. Even though there has been no large, national protest action this year, as there was in April 1985, the total participation in antiwar activities has been at least as great.

The biggest single street demonstration so far this year was a march of 25,000 in San Francisco on April 19. This demonstration was built around the same four demands that mobilized 125,000 in six U.S. cities on April 20 last year. These were: no U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean; end U.S. support for South African apartheid; jobs and justice, not war; and freeze and reverse the nuclear arms race.

At the San Francisco march, which came only a few days after the U.S. bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi, opposition to U.S. aggression against Libya became an additional focus of the protest.

Throughout March and April congressional consideration of the Reagan administration's request for \$100 million for its counterrevolutionary Nicaraguan mercenary force, the *contras*, was a target of anti-intervention protests.

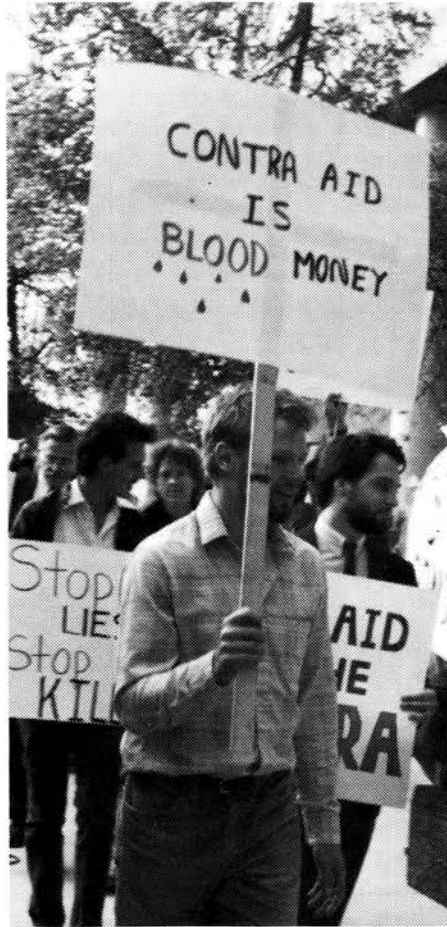
The first debate on contra funding in the House of Representatives in late March coincided with the "National Weeks of Anti-Apartheid Action" called by the American Committee on Africa. Some 300 cities held demonstrations, rallies, teach-ins, and protest meetings linking Washington's support to the *contras* and to the apartheid regime in Pretoria.

Less than a month later, activists in many of the same cities and others organized protests when the proposed package of financial aid for the *contras* came before the House again on April 14. According to the Pledge of Resistance, a national organization that called for a "National Day of Action" on April 14, activities took place in as many as 200 localities that day. Many of these actions were held at the offices of congressmen who had voted to approve Washington's financing of the Nicaraguan mercenaries.

Two separate rallies in Boston on April 14 drew a total of 3,000 people; in Washington protests were held at the White House and the Capitol; 1,000 in San Francisco marched from the Salvadoran consulate to Lykes Brothers Shipping Co., a major transporter of weapons to right-wing governments in Central America.

Protesters were arrested in Albany, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; Decatur, Georgia; Oxford, Ohio; Fox Valley, Illinois; and many other cities.

In a number of areas, participation by or-



Nancy Cole/IFP

Houston, Texas. March 19 picket against U.S. aid to Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries.

ganized labor was significant. Union-sponsored rallies were held in Detroit against contra aid on April 15 and against the South African government on March 22. Kenneth Blaylock, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents workers in the federal government, told the April 15 meeting that the labor movement must oppose sending any money to the "gang of thugs" known as the *contras*. In El Salvador, he said, the U.S.-backed government is waging "a war of terror against its people. We don't want to see another Vietnam in Central America," he concluded.

The 25,000 demonstrators in San Francisco heard from California Federation of Labor Secretary-Treasurer Jack Henning, farm workers' leader Dolores Huerta, and United Mine Workers of America President Richard Trumka. Trumka urged support for the boycott of Shell Oil Company, which has been initiated by his union, the AFL-CIO labor feder-

ation, and TransAfrica.

All five metropolitan labor councils in the San Francisco Bay area, along with dozens of union locals, endorsed the April 19 demonstration.

On college campuses the upsurge of protests has focused on the demand for divestment of funds from companies doing business in South Africa. Students on more than 100 campuses took part in the "National Weeks of Anti-Apartheid Action," which began on March 21, the anniversary of the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville, South Africa.

At 15 universities mock shantytowns have been erected to symbolize the wretched living conditions imposed on the majority of South Africans by the apartheid regime. In several cases, university officials, local police, or right-wing students have attempted to destroy these shanties, forcing anti-apartheid activists to defend them and their right to protest apartheid.

At the University of California at Berkeley, some 150 protesters have been arrested and 160 banned from the campus, necessitating further protests to defend free speech. On April 7 several activists banned by the university administration burned their "banning orders" while a crowd of 1,000 cheered. The University of California has \$2.4 billion invested in companies with ties to apartheid.

Most of the March and April actions made the link between Washington's policies in Central America and Africa. As a high school student leader in Cleveland told an April 5 rally, "If Reagan wants to support 'freedom fighters,' he should take the money away from the *contras* and give it to the African National Congress."

All these local activities show the potential for larger actions against Washington's war policies. A new parliamentary maneuver by congressional Democrats has put contra aid back on the House of Representatives' agenda for the week of June 9. This gives opponents of Washington's plans to overthrow the workers' and farmers' government of Nicaragua a focus for another round of protests.

A regional demonstration against U.S. support for apartheid has already been called for New York City on June 14 in recognition of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising. Several other cities, including San Francisco, Chicago, and Portland, Oregon, are considering organizing antiwar demonstrations for the same day. A protest against U.S. and Canadian intervention in Central America and South Africa is also scheduled for June 14 in Toronto. □

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