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Stakes grow in fight against the war drive

The pressures
on the
Nicaraguan
revolution

Brazilian labor
at turning point



**Imperialist
hands off
Grenada !**

International Viewpoint

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The stakes in the mobilizations against the missiles

In West Germany alone, more than a million people joined in the anti-missile protests on the weekend of October 23. That represents nearly 2 percent of the entire population of the country. According to the Paris daily *Liberation*, there were 450,000 at Bonn, 300,000 in Hamburg, and about 150,000 in each of three other cities — Stuttgart, West Berlin, and Neu Ulm. In Rome, there were 800,000 demonstrators, in London 230,000 and in Madrid about 150,000.

This massive outpouring has changed the political map in West Europe. One indication of that is that Willy Brandt, one of the main leaders of the West German Social Democracy and formerly an outspoken supporter of the NATO "Double-Track Decision" was a featured speaker at the Bonn rally of half a million people.

In West Germany in particular, these rallies represent a smashing victory by the peace movement in the face of a concerted campaign by the government and the media to intimidate the mass opposition to the missiles and isolate the antiwar activists.

The immediately following article describes the issues at stake in the anti-missile movement. The next one is the editorial from the paper of the West German section of the Fourth International on the sharpening confrontation between the anti-missiles movement and the new warriors. It was published just before the demonstrations.

Jean-Louis MICHEL

The December 1979 NATO decision is being met by a wave of mass mobilizations that is still rising.

This decision was officially called a "two-track one," because the deployment of the 572 new nuclear warheads, 108 Pershing IIs and 464 Cruise missiles, was supposed to depend on the outcome of the Geneva negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on intermediate range weapons.

In fact, the vicissitudes of these negotiations have shown over long months that Reagan had no intention of negotiating, that the U.S. imperialists were simply going through the motions of these negotiations to undercut the challenge of the peace movement.

The attitude of the U.S. administration was made clear enough by its rejection a few weeks ago of the proposal known as "The Walk in the Woods" compromise. According to this agreement worked out by the two delegations in Geneva, the Soviet Union would reduce the number of its SS 20 rocket launchers by 75. In return the U.S. would drop its plan for deploying Pershing missiles in Europe and be satisfied with installing 75 new rocket launchers, each carrying 4 Cruise missiles.

This agreement seemed favorable to the U.S. side, since it appears that the Pentagon itself found it quite satisfactory. But then Ronald Reagan decided to reject it without any explanation.

The former West German Social Democratic chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who, as is well known, was one of the main sponsors of the 1979 NATO decision, in fact expressed a certain irritation:

"I was not consulted, any more than the other allies, about the rejection of this plan. As I understand the interests

of my country and of the West as a whole, the 'Walk in the Woods Accord' was perfectly acceptable." (1)

The U.S. decision to reject a plan that provided for deploying 300 Cruise missiles and thus was far from meeting the demands of millions of antiwar demonstrators, testifies to the Reagan administration's determination to go the whole way in carrying out its war preparations.

In Reagan's war plans it seems, the Cruise and Pershing missiles do not have the same place. The Cruise missiles are designed for saturation bombing of the enemy defense lines. If they are used, it would be in large numbers and only after the start of an all-out nuclear war.

What is more, the U.S. leaders already have such missiles in their air and naval forces. The Pershing missiles are specifically first-strike weapons, designed to hit the enemy first and if possible by surprise.

It can never be repeated enough that the installation of Pershing missiles would gravely alter the present military balance in favor of the imperialists. To assess what this step means, you have only to think what the imperialist reaction would be if similar weapons systems were installed in Cuba, thereby directly threatening all the nerve centers of U.S. defense.

In the same way, the correspondence between the deployment of a weapons system such as the Pershing missiles and the U.S. Army's new doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons is very disturbing.

Some months ago, the *Military Review* wrote: "The 'Air-Land Battle' doctrine foresees the possibility not only that the U.S. could make first use of nuclear weapons — the previous doctrine provided for that — but that the U.S. might make a first strike. While the formula 'first use' means that the U.S. would be

the first country to decide to escalate a conventional war into a nuclear one, the expression 'first strike' means that the U.S. would start the war with a nuclear strike." (2)

Finally, to fully appreciate the danger represented by the deployment of Pershing missiles in West Germany, there is good reason to consider the possibility that a nuclear holocaust could be touched off accidentally. According to various American sources, it takes six minutes to identify a false alarm resulting from computer error. Reportedly, there were no less than 147 accidents of this type in the U.S. over a twenty month period. The same thing happens as often in the Soviet Union.

But it would take a Pershing missile less than six minutes to hit its target. If these missiles are finally deployed, the scenario of an accidental nuclear holocaust will be a real enough possibility.

The 108 Pershing missiles are to be deployed in West Germany. In December 36 of them are to be shipped to Heilbronn to be assembled, and then they are to be made operational in February or March. For good measure, at the same time NATO will install the first Cruise missiles in the Greenham Common base in Great Britain and the Comiso base in Sicily.

So, a decisive general test of strength has begun between NATO and the European antiwar movement. On its outcome will depend how quickly the imperialists go ahead with their war plans, the future of the mass antiwar movement, and to some extent, the general evolution of the relationship of forces in this part of the world. The imperialists have set the stakes. The workers movement and the antiwar movement now have to take up the challenge.

AGAINST THE ARMS RACE, AUSTERITY AND MILITARIZATION

This challenge has to be taken up in all its scope. With the deepening of the capitalist crisis, the arms race has assumed a literally insane tempo. A study carried out recently by the American Arms Control Association and the Rockefeller Foundation estimates that this year 660 billion dollars have been spent worldwide for military purposes, that is, 1.3 million dollars a minute. Some 50,000 nuclear weapons ready for use are in the stockpiles of the big military powers.

These nuclear stockpiles are sufficient to destroy all human life 22 times over. Their explosive potential equals three tons of dynamite for every inhabitant of this planet. What is more, the nuclear arsenals are not the only ones that give cause for concern. The stockpiles of bacteriological and chemical weapons are no less formidable, although all information about them is kept under a heavy veil of secrecy.

1. *Washington Post*, May 22, 1983.
2. Quoted in *le Monde diplomatique*, February 1983.

The stockpiles of conventional weapons themselves have taken no less than 9 million victims since the end of the Second World War. And research laboratories are still working overtime to perfect so-called intelligent conventional weapons. They are called "intelligent" because of their extreme accuracy, and "quasi nuclear" because of their destructive capacity which is comparable to that of nuclear weapons systems.

Even these astronomical figures are going to be left behind very quickly. The arms race, which now involves all sectors of military production, is accelerating very rapidly. To explain this, you have to look at the depth of the capitalist crisis. In this context, the armament industry plays the role of a substitute market for regenerating capital accumulation.

It is significant, moreover, that the capitalist ideologues who are always ready to denounce the "all-pervasive"

state when it comes to attacking the social gains of the working class, are all for a rapid increase in military spending by the capitalist states.

Thus, the one and a half trillion dollars that Reagan is asking for the U.S. war effort for the period 1984-88 would increase the share of the federal budget allotted to defense spending from 25 to 30 percent.

In France, the 830 billion franc military program for 1984-88 approved by parliament last spring will lead to a marked increase in the military's cut of the national budget (it is 20 percent now).

At the same time, in order to keep feeding this bottomless pit of military spending, the capitalists and the politicians who rule on their behalf are mounting more and more determined attacks on the past gains of the working class in the areas of health, education, and social security. Austerity measure

after austerity measure is being imposed on the workers and the youth.

Militarization and austerity are two inextricably linked elements of the capitalists' policy for extricating themselves from the economic crisis at the expense of the working class.

FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM

What the international workers movement needs is a policy for breaking this vicious circle. A few figures can point up how essential this is.

A mere 10 percent reduction in annual military spending would make it possible to eliminate hunger, while today 450 million people are undernourished. The transfer of 10 percent of the military credits to education would make it possible to put 400 million children in school, while today the number of illiterates, which has begun to rise again, stands at 800 million.

An International Labor Organization report published in Geneva on October 7 estimates that total reconversion of the arms industries would immediately create 5.5 million jobs. Some 80 percent of these would be created in the four main arms producers and exporters countries, that is, the U.S., the USSR, France, and Great Britain.

However, to force capitalist governments to accept such a policy, the most important means now is united mobilization of the workers and the youth. Only this can make it possible to block the imperialist war plans.

To give up trying to build such mobilizations would mean in fact abandoning today and in the future any hope of winning the objectives of peace and socialism, which can only be fully achieved if capitalism is overthrown in its main strongholds.

From this standpoint, the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy serves neither the cause of peace nor that of socialism. Instead of relying on mass mobilization for a solution, the Soviet bureaucracy is trying to divert the masses down the blind alley of arms negotiations politics. It is trying to reduce the antiwar movement to the role of a pawn in its diplomatic maneuvers.

Thus, the Soviet bureaucracy responds to the imperialist maneuvers first and foremost on the military level, and this has negative effects on the mass antiwar movement in the West. In fact, this approach is designed to justify, or consolidate, the bureaucratic yoke that this bureaucracy imposes on the workers in Eastern Europe and in the USSR.

In these conditions, the independent mobilization of workers in both East Europe and West Europe is not only a thousand times more effective against imperialism than a few extra Soviet missiles. It is the only realistic way to fight for peace. It is the road to a socialist future for humanity that will put an end to imperialist barbarism and dispell once and for all the threat of a nuclear incineration of the human race. ■

Imperialist hands off Grenada!

Army troops led by General Hudson Austin have overthrown the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada, executed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and six leading members of the New Jewel Movement, including at least four ministers and two major leaders of the trade unions, as well as of other mass organizations.

The very fact that important sections of the Grenadian people have demonstrated in the streets of St. George against the overthrow of Bishop, and that the army has responded by imposing a curfew proves that the new rulers have in no way acted in defense of the interests and aspirations of the toiling masses. Furthermore, the communique by the Cuban government indicates that, contrary to the disinformation ploy of Washington and the international capitalist press, the Cuban leadership has condemned the actions of Austin and company.

The Fourth International categorically denounces these actions and states that those responsible for such crimes have to be punished by the Grenadian people.

The People's Revolutionary Government under the leadership of Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement since the very beginning had carried out wide-ranging social, political and economic changes that benefitted the working masses.

The overthrow of the PRG represents a devastating blow to the Grenadian revolution, and it will have a negative impact on the struggles of oppressed people, first of all in the Caribbean and in Central America.

Since the victory of the revolution, Grenada became a target of imperialist attacks, of economic and political pressures, of blackmail and threats of direct aggression. In the context of the present crisis, imperialism will try by every means to finish off the revolution. A ten-ship U.S. task force carrying 1,900 Marines was immediately sent towards the coast of Grenada under the guise of protecting U.S. citizens there.

The Fourth International denounces all these imperialist manoeuvres, which are aimed not only at Grenada but also at the revolutionary government in Nicaragua, all the revolutions in Central America and the Cuban workers state. It appeals to the revolutionary organisations and the working class to continue and to intensify the worldwide campaign in support of the revolutionary regimes and movements in the Caribbean and Central America.

Working people and all supporters of the Grenadian revolution should stand guard and fight:

- For an immediate end to the curfew and all the repressive measures, and for the reestablishment of all democratic rights for the masses!
- Against all the imperialist manoeuvres in the region and for the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist armed forces from all the countries of Central America and the Caribbean!
- For the defense of the revolutionary achievements of the workers and farmers of Grenada!
- Imperialist Hands Off Grenada!

United Secretariat
of the Fourth International
October 23, 1983

The "hot autumn" of the missiles in West Germany

From the October 10 issue of *Was Tun* paper of the West German section of the Fourth International.

Winfried WOLF

The "Hot Autumn" got underway a good while ago. The offensive is already in high gear and has scored its first victories. On a world scale, billions are being spent on these actions. Not a day goes by without some action or campaign being launched to capture public opinion for the goals of this movement.

What I am talking about is the hot autumn of the cold warriors, the offensive of those who are pushing the arms race, the billions of dollars and Deutschmarks that this costs, and the daily provocations and black propaganda campaigns cooked up by today's and yesterday's "crusaders against the East" (1) to conceal their preparations for war.

To cite just a few examples from the past week.

— In the framework of their fall maneuvers, entitled "Confident Enterprise," the U.S. forces in West Germany for the first time practiced digging mass graves in a section of forest near Hanau. U.S. army spokesman Walter Nebgen explained: "It was an exercise for dealing with human losses in the event of a war. The entire operation was carried out reverently, as it would be in real life." (From the U.S. Army paper *Stars and Stripes*, cited in *Der Spiegel*, No 40.)

— At the beginning of October, West German soliders in Wetzlar held an exercise allegedly designed to train troops how to deal with peace demonstrators getting into the base. Brigadier General Rolf Huettel said: "Our defense measures go as far as using fire arms. But that is of course the final resort." (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 11.)

— The Christian Democrat minister of war, Woerner, ordered the drawing up of new guidelines for the West German army with regard to the fostering of German military traditions. And he asked for the opinion of the Verband deutscher Soldaten (VdS — German Soliders Association, an archreactionary veterans group with a good leaven of former Waffen-SS generals).

Among other things, the VdS called for "a more understanding attitude to the carrying of the banners and standards of

old German units [that is, of Hitler army units] and a stop to the condemning and defaming of the former Waffen-SS." Woerner promised to consider the VdS recommendations favorably. (*Der Spiegel*, No 41.)

— In early October, Franz Alt, a member of the Christian Democratic Party and a practicing Catholic, was removed from his position as TV news moderator. The reason for this was obviously his firm (moderate but firm) opposition to stepping up the arms race. The only TV news program where opponents of the arms race could be heard had to be "normalized" for this autumn of resistance.

— In the middle of September a story appeared in *Der Spiegel* about the "autonomi" — the "militant wing of the peace movement." It read like something bought and paid for by Zimmerman [the notoriously reactionary minister of the interior] and the Constitution Defense Service [political police].

The story included a long string of quotations of ultraleftist and terrorist statements. Secret service officials were called upon to wax eloquent about all the terrorist attacks these groups threatened to carry out this fall.

But there was not a word about the fact that people who can be shown to be secret service infiltrators have played the leading role in these groups, or that terrorist actions attributed to left-wing groups have proved to be carried out by Neo-Nazi groups, which themselves have been infiltrated for many years by secret service agents. (See *Konkret*, September 1983.)

It would be quite wrong to try to minimize these symptoms. They are not isolated cases. They are part of a campaign designed to prepare the population psychologically for war and, in this context, to reduce democratic rights and step up the attack on the working class.

For some time, members of the U.S. government have been saying that we are not in a postwar period but in a prewar one. In its October 10 issue, the most influential publication of international big capital, *The Financial Times*, describ-

ed the arms spending as "preparation for war." (2) West German general Ronald Zedler explained unabashedly: In long periods of peace, "armies get soft." (*Der Spiegel*, No 41.) This character is in a responsible position and is working with Woerner to make the turn.

In this campaign, they stop at nothing if it serves the end of stepping up armament. Reagan offers "disarmament proposals" by the dozen to cover up the U.S.'s increasing armament. The West German government is carrying out "educational" campaigns that cost millions of the taxpayers' Marks. The bourgeois prestige papers are pushing the arms race like the right-wing gutter press. For example, the main headline in the September 15 issue of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was "700 SS-20s deployed, four new SS-20s every month."

We have only to keep two facts in mind. First, every serious bourgeois publication stresses that NATO and the U.S. are far superior militarily to the Warsaw Pact, and in particular as regards nuclear weapons, and there is no way that the USSR can keep pace with the Western armament. On October 10, *The Financial Times* wrote: "In the last five years, in real terms NATO arms spending, led by the U.S., has increased by 11 to 12 percent, while Warsaw Pact spending has increased by 4 to 6 percent, that is by about half as much."

Second: The disarmament proposal made by the Soviet government is that if no additional NATO missiles are deployed, the number of SS-20s could be reduced to the number of missiles already stationed in France and Britain. All the SS-20s over that could be dismantled and scrapped. This would take us back to the situation that existed for a long time before the NATO Double-Track Decision, when no representative Western political figure talked about a Soviet nuclear missile threat. The U.S., French, British, and West German governments totally reject this proposal.

But these people are scarcely interested in facts. What they are interested in is war, to be more exact, two kinds of war. For the arms lovers and warmongers, victory in the war against the peace movement is the precondition for being able to wage "serious" war.

We cannot defend ourselves against this offensive just with facts. The enemy controls 98 percent of the media and is using 100 percent of the tax money against the masses of taxpayers. We have only one means, but it is a powerful one.

In these days and weeks, we have to take our arguments massively onto the streets, to the military bases, and to the factory gates. Every friend of peace, every enemy of war is another argument. And there will be millions of such convincing arguments. ■

1. Literally "Eastern Knights," *Ostreiter*, this refers to the worst traditions of German expansionism toward the East. — IV.

2. All the quotations from English-language publications in this article are retranslated from the German. — IV.

Spreading protest in Pakistan

Philomena O'MALLEY

Since August 14 there have been widespread protests against the military dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan. These have been mainly in the province of Sind, but to some extent in the large cities in the rest of Pakistan.

This campaign of civil disobedience, which has already resulted in a number of deaths and numerous arrests, was called by the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, an alliance of nine political parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of the former president, Zulfikar Bhutto, now led by his wife Nusrat and daughter Benazir.

The first organised protest in fact came on July 5, the sixth anniversary of Zia's overthrow of Bhutto and seizure of power.

Despite the arrests of a number of leaders of the MRD, a protest meeting of 600 persons took place in Peshawar, the capital of the North West Frontier province, and lawyers and politicians gathered in the High Court at Lahore to demand an immediate end to military rule and the holding of elections (*Le Monde*, July 7, 1983).

To head off the month of civil disobedience called by the MRD to start on August 14, Pakistan's Independence Day, Zia announced on August 12, a plan for elections at local, regional and national level, to culminate in parliamentary elections in March 1985. At the same time he proposed a revision of the constitution giving increased powers to the thus-elected president.

The plan for elections was local elections in September of this year, provincial elections in March 1984, and parliamentary elections in March 1985.

Political parties were specifically excluded from the local elections, and no mention was made of their role in the future elections — implying that they would be excluded from that part of the electoral process also. The president would be indirectly elected by an undefined electoral college.

These proposals run counter to the recommendations of the sub-committee of the hand-picked Majlis-e-Shoora set up by Zia to look at the question of the constitution. The fortnightly news magazine *India Today* reported their findings in its September 15 issue as follows:

'The highlights of the Shoora recommendations that caught the imagination

of the Pakistani people were:

' — that the 1973 constitution be restored in its basic essentials, including the fundamental rights, and a totally independent judiciary;

' — and that there be a balance between the powers of the President and the prime minister, which ruled out a presidential system of government.'

India Today went on 'In fact, in a matter of a mere two weeks, a national consensus emerged in Pakistan around two demands: restoration of the 1973 Constitution with minor modifications to suit Zia's Islamic preferences, and a cabinet system of government through parliamentary elections contested freely by the political parties.'

It was this national consensus that Zia so rudely disappointed with his August 12 announcement.

Even the leaders of the MRD did not expect protests of the scope that occurred on August 14. Big protest gatherings assembled in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, although police prevented a similar assembly in Rawalpindi.

Police used teargas and made a baton charge against the meeting in Karachi, but the first violent clash came on August 16, when a crowd, angered by police action, set a government bus on fire in Karachi. The first police firing occurred the following day in Dadu, north of Karachi, where one man was killed.

At the end of the first week most leaders of the MRD were in jail. MRD

General Zia at the Elysee Palace in Paris (DR)



circles in London claimed that 5,000 people had been arrested, although the official figure was nearer 1,500. (*India Today*, September 15). But the mass protests continued. Pakistan newspapers talked of large numbers — these were quantified by British radio, Voice of America, and Western news agencies as anything from twenty to fifty thousand. Troops had been moved into the major cities of Sind and Baluchistan, the provinces where the protest was based.

The main Baluch parties had stayed away from the protest movement until on August 18 the Pakistan National Party joined the protest and called a general strike for August 23 in Quetta, the capital of the province.

Students became involved in the protest movement from August 21, leading to the closing of colleges for one or two days at a time as the protest spread.

The first weeks of September were quieter, although protests, violent incidents and arrests continued, including those of four members of the Bhutto family, and of seven leaders of the PPP as they returned to Pakistan from exile in London. On September 18, some 1,000 protestors were released from jail in an amnesty to mark a Moslem festival.

The next focus of the protest movement was the series of local elections scheduled for the end of the month. The MRD called for a boycott of these elections, and a general strike in Sind.

It was at the time of the first stage of these elections, on September 30, that the most violent clash yet to occur took place when, according to official statements, 17 protestors were killed by police fire as they tried to remove a road block. Other sources put the figure at thirty. In other incidents polling stations were set on fire, stormed by crowds of protestors, or shaken by bombs.

In the two days before the elections in Sind *The Guardian* of London reported that 900 people were said to have been arrested in an attempt to prevent disruption of the polls (September 30, 1983).

As it was the centre of the present political agitation it was clear that Sind would respond most to the MRD call for a boycott of the election and general strike. *Le Monde* reported on October 4 that 'the second round of the local elections in six districts of Sind province on Sunday October 2 have been boycotted by a big majority of the population.' (The elections were 'staggered' across the country and within each province to reduce the possibility of co-ordinated protest, and the strain on the troops and police force).

The *International Herald Tribune* reported on October 3, that in this round of elections only some twenty people voted in the 20,000-population town of Bahan Saeedabad, and those were 'mostly plainclothes policemen'. Overall, in Sind province, voting figures seem never to have topped 30 per cent of the electorate.

In Lahore, the capital of Punjab, the main state of Pakistan, voting was also put at only 30 per cent, although in the rural areas it was estimated at as high as 70 per cent. However, the protest move-

ment has been very weak in Punjab. The first major demonstration took place in Lahore on Thursday, October 6, when lawyers called a protest against the military rule of Zia. This came at the time of the All Pakistan Lawyers Convention, which passed a motion demanding free elections on December 25.

A few days later the first violent clash outside Sind province took place when three protestors were killed in Quetta. The death toll now stands at over 200 in the period since August 14, according to opposition sources reported in the *International Herald Tribune* on October 8-9.

General Zia has now announced that he will meet with some leaders of the moderate parties in the opposition. However he is stalling on ending the ban on political parties, suspended when he first came to power, and on releasing political prisoners.

While these measures could help to pacify the present unrest, the accompanying article by Tariq Ali outlines why only a thorough reconstruction of the state can achieve stability in the long run. ■

Force. Mengal, now in exile in London, told me last week that the tiny islet of Mehdi-Ye-Koh, off Gwadar, has become a giant radar base and that 'no civilian officials, not even the most senior ones, are allowed to enter this area. Within the restricted zone there is another prohibited area, where only the top Pakistani army men are permitted. The entire zone is manned by Americans.' This new development could end the uneasy truce between the Army and Baluch nationalists and lead to renewed conflict in the region.

The explosion of Sindhi nationalism was predicted by those of us who had been monitoring military rule in Pakistan. There were numerous incidents in the rural interior of Sind of women being raped, their menfolk being publicly flogged or hanged for resisting and even people totally aloof from politics being subjected to indignities by arrogant and overbearing Punjabi military officers. It is difficult for most Sindhis to travel freely unless they have obtained a military pass. Small wonder, then, that slogans bearing the inscription of *Sindhu Desh* (independent Sind) have appeared on walls throughout the province and that demonstrators have made four railway stations inoperative and killed a number of policemen.

Ever since the establishment of a military dictatorship, the army and its network of competing intelligence agencies have sought to avoid, at all costs, public manifestations of discontent. Zia displayed Machiavellian skills in manipulating politicians and parties during his first five years in office. Warned of impending unrest, he tried on this occasion, too, to pre-empt the movement by promising elections to provincial and national assemblies in 1985. This time, no one was taken in. The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD); an alliance of nine political parties spanning the entire political spectrum, called for civil disobedience on 14 August (Pakistan's Independence Day). The response in Sind shook both the dictatorship and the MRD — both of whom in the past, have underestimated the effects of the national oppression that underlies the rickety structures of the State in Pakistan.

What makes the Sindhi response a powerful shot across Zia's bows is that the people have demonstrated their readiness to die. Even though the movement is restricted to Sind and Baluchistan, it represents a powerful stimulus to the common people of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province. This regime may not fall tomorrow but Zia's months are now numbered. His staunchest backers in the West — Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher — are, no doubt, already searching for a replacement model. His own senior officers have sounded the tocsin by beginning a clandestine dialogue with right-wing politicians with the aim of achieving a lasting political settlement.

Zia attempted a cynical use of religion to cement the army's hold over the state. The result was barbarities on every level. Women were deprived of rights and sub-

Behind the Sind uprising in Pakistan

This article, by the author of the recently published Can Pakistan Survive?, London, Penguin, 1983, was first published in the British weekly journal New Statesman.

Tariq ALI

When Sir Charles Napier's expeditionary force, with its customary brutality, occupied Sind in the 1830s, its commander is said to have reported it with a Latin pun: *peccavi* (I have sinned/Sind). General Zia's officers, currently engaged in containing the mass movement in that strategically important province (it shares a long border with India), are not yet in a position to despatch the modern Punjabi equivalent to their backers in the Pentagon. These are still early days.

The significance of the present unrest in Sind is twofold. It is not simply a struggle for democratic rights, but, primarily, an expression of Sindhi nationalism. The eruption is a direct result of the cruel military occupation that followed the coup of July 1977.

Bhutto was a Sindhi politician. Ever since his execution in 1979, Sind has been restless. The army acknowledged the seriousness of the situation by stationing six of its 20 divisions there. As there are hardly any Sindhi officers in the army — and since the Sind Regiment (sic) is composed almost exclusively of non-Sindhis — it is hardly surprising that the

imposition was viewed as a violation of Sindhi national rights.

The Pakistan Army and its high command are experienced in dealing with submerged nationalities inside Pakistan. The attempt to crush the Bengalis led to the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. Only two years later, the army occupied Baluchistan (another Pakistani province bordering on Iran and Afghanistan) and conducted a civil war for five years. It won, but the guerrillas of the Baluchistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF) fled to neighbouring Afghanistan. Today there is hardly any important Baluch political leader who does not believe in Baluch independence.

Now the army seems to have decided to teach Sind a lesson. Over the past fortnight, nearly 200 people in the province have been killed, several hundred wounded and thousands imprisoned under martial law regulations. The only support has come from Baluchistan, where a general strike paralysed Quetta and several smaller towns in a display of inter-provincial solidarity. The Baluch nationalists have accused the military regime of 'internationalising' the conflict by permitting the United States to construct a naval base near the port of Gwadar. According to Ataulah Mengal, the former Chief Minister of Baluchistan, this base is linked to the strategy of setting up local relays for the American Rapid Deployment

jected to an institutionalised brutality. Last December, a pro-regime cleric led his congregation after Friday prayers to stone a new-born baby to death: the child was illegitimate and, thus, a 'product of sin'. A few weeks ago, a religious court sentenced a young blind woman to be flogged for the 'crime' of adultery. (The man, of course, was set free.)

Pakistan's generals, however, have failed to make religion the opium of the people. Ironically, what they've done instead is to make heroin a minority religion. There were 50 registered addicts in Karachi (the largest city) in 1972. Today, there are 50,000. A number of generals have become overnight billionaires, while the victims of heroin are dying at an alarming rate. Add to this the treatment of trade unionists, journalist and national

minorities and it becomes clear that drastic remedies are needed.

Any regime that follows Zia will be under mass pressure to push through drastic reforms on every front. A demand already emanating from the minority provinces of Sind and Baluchistan is for the Pakistan army to be dismantled from top to bottom as the necessary prerequisite for a voluntary federation. A thoroughgoing land reform is vital for social and economic advance. If the politicians, currently waiting in the wings, succeed in forcing the army's officer corps voluntarily to surrender its powers of patronage and privilege, the choice facing them will be stark, but simple. Either they reconstruct the State on totally new foundations, or else it will cease to exist. ■

Balance sheet of the general strike of Belgian public workers

The general strike of public workers in Belgium started with a spontaneous walk-out by four train drivers in Charleroi on September 9. Within a few days, it spread to all the public workers and forced the unions concerned to issue formal strike calls. The public services were shut down, including transport and post, and the country ground to a halt.

The question of a general strike of all workers began to be posed. Many big plants began to have problems because of lack of transport, and some managements ordered partial or complete shutdowns as a result. In the Walloon industrial center of Charleroi, strikes began to develop in private industry as well.

A particularly severe austerity drive has been underway in Belgium for some time. The Belgian economy is one of the weakest of the small north European imperialist national economies in Europe, in the same class as Denmark. Unemployment has been hit hard, running over 13 percent.

The dismantling of the welfare state and the drastic decline in the standard of living has aroused an increasing desperation among the Belgian working class. There have been repeated big strike movements, with a national general strike last February. All these actions, however, have been undermined by union leaderships that are unprepared to put up a decisive fight against the bosses and the government. This experience explains how a walkout by four train drivers could ignite a strike that paralyzed the country and came close to touching off a national general strike.

The mood of the workers this time was that they wanted a showdown. Day by day, the workers assemblies voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike, right up to the last. But on Friday, September 23, the national leadership of the FGTB (Belgian General Confederation of Labor, the SP-dominated union federation) came out for a return to work. The Catholic and Liberal Party unions had withdrawn earlier, so this decision by the FGTB pulled the rug out from under the strikers.

The Catholic confederation predominates in Flanders, and the FGTB in the Walloon country. Historically, the traditions of class struggle in the Walloon country are stronger, while the Flemish workers have remained politically tied to the bourgeois Catholic party, the PSC/CVP. The leadership of the Catholic union federation, the CSC, is correspondingly more conservative. However, the traditional conservatism of the Flemish is also often used as an excuse by reformist and class-collaborationist leaders in the Walloon country.

Because of the national division of Belgium and linguistic sensitivities, every organization has two names, one French and the other Flemish, and sometimes they are not exact equivalents. Both the Catholic and SP-dominated confederations are divided along national lines, although the Catholic one predominates in Flanders and the FGTB in the Walloon country.

The following two articles are from the October 7 issue of *La Gauche*, the French language paper of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, the LRT/RAL (Ligue Revolutionnaire des Travailleurs/Revolutionaire Arbeidersliga — Revolutionary Workers League). They represent respectively the LRT/RAL's balance sheet of the September 9-23 general strike of public workers and of the work of the Fourth Internationalists in it.

Following the defeat of the Liege city workers, the Martens-Gol government

thought that they could launch a gen-attack on public workers. They did this

in the framework of the state budget for 1984. The response was a general strike of public workers that lasted for more than ten days.

The breadth of the mobilization testifies to the depth of the opposition to the austerity measures envisaged by the government. This opposition was expressed with the same strength in Flanders, Brussels, and the Walloon country.

Workers who had already waged struggles without gaining anything, such as the bus and tram drivers and the Liege city workers, came out again in support of this strike.

This opposition to austerity is not limited to the public workers. All the working people feel the same way about it.

Despite the hysteria campaign by the right and certain newspapers, who claimed that the strikers were "using the public as a hostage," the strike enjoyed very broad sympathy among working people.

Very rapidly, the need for extending the strike to private industry began to be felt, especially in the Walloon country.

The strike in the public services did not run out of steam. It was halted at the moment when the workers in the public services and private industry should have gotten the call for an all-trades general strike from the FGTB and the CSC (respectively, the Socialist and Catholic labor confederations).

On Thursday, September 22, two trade-union organizations withdrew from the strike — the liberal [right-wing] union and the Catholic Confederation of Public Workers (CCSP). This desertion created a certain wavering at the end of the first week.

On Friday, September 23, the National Committee of the FGTB made no decision and simply left the strikers hanging at a crucial moment. The Walloon Inter-regional Committee of the FGTB (1) waited 11 days before making a proposal for extending the strike to private industry.

CATHOLIC UNION RANKS FOR THE STRIKE

By agreeing to negotiations with the government, the leaderships of the public service unions assumed a grave responsibility. The Catholic unions ended up following the line of the CSC leadership, which was to do anything to save the government [in which the Catholic party is involved].

However, it has to be noted that while the CCSP accepted the accord reached on Wednesday, September 21, and called its members back to work, the Catholic railway workers waited until noon on Friday before deciding to go back. The CSC has probably never run into so much opposition from its ranks.

For its part, the CGSP [the FGTB public workers federation] by failing to

1. This is the FGTB leadership for the Walloon country. Toward the end of the public workers general strike, it issued a recommendation for an all-trades general strike, including private industry.

clearly reject the accord on Wednesday morning and "presenting" it to its membership, created doubt about what the objectives of the strike were. In taking this course of action, the national leadership of the CGSP gave the CSC a chance to cover up the fact that it was changing the aims of the strike and going to the aid of the government.

The trades councils' leaderships and the leaderships of the public workers unions in particular then sold out an exemplary struggle against a bad accord. In fact, even if the government made concessions on important points such as pensions, bonuses, and the biannual raises, it also — leaving the measures that affect all working people — cut 8.5 billion francs [52 Belgian francs equal 1 US dollar] from the appropriations for public workers.

AN EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY MISSED

Over and above the disappointing result of the public workers strike, the entire workers movement missed an exceptional opportunity. The leaders of the FGFB, the CSC, and Socialist Party and the Catholic Workers Movement (2) all attacked the policy of Martens-Gol. They all said "if the government doesn't change its policy, it should get out."

Well, the government has not changed its policy, but these leaderships did not dare throw it out. And they did not attempt this for one fundamental reason — they have no alternative to the austerity policy.

While their approaches are different, both FGFB and the CSC, both the SP and the Catholic Workers Movement start from the same principle that "sacrifices are unavoidable." Their policies aim at nothing more than assuring that these sacrifices are "shared more evenly."

During this conflict, these organizations failed to point to the ones really responsible for the crisis — the banks, the trusts, and the bosses. They offered no political alternative for making these people pay for the crisis.

Thus, right in the middle of the strike, Spitaels announced that "painful measures would have to be taken even if the SP were in power." This indicates that the SP aspires to nothing more than administering austerity. It is not interested in meeting the workers demands.

WORKERS LEARN NEED TO FIGHT FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF GOVERNMENT

It is also because the union organizations do not clearly reject the need for sacrifices that they have not really taken on the government. But the public workers strike showed that hundreds of thousands of workers think that there is no way to stop the austerity policy without taking on the government as such.

Even if such a mobilization makes the government and the bosses a bit more cautious, they are not likely to depart



Picket line at a Belgian railway station (DR)

from the objective that they have set. And that is, *to cut the direct and indirect wages of the workers in this country.* The results of the general negotiations between the government and the unions shows that the unions got nothing. If, the next time the workers movement engages in a large-scale action, it does not aim for forcing the government out of office, we will risk another defeat.

Broad strata of workers today realize that austerity is not going to solve anything for them and so they are not going to accept any new sacrifices.

Along with this, the strike demonstrated another important point. It is possible to achieve unity between the Flemish and Walloons. The unity that developed went deep. This time Flanders not only "followed," as it has on many other occasions. In any cases, it was in the vanguard. This was true for example in Antwerp, where the level of organization was the highest in the country.

Through this strike, the 800,000 public workers paralyzed a number of vital functions. By so doing they spread the idea of the need for "everybody out" for a strike that will "last." This lesson has certainly made an impact on a lot of workers, including in private industry.

THE GENERAL STRIKE IDEA TAKES HOLD

The idea of a test of strength that could be a *general strike* has become something tangible. All these lessons go against the notion of a "Walloon country retreat" proposed by the SP and the FGFB, and they will not be forgotten so soon.

In the trade-union organizations them-

selves, the strike is going to leave a deep impact. Besides the split between the two communities, the FGFB is going to be confronted with a split between public and private sector workers.

The FGFB's inability to take a decision to broaden the strike is going to increase distrust of all the multitrade union structures and weaken this confederation's striking force.

In the CSC, several trade unions (clerks, railway workers, and engineering workers) have demonstrated their opposition to the government and their reservations about the close ties that exist between the CSC and the CVP-PSC (the Catholic party).

All these elements, combined with the distinctive fact that the unions are no longer managing to defend the jobs and conditions of the workers, are going to fire an intense debate within the unions and their leaderships. The distrust of the leaderships, which are more and more out of their depth, will continue to grow.

To win the coming battles, things have to change in the union leaderships. The fighting unionists, those who have led the struggle, who have the confidence of their fellow workers and represent the aspirations of the ranks, have to be put in the leadership of the unions.

A new trade-union leadership has to be forged that can take on the struggle against austerity and capitalism. Already in the union elections in the private sector, hundreds of militant delegates have been pushed forward. The same thing has to be done now in the public sector, at all levels of trade-union organization.

2. This is a political association created by Catholic trade unions in response to pressure from their ranks for class independence from the bourgeois Catholic party.

A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE FOR THE WORKERS

Throughout the strike, the LRT and its members, both in the public and private sectors, supported another sort of policy. We were convinced that only an anticapitalist alternative could offer the workers the perspective they needed to win. The main points of this alternative are the following;

— *Reject all sacrifices.* Moderation has not yet created a single job. Reestablish full cost-of-living increases. A 32 hour week with no cut in pay.

— *Get the money where it is.* Abolition of banking secrecy, tax assessment of all fortunes, no amnesty for tax evaders.

In order to get the crisis in hand, the power of the bosses has to be broken. *Nationalization of the banks and holding companies*, of the key sectors of the economy, without compensation and under workers control.

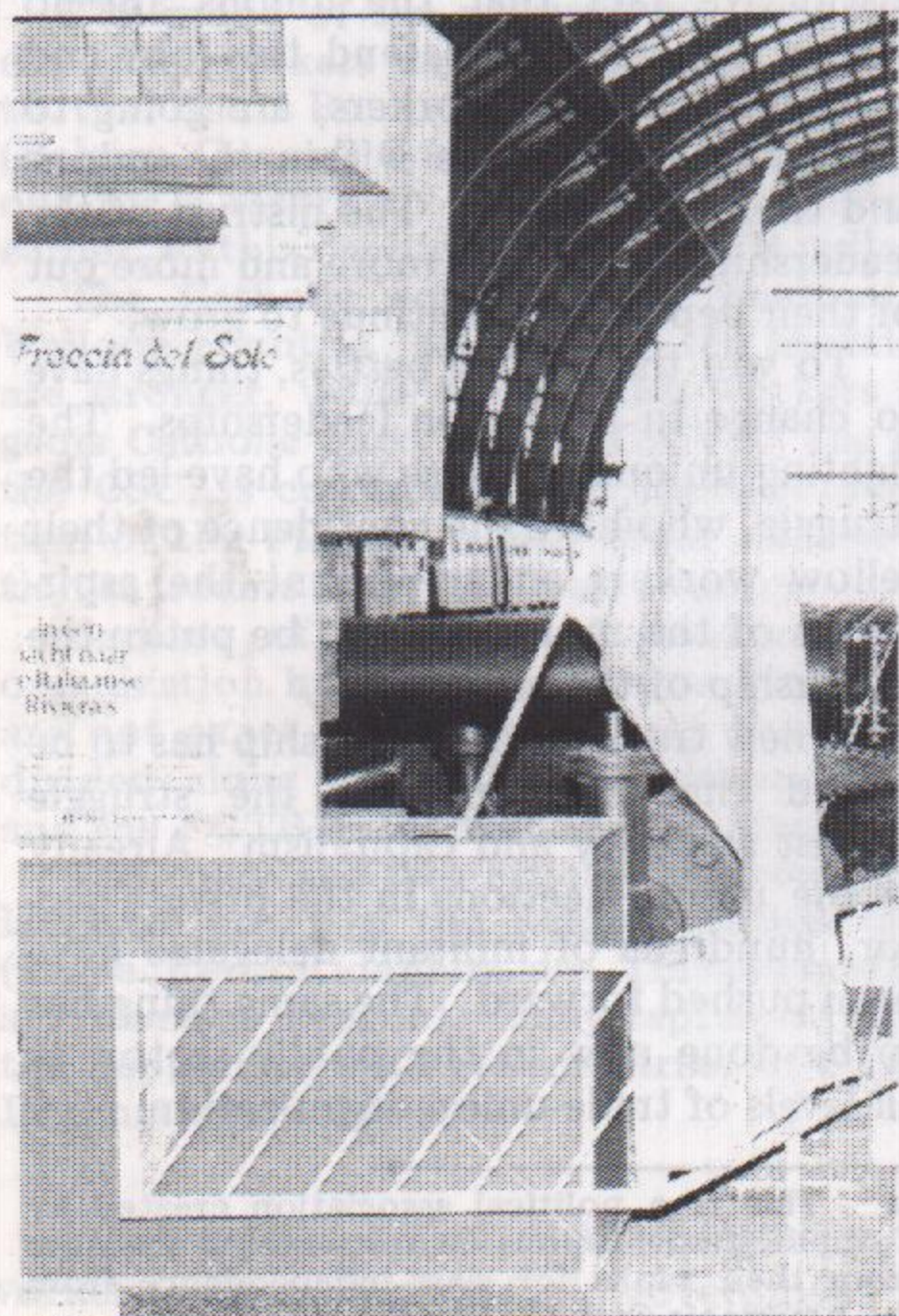
— *Martens-Gol out.* It's an illusion to think that this government is going to change its policy. It has to be thrown out.

— *Neither Martens-Gol, nor Martens-Spitaels (3) but a workers government.* A coalition government between the SP and the PSC-CVP will not solve anything. We need a government put in by a general strike and based on a trade-union united front. We need a government that will commit itself to meeting all the workers demands.

This government question was discussed a great deal during the strike. A lot of people asked "What are we going to put in to replace Martens-Gol?" This is a crucial question. As long as the trade-union movement has no alternative on this level, trade-union struggles cannot go all the way.

There is already a plan for such an alternative in the trade-union movement. It was worked out by the congress of teachers unions affiliated to the CGSP

Red flag placed by pickets (DR)



[the public workers federation affiliated to the FGTB]. We consider this a valid plan. It states:

"We call for a government based on the mobilized workers united around a political platform, which make the economy serve the society...."

"Such a government must represent all of labor and exclude all representatives of capital."

The SP and the Catholic Workers Movement should take a clear stand on such positions. It is only with such a perspective that a "front of progressives" would take on real meaning and put an end to class collaboration with the Liberals and the Social Christians.

Such a change of policy would represent a historic shift. It is not going to come about on its own. To forge fight-

ing workers unity, to advance an anti-capitalist program, we need to build a new workers party. We need a genuinely socialist party that will pursue the workers interests and not places in the state apparatus.

The LRT is dedicated to working to build such a party. Join the LRT and fight alongside its members in the plants, in the offices, and in the trade-union movement for a fundamentally different policy in this country. ■

3. Spitaels is both a leading SP politician and trade-union figure. Before the present Catholic-Liberal coalition, there was a Catholic-SP coalition that began the austerity drive.

The Fourth Internationalists in the Belgian public workers strike

A. TONDEUR

The LRT railway workers were obviously the first to be affected by the conflict, which began in Charleroi. When the bureaucracy was still groping to see if it had to issue a national strike call, on Monday morning, the LRT railway workers in Ghent, Antwerp, and Louvain, for example, were working actively to extend the strike.

DON'T PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

In the second phase, all the LRT public service workers explained in their workplaces and in their trade-union organizations that the struggle launched by the railroad workers was everybody's fight, and that it should be carried forward into a general strike in both the public and private sectors.

The very numerous sectoral and sub-sectoral union meetings that were held made it possible for them to see this view was shared by the great majority of the union members, and to explain that the struggle needed to be focused around a clear objective that could mobilize people — that is, the demand that the government rescind all its measures.

"This means not only the specific measures against the public workers but all the measures taken against the working class in the framework of the 1984 budget," the LRT members said in substance.

This point of view naturally led to arguing that it was necessary to build an all-sector general strike. The LRT members in the public services could see

how much this slogan, which had been propagated for months by our party, corresponded to the climate of mobilization in these past weeks.

But it would have been wrong to put the cart before the horse. In the first days of the strike, when the railway workers were the only ones to come out, the No. 1 task was to get a national strike call for all the public services.

As soon as this call came down, the LRT union activists, like all other fighting trade-unionists, faced the tasks of organizing the strike. They had to motivate and mobilize their fellow workers. This was essential to keep the strike from being a passive one.

Pickets had to be organized. In a lot of services, the railways in particular, the jobs are very dispersed. Coordination had to be organized between the various sectors and the two union confederations, and so forth.

ORGANIZE AND REINFORCE THE STRIKE

The response of the LRT union activists to these questions was the same everywhere: "In order to make the strike as effective as possible, we have to unite the two sectors and organize," this is what the LRT activists said everywhere.

This was made concrete by proposing regular, even daily, general assemblies of workers in all sectors with freedom of speech for all.

Such assemblies functioned in many centers. This was the case in Antwerp, Alost, Malines, Le Centre, Ath, Louvain. And the LRT members played an active role, sometimes a leading one.

In Malines, for example, it was on the basis of such an assembly that a march was formed to go bring out the workers at the SNCB railway yard. In Ghent, Brussels, Liege, and Charlerois on the other hand, the union leadership was able to prevent meetings. And this had its effect on the organization of the strike.

The most advanced experience of organization was in Antwerp, where a united strike committee was set up. LRT comrades, including Paul Otte, played a key role.

EXTENSION TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The problem of extending the strike to the private sector was discussed by LRT members. Everyone saw the chance to pursue this opening to get all of the forces of the working class into action. But, all the LRT activists in private industry concurred, it would be wrong to expect spontaneous strikes without a formal call.

So, the main efforts of the LRT union activists in the private sector were focused on the unions. They demanded assemblies, executive committee meetings, all-trades regional congresses, etc. to discuss the situation and give a lead to the workers.

The LRT activists waged this campaign on all levels, from the individual plant to the national leadership of the confederations.

Our comrade Andre Henry played an important role in the strike at the Glaverbel glass factory in the Charleroi region.

The LRT also intervened as a party, by selling its paper and distributing leaflets, in particular a leaflet calling for extending the strike against Martens-Gol to the private sector.

A CLEAR POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The real influence that the LRT activists gained in the public workers strike can only be understood if you take into account two elements: The first is that they were present on the ground, often in the very center of the struggle. The second is that they had a political line that corresponded to the aspirations of the masses of workers.

The LRT's political intervention was on two levels:

1) We put forward immediate demands, such as the call for the rejection of all the government's measures and rejection of all the government's measures and rejection of the 1984 budget as a whole. "You have to get the money where it is," the idea has spread and is being taken up now in circles much broader than our party.

Such demands made it possible to give a concrete form to our perspective of unity in struggle of the working class, between the private and public sectors, between Flemish and Walloon, between FGTB and CSC.



Unionists gather outside Catholic union headquarters, calling on them to join strike (DR)

To promote unity, since the LRT has a base in both parts of the country, we were able to take concrete initiatives to establish contacts between Flemish and Walloon strikers. All such initiatives that we made proved very successful.

2) Basing ourselves on the political consciousness of the workers, which marked this strike, we tried to orient it toward a central political objective — *the ouster of the Martens-Gol government.*

The clarity of the LRT's political line on this question gained respect for our party not just for the role played by LRT activists in the struggle but for the political weapons it offered to activists engaged in the political debate.

The course of the strike and above all its outcome have shown that there was no way to get around the question of an alternative to Martens-Gol.

Many trade-union leaders said that their aim was not to change the government but to force it to change its policy. This is true, for example both of the Communist Party and the Labor Party of Belgium (PTB) (a group of Maoist origins).

Basically, the PTB and the CP talked a similar language. Each in its own way impeded the development of the workers' political consciousness. In fact, there can be no change of policy nor any anticapitalist alternative without a determined fight to oust the Martens-Gol government.

Calling for a *workers government* based on a trade-union common front and put in by a general strike, the LRT

was the only party that intervened in the strike with a clear answer to the concern felt by thousands of union members: "We're all for dumping Martens-Gol, but what will we put in its place? A coalition government with the Socialist Party won't help anything."

The LRT's answer was not just propagandistic. It offered a way of building a campaign in the unions to put pressure on the big working class parties to support the demands of working people. We have never seen so many or such rich discussions about the alternative we offer. This will leave its mark.

Thousands of union members have gone through a powerful experience. They have come out of it disillusioned but certainly not defeated. A process of deepgoing reflection has started, focusing around a critical assessment of the policy of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement, especially the union leaderships.

These leaderships accept sacrifices, "on condition that they are shared equitably." This is why they refuse to put up a decisive fight, this is why they refused to dump Martens-Gol. So, the question of leadership in the workers movement is being posed. This problem now has to be seriously tackled, and this requires above all a correct political line.

It is this perspective of a long-term struggle points up the importance of strengthening the LRT, of building a new Socialist Workers Party. "You have good ideas, but what can your little party do?" we are often asked. The answer to this question can be seen from the balance sheet of the public workers strike. ■

Sandinistas fight for an economy geared to the needs of the majority

Nicaragua is up against a very difficult situation today. The revolution is under direct attack from the U.S. imperialists.

Washington has sent its fleet to threaten the Nicaraguan coasts. It is organizing large-scale maneuvers on Honduran territory. Moreover, it is trying to strangle the country by imposing a full-fledged blockade. (1)

This imperialist offensive is also being waged through the intermediary of the counterrevolutionary forces operating from Honduras and Costa Rica. In addition to the harm these gangs do by their acts of destruction and crimes, they are forcing the Sandinista revolution to give its main attention to defending itself.

To complete the picture, within the country itself, the most concentrated sector of private industry is refusing to invest and consciously doing its bit to further disrupt the economy.

Jean-Claude BERNARD

All the overall economic indicators for 1982, which are the latest known, show growing difficulties for the revolution. (2)

While in 1980 and 1981, the Gross National Product (GNP) grew by 10% and 6% respectively, in 1982, it declined by 1.4%.

Following the victory of the revolution in July 1979, the unemployment rate was reduced dramatically. In 1979, it stood at 36%. In 1980, it was cut to 13%. In 1981, it was still kept down to 16%. But in 1982, it had risen to 21%.

In 1982, moreover, consumption of products other than basic necessities dropped by 23%. As against this, consumption of necessities dropped by only 4.7%. While the rate of inflation was 25%, the drop in the buying power of the minimum-wage urban workers was only 14%. For rural working people, it is estimated that the decline in buying power was 19.6%.

Every revolution has experienced such difficulties in the beginning. The imperialists do not accept defeat but mount harassing operations. In the case of Nicaragua, these problems were further aggravated in 1982 by catastrophic floods that interfered with agricultural production.

THE GAINS OF THE REVOLUTION

Nonetheless, the growing obstacles have not diverted the Sandinista leadership from its orientation of meeting the needs of the workers in the countryside and in the cities.

What should be pointed up first of all is the major efforts made to improve public health and education. In 1982, for the first time in the history of the country, there was not a single case of polio, which represents no small accomplishment.

Between 1978 and 1982, the infant

mortality rate fell by a quarter, dropping from 120 per 1,000 to 90 per 1,000. Medical care is free in the health centers, and these centers account for 60% of the visits to the doctor registered in 1982.

In the area of education, the reduction of the rate of illiteracy from 50% before the revolution to 12% today represents a real historic victory.

The number in school has tripled, rising from 500,000 in 1978 to 1,500,000 today. Some 73% of children between the ages of seven and twelve are now in school.

The gainers from these advances have been the immense majority of the population, the working people in the countryside and the cities, who were previously denied access to these social services.

This progress means little for the bourgeoisie and the well-to-do middle strata, who already had access to medical care and to education for their children.

This orientation of meeting the needs of the largest possible number is reflected also in the results obtained in the area of consumption. The year 1982 was certainly a difficult one. But the drop of 4.7% in the consumption of necessities was small by comparison with the drop of 23% in the consumption of other products. This is the effect of subsidies to stabilize the prices of staples such as maize, rice, and beans.

The increase in the prices of necessities was only half that of other products — 12% as opposed to 25%. In fact, the general decline in consumption noted in 1982 hides the significant fact that there has been a very large increase in consumption of the highest-protein foods.

This is a particularly impressive success since in 1979 the diet of the majority of the population suffered from protein deficiency. For example, per capita consumption of chicken increased by 15% between 1980 and 1982 and per capita consumption of eggs by nearly 25%.

There have been calculations of the relative cost of living in the various Cen-

tral American countries. By way of comparison, a month's supply of 21 essential products for a family of six costs 36 dollars in Nicaragua. In neighboring Honduras — a prize specimen of Ronald Reagan's "free world" — the cost of this month's supply of staples is double.

All the other Central American countries have a cost of living far higher than Nicaragua. Despite all the difficulties Nicaragua has faced, it has suffered less of an economic decline than its neighbors.

The massive aid in dollars that has been showered on the most privileged layers in the other countries on the Central American isthmus did not prevent a drop of 9.5% in the GNP in El Salvador, 5.9% in Costa Rica, and 1.6% in Honduras. For most of the people in those countries, living conditions are much more difficult.

THE GRIP OF THE PAST

All the steps taken by the national leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) since July 19, 1979, have not, however, been able to immediately overcome the heritage of the past.

That is, Nicaragua is a small country that the former dictator Somoza assured would be dedicated mainly to growing coffee, cotton, and sugar cane, thereby increasing its dependence on the fluctuations on the imperialist-dominated world market.

In such a situation, it takes a long and complex process to eliminate the constraints imposed by ignorance, hunger, and poverty. You have to reorient the whole apparatus of production and exchange so as to give priority to meeting the needs of the greatest number.

This is what is involved in the objective and the work of building "people's power" undertaken by Managua. It involves organizing the power of the working class in alliance with the peasantry, that is, the overwhelming majority of the economically active population.

The direction of the process initiated on July 19, 1979, is clearly toward an overall reorganization of the economy. And this is going hand in hand with the emergence and consolidation of a mass movement representing the interests of the working people in the cities and in the countryside.

At every step, this process has met with fierce resistance by the counter-revolution both from within and from without. This is why, far from advancing at a constant and regular rate, this process has been marked by crises and stops and starts. But the outcome of all these crises

1. See "The Nicaraguan revolution under fire," *International Viewpoint*, No 36, September 19, 1983.

2. With the cited exception, all these figures come from official data included in the report of the Government Council to the Council of State dated May 4, 1983; from the speech by Sandinista commander Daniel Ortega on the anniversary of the Sandinista revolution on July 19, 1983; and from the report for 1982 by the National Statistics Institute (INEC, Managua).

is a further shift of the relationship of forces in favor of the workers and peasants.

Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie still controls an important part of the productive apparatus and which can exert ideological influence through its press and the Catholic hierarchy. And it has not yet given up hope that it can reverse the process.

IMPERIALIST ECONOMIC PRESSURE

This process is all the more complex because Nicaragua can only develop on the basis of international exchanges. There has been a steady reorientation of such exchanges since July 19, 1979.

In 1979, 78% of the credits came from international organizations, as against 22% from bilateral contracts negotiated with individual governments. In 1982, this situation was totally reversed. Bilateral contracts accounted for 92% of the credits, as against 8% from international organizations. This is due in part to the full-fledged boycott imposed by U.S. imperialism, which managed to block financial assistance from the international bodies that it largely controls. But it is also a result of the policy adopted by the FSLN and the Government Council for National Reconstruction.

The Nicaraguan government is now better equipped to make bilateral agreements, even with the governments of the capitalist European countries, that meet the priorities it has set for development. For the entire period running from July 1979 to May 1983, cooperative aid from capitalist countries represented 78% of the total, whereas that coming from the "Eastern countries" and Cuba amounted to only 22%. (3)

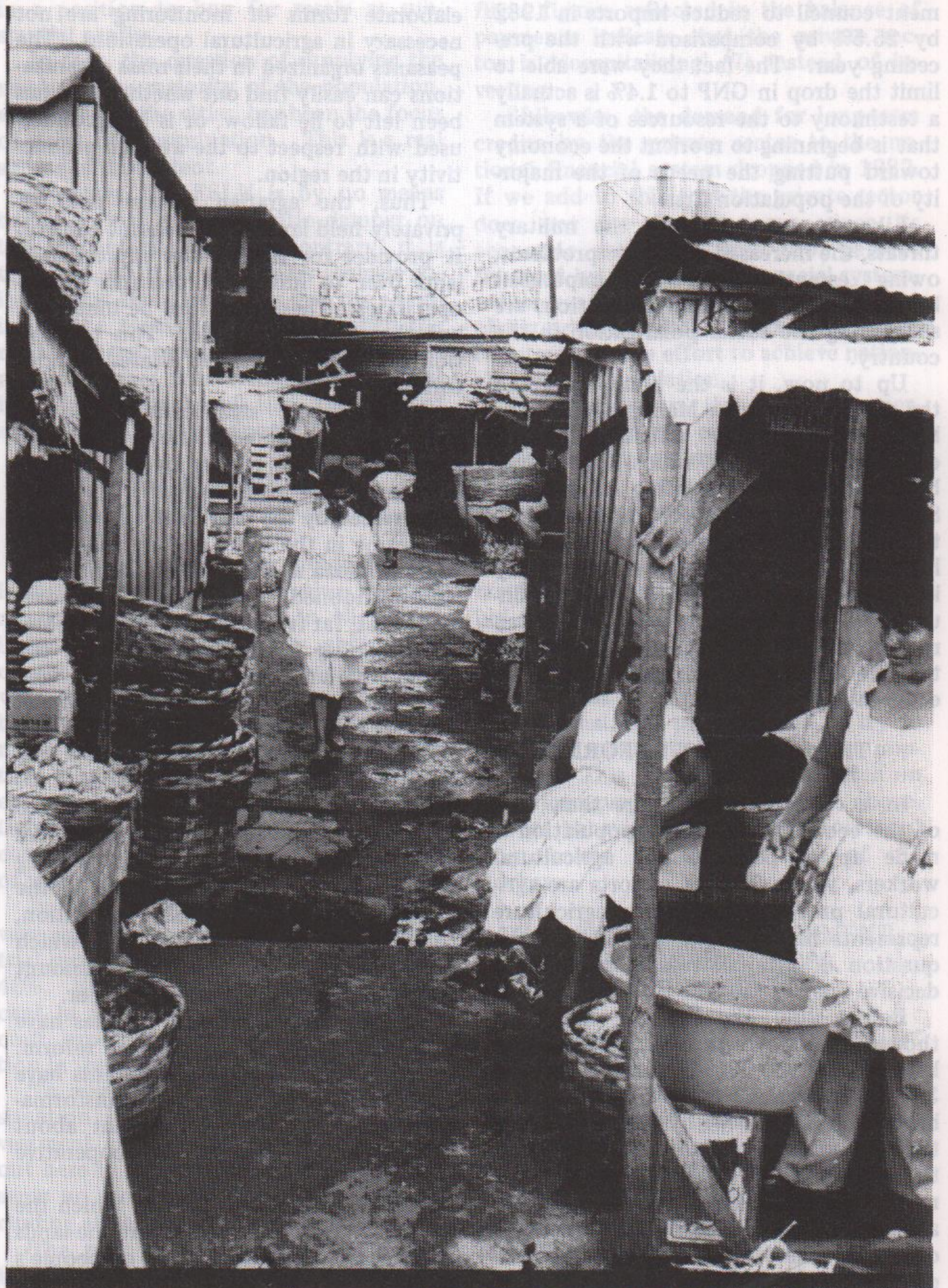
This pronounced dependence on the capitalist countries can be seen also when you examine the results of foreign trade for 1982. Exports to the "Eastern countries" and Cuba represent 6.3% of the total, while imports from these countries add up to 11% of the total imports. These facts far from support the stereotype promoted by the international press of Nicaragua becoming a "Soviet-Cuban" colony.

Latin America (including the Central American Common Market) accounts for 45% of imports and 16% of exports. The Central American Common Market alone accounts for 18% of imports and 13% of exports.

The U.S. itself still accounted for 19% of Nicaragua's imports and 22% of its exports in 1982. The steps taken by the Reagan administration in the spring of 1982 to block Nicaraguan sugar exports to the U.S. will reduce this.

The still relatively important scope of trade with the U.S. indicates how much any stepup of the American blockade could disrupt the Nicaraguan economy.

Trade with West Europe has been growing over the most recent period. Exports to the Common Market countries, which account for 24.5% of the total of Nicaraguan exports, are four times great-



Revolutionary banner in Nicaraguan shanty town (DR)

er than those to Eastern Europe. Imports from the EEC — 14% of the total — are double those from East Europe.

So, the overall reorientation of international exchanges is marked by two features. On the one hand, there is a growth in trade with the East European countries. On the other, there is a realignment of trading relationships among the capitalist countries — with the West European countries (Germany, France, and Italy) and the Latin American countries (mainly Mexico) assuming a larger role.

The importance of trade with Mexico is still more crucial because today it is Nicaragua's major oil supplier. Up to the end of 1982, the 15,000 barrels a day Nicaragua needs were supplied equally by Venezuela and Mexico.

At the beginning of 1983, Venezuela stopped deliveries because of Nicaragua's inability to meet its debts on time. This has to be seen as a direct result of U.S. pressure on a country like Venezuela, which is also deeply in debt.

Since early this year, the 13,000 barrels arriving daily in Nicaragua have come from Mexico alone. And the U.S. has been increasing the squeeze on Mexico, as the *New York Times* has indicated. (4)

So, reorienting Nicaragua's international exchanges is closely related to the diplomatic and economic pressures that can be brought to bear on the country and which represent obstacles in the Sandinista revolutionary process.

This relationship makes the question of the foreign debt and the negotiations on repayment particularly acute. In 1982, repayment of the foreign debt absorbed 45% of the total income from exports. This points up one of the means the imperialists might use to try to strangle the revolution.

The pressure of this debt forced the FSLN national leadership and the govern-

3. Figures provided by the International Fund for Reconstruction (FIR), Managua.

4. Information provided by the weekly bulletin of the Nueva Nicaragua news agency, Managua, August 1983.

ment council to reduce imports in 1982 by 25.5% by comparison with the preceding year. The fact they were able to limit the drop in GNP to 1.4% is actually a testimony to the resources of a system that is beginning to reorient the economy toward putting the needs of the majority of the population first.

Like the escalation of the military threats, the increased economic problems, owing essentially to the imperialist blockade and the counterrevolution, are sharpening the social polarization in the country.

Up to now, it is the bourgeoisie and the middle classes in Managua who have been most directly affected by the economic restrictions, which have mainly been put on the importing of luxuries. So, the result of the economic difficulties has been the deepening of the revolutionary process that can be seen today in Nicaragua. It is reflected in the continuation and acceleration of the agrarian reform, as well as in the transformations that are shifting the balance of the mixed economy.

THE AGRARIAN REFORM

In a country where more than 60% of the economically active population is made up of peasants and agricultural workers, where 75% of exports are agricultural products, and where agriculture represents half of total production, the question of agrarian reform is clearly a decisive one.

Before July 19, 1979, a couple of thousand landowners held 50% of the land, while 120,000 peasants held only 3%. This richest layer of landowners have been hardest hit by the transformations in progress. Under the impact of the expropriation of the holdings of Somoza and his direct associates immediately after July 19, 1979, the percentage of the land held by this top layer of landowners fell from 50% to 13%.

At present the land is divided up as follows: 23% is held directly by the state, 20% belongs to small peasants organized in cooperatives, 13% remains in the hands of the big landowners, and the rest — 44% — belongs to the middle peasants.

The agrarian reform decreed in August 1981 set the maximum individual holding at 350 hectares on the Pacific coast (the most densely populated area) and 700 hectares on the Atlantic coast. A lot of agrarian reforms in other Latin American countries might look more radical on paper. But unlike most of them, the Sandinista agrarian reform has actually been put into practice.

What is more, cultivating land effectively has been made a condition for keeping it. In accordance with the dynamic of the revolution, it has been the mass peasant organizations — the National Union of Farmers and Stock Raisers (UNAG) and the Association of Rural Workers (ATC) — that have made sure that this condition is observed.

Unlike in the big industrial plants,

elaborate forms of monitoring are not necessary in agricultural operations. The peasants organized in their mass organizations can easily find out whether land has been left to lie fallow, or is being underused with respect to the average productivity in the region.

Thus, the agrarian reform puts all privately held land under peasant control. It provides for turning the expropriated land over to individual peasants or cooperatives. These titles can be inherited, but they cannot be sold. This prohibition is to keep big landed estates from reforming.

A particularly significant element in the present dynamic of the revolution is that the agrarian reform decree has not only served to institutionalize the situation created by the mass land occupations that came in the wake of July 19, 1979, when Somoza and his cronies left a lot of land abandoned. It also started a movement that, far from running out of steam, is continuing to accelerate. Twice the amount of land was distributed between June 1982 and March 1983 as between October 1981 and June 1982. (5)

Thus, between September 1981 and July 1983, titles have been distributed for 210,000 hectares, with 166,000 going to cooperatives and 44,000 to individual small peasants. This process is speeding up. In fact in July, at the time of the fourth anniversary of the revolution, 70,000 hectares were distributed, which represents more than half the amount distributed since the start of the year.

So far, 20,000 peasant families have gotten land through the agrarian reform. In fact, a larger number of peasants have been affected by the ongoing transformations, since it is estimated that about 60,000 are involved in the cooperative movement.

The two mainstays around which the agrarian reform is organized are the lands nationalized "in the domain of people's property" and the lands cultivated by the burgeoning cooperatives. The target is an allotment of 50% to the poor peasants, 25% to the state sector, and 25% to a private sector of market farmers. The share still held by big landowners and middle peasants, more than half the total, indicates how far the Sandinistas still are from their goal.

AGRICULTURE HARNESSSED TO SOCIAL NEED

The change in tempo in recent months does not mean that the goal is already near. What it signifies is that to meet the demands of the revolution's social base in the countryside and to orient agricultural production in accordance with the national priorities it was necessary to step up the pace.

To appreciate the sort of alliance that has been formed between the peasants and the revolution, it is important to note that the targets of agricultural production are not being determined by the interests of the peasants alone. The first task the FSLN national leadership set for agri-

culture was to assure an adequate supply of the staples of the national diet.

This goal is in the interests of the peasants, to be sure, but also of the urban workers. It was not set to suit economic interests of one or another layer of the peasantry. It was adopted to meet the demands of a policy designed to achieve a planned development of the country in the interests of the majority of the working people.

This political choice has already led to tangible results. While the overall level of agricultural production in 1982 was 10% lower than in 1977, the trend was the opposite for the food-staple crops. Between 1977 and 1982, rice production doubled, the bean crop increased by 15%, and the supply of pasturized milk rose by 70%. At the same time, production of maize, the basis for the main national staple — the tortilla — remained constant.

On the other hand, there was a marked drop in cotton production in 1982, while the coffee and sugar cane harvests stayed at the old level.

THE ROLE OF THE BIG LANDOWNERS AND STATE FARM MANAGERS

The reason for the fall off in cotton is that this crop is cultivated mainly on the big private plantations or state farms. And in the case of the state farms, the administrative teams appointed under Somoza are often still there, since there is a shortage of technically qualified personnel to replace them. These two factors combined to produce poor results, in contrast with the cooperative sector in which the poor peasants have combined, and in the most advanced cases cultivate the land collectively.

In the cooperative sector the social mobilization is much more active than on the private plantations and big state farms. It should also be noted that the cotton and sugar cane crops have been the targets of criminal arson by the "contra" gangs.

So, the agrarian reform underway can only be analyzed as a process that is still far from being completed. Active participation by the agricultural workers and the poor peasants is the key in this area, as it is for the revolutionary process as a whole. The advance of the agrarian reform cannot, in fact, be analyzed separately from the measures taken with respect to other sectors of the economy, in particular foreign trade and distribution within the country.

HOLES IN THE STATE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

The state holds a monopoly of foreign trade and wholesale trade in agricultural products has been nationalized. Thus, the peasants in principle do not have direct access to the market. The trend is rather toward nationalized con-

5. The magazine *Envio*, Managua, August 1983.

trol of distribution of produce, whether it comes from the private, cooperative, or public sector. Thus, the revolutionary government is tending to acquire the means for allotting agricultural surpluses to those sectors to which it gives priority.

In this area also, even though a clear target has been set, the present situation remains very uneven. Two distribution networks continue to exist side by side, from wholesalers to retailers.

Products subsidized from the state budget are sold only through the public network. In fact, because of these subsidies peasants can buy beans and maize at lower prices in the stores than the price they got for selling the same products.

But many sections of the peasantry continue to sell their crops through private circuits, thereby deliberately causing shortages of the products sold at subsidized prices in the 2,600 public stores.

For example, the "Eastern Market" in Managua, the city's oldest market left standing after the 1972 earthquake, is a den of speculators. In August 1983, they were selling rice and beans at double the prices in the public stores. The price for chicken was 80% higher. (6)

The daily press that supports the revolutionary process, *Barricada*, the organ of the FSLN, and *Nuevo Diario* have been waging an intense campaign against these speculators, who can profit from the shortages systematically created in the public distribution network. The role of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS, the neighborhood organizations) in combating speculation should be noted in particular.

The weight of the past and the complexity of the problems to be solved becomes clear when you see that on many levels private distribution networks have been able to tap the public ones.

Nationalized farms growing maize, for example, contribute to speculation by selling their crops to private wholesalers at prices higher than the official ones. Often it is managers left over from Somoza's time who are responsible for this.

Moreover, at all levels of the public distribution network, private traders are

in a position to buy for resale at substantial profits.

In fact, the question of supplying the needs of the majority of the population, especially in the cities, has been the focus of a lot of recrimination. This is a real source of discontent.

However, the FSLN is by no means trying to put a bureaucratic damper on this discontent. To the contrary, it is trying to use it to get a mass struggle going against the speculators and the enemies of the revolution and to deepen the revolutionary process. The revolution is not something that stands still, or that has already set for all time the level of socialization in the economy.

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE "MIXED ECONOMY"?

The same observation holds for the industrial sector, which is also under a mixed economy system. In Nicaragua, industry accounts for only about 30% of the Gross Domestic Product. It is very dispersed. On February 31, 1982, there were no more than 96 plants with more than 100 workers, and no more than 97 with between 50 and 100 workers. But these less than 200 plants by themselves accounted for 85% of the country's industrial production in terms of value.

In 1982, it was estimated that the private sector accounted for 60% of industrial production and the public sector for 40%. But this figure is not very significant in itself because it combines small craft production and capitalist production in the full sense of the term.

To assess the dynamic of the present situation, it is more fruitful to look at investment. The main fact that comes out here is that private investment represents no more than 23% of the total, including all sectors of the economy.

The role played in reality by private investment was analyzed as follows in an economic survey by *Barricada* focused on investment in 1979-82.

"Private fixed investment declined, playing much less of a role in the investment process. Moreover, the capital

'The people of Sandino are a victorious army' (DR)



flight figures reflected in the balance of payments indicate that the private sector is 'decapitalizing' (7) instead of investing.

"Likewise, the demand for long-term credits by the private sector to the national financial system dropped in 1982. If we add to this that the private sector does not get foreign loans, since its economic activities are 100 percent financed by the national financial system, we see a negative orientation on the part of big private capital. It is showing a lack of interest in the effort to achieve national capital accumulation.

"In recent years, the surpluses generated by big private capital have been directed toward non-productive uses. This includes not only consumption but speculation and capital flight." (8)

To deal with this "negative" attitude on the part of big private capital, the revolutionary government is not just making denunciations. It is expropriating or intervening in plants where the bosses are not respecting the terms of the contract made — that is, to produce in accordance with the national priorities and to try to meet the most urgent needs of the population. This means putting a watch on the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie from above. But its behavior is also being monitored from below on the initiative of the workers.

THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT, A "SANDINISTA" BOSS, AND THE WORKERS

The example of the "labor conflict" that occurred in Managua in early August in the biggest bakery in the city illustrates the sort of initiatives the workers are taking.

This bakery employs 85 workers and the state holds the majority of stock (51%). The manager, who holds the rest of the stock, was a Costa Rican citizen, Chavez Ovarez. During the war of liberation, he supported the FSLN and was rumored to be linked to the "Group of the Twelve" (a group of prominent exiles who lined up with the FSLN).

So, this manager had ties to current leading circles and was guaranteed a supply of flour, even in the event of shortages. This did not keep him, however, from being an aggressive boss. In particular, he refused to accept the setting up of a local of the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST) in "his" business. He went so far as to fire a militia member who was mobilized to defend the revolution.

On Sunday, July 31, 1983, the bakery workers hung a banner across the front of their workplace with a hastily written slogan, "Stop the violations of the workers' rights!"

In response to growing discontent among the workers, the manager decided

6. *Nuevo Diario*, Managua, August 3, 1983.
7. "Decapitalization" is a jargon term coined to cover the two-sided policy of the bourgeoisie of refusing to make investments and taking their capital out of the country (capital flight).
8. *Barricada*, Managua, August 15, 1983.

to close "his" business, claiming that he was having problems with flour shipments. He put up a sign saying "Closed until August 4," without giving any notice to the workers concerned or to the responsible administrative authorities.

The workers responded quickly and decisively. They appealed to the Ministry of Labor to remove the manager. Within four days they got satisfaction. The manager was ousted, although he kept his stock. He was replaced by a new administrator whose nomination was approved by the CST.

A local of the CST was finally set up in the bakery, and working hours were re-adjusted. This conflict is particularly significant because it was not between an avowed supporter of the Somocistas and the workers but between the workers and a boss formerly linked to leading circles in the FSLN. The Ministry of Labor rapidly settled the dispute in favor of the workers. This case is a clear in-

Thus, the "mixed economy" system that prevails today in Nicaragua has not established a fixed line of demarcation between the private and public sectors. It represents a transitional economy. The rate at which it evolves depends on the class conflicts that are continuing to develop between a working class that is building up its strength and capacity for organization and a bourgeoisie that is disputing every inch of ground to defend the economic positions it still holds after having been ousted from political power.

The private sector is obliged to respect the targets set by the national plan, under threat of expropriation. And expropriations are in fact carried out. This constraint gives rise to real differentiations within the bourgeoisie, since certain sectors have an immediate interest in working within a system that guarantees their prices and markets. This is true, for ex-

ample, for a section of commercial farmers.

Nonetheless, the general tendency is toward a direct takeover of production by the government that came out of the revolution. Most of the big investment projects are being carried through by mobilizing public resources alone. This goes for the schemes to achieve self-sufficiency in energy, as well as to develop transport and food processing.

THE WORKING PEOPLE TAKE CENTER STAGE

What is most important is that, even if they have not yet been able to institute developed forms of workers control, the working people of the cities and in the countryside are strong enough through their mass organizations to keep a watch on all the private producers. In this way, social polarization sharpens as the revolution advances.

The transitional form represented today by the mixed economy is possible only because there is a revolutionary government in Nicaragua that has not reformed but destroyed the Somoza regime's instruments of coercion.

In a book published in July 1983, Jaime Wheelock, one of the nine members of the national leadership of the FSLN, wrote: "The bourgeoisie is used to being the dominant force ideologically, culturally, and socially. And now it is not dominating things. Now it is the workers and peasants, the student leaders, the ATC, the CST, the Sandinista Front that are doing the talking and pointing out the path to follow. And none of these represents the bourgeoisie."

All the potential contradictions that lie in the mixed economy system being followed today were in fact pointed up by Jaime Wheelock when he wrote: "It has to be tested whether the bourgeoisie can produce without power, whether as a social class it can limit itself to playing a productive role, that is, limit itself to exploiting the means of production that it holds and using them to live and not as an instrument of power and oppression."

The whole question is, in fact, whether a social class that is being offered the material possibility to maintain itself as a class can long resign itself not to using its material means as an instrument of political power.

The events that have unfolded since July 19, 1979, show that the ranks of the counterrevolution have been swelled by one bourgeois faction after another which has preferred to break national unity rather than accept its own defeat.

This is proof that the revolution has not stopped its advance despite the growing threats from U.S. imperialism nor yielded to the pressures of the bourgeoisie.

The example of steadfastness that the Nicaraguan revolution gives every day cannot help but inspire the international movement in defense of the Sandinista revolution to show a similar determination. ■

Celebrating the sixth anniversary of the women's organisations (DR)



Negotiations—

A new front in the Salvadoran struggle

Francisco Herrera, representative of the Salvadoran revolutionary front, the FMLN-FDR, for Austria and Switzerland, passed through Paris in early October.

The following is the second half of the interview he gave at the time to Gerry Foley and Vincent Kermel — the editors respectively of *International Viewpoint* and *Inprecor*, the English and French language journals published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

Question. What possibilities do you see for developing and extending People's Power in the next period?

Answer. We are rather optimistic about the possibilities. The PPL (Poderes Populares Locales, Local Organs of People's Power) are one of the great successes of the process of liberation. We are not saying that they represent some kind of utopia. But for us, they are fundamental. They have a strategic function in the war of liberation and will continue to play a very important role afterward.

In the zones where they exist, the PPL are an administration of the collective life in the hands of the popular masses. They have already taken some important steps forward.

For some time, the population has been organizing production, that is, what we call "war production," since we are in a war. The aim is self-sufficiency. And it is even possible now for some PPL to provide support for the guerrillas.

The PPL organize the health services, although they face enormous difficulties. We can say now that some of the chronic maladies that result from our poverty, from the capitalist exploitation we suffer, are disappearing. In confronting these problems, the people are demonstrating enormous creativity.

The PPL are also combating illiteracy. This is very important. As a third world country, this is one of the curses that afflict us. For fifty years the regime has staged phoney literacy campaigns. But there are areas in Salvador where up to 80 percent of the population is illiterate.

In the controlled areas, the PPL have done a great deal to wipe out illiteracy. They take care of the children, since there are a lot of war orphans in particular. They develop craft production. This is quite important for a personal sense of value. Some of the peasants are quite old, and through craft work they regain a connection with the younger people.

The PPL also organize defense, that is, self-defense, direct evacuations when necessary, and prepare shelters.

This new way of organizing social life

is very important for us because it is a way of implementing, even before the seizure of power, certain aspects of the FMLN platform.

So, in May a national meeting of the PPL was held in Chalatenango. There the representatives made a balance sheet of the experience and laid the basis for the work of these bodies in the future. In a big assembly, they set up a sort of coordinating committee of the PPL.

What this means in effect is a form of government, a truly people's government, a kind of counterpower. To build this under Reagan's bombs is a considerable political achievement.

This advance contrasts with the worsening situation of the Salvadoran government, which is being caught more and more deeply in its contradictions because of its difficulty in dealing with the economic problems. It has reached the point that every time it takes a step it just sinks deeper in its own contradictions.

The whole economy is focused on the war. While the government makes a propaganda show of solving some problems, it is really not changing anything. It is in fact no longer a question of will. The situation is so critical that only fundamental reforms can help.

So, the embryonic government represented by the PPL is not just the answer of the Salvadoran people to a tyrannical regime that has ruled the country for fifty years. It is a signpost to the future that will follow the liberation. You might call it a laboratory, in any case it is an example, for the new Salvadoran society.

Q. Is there any relation between this building up of people's power and the reports of the formation of a provisional government in the liberated zones?

A. You have to be careful about the term "provisional government." That's why I talked about a sort of regional government. In fact, it is a coordinating committee of the different PPL. But if you talked about a provisional government, that could open up the way for an attempt by the U.S. to divide our coun-

The interview was conducted in French and has been translated and edited. Companero Herrera has not had the opportunity to review the English edited text.

This part of the interview deals in some detail with the political perspectives of the revolutionary front, in particular the development of "people's power" in the liberated zones and the negotiations that have been undertaken with representatives of the U.S. and Salvadoran governments.

try into two parts, one where its government rules and the other. That's one aspect of the problem. But there is another.

There is an important part of the population in the zones controlled by the FMLN. But this is not, and is far from being, the majority. We do not have the right to consolidate Chalatenango and Morazan and abandon the rest of the country.

In the rest of the country, the population is suffering. If we abandoned it, the political work that is being done by the mass organizations would have no meaning. Take ANDES [the teacher's organization], for example. Its main work is not being done in the controlled areas. The teachers are where the schools are, and this is mainly in the zones controlled by the enemy. And ANDES is part of the FDR. The FMLN is the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation.

That is, the victory we are aiming for is a national one, a central seizure of power, whether this is by an armed assault on the presidential palace or by diplomatic means. But it is this national seizure of power that we are after, we are not interested in creating any sort of parallel government.

The PPL are spreading and developing. But they are a different thing. You might call this a sort of government. But it is not something like the Provisional Government in Vietnam. That's another process.

Q. What is your assessment of the statements the imperialists have made about negotiations? What sort of policy do you propose to take in discussing with Reagan's envoy, Stone, and with the Peace Commission? How do negotiations fit into your overall strategy for taking power? Finally, what is your attitude toward the scheduled elections?

A. Reagan has been forced to make a move toward negotiations by very strong resistance to his aggressive policy in Central America from the American public and congress. This is a tactical concession.

Parallel to this gambit by Washington,



we have seen the formation of this famous Peace Commission. It was formed on the initiative of the political parties and then endorsed by President Magana. In practice, it is the government's instrument for making contact with us.

Both the Peace Commission and Richard Stone have the objective of getting us to participate in the elections. These elections were first scheduled for March 1983, then for December of this year, and now they have been postponed again to March 1984. This indicates the problems they are having, and they are anxious to get us to lend some credibility to these elections.

Stone wanted to give people the idea that he arranged the meeting between us and the Peace Commission. The fact is that we decided to meet with this body for our own reasons.

The essential thing for Reagan is to calm his congress down a bit by this maneuver, so that he can get the aid appropriation he wants.

This negotiation gambit also has a wider political importance. In this context, it has been essential for us to keep the initiative, which we have done.

Washington wanted people to think

that we agreed to negotiate under their pressure. But in reality, the FMLN has proposed general political solutions to the conflict since 1980. Our offers have always been refused.

The FMLN wrote an initial letter to Stone that reached him through an intermediary in which we proposed a date. He accepted. Subsequently, however, there were difficulties in actually holding the meeting. Certain mechanisms did not work. The Americans wanted to manipulate this first meeting. So, we demanded that there be witnesses.

Then, the FMLN-FDR wrote again to Stone to propose another meeting, and that one did take place. What we wanted to do was to demonstrate our readiness for dialogue and at the same time to show Stone what interested us was a deepgoing discussion of an overall solution to the conflict, and that we were not interested in the elections. That is essentially our position.

In the case of the Peace Commission, its members made a lot of statements to the Salvadoran press. They want to get us to participate in the elections. What we want is a national debate in San Salvador. They reject that. These exchanges

are the very first steps in the first phase, which is one of dialogue.

What we want to do is to show our willingness to engage in dialogue, not to close the door, to demonstrate flexibility about the mechanisms. But at the end we want to achieve a national debate.

Q. By this you mean a public debate throughout the country?

A. Yes. We are not interested in any debate behind closed doors. We want the people to know what we are saying.

We don't recognize Stone as a mediator. The U.S. is a party to the conflict.

What in fact are dialogue and negotiations in the overall context of people's war? We can say that they are a new instrument. That is, it is the war itself that has produced this new front. We did not see this in Nicaragua or Cuba, where the processes were more rapid. But we did see it in Vietnam. So, dialogue and negotiations are an important new front, but one that has to be closely coordinated with the war.

Q. It's true that we saw such a process in Vietnam. But the conditions after all are hardly the same in both cases. The outcome was favorable to the Vietnamese for a whole series of reasons. You say that this proposal for dialogue and negotiations represents a maneuver by Reagan in response to the pressure of public opinion reflected in the congress. But it seems that there is another aspect.

These proposals fit into the framework of large-scale regional maneuvers. The U.S. is using certain states in the region to make proposals for regional solutions. And in the case of El Salvador, these proposals have been designed to gain time for the imperialists. They are continuing to build up their military forces and their military technical machine. Perhaps they hope to gain time either to strengthen their positions in El Salvador or elsewhere in Central America.

A. Yes. That is one of Reagan's objectives. We do not have the slightest illusion about that. They have a time problem. They have a local army that is not living up to their expectations. They have the problem of strong resistance by U.S. public opinion. Reagan faces a very important test next year. They also face a phenomenon in Central America itself that they can hardly understand.

El Salvador is a very small country, without important resources. It is only two hours and 45 minutes by plane from U.S. territory. It's only 35 minutes from the Panama Canal Zone. And yet in El Salvador they face a people's war that they have not been able to stamp out. They have not been able to crush the resistance in our country precisely because it is a people's war.

And in a people's war, time is an important ally of the people when their forces are strong enough to begin to hit the enemy's strategic centers. At that point, time is on the side of the people and workers against the army. That's what's happening now in El Salvador.

As I said before, they calculated that they could easily destroy us, and now they realize that it is going to take time. So, they are trying to maneuver, using various political and military means.

They are engaged in an escalation. No date has been set for these maneuvers in Honduras to end. Honduras is being made into a military staging area. In fact they are trying to gain time to reorganize their forces and readjust their strategy.

They do all this in the context of a regional plan. Because they start from the idea that if there were no Nicaragua, if there were no Cuba, there would be no problem in El Salvador. But they risk getting caught in their own game. We have shown that we can fight effectively on the diplomatic front too.

Q. Precisely what advantages are you trying to gain on the diplomatic front?

A. At the start of the year, the Americans thought they were going to have a lot of problems in continuing military aid to the Salvadoran regime, because of its brutality, its contempt for human life. The unpopularity of Reagan's policy in El Salvador put pressure on congress to place limitations on the aid to the regime. So, a discussion began to develop in congress about the need for the U.S. government to demonstrate flexibility, a spirit of dialogue. The view expressed was that if the Salvadoran regime did not go along with this, military aid should be cut off. This means was to be used to force them to engage in a dialogue.

Now, if at that point we had shown inflexibility, that would have been used as an argument to justify continued U.S. aid to the Salvadoran regime. So, this was a means of putting pressure on us. But at the same time it was a maneuver designed to make us look negative, like militarists, like extremists.

Q. That is, they wanted to portray you as extremists not just to the American public but also to a section of the Salvadoran people?

A. Exactly. It was a trap. If we had let ourselves be put in a position where it looked as if it was we who were unwilling to talk, then they would have used that to start a big propaganda campaign against us, claiming that we were "subversivos," terrorists, and so on. So, we did not want to fall into the trap.

But we also took a more rounded view of the question. We expected that if discussions started, certain contradictions would appear in the government, in the bourgeoisie, and in the army. And that is what happened.

But we also had to avoid letting ourselves be put in a position where we only reacted to their proposals. We had to make our own initiatives. We did, and they were obliged to respond to them, as I explained earlier.

Taking advantage of their signs of willingness for discussion, we make proposals.

This arouses enthusiasm among many sections of the Salvadoran people, who for various reasons want to see the war end.

Q. Does this inspire enthusiasm or illusions in the possibility of a negotiated settlement with imperialism? How do you explain, for example, that always before when you proposed dialogue there was a strong reaction from the far right? But there does not seem to have been any now when you met Stone and the Peace Commission.

A. It's true that last October, when we proposed dialogue, ARENA [the main far-right organization] acted within 24 hours to close off any possibility. But the Death Squadrons are more active now than ever. They have set up a radio station called "Radio Sovereignty." They have been assassinating trade-union and political figures. They assassinated a government minister not long ago.

The oligarchy, which is sort of the hard core of the bourgeoisie, is by no means ready to accept dialogue. It is for that reason that President Magana has declared several times there is no question of negotiating about power or the army.

Q. So, what does the FMLN-FDR intend to negotiate about?

A. We got involved in this struggle to change things in El Salvador, to end a tyranny that has lasted for fifty years, to deal with an economic crisis that is not something temporary but has structural roots, to achieve democracy. To achieve these objectives, we were forced to take up arms.

Our objective is to achieve a relationship of forces that will make it possible for the people to put on the agenda the questions of change and the seizure of power.

Our policy is to change the relationship of forces. For fifty years the people represented zero in terms of force. Before the civil war began, they represented zero. The army had 12,000 soldiers, so it was 12,000 to zero. Now this is far from true.

There is a people's army, a guerrilla force. We have a platform, a project, international recognition, representativeness. Our objective is to get to a position where the people can run the country for themselves, by the people for the people. We are not militarists. We have a rounded view of the process of liberation.

As Comandante Marcial said, there are several ways in which the war can end. One is by negotiations. But in every case, the condition is that the relationship of forces be favorable to the people.

Our concern is to hold the initiative, to combine our diplomatic activity with political mass work and military action. This creates contradictions among our enemies, because there are sectors within the bourgeoisie itself that want to see the end of a terrible civil war. That does not mean that they are with us. It does not mean that they want to see the victory of the FMLN. But they are looking

for alternatives. There are also contradictions between the regime and the U.S.

Q. This combination of three types of activity that you mention is something new and complex. One supposes that there have been discussions about this within the FMLN.

A. It is entirely logical to think that the opening of a new front, the diplomatic one — which is a very complex one — would arouse discussion in a young organization, one that has been forged in the fire of action. On the other hand, this organization has been consolidated over the last four years of struggle. Great advances have been made, and a great capacity for leadership has been shown. That could not be explained if there were not a strong desire to maintain unity, in a front made up of organizations that come from different origins.

So, it is entirely natural that the question of negotiations aroused discussion. What is important is what kind of discussion. Essentially it was over the content of the negotiations, what we are going to negotiate. Is there any danger that the working masses may lose something? Well, we are still in the first steps. We'll see. But we have to study the question more deeply.

Q. Perhaps you could explain the principles on which your position in these negotiations is based.

A. First, we are not going to participate in the elections. Even if the Salvadoran regime agreed to postpone them, that would change nothing for us. It's not a question of dates. It's a fundamental question.

The minimum conditions do not exist for the kind of elections we could participate in. There is more than enough evidence of this, such as comrades who were murdered when they tried to engage in dialogue.

There is no reason to put in question our call for a revolutionary democratic government. This demand is a historic fact of the process in El Salvador. It is not something accidental, it is not something dreamed up by some individual genius who stayed up all night and produced a document. This perspective is the synthesis of the struggles. It cannot be swept away so easily, and it will certainly have a direct relation to the dialogue in which we engage.

Q. Do you see the possibility of the dialogue leading to a truce?

A. No. In the first place, our people would never permit this, even if we ever took a notion to try it. Such a thing would simply be suicide. There is no question of that. The U.S. wants to destroy us.

It is possible, although we are a long way from such a point, that military questions could be taken up in the negotiations. There could be local, limited ceasefires, among other things to test intentions. But we have no intention of accepting a general truce. ■

The Brazilian workers movement on the eve of its second general strike

The world's most indebted country, Brazil, accepted the IMF's conditions in early September for the extension of new credits.

The Brazilian government's economic policy will not put an end to the spiral of debt, which is a result of the country's dependence on imperialist capital. But it does mean measures are in the works that will drastically reduce the workers standard of living. Several decree laws that go in that direction have already been adopted by General Figueiredo's government.

However, this orientation is encountering opposition among the capitalist bourgeoisie, the bourgeois opposition parties, as well as among the working masses. The climate within the regime is illustrated by the recent resignation of the chairperson of the Brazilian central bank, Carlos Geraldo Langoni. He refused to sign the "Letter of Intent" committing the government to the IMF. His argument was that the measures envisaged would mean "generalized poverty for the Brazilian people." (*International Herald Tribune*, September 22, 1983).

Parallel to this debate on relations with the IMF and the country's debts, the bourgeois forces are also involved in discussions around choosing a candidate to succeed General Figueiredo as president.

The rejection of the government's economic policy has also been reflected in the refusal of the bourgeois opposition parties

to vote for one of the austerity decree laws issued by General Figueiredo's government. This produced a majority opposed to the government's plans.

Last but not least the response to these measures among the masses of working people has been a new upsurge of mobilization and radicalization. This led to the spontaneous demonstrations against poverty last spring in Sao Paulo and to the July 21 general strike. The growing exasperation of the working people is a crucial factor in the present situation, and has conditioned the attitude of the bourgeois forces to the government's policy.

The ways to build and centralize the mobilizations against the economic policy of the government and the dictatorship are also being widely debated in the workers movement.

Despite the divisionist maneuvers of "yellow" union leaders and the reformists of the Brazilian Communist Party, the Second Congress of the Working Classes (CONCLAT) was held in late August and managed to make progress toward building a single confederation of labor. (See the box below).

The following article deals with all these questions, offering a detailed study of the economic, social, and political changes that gave rise to them.

Jorge BUARQUE

SAO PAULO — Leaving Brazil after a laborious round of negotiations on new loans to the dictatorship, the chief of the IMF delegation told the press: "The situation in the country is unpredictable." This is true in several respects.

Social tensions are growing rapidly. They are reflected in big mobilizations, such as the general strike called for last July 21 by 130 trade-union structures.

The economic crisis is deepening, and this is sharpening the contradictions in the ruling class. Thus, the dictatorship is divided among various candidates to succeed Figueiredo. (A new president is supposed to be chosen early in 1985). And some rightist sectors that were involved in the 1964 coup d'etat are now in the opposition.

At the same time as the dictatorship's room for maneuver has been narrowing, the bourgeois opposition parties, which have governed seven states since the November 1982 elections, have become more and more embroiled in a policy that combines violent repression and proposals for social pacts. (1)

However, the opposition parties have also raised louder alarms than the IMF representative. Manoel Pimentel, secretary for security in the Sao Paulo government of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party has said that Brazil is "on the brink of grave problems," and even raised the spectre of "blood baths." His colleague, the secretary to the minister of labor, Almir Pazzionotto, has explained that "There has been no change

in the causes that produced the April rebellions and the July general strike."

For his part, Dom Paulo Arns, bishop of the city, has said that "if it had not been for the solidarity among the families of the unemployed, Sao Paulo would have already gone up in flames at least a dozen times." He concluded: "The world needs a radical revolution." (2)

The negotiations with the IMF were opened in January by a "Letter of Intent," in which the Brazilian government promised to reduce inflation and keep its commitments to the IMF.

However, the state financial report presented by the Brazilian regime was rejected by the IMF. The measures already adopted do not correspond fully to what the creditors demanded. So, the negotiations began in the summer of 1983 and are very important.

From the government's standpoint, these negotiations offered the prospect of a loan of 820 million dollars and access to 4.4 billion dollars in financing. For the IMF this was the first test of the prospects for renegotiation of the overall debt. This is, in fact, inevitable in view of the situation the country is going through and the growing pressure of the Brazilian bourgeoisie for a moratorium on payments.

In this race against time, the government presented Decree-Law D.L. 2 045 on July 14. This measure makes it clear what sort of economic program the government is drawing up. Wage increases are not to exceed 80% of the official rate of inflation, which is calculated on the basis of the national index of consumer

prices. Previously, wage earners got full compensation every six months for increases in this index.

Since this index has generally been rigged, it can be imagined how big a blow this change means for the workers. (3)

So, a rapid reduction of the real wages of the working people is the primary axis of the dictatorship's economic policy. The government moreover, tried to give a particular weight to this decree by having it approved by a special meeting of the National Security Council, a central institution of the military dictatorship, and presenting it to parliament as a question related to "national security." (4)

TOWARD MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT

The central objective of this policy is to generate a rapid growth of massive un-

1. See "The Workers Party and the Deepening Crisis in Brazil," by Daniel Jebrac, in *International Viewpoint*, No 36, August 1, 1983.

2. *Folha do Sao Paulo*, August 12, 1983.

3. Moreover, according to *le Monde* of July 16, 1983, "there were two other measures that provide for virtual dismantling of the Brazilian system of cost-of-living increases. First, there will be adjustments only twice a year rather than four times a year, as has been the case up till now. Secondly, the index will exclude consumer price increases taken account of in calculating wage raises, as well as price increases resulting from natural calamities."

4. Despite this warning, the opposition, which has a majority in congress, rejected on September 21 a presidential decree law on wages, and everything indicates that it will do the same in mid-October in the vote on Decree Law 2 045, the keystone of the government's policy for wage controls and the base of the agreement made with the IMF.

employment. According to the data published by the powerful Sao Paulo State Federation of Industries (FIESP), over the last two years the local industrial concerns have fired 405,000 workers.

The labor force employed in industry has fallen back to the level of July 1973. But the IMF is demanding a much more aggressive policy. One of the targets for the coming months is to reduce the rate of inflation from the 170% previously projected to 150%, and next year to 50% or 60%.

Since the "dollarization" of the Brazilian economy has far from diminished, value continues to be transferred from the industrial sector to the financial one by high interest rates. This is thus inevitable; that any measure aimed at reducing the inflation rate so rapidly would have enormous consequences for the level of employment.

The economic crisis the Brazilian regime faces now, however, is the result of contradictions that accumulated during the process of industrialization. Brazil's insertion into the international division of labor as a coffee exporting economy offered the possibility in the 1920s for an initial capital accumulation and a small measure of industrial development.

This development took the form of modernizing the consumer-goods industries, differentiating the industrial structure, and creating small cement and steel industries. On this basis, after the 1929 crash and throughout the prewar years, it was possible, taking advantage of the decline in international trade, to launch a more ambitious industrialization.

This period represents the heyday of populism pushed by Vargas' "Labor" Party, when there was a mirage of autonomous economic development and a vigorous independent capitalism.

However, this industrial development took place in sectors with a low organic composition of capital, which were complementary to, and did not compete with, the international trusts. In fact, after 1964, the big imperialist concerns increased their penetration. They financed and controlled Brazil's economic expansion. (5)

The most recent phase of economic expansion, the Brazilian "miracle," fits into the context of this growing dependence on imperialist capital. Between 1945 and 1980, the Gross Domestic Product increased by ten times, which represents an annual growth rate of 7%. A modern industry developed, marked by a high degree of concentration and internationalization of capital.

THE BILL FOR THE BRAZILIAN "MIRACLE"

All the contradictions generated by this industrialization process and dependence are coming to a head today in the accumulation of a staggering level of debt and in stagnation of agricultural production. Brazil's foreign debt has nearly reached the 100 billion dollar mark. It represents a third of the Gross Domestic

Product and three times the annual income from exports.

Cheap food production, one of the sources of financing for the Brazilian "miracle," is being threatened today by several factors. In 1983, a cycle of poor harvests began that will last until 1986. State subsidies were drastically cut in order to comply with the demands of the IMF. The area under cultivation shrunk by 15% in 1982-83. The disorganization of agricultural production and the resulting shortages fueled inflation.

AGORA TEMOS A CUT



'Now we have a United Confederation of Workers (CUT)' (DR)



The recession that has set in is thus threatening to upset all the balances of the regime — the balance between the industrial and financial sectors, between the dictatorship and the bourgeois opposition, between capital and labor.

Over this period of industrialization, bourgeois domination took different political forms. Getulio Vargas, who was in power from 1930 to 1954; the postwar "Populist Republic"; and the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) were ideological representatives of this transition from agricultural-export economy to industrialization. The Consolidated Labour Laws (CLT), the body of laws establishing a corporatist trade-union structure under the Ministry of Labor, date from this period.

CRISIS OF THE DICTATORSHIP

The dictatorship established in 1964 after the overthrow of President Joao Goulart accelerated industrial development under the dominance of international monopoly capital. The political loosening up of the regime after 1974 represented an attempt to control social discontent primarily by institutional channels and secondarily through the bourgeois oppositions.

This "slow and gradual political opening" initiated by General Geisel under the patronage of General Golbery was soon shaken up by the evolution of the relation of forces among the classes.

Early in the process, the two-party system set up after the 1964 coup d'etat, with the Alliance for National Renewal (ARENA) as the official party and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB)

in the opposition, revealed the growing isolation of the dictatorship in the electoral arena and opened up the way for reorganization of the opposition groups. The workers movement began to undergo a process of recomposition.

The second stage of this evolution involved the reorganization of the political parties. The two legal parties were dissolved by the Figueiredo government in December 1979. The official party reemerged under the name "The Social Democratic Party" (PDS). And the MDB became the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB).

However, the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) also appeared. It was led by Getulio Vargas' daughter and former president Janio Quadros. General Golbery encouraged it with the aim of channeling the populist tradition.

In addition, the People's Party (PP) was founded. It was organized by high finance and the right wing of the MDB.

The most important event in this period, however, was the rise of the strike movement and the formation of the

5. See Reginaldo Moraes, *Le Phoenix tropical*, p. 52 ff.

Workers Party (PT), which organized the fight for political independence of the workers.

The third stage was marked by the elections of November 1982 (6), which resulted in a spectacular setback for the PDS and for the dictatorship. At the same time, parties like the PTB that were trying to contain the workers movement and negotiate with the dictatorship got nowhere.

THE BATTLE OVER SUCCESSION

This "transition," to use the term current in the Brazilian press, has now gone into a fourth phase. The dictatorship is preparing the way for a change of president, while the bourgeoisie is trying to achieve more unity in the face of the economic crises and the social struggles.

With the approach of the PDS's official congress, which is to designate a candidate to succeed Figueiredo, several candidates have already thrown their hats into the ring.

The former governor of Sao Paulo, Paulo Maluf, known for his corruption, is in a good position in the race. The minister of the interior, Mario Andreazza, is the favorite of Figueiredo, who will have an important say in selecting the candidate, who will be finally elected by an electoral college where the PDS is guaranteed a majority. (7) Nonetheless, Andreazza is not very well regarded by the military chiefs.

The present vice president, Aureliano Chaves, also has presidential ambitions. Finally, the governor of Minas Gerais, Tancredo Neves, elected on the PMDB ticket, is offering himself as a possible candidate to represent a broad national consensus.

The crisis of the dictatorship is reflected in the clash among these personalities. General Golbery, who was the regime's grey eminence until last year, is giving tactical support to the candidacy of Paulo Maluf, while holding out the possibility of backing Tancredo Neves as a second choice. He says forcefully: "Nobody is going to accept military men running the government any more, not even the armed forces themselves." (8)

The influence games and maneuvering are on the increase. Golbery is making statements to discredit the candidacy of Chaves, and he managed to throw a monkey wrench into the parliamentary agreement between the PTB and the PDS, so that the government party finds itself in a minority in the Chamber of Deputies, with 235 deputies as against 244 for the rest of the parties.

On the eve of the important discussion on Decree 2 045, Otavio Medeiros, chief of the political police (the SNI) speeded up the return to Brazil of Figueiredo, who had gone to the U.S. for medical reasons. His objective was to restrict the activity of Chaves, who had taken over for Figueiredo in his absence.

Finally, the most popular candidate for president, if there were direct elections, would be Leonel Brizola, Rio state

governor since the November 1982 elections. He proposes extending General Figueiredo's mandate for two years in exchange for direct presidential elections in 1986.

It is not by chance that these conflicts are accelerating. The problems of the federal government's relations with the governments of the most populous and richest Brazilian states and the need for uniting the bourgeoisie against the threat of working-class mobilization, as well as the demands of administering the economic crisis, are forcing the central nucleus of political power to redefine its strategy. And up to now this position has been in the hands of military men.

A SWOLLEN STATE TORN BY CONFLICT

In fact, every political conflict is immediately reflected within the swollen state apparatus. In the first place, this is because of the large role of the state in the productive structure (the state accounted for 40% of the Gross Domestic Product in 1969-1978, as against 19.6% in 1947-57, and public enterprises are responsible for 40% of the foreign debt).

Secondly, political conflicts are fought out in the state apparatus because of the lack of means in the first phase of the dictatorship for representation and coordination of the various factions of the bourgeoisie. This resulted in a transfer of these functions to the center of the state apparatus itself.

A section of the hard right is raising an outcry now against the divisions within the military nucleus and demanding that the regime unite behind a single candidate. Its ideological representatives are, in particular, the two mass-circulation dailies, *O Estado de Sao Paulo* and *Jornal da Tarde*.

For example, in its August 14 issue, *O Estado de Sao Paulo* ran an editorial saying: "Today, with the satisfaction that comes from having done our duty but with a bitter feeling that the nation has gone backward in recent years, we think that we can offer our readers the missing pieces to prove that the March 1964 movement [that is, the coup that established the dictatorship] has been betrayed."

On the following day in turn the *Jornal da Tarde* published an editorial under the eloquent headline "It's Later Than You Think, General." It said "the ball has been over for three years," concluding: "General Figueiredo should not have any illusions. He no longer has the strength to impose a candidate. The only backing he can offer is his personal preference. Twenty-eight days [the length of time Figueiredo was hospitalized in the U.S.] is very little in the life of a country. But it is more than enough time for an institution that is rapidly breaking down. It's later than you think, general." This chain of newspapers remains notorious for the role it played in preparing the way for the military coup of 1964.

At the other extreme of the bourgeoisie

spectrum, you find sectors that are calling for a more deepgoing democratization and pose this as the condition for a social pact. The influential magazine *Senhor* for example said in an editorial on the negotiations with the IMF: "The government's glaring lack of representativity and legitimacy is weakening our bargaining position, particularly in the economic field."

This view is held especially by national capitalist sectors. Such companies are being strangled by problems of credit and the foreign debt. The directors of a dozen big companies have signed a document putting forward this view.

The declaration says: "Achieving full democracy is a great national project. The complete return of the country to constitutional rule requires the independence of the three branches of government...."

"It is essential that there be a free debate on an austerity program that can be understood and accepted, that can unite all Brazilians, one that can apportion the sacrifices and reestablish credibility...."

"Our creditors and the governments of friendly countries have to understand that it would be risky to plunge the country into a recession for an indefinite period and with results contrary to the interests of Brazil."

"A prolonged restriction of productive activity will lead inevitably to the bankruptcy of Brazilian private enterprise and could even lead to a challenge to the system of free enterprise in general...."

"This is a complex country, with a high degree of urbanization and at the same time enormous masses of absolutely impoverished people. At the same time, it has an attitude of dynamic social mobility. It cannot live with the tensions created by unemployment and declining real wages. This scenario is intolerable for Brazilians, and it is not desirable for the Western World. We have to try to avoid a deliberate or unwitting break with the international financial community."

This lucid description of the situation the country is in came from a group of leading businessmen selected annually by the economic magazine *Gazeta Mercantil*. In 1978 this same forum called for a widening of the "opening" initiated by Geisel.

This time the documents were signed, among others, by Erminio Moraes, a representative of the Votorantim trust (mines and construction, the main Brazilian private trust), representatives of the Banca Itau, Pao de Acucar, and the Bardella engineering industries.

These capitalists represent an important sector and are pushing a proposal

6. For the balance sheet of the November 1982 elections, see "Brazil Elections: Defeat of the Dictatorship," by Daniel Jebrac, *International Viewpoint*, No 22, January 24, 1983.

7. The new head of state is to be elected in January 1985 by an electoral college made up of the members of the federal parliament and the members of the state parliaments. Since the PDS has an absolute majority in this college, the nominee of the official party is certain to be elected.

8. *Folha do Sao Paulo*, August 8, 1983.

that is gaining acceptance. It calls for negotiations and a moratorium on the foreign debt. Abilio Diniz, from the supermarket chain Pao de Acucar, defined the contradictions that exist today still more sharply: "A unilateral declaration of a moratorium is the next worst road. But it is better than the one we are following today — that is, an immobilism that is going to have us wake up one day with a moratorium that we did not consciously prepare for." The warning was clear.

This position is tending to prevail. The chairman of Volvo-Brazil has already come out for it. Vice President Aureliano Chaves leaked information about a meeting he had with company heads who proposed a negotiated five-year moratorium. The PMDB proposes a three-year negotiated moratorium.

The *New York Times* devoted an editorial to the question, headlined "The Brazilian Threat." It argued that the sooner a moratorium was negotiated, the better it would be for both parties. But this course requires a systematic effort to gain more support for the regime in the society, at the possible price of accelerated reforms and restricting the power of the military.

A DEAL WITH THE DICTATORSHIP ?

The pressure for such a solution showed up clearly in the PMDB, the leading opposition party, in the wake of the November 1982 elections. The Minas Gerais state governor, Tancredo Neves, became the advocate of "negotiations" with the dictatorship. In other words, he proposed himself as a candidate to succeed Figueiredo, as someone who would be both acceptable to public opinion and reliable in the eyes of the military.

The representatives of the left wing of the PMDB, such as economist and senator Gernando Enrique Cardoso, are proposing today that the party open up negotiations with Figueiredo.

In this perspective, the PMDB has worked up an economic plan that provides for broadening democratic liberties, for setting up a constituent assembly, a moratorium on the foreign debt negotiated with the imperialist powers, and direct elections to the presidency.

However, the timidity as regards dealing with the economic crisis led the vice president of the PMDB, Teotônio Vilela — who supported the July 21 general strike against the governor of Sao Paulo, also a member of the PMDB — to say that this program reflects "the view and interests of the bankers and the Sao Paulo bosses and not the aspirations of Brazilian society."

THE DICTATORSHIP'S DEMANDS

Despite these contradictions, it is clear that the great majority of the PMDB inclines toward conciliation. Thus, on the eve of the July 21 general strike, the representatives of the dictatorship let the Sao Paulo state government know that

Militant Brazilian unionists found national labor confederation

The second Congress of the Working Class (CONCLAT) was held August 26-28 in Sao Bernardo.

It was successful in terms of the urban and rural unions that were represented despite splitting maneuvers by the "pelego" and reformist trade unionists. These bureaucrats had called for a different sort of CONCLAT in November in Praia Grande, one that would be based on the established national leaderships of the unions.

The Sao Bernardo CONCLAT was attended by 5,059 delegates, representing 12 million organized workers (there were 5,036 delegates at the first CONCLAT). Delegates came from 355 urban workers organizations and 310 rural workers organizations, nearly a hundred public workers unions, five national trade unions, one confederation, and eight national trade-union coordinating committees, to say nothing of about a hundred union organizing committees.

Trade-union confederations from France, Spain, Holland, West Germany, Mexico, and the United States sent representatives.

On the basis of this representativeness, the second CONCLAT founded the United Confederation of Workers (CUT), adopted a plan of action for the new confederation, and chose a collective leadership for it to hold office until the first congress of the CUT, which is projected for August 1984. The national leadership of the CUT is comprised of 83 full members and 83 alternate members. There is a National Executive of 15 members and a National Coordinating Committee of seven members, including the presidents of the engineering workers organizations in Sao Bernardo do Campo and Diadema, Canoas, Joao Monlevade, Niteroi, the presidents of the petroleum workers organizations in Campinas and Paulinia and of the rural workers organization in Santarem, and of a leader of the rural workers organization in Victoria de Conquista.

The CUT defines its aim of being "representative, democratic, independent of the state, the bosses, and the political parties." A series of regional meetings have been projected for March to prepare for the August 1984 national congress. The plan of action centers around the struggle against Decree 2 045, which calls for cutting back cost-of-living allowances. It also provides for building a general strike for the end of October against this decree, after all the other forms of action are exhausted.

Some union representatives who took part in founding the CUT seem to accept the present split created by the boycott of the "pelego" and reformist trade unionists. However, the fight for broader unity of the trade-union movement remains on the order of the day. As the Marxist journal *Em Tempo* noted in its 8 October 1983 issue: "Through this understanding and initiatives by the CUT in struggles it would be possible to attract other sectors and block the path of the "pelegos" and reformists and keep them from carrying through their splitting maneuver of founding a new confederation in November."

they wanted energetic measures. The chief of the president's military cabinet, General Ruben Ludwig, said: "This strike does not seem to be part of the democratic process."

Still more explicitly, General Danilo Venturini, secretary of the National Security Council, said: "Those who have the responsibility for keeping the situation from getting worse (i.e. the Sao Paulo state governor) must not neglect their job."

In fact, the PMDB government of Sao Paulo took its job seriously enough. Some 18,000 police clamped down tight control on the city. The troops of the Second Army Corps based in Sao Paulo were put on the alert. The "forces of order" barged into the churches. Trade-union leaders were arrested on the eve of the strike. Several union headquarters were taken over. Five union leaderships were suspended, including those of the largest unions in Brazil, such as the Sao Bernardo engineering workers union organization and the Sao Paulo bank workers union.

The "conciliation" advocated by the

PMDB thus imposes obligations that come quite sharply into conflict with the dynamic of mass mobilization. The growth of industry in the country in recent years has in fact profoundly changed the Brazilian working class. And these structural changes opened the way for major changes in the trade-union movement.

In the recent period, the Brazilian industrial working class has grown considerably. In 1960, it included 2.9 million workers. Twenty years later, this number rose to 10.6 million workers. It has also undergone important internal changes. The number of working women, for example, has tripled in the last decade.

The leading companies in manufacturing have developed much more rapidly than the traditional sectors. Massive urbanization has gone hand in hand with an exodus from the rural areas and the growth of regional population centers.

The state of Sao Paulo by itself includes 50.2% of all the industrial workers employed in the country, the majority of them in plants with more than 500 workers. And 70% of this labor force is

concentrated in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area. This is the cradle of militant unionism and the proposals for working-class independence that are the driving force of workers struggles in the country.

THE RISE OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

The recent development of the workers movement has gone through four successive stages:

1) The first mobilizations following the end of the era of the Brazilian "miracle" occurred in the ABC (9) industrial belt and in Sao Paulo itself. These were the first experiences in the reorganization of the workers movement. They made it possible to elect militant leaderships in the corporatist unions subordinated to the state apparatus and paved the way for the radicalization of these leaderships.

2) The cycle of strikes in 1978-79 marked a qualitative leap in the development of the workers movement. It started in the Scania factory and in the engineering plants in the ABC belt, where 100,000 workers are concentrated in six neighboring factories.

The movement spread to other categories of workers. Several unions called strikes against the will of the established leaderships in the face of the threat of violent repression. It is out of this struggle that the Workers Party (PT) emerged. It brought together the most representative leaderships of the wave of strikes.

3) A new phase opened with the defeat of the May 1980 strike of the engineering workers in the ABC belt. The strike lasted forty days but was finally broken by repression, the suspension of the union leadership, and the jailing of some leaders.

The two distinctive features of this new situation were the shift to more dispersed and more defensive struggles and the first attempts to set up national cross-union coordinating structures.

STEPS TOWARD TRADE-UNION UNITY

Thus, the first Congress of the Working Class (CONCLAT) met in August 1981. It was attended by about 6,000 delegates from the cities and the countryside. (10) The militant current had the majority. But by organizational maneuvers it was put in a minority in the National Commission for a Single Labor Confederation, which was elected on this occasion.

4) The increase in unemployment, the drop in buying power, and the worsening of the economic crisis, combined with experience accumulated and the growth of working-class organization, prepared the way for a new upsurge of struggles.

In April 1983, the unemployed in the southern district of Sao Paulo clashed with police and sacked the supermarkets. On July 6, the big Paulinia petroleum re-

finery went on strike against cutbacks in the workforce, the speedup, and the growth of on-the-job accidents over the last two years.

The same day, the leadership of the Sao Bernardo engineering workers local organized assemblies at the factory gates and decided to go out on strike the next day in solidarity with the petroleum workers.

The other refineries also shut down and were occupied by the workers. On July 7, 60,000 out of 100,000 engineering workers in Sao Bernardo went on

regional unevenness continues to weigh heavily. But the working class made a demonstration of strength in an action that its organizers described as opposed not just to the economic measures but to the dictatorship as such.

CORPORATIVIST UNIONISM

The majority of the 4,712 union organizations in the country (2,397 urban workers organizations and 2,315 rural workers organizations) do not function on a representative basis. Most of them



strike, along with 40,000 workers in other industries. There were giant demonstrations.

Three days later, the government shut down the headquarters of the unions responsible for the strike. Trade-union leaders from all over the country then met, in response to an initiative from the militant trade-union current, but with the participation of the collaborationist bureaucracy.

In Rio de Janeiro, at a meeting of representatives of several unions, a bureaucrat admitted: "I think that we are going to have to support the general strike, otherwise they are going to expose us." These are unusually frank statements in a trade-union movement where the leaders are still largely appointed by the Ministry of Labor.

The July 21, 1983, general strike mobilized nearly three million workers. This included, according to careful calculations, 80% of the workforce in Sao Paulo, and many sectors in Porto Alegre (the capital of Rio Grande do Sul) and its industrial belt.

In the other states, where there was no strike, there were nonetheless important expressions of solidarity. Some 60,000 people demonstrated in Rio and 10,000 in Belo Horizonte. This was clearly not a real nationwide strike. The

are bureaucratic social-welfare agencies. The federal structure assures the predominance of the collaborationist bureaucracy most closely tied to the Ministry of Labor.

For example, in the election of the leadership of the engineering union, the Sao Paulo district, the biggest union organization in Latin America, had no more votes than a small union organization from a city in the interior.

In turn, the industrial unions elected the Confederation of Industrial Workers (CNTI). In the elections for the leadership of the CNTI, there was a head-on conflict. A minority backed the candidacy of "Jozquimzao," the country's most notorious "pelego" (literally, "soft seat," a term for bureaucrat).

Joaquim Santos de Andrade is in himself the best symbol of the difficult history of the Brazilian trade-union movement. First, he was designated by the dictatorship as a trustee for the engi-

9. The ABC is the belt of working class suburbs around Sao Paulo. There are concentrated 400,000 engineering workers employed by the multinational automotive companies — Ford, Volkswagen, General Motors, Scania, etc. This area has been the beacon of the struggles since 1978. ABC stands for Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo, and Sao Caetano.
10. See Nos. 109 and 111, September 8, 1981 and October 26, 1981, of *Inprecor* (IV's French-language sister publication).

neering workers union in Sao Paulo. He then managed to keep himself at the head of the union by one election fraud after another.

After the start of the political "opening," he included the activists of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in the union leadership and reformed the method of functioning in the union. He supported the July 21, 1983, general strike against the advice of Ari Campista, a representative of the bureaucracy most closely aligned with the Ministry of Labor, who was elected over him to the leadership of the CNTI.

The corporatist structure thus rests on two foundations. On the one side, there is the federal organization that guarantees the predominance of agents of the state apparatus and obstructs coordination among different categories of workers. The other is the Ministry of Labor supervision of the functioning of the unions. It collects the "union tax," a compulsory dues deduction that serves in part to finance the unions. And it can freeze the accounts of a union and suspend elected union leaderships.

TWO CURRENTS CONTENTEND IN THE UNIONS

The rise of workers struggles, combined with the crisis of the dictatorship, led to the appearance of two distinct currents in the trade unions, beginning in 1978. On the one hand, there is the "traditional" current, that is the old yellow bureaucracy. And the Stalinist current, the PCB and the PC do Brasil (pro-Albanians), remains linked to this wing. On the other hand, there is a militant current lined up behind the Sao Bernardo engineering workers union organization and the Sao Paulo bank workers.

The militant current made a decisive contribution to developing coordinated struggles and to starting up a trade-union coordinating committee to prepare for launching the United Confederation of Workers (CUT).

It was the first CONCLAT in August 1981 that decided to found in the following year a trade-union confederation that would unite all the unions that agreed to join, as well as individual workers.

Over the following year, the CUT Preparatory Commission that was elected proved ineffective. It was paralyzed by the conflict between the two opposing wings of the movement. Moreover, the dispersed and defensive nature of the struggles facilitated maneuvers by the bloc of union bureaucrats, such as Joaquim Andrade, and the reformists of the PCB. As a result, the second CONCLAT, and therefore the founding of the CUT was delayed.

From this point, two conceptions and two political strategies were clearly counterposed. On the one side were the "pelegos" and the reformists, who wanted to maintain the corporatists structure, negotiate over the political "opening" with the dictatorship, put pressure

on the state governments headed by the bourgeois opposition parties, and achieve a social pact.

This last objective explains the interest this bureaucratic current has in preventing the formation of a single workers confederation.

On the other side, is the militant bloc, which wants to create the CUT as an instrument for overturning the corporatist struggle and advancing the struggles, even at the risk of seeing the most representative union leaderships suspended, as happened at the time of the July strikes.

THE MILITANT CURRENT

This militant current is itself heterogeneous. It is headed up by the unionists in the ABC belt, and, first of all by Luis Inacio da Silva, "Lula," who is also the chairperson of the PT. But it also includes independent unionists who are not members of the PT. Some of them are "Prestistas" (that is, members of a CP splinter group led by the historic CP leader Carlos Prestes). But most of them are Catholic trade unionists, who have considerable influence.

The Catholic unionists also get important material support from the European Social Democracy. They clearly follow a policy that favors division in the trade-union movement. Their influence is particularly strong among the rural trade unionists.

The confrontation between these two opposed currents in the union movement has now entered its crucial phase.

During the preparations for the July 1983 general strike, the "pelego"-reformist bloc split. Joaquim, president of the Sao Paulo engineering workers, supported the strike. He recognized that "Sao Paulo today is a powderkeg that could explode at any moment, given the number of unemployed who no longer get any kind of compensation. The spark could be approval of Decree 2 045." Other "pelegos" resolutely opposed the strike.

The PCB itself divided on the question. The Central Committee issued a call opposing the strike, and one of the party's best known leaders, Hercules Correia, told the magazine *Senhor* that he was "working full time against the strike." But the Sao Paulo Committee of the PCB, under the pressure of the engineering workers leadership in the city, found itself obliged to support "a strike without demonstrations or pickets." Its reasoning was clear enough: "We regret the fact that the national leadership is holding back from participating in the mass movements. In this way, the CP is going to continue to lose strength."

It has to be noted also that another current abstained from the strike. It was the supporters of the paper *O Trabalho*, which reflects the positions of the Internationalist Socialist Organization, (OSI), linked to the international Lambertist current headed by the French International Communist Party.

Their argument was that the strike was a maneuver by the bureaucrats to channel the movement. This decision to abstain came directly from their international center.

What actually happened was the exact opposite of what the Lambertist current warned against. The success of the July strike threw the "pelego"-reformist bloc into retreat, out of fear that the movement would radicalize and spread. In fact, 37 trade-union bodies are already calling for a new general strike before the end of the year. The majority of state union conferences, the ENCLATs, have also come out for building such a general strike.

So, founding the CUT emerged as the fundamental task of the second CONCLAT, which met at the end of August 1983. The creation of this body would be a major stimulus to national coordination of the workers movement.

However, in an attempt to pull their bloc back together and safeguard the corporatist union structure, the "pelego" and reformist unionists withdrew from preparations for the second CONCLAT. The pretext came over the rules on representation of delegations from unions whose leaderships did not want to participate in the CONCLAT.

It was the Confederation of Agricultural Unions (CONTAG) that raised this objection. Its president, Jose Francisco, wanted to nail down total control of delegations elected by the ranks, because he feared the radicalization and growing influence of militant sectors among the rural unions.

The bloc of "pelego" and reformist unions thus proposed holding a founding congress of a confederation at a national meeting of unions that would take place in October. This confederation would be based on the leaderships of the present corporative structures.

For its part, the bloc of militant unions continued to support the call for the second CONCLAT to meet at the end of August. Thus, a split in the union movement emerged at a time hardly favorable for the Brazilian workers.

It is true that it would be difficult for the two blocs of trade unionists to continue to live together for a long time in the same all-trades structure. The work of the militant bloc to build mobilizations and to bring together all categories of workers is aimed at destroying the collaborationist bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the maneuvers of the bureaucracy are designed to destroy the influence of the militant current in the workers movement in order to keep the movement from radicalizing.

However, it is also clear that today a united front of the trade-union structures against Decree 2 045, against state intervention in the unions after the July strikes, and against unemployment would give a powerful impetus to mobilization. It would undermine the base of the reformist bureaucracy, as could already be seen in the case of the July 21 actions. ■



AROUND THE WORLD



REVOLUTIONARY LEADER DIES IN COMBAT

We publish below extracts from a communique by the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers of Honduras (PRTC-H), which announced the deaths of a group of militants who had undertaken the armed struggle against the reactionary Honduran regime and the American imperialists who are occupying the country.

The leader of this group, Jose Maria Reyes Mata, finished his studies in Havana at the end of the 1960s and then went to Bolivia, with the aim of reorganising what remained of Che Guevara's guerrilla forces. He was arrested and sentenced six months after his arrival in the country. He then escaped and went into exile in Chile. After the coup by General Augusto Pinochet in September 1973, Reyes Mata took refuge in the Honduran embassy, and then returned to his country. A founding member of PRTC-H, he took part in the kidnapping of a manager of the American oil company Texaco in Tegucigalpa. Captured and imprisoned, he was then released under an amnesty.

We, the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers of Honduras, (PRTC-H) and the People's Armed Forces (FAP), have declared war against the North American intervention and its acolytes in our country since the end of last year. The FAP are presently limited in number and resources. They draw their real strength from the patriotism of the Hondurans, the revolutionary consciousness of the workers and peasants, having at their side representatives of the middle layers, mainly those of the intellectual milieu.

We decided to take the first step, to give an example of sacrifice for the homeland, so that the Honduran people would stand up against the foreign invaders and their puppets.

This war, launched by the FAP on our national territory, is part of the struggle that the peoples of Central America are carrying out against the intervention of the Reagan administration and its allies, the military and the oligarchy. All we Central Americans have the duty to unite in this struggle, as the peoples of Central

America united in 1856 to confront and vanquish William Walker (1). Today we have the same ideal as did Morazan (2) against the presence of these modern freebooters, the Yankees, in any of our countries.

Today as yesterday, blood and sacrifice are the high price that the struggle for liberty demands. The cause for which Lempira fell in the people's struggle against the Spanish conquistadors, Morazan during the national democratic struggle against the oligarchy and the British colonialists, Wainright and Calix Herrera, Lorenzo Selaya and Manuel Rodriguez in the present struggle for national liberation, is the same fight for which the brave leaders and militants of the PRTC-H and FAP have recently fallen.

It is with great sadness that our party and our armed forces announce the death in combat of a group of comrades, led by Jose Maria Reyes Mata, top political and military leader of our two revolutionary organisations. They fell fighting the enemies of our nation and people. Their blood will not flow in vain.

Commandante Jose Maria Reyes Mata and the other comrades we mourn, whose identities, and the circumstances in which they died, we will reveal at the right moment, have given an undying example. They have planted in the hearts of the people the flag of national liberation flourished by the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers of Honduras and the Unified National Leadership of the Honduran Revolutionary Movement. By their unremitting efforts and their heroic sacrifice they have raised the struggle of the popular movement to a new level. Abandoning the anti-imperialist pen of Froylan Turcio to take up the liberating guns of the patriotic guerrilla struggle in Olancho, they have put into action the words of our national hymn, which we sing today in their memory: 'Honduras, numerous will be your deaths, but they will fall with honour. For Honduras, to win or die.'

Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC-H)
People's Armed Forces (FAP)
Honduras, Central America
September 25, 1983

1. William Walker was an American adventurer who landed on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua in the mid-19th century. He became master of the country thanks to his mercenaries, proclaimed himself president of Nicaragua, got himself recognised by the US, and re-established slavery in the country. Overthrown by the military forces of the Central American state, Walker was shot in Honduras in 1860.

2. Of Honduran origin, Francisco Morazan was the promoter of a project for a federation of Central American states in the first half of the 19th century.

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION - MARIANELLA GARCIA KILLED BY SALVADORAN ARMY

Salvadoran human rights activist Mari- anella Garcia Villas was murdered in Sal- vador in March 1983. At the time the Salvadoran government claimed that she was involved on the guerrillas' side in a clash with the army.

However, the Paris daily *Le Monde* reported on 5 October 1983 that a recent report by Pax Christi, the international Catholic organisation, stated that Mari- anella Garcia had been 'tortured to death by the armed forces'. The Pax Christi re- port, *Le Monde* continued, states that 'The victim was captured during an attack on the village of La Bermuda, by a contingent of the elite battalion Atla- catl, where she was making an investi- gation of previous violations of human rights, particularly the use of chemical substances by the army. Then taken to the military school at San Salvador, she must have died after having been tortured for some six hours.'

This is not the first time that an inter- national human rights organisation has challenged the version of her death given by the government. Although Mari- anella Garcia was originally an activist of the Christian Democratic party, she had been a continual target for repres- sion by the government, who profoundly disliked her work in revealing human rights violations in El Salvador. ■

SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAELI ANTI-WAR SOLDIERS

We publish below a statement by the Po- litical Bureau of the Revolutionary Com- munist League (RCL), section of the Fourth International in the state of Is- rael, calling for solidarity with anti- Zionist militants who have suffered re- pression because of their refusal to serve in the Israeli Army in Lebanon or the occupied territories.

For a more complete understanding of this struggle, and particularly the action of the activists of Yesh Gvul

(*'There is a Border' or 'There is a Limit'*), refer to International Viewpoint No 34, 11 July 1983, where we published an interview with anti-Zionist militants in the Israeli Army.

The Israeli Army is getting ready to spend its second winter in Lebanon. Since the massacres the Israeli government is completely bogged down, and unable to withdraw its troops without completely losing face.

The longer the war goes on the more it loses the little popularity it still had among the population of Israel. In every unit soldiers are deserting, or refusing their call-up, because they do not want to run the risk of dying in a war that 'is not ours'. Among them, and at their head, are the militants of Yesh Gvul who, since the beginning of the war have stated their refusal to take part in an adventure as criminal as it is unrealistic.

Our comrade Yigal Vega, 31 years old, the father of two children and a metalworker, is the ninetieth soldier to have been sentenced to a prison term for having refused to rejoin his unit. He has

been sentenced to 35 days in the No 6 military prison. These 35 days could be renewed indefinitely by a new decree authorising the military authorities to immediately recall any soldier who has been in prison for territorial insubordination (refusing to serve in Lebanon or the occupied territories), and so it could go on.

The only way of preventing the Israeli military authorities from condemning the Lebanon absentees to unlimited prison terms is if a broad solidarity movement, local and international, develops. In this sense, Ygal's case is a test for the whole of the soldiers' movement.

We call on all the sections of the Fourth International to mobilise their members and the democratic forces in their countries, in solidarity with Ygal Vega and the absentees of Yesh Gvul, to organise pickets in front of the Israeli Embassies, and to send telegrams demanding their immediate release to: *Moshe Arens, Minister of Defence, Hakiriya, Tel Aviv*, with a copy to: *Yesh Gvul, B.P. 4172, Tel Aviv*. ■



THREE SOLDIERS CHARGED WITH 'INCITEMENT TO INSUBORDINATION'

Two French soldiers doing their compulsory military service, Olivier Lecour Grandmaison and Laurent Fritz, stationed in the 32nd Engineers Regiment in Kehl in West Germany, have been on charges since October 14 of 'incitement to insubordination' under articles 423 and 429 of the Military Code of Justice.

They incur from two to ten years in prison for simply having been found in possession of an information sheet from the soliders committee of their regiment, entitled *Les Sapeurs en Lutte (Sappers in Struggle)*, and of a petition demanding the withdrawal of French troops from West Germany, as well as all foreign troops from the two Germanies.

They are presently imprisoned in Landau fortress, and on charges before the Military Tribunal of the Armies (TMA) in Germany, the last survivor of the Permanent Tribunals of the Armed Forces (TPFA). This jurisdiction, in part abolished by the Mitterrand government, is in the line of descent of those who assassinated hundreds of soldiers for rejecting the imperialist butchery of the 1914-18 War, repressed the Black Sea

Mutiny, organised the Mayence trial in 1923 of the soldiers who rejected imperialist occupation of the Ruhr. A veritable war machine against all those who fight for democratic rights within the barrack walls... More recently, in 1974, it took the soldiers Ravet, Taurus and Pelletier in front of the TPF in Draguignan because they had demanded better living conditions and greater freedom in the barracks. Paradox of history, at the time it was Charles Hernu, present defence minister, who came, in the name of the Socialist Party, to speak in favour of the three charged.

The following year, 1975, Jacques Chirac, then prime minister under Giscard d'Estaing, organised a huge police operation, dragging some thirty civilians and soldiers in front of the State Security Court. In both these cases a campaign of activity made the government and the military hierarchy retreat, forcing them to suspend their action against the accused soldiers and civilians.

When in opposition the Socialist Party and Communist Party made great declarations on conscripts liberties, and elabor-

ated 'democratic' statutes for them. Francois Mitterrand even promised to reduce military service to six months and grant certain democratic liberties to soldiers. Today, Francois Mitterrand and Charles Hernu have forgotten their democratic pronouncements of yesterday. Not wanting to be outdone by their predecessors in power, they had the homes of the family and friends of the two charged soldiers searched. Searches have also been carried out in Metz, the home town of another soldier, Etienne Patoor, from the 13th Engineers Regiment at Treves, who will also be brought before the TMA at Landau.

It is once more the whole soliders movement which is targeted through the charges against these two soldiers. Since 1968 when the movement re-emerged on the political scene, it has been the target of the military hierarchy and reactionary forces. But, with each wave of repression, the stand and activity of the workers movement, and the tenacity and courage of the soldiers in struggle, in 1974 and 1975 turned these police operations into a political rout for their promoters.

The present repressive attitude is in line with the pro-imperialist policy Mitterrand is implementing, through his recent speech in Brussels reviling the European peace movements, the increased defence budget presented by Hernu at the same time as the workers are forced to accept austerity, or the neo-colonial interventions in Chad and Lebanon.

By the same token these attacks on soldiers rights are an attempt to strike a blow against the anti-war movement as a whole. The struggle of French soldiers for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from German soil and, in the first place, of all French troops, is an integral part of the struggle of millions of workers and youth against the imperialist arms race, the Cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles and the militarisation of their countries.

Thus it is the responsibility of the workers movement and anti-war movement throughout Europe as well as in France, to act demanding the release of these French soldiers. The mass demonstrations in the next month are an occasion to do this.

Faithful to the tradition of international co-operation established by the French and German Communist Parties at the time of the Mayence trial, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire and the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten from France and Germany, and the other European sections of the Fourth International will act to force the military hierarchy to retreat and release the soldiers imprisoned by French militarism.

Solidarity messages should be addressed to *Olivier Lecour Grandmaison, Laurent Grandmaison and Etienne Patoor, Landau Military Prison, Mangin, Dorenberg St., Landau, FDR*.

Protest messages should be sent to: *M. Lateve, Examining Judge, Mangin, Dorenberg St., FDR, and Minister for the Army, 14-16 rue Saint-Dominique, 75007 Paris*. ■

US imperialism aims to strangle Nicaraguan revolution

Vincent KERMEL

American imperialism is tightening its grip on Central America. Under the pretext of joint military manoeuvres with Honduras, the Reagan administration has stationed thousands of American GIs, dozens of war ships and hundreds of American aircraft around Nicaragua.

The 'Big Pine II' manoeuvres have thus been an opportunity to increase the imperialist blockade. The latest actions of the counter-revolutionaries on Nicaraguan territory also illustrate what the imperialists are after. This aim of worsening the social and economic situation in Nicaragua, and weakening its defence capacity is a constant feature in the policy of the United States.

There was a step-up in this campaign at the beginning of September, with the entry into action of counter-revolutionary aircraft, which bombed the international airport at Managua, the port of Corinto, and the residential neighbourhood of the capital where the minister for foreign affairs, Miguel d'Escoto, lives.

These aggressive actions were launched from Costa Rica, and claimed by the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) led by the traitor Eden Pastora. Other such attacks were launched from Honduras, to the north of the country, by the Democratic Forces of Nicaragua (FDN). Former major of the Somozaist airforce, Roberto Amado Narvaez, shot down during one of these bombing raids, confirmed that the objective of the FDN was to 'carry on aerial resupply in October of the strike forces operating on Nicaraguan territory so that they can mount attacks on the towns in November, and move towards Managua in December.' (Agence Nueva Nicaragua, Managua, October 6, 1983).

Narvaez also had to admit that American military officers were involved in training the counter-revolutionaries, that they got US aid in supplies. He also acknowledged that the contras had the use of take-off runways of the Honduran Army as well as a base in El Aguacate — installed by the CIA in the department of Olancho — for their attacks against Nicaraguan territory.

The simultaneous timing of the aerial bombardments launched from Costa Rica by the ARDE and Honduras by the ex-Somozaists of the FDN is a sign of the progress made by US imperialism and the CIA in co-ordinating the different counter-revolutionary fronts. Another example of this is the simultaneous attack on the Penas Blancas post on the Costa Rican border, and the El Espino one on the Honduran border, at the end of September.

The aim of these actions was to block the Pan-American Highway that crosses Nicaragua. There again, the desire to stifle the country economically is clearly an objective of the military tactics of the contras. The hundreds of contras who have infiltrated Nicaraguan territory limit themselves to ambush and sabotage operations.

The complicity of the government authorities and the Rural Guard of Costa Rica has become obvious during the last few weeks. It has even been partially acknowledged by Colonel Rigoberto Badilla himself, head of the Costa Rican Rural Guard (cf Agence Nueva Nicaragua, October 1, 1983).

The Costa Rican government has nonetheless taken the Nicaraguan response as a pretext for souring diplomatic relations. For example, it has threatened to invoke the Rio Treaty for inter-American assistance against the Sandinista government. This could hardly fit in better with the interventionist plans of US imperialism.

Finally, imperialist pressure on the Nicaraguan economy is also shown by the destruction of the oil depots at Puerto Zeladon on the Atlantic Coast (1.5 million litres) and at Corinto on the Pacific Coast (3.8 million litres). In the latter case the Sandinista authorities had to evacuate 10,000 of the 25,000 inhabitants of the town. The *New York Times* of October 16, reported that the CIA was directly implicated in planning these actions.

Since US financial pressure has not succeeded in forcing Mexico to suspend oil deliveries to Nicaragua, as Venezuela has done, the CIA is now sending commandos to sabotage the installations in Nicaraguan ports. At the same time, the FDN is threatening to destroy the vessels that deliver the oil.

These actions, combined with American surveillance of the Nicaraguan coasts, intensify the imperialist blockade. The objective is not simply to increase the economic and social difficulties of the Sandinista revolution. It is also to restrict the Sandinistas mobility and capacity for response on the level of military defence. This is to allow the contras to move on to another stage in their activity — or even to prepare the ground for a direct imperialist intervention.

International solidarity is now more than ever an urgent task. The peoples under attack desperately need support to combat the economic war and military aggression organised by the imperialists and their allies against the Nicaraguan and Central American revolution. ■

New printshop for Barricada

Six days after the overthrow of the dictator Somoza on July 19, 1979, the first issue of *Barricada* was produced by the FSLN in the former offices and printshop of the Somoza daily *Novedades*. Since then its resources have remained modest, and there have been daily difficulties. For a long time the bourgeois daily *La Prensa* sold better than *Barricada*.

There are many difficulties in the operation of the printshop. First of all, there is a lack of qualified skilled workers, as is the case throughout industry. Many were hostile to the revolution and left the country along with the bourgeoisie. Materials are very old and worn-out, lots of machines are out of order and difficult to repair. Most come from North America and the replacement parts would be very expensive.

The *Barricada* printshop would like to change its equipment, buying new, preferably European, machines, and training its workers on this modern equipment.

The Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International, has, in consultation and agreement with the comrades who run the *Barricada* printshop, decided to launch this campaign and organise it together with its own printshop, Rotographie. Other sections of the Fourth International intend to participate in this campaign, particularly the comrades of the Swiss section, the Workers Socialist Party (PSO/SAP/LSO).

This campaign was launched publicly on October 13, during an LCR meeting in Paris, where a first collection was made.

If you wish to show your solidarity in this way, send cheques payable to the LCR to: Stephane, Imprimerie Rotographie, 2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil.