

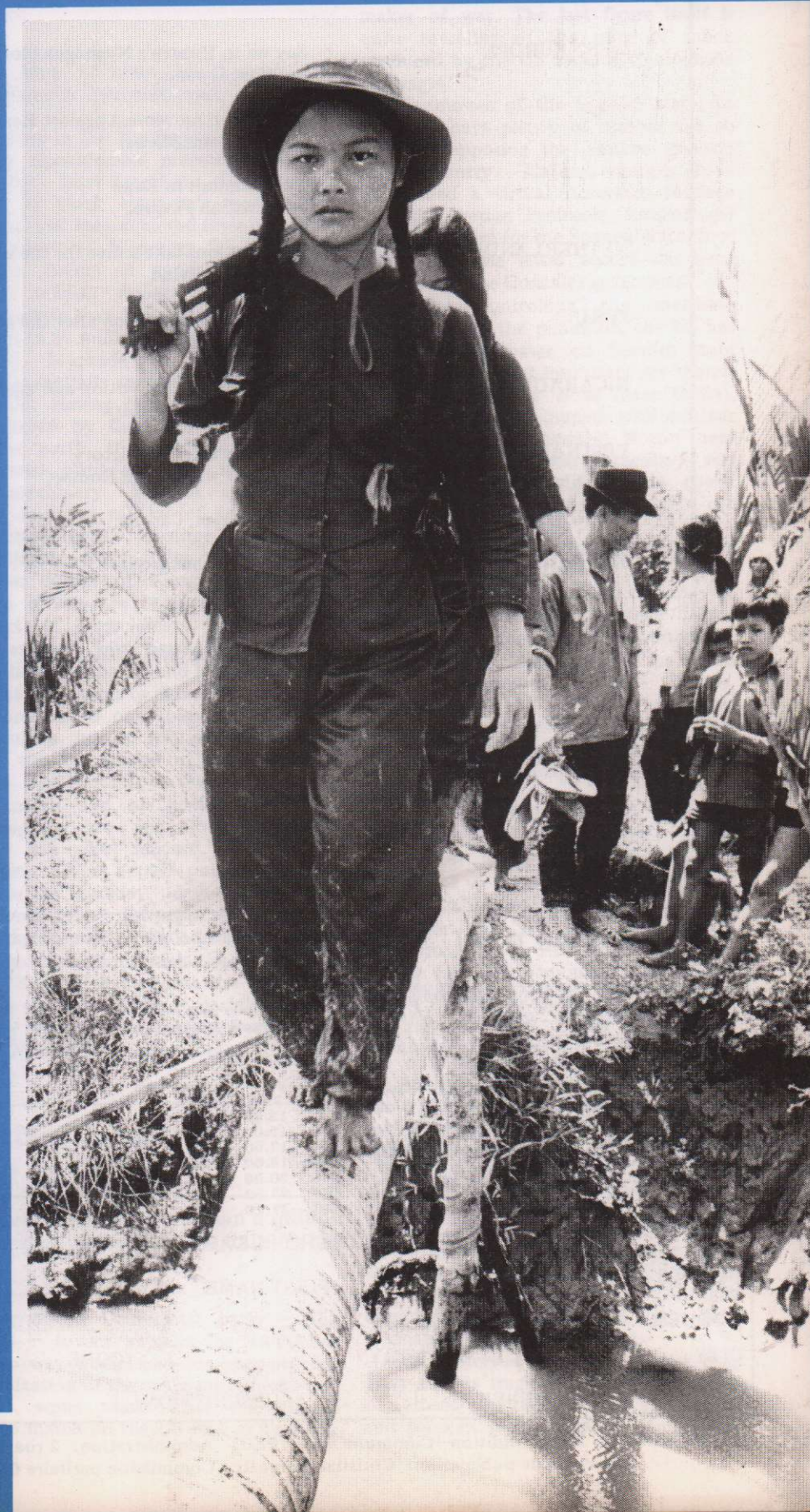
# International VIEWPOINT

ISSUE NO 76 20 May 1985

**The legacy  
of the  
Indochina wars**

**Democracy  
and revolution  
in Nicaragua**

**Reagan's act  
bombs in Europe**



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# International Viewpoint

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# Say no to Reagan's Nicaragua blockade

The following is an editorial from the May 9 issue, of *Rouge*, the weekly paper of the French section of the Fourth International.

Alan GWENN

After more than 100,000 persons demonstrated in the United States on April 20 and more than 100,000 marched in Spain and 50,000 in the streets of Bonn at the time of the Big-Seven summit in protest against Reagan's aggressive policy, the US president decided on May 1 to declare a total embargo against Nicaragua. This, moreover, was just four days after he had been handed a rebuff by the US Congress, which refused to grant the 14 million dollars in aid that the White House chief had demanded for the former Somoza National Guards.

Was this cynical revenge of an embittered old man for his recent diplomatic defeat? No! Reagan is just giving a new push to the powerful military machine that is already in motion in his country. Although the Congress's rejections caused some problems, aid to the contras has never stopped. There is always a flow of money, among other things from CIA dominated organizations, to those who are fighting against the new democratic system in Nicaragua.

For five years, the US has been waging an undeclared war, providing training and logistic support from its base in Honduras for Reagan's celebrated "freedom fighters," who are sowing death and deprivation in Nicaragua. More than 80,000 peasants, soldiers, and teachers have lost their lives and the economy has suffered more than a billion dollars in losses.

Reagan's blockade is intended most of all as a last warning. In fact, a trade embargo had already been instituted. In 1983, the US made a major

reduction in the Nicaraguan sugar import quota. Considerable pressures were put on the Inter-American Development Bank to block Managua's requests for credits, and they achieved their objective. US exports to Nicaragua fell from 247 million dollars in goods in 1980 to 111.5 million dollars in 1984, and US imports have fallen from 214 million dollars to 57 million.

The blockade of Nicaragua will affect essentially spare-parts imports from the US. Having inherited an economy dominated by their powerful neighbor to the north, the Sandinistas have an industrial plant equipped mainly with US machinery. Without spare parts, many factories will be left to the mercy of breakdowns. Another problem is insecticides, which today represent 9.14 million dollars of Nicaraguan imports. These effects are compounded by the impact of encirclement and isolation. The embargo also bans all air and sea links between the US and Nicaragua.

The US "wants to defeat us by hunger, to force us to our knees by economic difficulties, but it will never succeed." That was the answer of the Sandinista Front. And it points up the real intentions of Reagan and his advisers. But the Nicaraguans are not alone in saying "they will never succeed." That is the meaning of an appeal published in *Le Monde* on Tuesday, May 8, signed by 100 well-known European personalities. "European public opinion has a decisive role to play, along with the currents in the US itself that oppose the escalation of the war. Our honor is at stake, as well as our own interests, because freedom for the Nicaraguans also means freedom for us."

near Madrid, there can no longer be any doubt. Despite the shift of the Social Democratic government of Felipe Gonzales, the overwhelming majority of the peoples of Spain oppose the integration of the Spanish state in the imperialist alliance.

According to a poll in *El Pais* [the country's most respected mass circulation all-Spain daily], 54% of persons asked rejected NATO, 66% oppose the presence of the US bases, 74% see Reagan as a maker of war. The last figure itself is quite revealing of the state of shock produced by the US decision to blockade Nicaragua.

The masses of the Spanish state, to be sure, have plenty of reasons for so strongly opposing the Yankee grip on their country. Bilateral accords have established a virtual American tutelage over the Iberian Peninsula, for Portugal since 1946 and for the Spanish state since 1953. And the latter accord has been renewed by the Gonzales government.

Besides controlling the maritime approaches to the peninsula, the US has several dozen bases on Spanish state territory. The most important are the air and naval base at Rota (near Cadiz), which is being equipped with nuclear arms; and the air bases at Moron (near Seville), Sanjurjo (near Saragossa), and Torrejon (near Madrid), where about 15,000 US military personnel are permanently stationed.

These bases are vital for the US's policy of intervention in the Middle East, for which they serve as backup. For years, this US military presence helped to reinforce the Franco dictatorship. Today, it is a major factor in the brutal austerity imposed on the masses, inasmuch as US military "aid" has been made conditional on increasing the Spanish military budget and the Spanish state placing orders with US arms industries.

Thus, in 1983, the US extended 400 million dollars in military aid to Spain, but it got orders for military equipment worth ten times that amount. The contract given to McDonald Douglas the same year for 72 F-18 airplanes alone amounted to 1.6 billion dollars.

The May 4-5 demonstrations have in fact given the signal for a new offensive of the European antiwar movement. They have opened the way for widening the mobilizations against foreign bases, especially in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. They have outlined the perspective for a new advance of the entire European peace movement, with a more and more conscious radical anti-imperialist orientation.

After the Easter demonstrations in Great Britain and West Germany, after the May 4 antimissiles day of action in the Netherlands and the anti-Reagan demonstrations May 4-5 in West Germany the tone has been set.

The outcry everywhere against Star Wars and its tragic implications in terms of austerity for the European and American peoples, the affirmation of uncondi-

## New rise in movement against Reagan's war policy

"No NATO! Yes bases out!" Shouting these slogans, more than a million people came onto the streets of the main cities in the Spanish state on the weekend of May 4-5 during Reagan's visit.

Jean-Louis MICHEL

In Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao, Santander, Oviedo, Saragossa, and Seville in particular, huge marches formed, showing that the turnaround of the

ruling Social Democratic party — the PSOE — toward support for NATO has in no way diminished the capacity for mobilization of the peace movement.

So, some weeks after the success of the march on the US base at Torrejon

tional solidarity with the national and social liberation struggles from Nicaragua to Kanaky, including Africa and the Middle East, provide the framework for new and decisive antiwar

mobilizations against the militarization and austerity programs of the European capitalist governments that are grouped in NATO under the leadership of the dominant imperialism. ■

6 meeting, the Paris business daily *les Echos* wrote: "In almost every case, the aim is to contain inflation, control public spending, promote unemployment, develop technology, and create conditions favorable to private enterprise."

For the Third World, a large part of which is now facing conditions of virtual economic collapse (i.e., the sub-Saharan countries, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, etc.), the leaders of world imperialism offered only a few lines in their conclusions: "The flow of resources, including public aid for development, should be maintained, and if possible, increased for the poorest countries."

The lack of content in the statement of the Seven in this respect is in no way accidental. The vagueness was designed to conceal the increased pillage the underdeveloped countries are suffering.

A recent report of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel has just highlighted the cynicism of the big international financial groups. It notes, for example: "In 1984, through the international banking sector, there was a major transfer of resources from countries outside the zone to the rest of the world."

Thus, it could hardly be clearer, that underdeveloped countries are partially financing the crisis whose source is the core of the imperialist centers. The dominated countries find themselves forced to take bitter medicine by the IMF (largely controlled by the US), but they are getting nothing in return, not even in terms of bank loans.

Mitterrand will no doubt try to make the maximum political capital from his clash with the White House chief, building up his Gaullist image and trying to refurbish his reputation a bit with the "people of the left."

An attentive study of the impasse in Bonn shows, however, that Mitterrand's policy continues to be dictated by a determination to serve the interests of the French bourgeoisie in the best way possible. ■

Ronald Reagan (DR)



## Crisis summit in Bonn

Year by year, the summit meetings of the heads of state and government of the principal Western powers point up the extent of the crisis shaking the capitalist world. Not only did the meeting in Bonn from May 2 to May 4 confirm these tendencies but it marked a new stage in the crisis of the Western bloc.

Christian PICQUET

The specific interests of the various national ruling classes clashed so gravely that no accord, not even a formal one, was reached on the main points under discussion.

The reason for this is that the economic upturn that began in 1983 and 1984 is showing the first signs of running out of steam. In the United States, which had been the locomotive of the expansion, a growth rate of 1.3% for the first quarter of this year points to a 3% annual decline by comparison with 1984. This is the logical result of the mechanisms that produced the expansion of the last two years, because it was stimulated essentially by a pyramiding of the budget deficit in the imperialist citadel (200 billion dollars a year for the last four years).

To prevent this deficit from leading to runaway inflation, Reagan has sought to attract a mass of foreign capital looking for juicy speculative operations. In order to achieve this, the US administration has had to keep interest rates high, bringing on an up-valuation of the dollar detrimental to the economic equilibria of the other imperialist powers.

While in the beginning this policy made possible a revival of production in some sectors, it also inflicted disastrous results on the overall economic life of the other Western countries.

The rise of the dollar in fact made US industrial goods less competitive by comparison with those of other Western countries. In 1984, US imports nearly equalled the Gross Domestic Market Product of France (341 billion dollars).

In trade with Japan, the US has a deficit of 37 billion dollars. And exports of industrial manufactures from Third World countries to the US in fact exceed American exports of such goods to the Third World.

This development is generating a chain-reaction effect on American industry. Firms such as Caterpillar, Ford, Du Pont, and Good Year are closing some of their factories in order to redevelop within the US.

Such is the context that explains the main proposals Ronald Reagan made

in Bonn — the opening of multilateral trade negotiations with the aim of eliminating subsidies and regulations that protect the markets of the competing imperialist centers.

The first question mark in this respect is the West European agricultural policy, which depends to a large extent on export aid to cover the difference between the European and world-market prices. This system is obviously unfavorable to US agricultural interests, who in the first half of this year have lost twelve contracts for the sale of wheat representing a value of 255 million dollars.

Reagan's proposals in this area ran into conflict mainly with French agri-food companies who hold first place on the European market for agricultural products and second place on the world market. If the US president's proposals were implemented they would lead to the loss of 40 billion francs [more than 10 billion dollars] for France, that is, the equivalent of twice the country's 1984 trade deficit.

On this question, therefore, Francois Mitterrand was obliged to take his distance from his European partners and break with the tradition of submission to Reagan's diktats followed up to now by French governments. Mitterrand's determination was all the greater because the ruling team in Washington could not offer him any quid pro quo in terms of lowering the interest rate.

This year, the US budget gap will be still larger than the one in 1984, and will combine with a larger trade deficit. So, for the White-House, the only way out remains a dear money policy, despite the threat it poses for the international upturn.

While the Western leaders could not reach an agreement on medium-term policies, they nonetheless could note the convergence of their present economic strategies. The final statement of the Bonn Summit noting the "specific priorities" of every country points up clearly that the Seven are united on the essential things — austerity for the workers, pursuing industrial restructuring, reducing social spending, and financial aid for the owners of the means of production.

In summing up the results of the May

# Dutch unions take a dive for the benefit of the Social-Democrats

In April, confrontations seemed to be shaping up over the new contracts in key sectors of Dutch industry. These battles appeared likely to become the sharpest labor struggle in northern Europe after the Danish protest strikes at the beginning of the month. However, the rug has been suddenly pulled out from under the workers by the union leaderships.

Under the headline, "The Union Leaders Did Not Want to Fight," Rene Visser wrote in the May 1 issue of *Klassenstrijd*, the paper of the Dutch section of the Fourth International:

Aage SKOVRIND

The new contracts just signed in the biggest industries in the Netherlands will doubtless determine the trend for the rest of the labor market in the country. They provide full wage increases of 1% to 1.5% for the year (in some cases supplemented by cash bonuses), full coverage for illness (in compensation for the cutbacks in public insurance that the bourgeois government has undertaken this year). They bid a farewell to automatic cost-of-living increases. And the whole thing is sweetened by unbinding promises that a study will be made about the possibilities for reducing the workweek below the present 38 hours.

The workers' main demand for cutting the workweek to 36 hours, in other words, will be put on ice.

More overtime, speedup, more temporary workers — these have been the results of the two-hour cut in the workweek introduced two years ago. Moreover, the Dutch workers had to pay for this cut in working time themselves by giving up automatic cost-of-living increases. This has meant that in the last two years real wages have fallen by 5% to 7%. The objective of all this was to increase the number of jobs. But very little has been achieved in this respect.

The official statistics indicate that this measure has created new jobs to take up only 20% of the slack created by the workweek reduction. This could happen first and foremost because it was not really a reduction of the working week. The two-hours were given in the form of 13 more holidays a year. This gave the bosses the opportunity to make their production schedules more flexible without hiring significantly more workers.

The disillusionment at the small gains from the reduction of working time in 1982 has meant that the Dutch unions

"At a rapid pace in the past weeks, contract agreements have been reached, one after the other. With some important exceptions (the printing industry and various medium-sized plants), there was no real breakthrough toward the 36-hour workweek. Not only that, but the bosses got off this time with giving minimal wage increases."

The employers and the union bureaucrats put off any confrontation by signing contracts for one year only instead of the usual longer terms. One reason is that the eyes of the Social Democrats are on next years elections.

are continuing to lose members at an undiminished rate. For example, over the last five or six years, the *Industriebond*, the big industrial workers union, has lost nearly a third of its membership (which has fallen from 300,000 to 220,000). But the rank-and-file discontent also led union leaders to stiffen their demands in negotiations this year. This time they demanded a reduction of the workweek to 36 hours and in a very different form.

"The first time, we were the ones who paid for it, now it's your turn," the union leaders said in effect. Among other things, they could point to record profits by Dutch businesses. This time, the lack created by the reduction in hours should be taken up 100% by new hiring, the union leaders argued, but without indicating in practice how this could be controlled.

On the other hand, the *Industriebond* failed to raise the demand for restoration of cost-of-living increases. The leadership figured that automatic increases would not make the need for the union as clear to the members as regular wage negotiations.

The bosses had already rejected the demand for the 36-hour week in the fall. And in the beginning of March the negotiations were temporarily broken off. In a lot of workplaces, there was a readiness for action. Action plans were worked out and warning strikes took place, rallies were held. In the meantime, it became clear quickly enough that the union leadership did not want to *fight* for the union demands but only to put pressure on the employers.

The leadership in the largest labor confederation, the *Federatie van Nederlandse Vakverenigen* (FNV — Netherlands Federation of Unions) supports the Social Democratic PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid — Labor Party). And the PvdA is hoping to be able to participate in a coalition government with one or a number of bourgeois parties after the parliamentary elections

in 1986. The opinion polls show a clear advance for the PvdA, indicating that as of now over 40% of the voters would support it [this is a large percentage in view of the many parties represented in the Dutch parliament].

The experience with the 13 extra days off a year has been, as I noted, that the bosses have carried out a speedup, increased the number of hours the plants operate, and increased the number of temporary workers. Their response to a concerted demand from the unions for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay and all the slack taken up by new hiring was flat refusal.

But that has not been an obstacle to the bosses signing local contracts where the conditions are favorable to them. The most striking example is the big metallurgical plant *HOLEC* in Nijmegen, where the management itself proposed reducing the workweek to 36 hours. In return for that, they wanted to introduce two six-hour shifts a day and Sunday work! The unions in the plant expressed a positive interest in the proposal.

A similar development has taken place in Belgium, where Saturday and Sunday have already come to be considered normal working days. Two years ago, the contracts opened the way for weekend work, if the "social partners" in given factories agreed on this. A few weeks ago, the bourgeois government considered a law that would eliminate the need for the workers' consent. The government could point to the fact that this system has already been introduced on a voluntary basis in a series of plants.

The eight-hour workday, with Saturday and Sunday off, safety improvements, and other gains the workers movement has won through long years of struggle can quickly become things of the past if the unions do not put up a fight soon enough against the bosses' plans for flexible working time. ■

## Political recomposition after the general elections

The results of the first round of the Peruvian elections on April 14 demonstrated two important points. Firstly they showed a massive rejection by the Peruvian masses of the Belaunde Terry government but secondly they demonstrated the absence of any real popular alternative.

The ruling, Accion Popular (AP) along with all the conservative parties received a derisory vote. Hardly surprising since under the AP government unemployment has reached 12% with 58% of the population underemployed and inflation running at 200%.

The Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) with 48% of the votes for their presidential candidate and 51% for their parliamentary representatives are set to win in the next round, as had been widely predicted.

The lack of a real popular alternative at the electoral level however, was rather sharply posed when the runner up in the first round, Alfonso Barrantes of the United Left (IU) announced on April 30, his withdrawal from the second round altogether. This party, with a genuine base inside the trade unions and the mass organizations in the shantytowns had done slightly less well than anticipated from the 1983 municipal election results. Following its withdrawal from the second round constitutional experts are now debating whether the second round has to go ahead.

Esteban MARCOS

There were few surprises in the first round of the Peruvian elections. Most local and international commentators had agreed months before on what the outcome would be. Now we have to wait until the end of June to see the predictions fully confirmed. What is expected is that in the end APRA will make a clean sweep of the general elections, after winning a majority in both houses of parliament in these first-round elections.

If, as predicted, APRA scores an across-the-board victory, this will repeat, on a higher level and with more contradictions, the situation of one party holding all the power, as has been the case of the Accion Popular (AP) regime headed by the incumbent president, Belaunde Terry.

Of course, there is still the remote possibility of a surprise. The United Left (IU) might win in the second round. The problem there is more the leadership of the front than any lack of readiness to unite and fight on the part of the toiling masses of the country. Nonetheless, the Marxist front is already the second strongest political force in Peru and the most serious parliamentary opposition to the APRA.

According to unofficial figures, Alan Garcia got 48% of the vote, and the APRA parliamentary candidates got 51%. To explain this outcome, the first thing that comes to eye is the collapse of the AP vote. There was a nose dive from the 47% won by Belaunde in 1980

to the 5% scored this time by Alva Orlandini. Another factor is that there was probably a shift of votes from the Partido Cristiano (PPC) and even from the IU to APRA.

The electoral alliance called "Convergencia Democratica" (CODE) including the PPC, the Movimiento de Bases Hayista (MBH — The Rank and File Movement Faithful to the Principles of Haya de la Torre, the traditional leader of the APRA who led the movement in a more radical phase of its trajectory), and the Independientes, went from 20% in 1980 to 12%. In November 1983, the IU got 30% of the vote. This time it got 23%. Finally, another factor that has to be considered is the number of spoiled ballots, which dropped from 18% in 1980 to 9% in these elections.

The fundamental thing is that under the surface, within the complex process of the class struggle in the country, a polarization is taking place between the two fundamental classes. The bourgeoisie is lining up behind the APRA, and the proletariat behind the IU. At the same time, the vast middle layers in the countryside and the cities swing back and forth.

The local and international comment on the April 14 elections summed up the result as "an overwhelming victory for the left," which was supposed to have gotten 70% against the "right." While this pattern did reflect, on the one side, the fears of the petty bourgeoisie about a revolutionary advance on the parliamentary front, it also reflected, on the other side, the desire of the great

majority of the population (including the native bourgeoisie that has been ruined in the last five years) for a total change of direction from that imposed by the already decrepit government of the AP and the PPC.

The majority of the bourgeoisie is falling in behind the APRA, which since 1978 has had the public endorsement of the armed forces for assuming the government of the country. Those sections of the bourgeoisie that have become implicated in the present government and have profited from it, as well as the intermediate sectors that have lived a parasitic existence in recent years under the aegis of international finance capital, are digging in behind the AP and the PPC, which are condemned irrevocably to political and social isolation.

The future of the AP, which for thirty years has been the bourgeoisie's most perceptive populist-reformist party, will depend to a great extent on the health of its caudillo. It is clear that nobody is going to take Belaunde's place. The AP's political space has come to be occupied by the PPC, which has a social-Christian facade and conservative policy in the economic field. The PPC's leader, a shameless admirer of Pinochet, is on his way to becoming the leader of the sections of the bourgeoisie most closely associated with imperialism.

The middle strata have shifted toward the APRA. The working class and the semiproletarian layers in the cities and the countryside have moved toward the IU. The change that occurred in 1979 in the social relationship of forces has been given an official expression by the APRA electoral victory, on the one hand, and by the continuing strength of a deeply rooted and extensively organized movement of the workers and poor masses, on the other. This movement has proved undefeatable, and through its political front, the IU, it managed to take second place behind the main bourgeois party (which is being put forward as the bourgeoisie's last card in the game of parliamentary alternatives).

It is always useful to gauge the subjective desires, the sentiments and feelings of every social force by analyzing the votes of masses of people belonging to different classes and strata. The struggle among the parties for the support of the electorate and the results achieved in it always offer data for testing our conception of the relationship of social forces in the country, and in particular of the importance of various slogans. I will try to make a brief analysis, although this has to be based only on the dispatches in the press and the reports over the radio. We will try to make a more detailed analysis later based on fuller information.

The new government will come out of a deepgoing crisis. It will try to maintain the system of bourgeois rule at the price of losing its credibility very rapidly, by trying to coexist with the military hierarchy. In fact, the country will remain divided between two regimes. One is the parliament, based on the constitution

adopted in 1979. The other is the most ferocious dictatorship in our history, which has been established in 18 provinces. For the military rulers of these provinces, the parliamentary democratic system often represents no more than an impediment.

To this state of affairs, you have to add the following factors: There is a constantly growing economic and social crisis. The working class has breached the walls of parliament. A revolutionary consciousness is developing rapidly among the masses, and it is reflected in the growth of extensive trade-union, neighborhood, professional, student, and women's organizations. On top of this, there are advances in democratic, mass self-organization represented by the growth of the People's Assemblies, the Defense Fronts, the open municipal council meetings, as the incipient structures for self-defense as embryos of people's power.

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### An explosive situation

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If we analyze all these factors, we can say that we are facing an explosive situation, and that the end of the political period inaugurated by the Constituent Assembly and the 1980 general elections will be followed by a buildup toward revolution. This will take place within a political framework defined by the existence of an APRA government with a majority in parliament, with an understanding with the military, and with a disciplined mass party apparatus, a nationalist-populist doctrine, and an authoritarian tradition. Obviously, before the hold of the future government can be broken, the masses will have to go through the experience that will begin in July after the elections. The course of the process will also be conditioned by the development of the contradictions in the APRA party between the nationalist and Social Democratic tendencies.

However, it would be infantile to think that given the present relationship of forces, the mobilizations of the working people against the economic ruin of the country, and the activity of the Partido Comunista Peruano "por el Sendero Luminoso de Mariategui" (PCP-SL — Peruvian Communist Party "for the Luminous Path of Mariategui") and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) that the APRA will be able to repeat, if not improve on, the experience of the last five years.

In the present stage, the IU remains the real political expression of the organized working people of the country. In recent months, it has been subjected to an intense campaign of slander and boycott. Every critical view expressed within it has been distorted by the press. State credit and subsidies have been cut off from the municipal governments controlled by the front. And to top it off there has been an attempt to create

the conditions for repressing the IU by means of a McCarthy-type campaign designed to identify it with the PCP (SL).

All of these attacks, which are the result of a bourgeois strategy, cannot obscure the fact that there are real differences in the IU, which, since they have not been resolved democratically, have limited its capacity for revolutionary action. This has resulted in the alienation of not inconsiderable middle strata, which have seen, through their own experience, the obstacles to the front carrying forward a revolutionary democratic program calling for deepgoing economic and social transformations.

As mayor of the city of Lima, compañero Barrantes, the president of the IU and its presidential candidate, has replaced mass mobilization with diplomacy and maneuvers at the top. It has not taken long to see the consequences of this. Both the regime and the APRA have immediately taken advantage of this "sensible" attitude. Barrantes has not gotten the loans he asked for and still less the subsidies to which he is entitled. He is not given credit for anything, and the slanders in the bourgeois press have not stopped.

To the contrary, the IU-controlled city governments are being pushed into conflict with the municipal workers, with the public workers organized in the Confederación Intersindical de Trabajadores Estatales (CIT) who are on strike, and with the masses of shantytown dwellers who mobilized against the failure to install basic services such as water and electricity.

Barrantes has been forced in practice to come out against the rising wave of strikes and against the PCP (SL). The people's response to the crisis was a legitimate one. The wage raise was achieved after a twenty-day-long heroic struggle. The APRA was promoted by the press. The party leader, Garcia, sang the praises of the mobilizations. And a lot of APRA cadres tried to take the leadership in the movement. Barrantes was forced by the masses to take the lead of the neighborhood mobilizations. But at the same time, he was telling the press that "the present struggles are endangering the elections and they are being motivated by SL infiltrators." This was a very big error, since most of the union and neighborhood organizations are led by members and sympathizers of the IU. Such statements had a grave impact on the rank and file.

The waning of the IU's political influence that the bourgeoisie talks about can be measured by a loss of confidence by middle strata. This is the result of grave political errors made by the reformist wing. It is by no means the consequence of any lack of determination on the part of the working masses organized in the front.

The election campaign itself was punctuated by public conflicts. On the one hand, there was the censuring of Dr. Ledesma, a member of the Executive Committee of the front; limiting of demonstrations; and the arrogance

of the presidential candidate, who took it upon himself to decide the itinerary and role of the speakers. On the other, in striking contrast, there was the warm and massive sympathy demonstrated by the working people at every public presentation of the "Presidential Platform."

The PCP (SL) and the MRTA have not been militarily defeated. The first called for an "active boycott of the elections" from January on. And the second called for "spoiled ballots." But no one doubted that the virtual military occupation of the country for the 48 hours preceding the elections was going to put a very strong damper on any possibility for "terrorist adventures."

What was notable, however, was the absence of offensive terrorist actions, which everyone expected in the weeks before the elections. It is evident that both revolutionary organizations have taken coinciding courses of tactical retreat with respect to carrying out armed actions now, while remaining firm in their strategy of prolonged war.

While we condemn the foot dragging of the reformists and opportunists in the IU, no less deplorable is the total lack of any objective analysis of the political positions of the PCP (SL) and the MRTA. These organizations have been forced into a retreat mainly because the masses have rejected methods that are isolated from their activity, their traditions, their experience, their gains, and their aspiration for unity in struggle.

Both the reformists and the ultra-leftists, each in their own way, are offering a respite to a divided bourgeoisie, which is finding in the APRA a way to rebuild its unity. Both of the guerrilla organizations will be obliged not only to make a tactical retreat but to offer an explanation to the masses and to their own self-sacrificing militants for the vast gap that exists between their political conceptions and the present level of consciousness and organization of the masses.

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### What the new government faces

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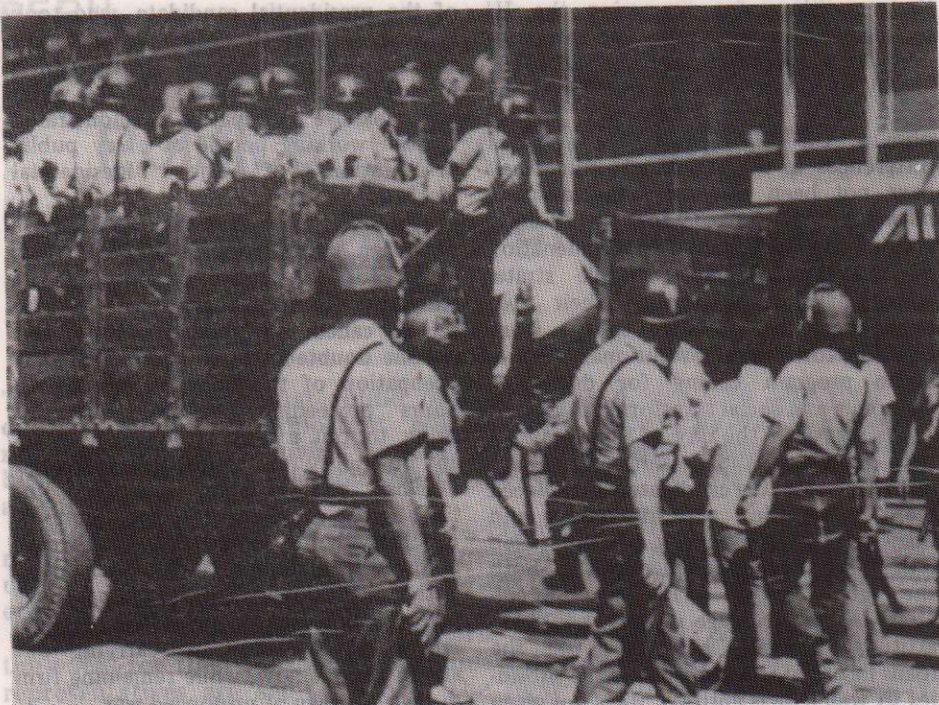
The government that takes office on July 28 will have to face the worst crisis in the history of the country:

1) Inflation, estimated at 200% in 1985, is setting new records.

2) Unemployment is running at 61.3% of the economically active population.

3) The foreign debt has gone over 13 billion dollars, and payment of service and interest charges is several months in arrears.

4) There is a virtual civil war in 18 provinces, encompassing five of the 25 departments of Peru (Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurimac, Pasco, and Huanuco). These areas have been put under "emergency" rule by the armed forces, which have been given free rein to "disappear" people, to torture, rape,



The Peruvian army in action (DR)

and carry out summary executions.

5) The sell-out of our copper and oil to US imperialism (to Southern in the first case and OXY in the second). Both of these companies have gotten tax write-offs of 600 million dollars a year.

6) A minimum wage equalling 35 dollars a month, a high rate of infant mortality, an unprecedented recession (the GNP fell by 13% in 1983), and rapid depreciation of the Peruvian currency, with the exchange rate for the dollar reaching 8,500 soles in March.

In the face of this situation, the well bankrolled demagogic electoral campaign run by Alan Garcia, which is estimated to have cost about 20 billion soles, has offered no precise answers. His most respected technical adviser, the economist and present deputy Luis Alva Castro, candidate for the post of second vice president and probable minister of the economy under the new government, has proposed the following measures for the first hundred days of the APRA government:

- 1) To reduce inflation in the first months to an annual average of 60%.
- 2) To renegotiate the foreign debt over a long term and get new financing.
- 3) To revise the oil contracts, eliminating the tax write-offs for foreign companies.
- 4) A program for cleaning up public finances.
- 5) A program for national pacification through full and unrestricted respect for human rights and democratic freedoms.
- 6) Launching a program of regional autonomy and decentralization to be carried out over the five year period 1985-1990.
- 7) A social emergency program, giving priority to the development of health services, education, and housing.
- 8) Economic reconstruction through

planned state intervention in the economy in order to overcome the imbalances in local and international economic operations.

The APRA is obliged to tie the working class, which is identified with the revolutionary left, to a bourgeois reformist program that depends to a very large degree on international finance capital, mainly US and to a lesser extent West European. It will have to make an accounting to the IMF, and at the same time convince the masses to accept another five years of sacrifices.

The APRA's political deal with the SODE (Solidarity and Democracy) of the economics minister in the military dictatorship of Morales Bermudez, Javier Silva Ruete, who first hitched our national economy to the IMF's purse strings, is not going to be very helpful in the present stage of the class struggle.

The room for bourgeois-democratic maneuver has been reduced to a minimum, and even that is being threatened by the militarization of the country, which Garcia and the APRA are willing not only to tolerate but to deepen. The APRA's political link with the international Social Democracy is not going to mean very much, after the experience the Bolivian people have gone through under the government of Siles Suazo.

Far from attenuating, the class contradictions are deepening. On top of the militarization, we will have fascist-like activity by a party apparatus that since 1940, including in the period of the Constituent Assembly and more recently in the case of the murder of an IU activist, has made no bones about using terror to impose its policy.

The victory of the APRA will serve to sharpen the mass struggles. The present rise of struggles can be stemmed only by a violent defeat of the workers organizations or by a split in the IU, with its reformist sector going over to open

class collaboration.

It is an essential task to maintain the united front and defend it against divisive adventures out of line with the experience of the workers and the evolution of their consciousness, to bring about a revolutionary convergence within the IU. The debate between reformists and revolutionists can take a dangerous turn if we fall for the provocations of the bourgeoisie and the dogmatic sectors.

However, dangers can also arise from attempts to cover up or play down political conflicts by means of maneuvers. It is necessary to defend the fullest democracy in the front and unity of action of all the organizations that make it up, as well as to press for the admission of all the revolutionary forces that have applied for membership.

It is necessary to mobilize alongside the exploited and oppressed masses for the achievement of the people's urgent demands. The latest bourgeois reformist regime has to be forced to make clear where it stands. This is the way to wear away the expectations and illusions that the middle strata and backward sections of the proletariat are placing in the new regime.

The initiative in economic, political, or national demands cannot be left to the petty bourgeoisie or to the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to give impetus to a correct policy of revolutionary democratic alliances without mortgaging the political independence of the proletariat. We have to use our parliamentary victories in mass mobilizations. A fight has to be waged for a moratorium on payment of the foreign debt and for independence from the IMF.

The movement has to take the leadership in the fight to defend our national sovereignty for nationalizing the copper and oil industries. It has to demand the lifting of the state of emergency in the 18 provinces of the south-central highlands, the release of the political prisoners, and the bringing to justice of those responsible for the outrages committed.

The crisis in which our country finds itself, the servile subservience to imperialism of every successive government make it vital to accomplish these tasks. They are all the more urgent because the fight for them goes hand in hand with struggling for the economic demands of the workers for decent wages, or job security, and for a sliding scale of wages and hours.

The bourgeoisie's demagogic line of giving priority to the peasants makes it essential for the proletariat to adopt a policy of alliance and joint mobilization with the poor in the countryside. It is absolutely clear that the fight for the unity of the IU and for reinforcing and extending the front's local committees throughout the country has to go hand in hand with building a revolutionary leadership within the front itself. On the accomplishment of these tasks will depend the fate of our country and of millions of exploited and oppressed. ■



## The Sandinista revolution and mass democracy

The Reagan administration is redoubling its efforts to throttle the Nicaraguan revolution. It is using every conceivable means — black propaganda, economic boycott, internationally concerted diplomatic pressures, and military attacks by the contras. (1) In this de facto Holy Alliance against a people fighting for the right to decide its own future, the West European bourgeoisies, regardless of the differences they have, are not failing to make their contribution.

The West European bourgeoisies are offering "democratic" credentials to the more presentable representatives of the armed counterrevolution, such as Arturo Cruz, a former member of the Council of Government for National Reconstruction (JGRN). They are blocking credits vital for the development of the country. For example, the Social Democratic government of the Spanish state headed by Felipe Gonzales has just suspended a 7.1 million-dollar line of credit. (2)

Even Mexico and Venezuela are not hesitating to put pressure on the Sandinistas by cutting off oil deliveries. What is more, very strong pressure is being put on Mexico to endorse the Reagan Plan. In addition, the Inter-American Development Bank, owing to US pressure, has frozen a loan of 54.8 million dollars for agricultural projects (*Financial Times*, April 10, 1985).

This international conspiracy — and this is no

exaggeration — reflects the imperialists' fear, which is shared by the ruling bourgeoisies in Latin America, of the attraction of the Nicaraguan revolution for the exploited and oppressed masses of the South American continent. In fact, "the Sandinista people's revolution in its practice presents a democratic alternative for building socialism." (3)

Thus, on the international scale, the Nicaragua revolution is offering a hope, a hope that threatens imperialism. For this reason, the US and its acolytes are trying to strangle this people and its revolution. They are prepared to use any method to portray the regime as "totalitarian." What is more, they do everything they can militarily and financially to force the Sandinista government to take self-defense measures. Their aim is then to present these measures as "proof" that the Sandinistas are following a "totalitarian" course. In this way, they are trying to create better conditions, in the United States in particular, for justifying military intervention of larger scope.

It is necessary to highlight the essential features of Sandinista "people's democracy," not only to clarify the simultaneity of the genuine democratic and social transformation of the society in Nicaragua but also to counter the campaign of lies that is being obligingly relayed by the media.\*

Charles-Andre UDRY

Among the purveyors of negative propaganda dressed up with the sauce of "anti-totalitarianism," we have to take note of the signers of the appeal published in *Le Monde* on March 21, 1985. (4) They claim that they have been compelled to take up this job by their loyalty to "Western values." They implore the US Congress to accept Reagan's proposal to turn over 14 million dollars officially to the contras. This modest contribution, they say, would make it possible to save "the future of democracy" and fight "the dictatorship of a totalitarian party, the FSLN."

This collection of "intellectuals," among whom we find former devotees of Mao and Stalin, have the gall, or the foolishness, to call for escalating US intervention "to save democracy." The US Marines have already intervened four times in the history of Nicaragua, and on each occasion it was to prop up the power of imperialism and a dictator subservient to it — "a son of a bitch ... but our son of a bitch," Franklin D. Roosevelt once avowed with a cynical frankness. He was talking about the first Somoza, the father of the Nicaraguan dictator overthrown in 1979.

Have these mandarins, who serve up glittering generalities in the name of a "democracy" limited to a self-appointed

elite, ever seen the US intervene in Latin America a single time to overthrow a dictatorship that was oppressing the people?

What is more, who are these contras who are supposed to "save democracy?" This is how the members of an American Congressional investigating committee assessed them:

"During the testimony to the House Select Committee on Intelligence, members of the Congress and other sources revealed that official representatives of the CIA and other persons had presented evidence that the rebels supported by the United States raped, tortured, and killed civilians, including children. The report included data on groups of civilians, including women and children, who were burned, dismembered, blinded, and decapitated." (*International Herald Tribune*, December 28, 1985.)

*Washington Post* correspondent R.J. McCartney found himself obliged, after an on-the-spot inquiry, to make the following judgement: "Furthermore, they [the contras] are threatening to alienate the peasant population with their practices of pillaging the peasants and slaughtering wounded fighters." (*International Herald Tribune*, December, 11 1984).

This is the real face of the saviors of democracy that our crusaders against

totalitarianism think that Reagan is supporting. Reagan, who in the 1960s called for bombing Vietnam until it was "as flat as a parking lot." You would wonder what kind of "democracy" these people think they are defending when they see the contras and a stepped-up US military effort as guarantees of "freedoms."

Nonetheless, there is one fact that springs immediately to the eye for all "honest human beings," a category that is becoming scarce among the Paris intelligentsia.

"In the two first years of the revolution, leaving aside the initial chaos — which was minimal by comparison with the start of other revolutions — there has been no repression, no deaths, nor any attacks in the border areas. There was a general climate of peace, despite the natural ideological struggle set in motion by a process of deepgoing changes.

\* All the quotations originally in English in this article have been retranslated from the French.

1. On the Nicaraguan elections, see IV, No. 62, October 20, 1984.
2. *Latin American Newsletters*, March 29, 1985.
3. Jose Luis Coraggio, "Revolucion y Democracia en Nicaragua," *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Propio*, Managua, INIES, p.5
4. For the text of this appeal, see IV, No. 74, April 22, 1985.

"The war came in December 1981, when the US government decided to give clandestine support, through the CIA, to the Somoza National Guard veterans concentrated in Honduras. From that moment, peace in Nicaragua has become more and more remote as a war has been imposed on the country and its army, a war that the revolutionary government and the people do not want." (5)

Moreover, despite this counterrevolutionary war on the frontiers of the country, despite the attacks against hospitals, schools, and cooperatives, the Sandinistas have extended the rights of the masses. Their army is serving as a guarantor of the creation and consolidation of people's power. This is the real aggression against imperialism and against those who live off the proceeds of media circuses, who think that nothing can be changed, and in particular nothing should be changed in this world.

These "democrats" can, to be sure, lay claim to a tradition, that of the French National Assembly in May 1791, when the majority led by Barnave, leader of the bourgeois right in opposition to Robespierre thought that the Rights of Man belonged only to the white man and to him alone. So, with respect to the slaves, they were able to say: "The National Assembly has declared that it will not consider the status of nonfree persons ... A change in their condition would be contrary to the general good."

A Sandinista leader has said: "We can say that in Nicaragua the socialist program has always been inseparable from building substantive democracy." (6) This marriage between a deepgoing political, social and economic transformation — a long-term one with respect to the last two aspects — and a deepening of direct democracy on all levels cannot be understood without illustrating both the process that led to victory in July 1979 and the nature of the regime that has been built up since.

First of all, the overthrow of Somoza involved incorporating the masses into a prolonged struggle that culminated in mass insurrections and a military offensive led by the FSLN. Prompted by the Sandinistas and the needs of the struggle, the peasants, the pauperized strata in the cities, the youth in school, and women built mass organizations. Already in 1978, they were brought together in the MPU (Movement of the People United). Under the political hegemony of the FSLN, they integrated themselves politically into the fight against the dictatorship and imperialism.

This mass participation in all aspects of the assault on the dictatorship installed by the US in the 1930s led, once the victory was won, to a regime representing the working people. As Bayardo Arce, one of the nine revolutionary commanders, indicated in 1980:

"We state categorically that the toiling classes in our country realize that through the Sandinista victory they have taken power. It is the workers

and peasants who are in power. They realize that their tasks today are to improve, refine, and perfect their instruments of rule." (7)

Carlos Nunez Tellez, another revolutionary commander, stressed in April 1980 the decisive role of the mass organizations because "the revolutionary state that we have begun to create must before all else be an instrument of the revolution." (8)

From the outset, the FSLN saw a dialectical process developing. On the one hand, it involved using the power that had been won to widen the participation of the masses and extend their democratic and social rights (agrarian reform, providing food for the masses, literacy, health, the right to organize unions, the right of assembly, etc.). On the other, it involved making the masses into the direct agent of the transformation of the society on the economic, social, political, and cultural levels.

"For the Sandinista front, democracy cannot be measured only on the political level, nor is it limited to the participation of the people in elections. Democracy ... means participation of the people in political, economic, social, and cultural affairs. The greater the role that the people play in these areas, the more democracy there will be." (9)

### Nationalism and Socialism

Obviously, in a country marked by decades of imperialist exploitation and oppression, winning and consolidating sovereignty, self-determination and real national independence, is a precondition for carrying through the process of liberation and making the peasants and workers the direct fashioners of their own history.

After pointing to all the obstacles posed by the world economic crisis, the legacy of dictatorship, and military aggression, revolutionary commander Victor Tirado Lopez stressed that "for our country, revolution means that ... in the final analysis we decide on how to use our natural resources and how to establish new economic exchanges with other countries." (10)

This fight for sovereignty — which today takes the form of massive military resistance to the attacks of the contras and the imperialists — is forging the national consciousness of the masses. In this process are combined the emergence of a nation and the rise of people's power.

It is, among other things, for this reason that the contras and their political representatives enjoy only very limited political support, despite all the enormous economic difficulties the revolution is going through. After the November 1984 elections, Daniel Ortega could say with justification that over and above the political differences that the FSLN had with a lot of those who did not vote for the Sandinistas (33%), the very fact of participating in the elections was a "vote for sovereignty." (11)

The power of the anti-imperialist mobilization cannot by itself eliminate the concrete differences in material interest running through the electorate that, by voting, declared its opposition to US intervention. It cannot wipe out the social scars left by a terrible civil war, by decades of dictatorship (an illiteracy rate of 52% in 1979, an infant mortality rate of 200 per thousand, etc.), the scars moreover created by the effects of the economic strangulation cynically applied by Washington. But it represents a considerable card for the FSLN, even a decisive one.

In order to make the picture as clear as possible, I will take up only five aspects of "people's power" in this period when a new Nicaragua is being built under the conditions of imperialist encirclement. Sandinista democracy rests in the first instance on the mass organizations. Their function is to defend the interests of the various sectors of the people, to unify the popular strata, to give Nicaraguan citizens the opportunity for the first time to assert collectively and individually their rights on the social, economic, and political levels.

Joining these mass organizations is voluntary. They, therefore, play a direct role in the conscious reinforcement of the new workers state. Their growth is one of the characteristics of the revolution. These organizations include, among others, the Sandinista Labor Confederation (CST) and the Association of Rural Workers (ATC), trade-union organizations that today represent about 75% of urban and rural wage workers. (12)

Alongside these trade-union organizations are the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG), which includes small and middle peasants and even big farmers who agree to work within the framework of the priorities set by the revolution. (13) There is also the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE) for women and the Juventud Sandinista — 19 Julio for young people.

Finally, the creation of instruments

5. "Nous voulons la paix," Letter of the Christian Base Communities of Nicaragua to the Men and Women of the Entire World Working for Peace, a special by *Cimade-Information*, Paris, November 1984.

6. Jose Luis Coraggio, *Op. Cit.*, p.5

7. Bayardo Arce, "El papel de las fuerzas motrices antes y despues del triunfo," *Serie Orientacion Sandinista*, No. 6, Managua, 1980, p.29

8. Carlos Nunez Tellez, "El papel de las organizaciones de masa en el proceso revolucionario," *Serie Orientacion Sandinista*, No. 3, Managua, 1980.

9. *Barricada*, the organ of the FSLN, August 24, 1980. "Comunicado oficial de la Direccion nacional del FSLN sobre el proceso electoral."

10. Victor Tirado Lopez, "La respuesta a la crisis es la revolucion," CST pamphlet, Managua, 1982.

11. *Pensamiento Propio*, No. 19, Managua, December 1984, p.8.

12. Carlos M. Vilas, "Democracia popular y participacion obrera en la revolucion sandinista," *Estudio Social Centroamericano*, No. 35, 1983, p.103.

13. cf the interview with Daniel Nunez, president of UNAG, in issue No. 190 of *Inprecor*, IV's French language sister publication, February 18, 1985.



Fifty percent of the Nicaraguan population is under 15 year of age (DR)

of self-organization and struggle against the dictatorship (the Civil Defense Committees — CDCs) has extended into the formation of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), mass local organizations that carry out numerous administrative tasks in the neighborhoods.

Such activity in the mass organizations, in which the defense of collective rights is reinforcing individual rights, is bringing about a radical break with a history in which the working people were bled and worked like cattle, atomized by repression, and deprived of the most elementary rights. Through participation in these organizations, the people can acquire dignity, and all the more so because the FSLN respects the autonomy of these bodies. They are by no means transmission belts.

“Most of the sharper criticisms of the state and the FSLN,” the letter of the Nicaraguan Christian Communities said, “are coming from the Sandinista Youth and the Association of Rural Workers.”

Back in 1981, the FSLN leadership pointed out: “The mass organizations ... have sufficient means to combat ossification of these bodies through internal criticism, public criticism, using all the means of communication up to and including mobilization to demand that measures be taken that can assure that their demands are considered.” (14)

In line with this, the right to strike, which was suspended when strikes (some of them promoted by unions linked to the American AFL-CIO) coincided with extreme difficulties in economic reconstruction, was reestablished in December 1981 by the Council of State.

Such autonomy for the mass organizations means likewise that opposing positions can be defended within them, positions that may be put forward, even in an organized way by a plurality of parties. Moreover, different union confederations can be organized. Some of these confederations are grouped in the Nicaraguan Trade-Union Coordinating Committee (CSN), in which there are quite open debates, and this points toward a possible process of trade-union unification. (15)

In the mass organizations, the FSLN struggles to win political hegemony on the basis of “social pedagogy” on the basis of its practice and its program, the strength of conviction and the human and political quality of those who identify most directly with it.

Some people in the ranks of the Social Democracy claim the game is rigged because the FSLN controls the key levers in the state apparatus and the army. Such criticism indeed comes from people who have a great fund of experience in manipulating bureaucratic trade-union apparatuses, but it ignores one problem. The weight and responsibility that the FSLN carries in the government identify it with all the difficulties the working people have to face.

The Social Democrats know something about the problems of governmental responsibility! In France and in Spain when they have taken over administering an austerity policy they have experienced a grave loss of credibility and had to pay a heavy price on the electoral and trade-union level. But the FSLN, despite all the obstacles

and without resorting to repression, has not only maintained its support but reinforced it. This is the best illustration that the Sandinistas’ hegemony rests on the legitimacy they gained in the struggle against Somoza and imperialism and on their identification with the achievement of dignity, in the broadest sense, by the masses.

Of course, these mass organizations have problems. Carlos Nunez has noted some of the obstacles to their development — lack of cadres; an insufficient cultural and technical level; the difficulties, in an essentially agricultural country, of surmounting narrow special and local interests in order to instill broader and longer term perspectives into the consciousness of the masses; the exertions and sacrifices demanded by reconstruction; the ever present tendencies to bureaucratization and misuse of office in a situation of scarcity of the basic necessities; the disproportion between the immense sacrifices made by the toiling masses (e.g. in the civil war, the effort to increase production, and in the new war of aggression) and the immediate material results, despite all the progress that has been made. (16)

Whatever the gaps between the daily reality and the general conceptions, the FSLN and the levers the working people have for intervening in various

14. *Barricada*, July 2, 1981.

15. See the speech of Victor Tirado Lopez to the assembly of construction workers in Managua on October 12, 1982, which is in the pamphlet quoted in foot-note 10.

16. Carlos Nunez Tellez, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.



Militia members on guard against contra attacks (DR)

areas of social life offer safeguards against authoritarian tendencies getting out of hand, against a total concentration of power at the top and, with it, an undermining of activity of the masses — the sort of thing that could lead to the kind of catastrophe that happened in Grenada. This was recognized implicitly by Jose Luis Coraggio:

“In this sense and in the face of the possibility of a US invasion, there is no chance that the Grenada tragedy will be repeated in Nicaragua, given the strength and authority that the mass organizations have already won and their interlocking with the revolutionary project.” (17)

All historic experience shows that the insurance against the dissolving effects of poverty fostered by an imperialist encirclement policy is to boost the level of consciousness, mobilization, democracy, and direct mass involvement. This insurance, however, is not of the “all risk” kind.

Overlooking the economic, social, and military context in which “people’s power” is being built in Nicaragua in the name of an ahistorical, asocial, and non-class conception of democracy means disregarding the consequences

of decades of exploitation and oppression imposed by imperialism on a people who have been deprived for centuries of the ability to express themselves.

Moreover, raising such an abstract notion of democracy means proposing as a “model” a form of democracy where the isolated individual, called the “free citizen” is simply the legal reflection of a supposedly “free” and “equal” relationship between the free owners of the means of production and the workers who are “free” to be fired, to have their wages cut, or to compensate for the meager social security benefits available to them by “individual saving for a rainy day.”

However, the Nicaraguans have already experienced such a model in substance if not in the proposed political form, under Somoza. And they have said “no thanks!”

The FSLN has hegemony over the revolutionary process, that is, it holds political and moral authority for the bulk of the working people. This ascendancy is not based on a monopoly of power by a party, by a single political force. Hegemony here means the opposite of a one-party system, it was won in the course of the struggle

against imperialism and the dictatorship.

Over 18 years, and in an accelerated way after 1977-1978, the FSLN was able to represent and give concrete form to the opposition to the Somoza regime. It gradually wrested all real political authority away from the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie, which wanted to keep the same socio-economic system, but without Somoza. To that end, it sought American mediation in order to solve the “crisis” at the least cost, that is, assuring its positions.

Thus, the FSLN was able to create a sort of national “consensus” among the bulk of the people. Once the backbone of the Somoza regime — the National Guard — was destroyed, it pursued the democratic and anti-imperialist tasks at a higher level by building up the mass organizations. The agrarian reform was a keystone of this change.

At every turning, the Sandinistas forced the “opposition bourgeoisie” to expose itself on questions that clearly involved the interests of the masses and of national independence. Gradually, the Robelos and the Cruzes revealed their

17. Jose Luis Coraggio, *Op. Cit.*, p.25.

lack of any program for building national democracy, by putting their future in the hands of the contras and of Washington.

In the train of democratic and anti-imperialist measures that were introduced at a rate that corresponded to the objective possibilities and to the advances in the consciousness and organization of the masses, the FSLN began to carry out certain socialist tasks. It also showed its capacity to incorporate more and more into the revolutionary process social sectors that had not been in the forefront of the fight against the dictatorship, both sections of the peasantry or even of the small working class of Managua.

The roots and the power of the FSLN's hegemony thus lie in the strategy based on the conception that "Sandino and Sandinismo are the symbol of our nationality, the standard around which the greatest part of the nation can be rallied to achieve the victory of our national aim ... And in this process of developing historical and national consciousness, the FSLN remains — as it was during the war of liberation — the vanguard that strives to understand the people and which is leading the people, while always remaining answerable to the people." (18)

This sort of hegemony in fact presupposes pluralism. As Jose Luis Coraggio pointed out: "The Nicaraguan people have opted for a pluralist system, involving political parties that compete for power through elections. They have given recognition to the FSLN's revolutionary line, which means deepening the social, political, and economic transformations of Nicaraguan society and rejecting US domination." (19)

The FSLN, thus, continually renews and consolidates its hegemony

through its capacity to respond to the needs of the masses — its superiority on this level — as well as that of ideas over the other political forces.

In November 1984, Carlos Nunez said, "Sandinista hegemony will be assured to the extent that its representatives on the Sandinista front's National Unity slate are able to promote a draft of a political constitution suited to the reality of our country, one that can incorporate the most profound revolutionary conceptions, which will reflect the power in the hands of the people and, at the same time, the most modern juridic conceptions, as well as the most advanced ideas of the forces represented." (20)

This necessary combination between pluralism and hegemony has found an ideological and cultural underpinning in the special alliance that was forged in the Nicaraguan revolution. This was pointed up by Gallardo, an FSLN cadre, who described an alliance between "the three historic currents of humanity ... One is nationalism, especially the nationalism of the poor masses represented by the traditional struggles of the Nicaraguan people and, more particularly, by the anti-imperialist and popular programmatic heritage left by Sandino ... Another is Christianity, represented by the religious feeling and popular culture of the great masses of the people of Nicaragua and by the participation in the struggles of the revolutionary process of a large number of Christians, both in the insurrectionary war and in the process of consolidating the revolution ... Another is Marxism and the revolutionary experiences of other peoples that the Sandinista front absorbed during its fight against the dictatorship." (21)

Nonetheless, the growing aggression of the counterrevolutionary forces and the imperialists forced the FSLN to impose

some restrictions on democratic rights as regards the freedom of organization and activity of some opposition forces, over and above the military answer to these attacks that has already been given.

On November 13, 1984, Daniel Ortega revolutionary commander and president of Nicaragua, said: "The Sandinista Front will make every effort to maintain pluralism, but in the last instance this situation will be determined by the aggressive policy of the United States. If we face bombing, or if there is an intervention, we will find ourselves forced to introduce a state of war, and obviously that will affect the efforts we are making to definitively establish democracy in Nicaragua." (22)

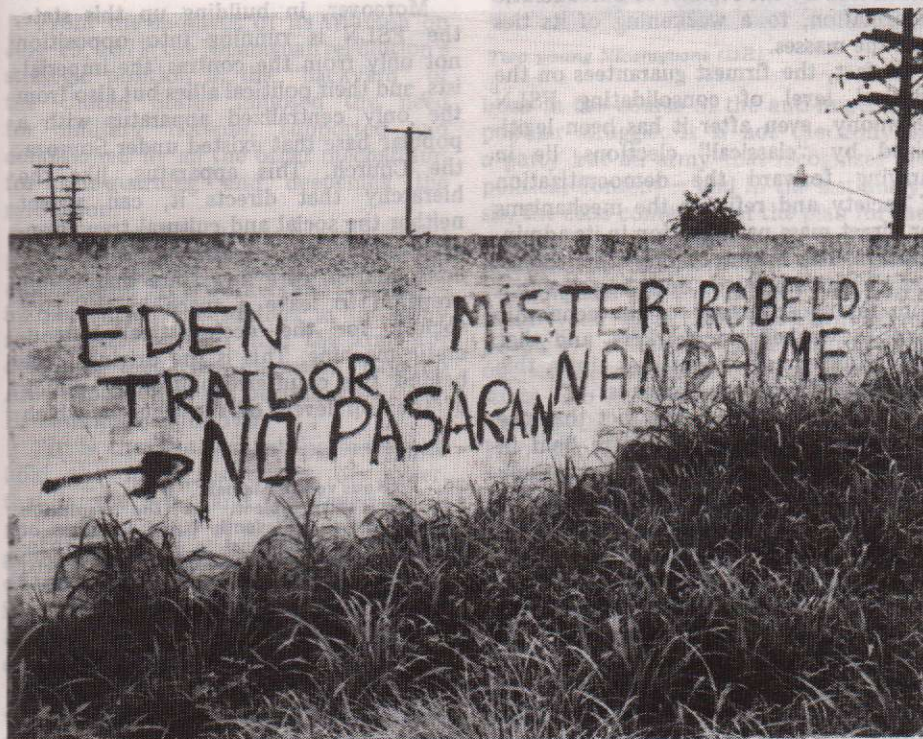
In conformity with the whole previous historical pattern, therefore, the responsibility for restricting a series of rights will rest first of all with the imperialists, who consider this region part of their empire. But any such necessary restrictions will be directed against those who oppose the majority of the people becoming an independent political subject, those who, while they sometimes speak in the name of democracy, will be prepared to applaud enthusiastically the attempts to break the combativity of the toiling masses by war, and who will collaborate with such attempts.

Furthermore, it is necessary to understand that the Sandinista's strategy with respect to pluralism and "people's democracy" is not dictated by purely tactical and diplomatic considerations arising from the demands of the fight against imperialism. The FSLN does, of course, realize that developing such "people's democracy" is a means of struggle making it politically more difficult for the United States on the domestic and the international front to mount an intervention. But, it has also seen that its strength lies above all in its capacity to rally a vast popular political consensus against the options of Reagan and his allies within Nicaragua.

In this respect, the combination of hegemony and pluralism also assures the defense of the revolution on the military level. And this is to say nothing of the guarantee it represents against all the bureaucratic deformations that, as the FSLN itself explains, continually threaten a besieged revolution that is being bled white.

In reality, an examination of the course of the revolution shows that, despite the escalating economic and military attacks, democratic rights, including their formal juridical expression, have been continually expanded. This has been the pattern from the Fundamental Statute of July 1979 to the November 1984 elections and the Nationalities

The writing is on the wall for traitors Pastora and Robelo (DR)



18. "Nous voulons la paix," p.15.  
 19. Jose Luis Coraggio, "Elecciones: interrogantes y desafios," in *Pensamiento Propio*, Managua, December 1984, p.9.  
 20. Carlos Nunez, quoted in *Pensamiento Propio*, December 1984, p.9.  
 21. Gallardo, "Nicaragua sandinista devant la crise internationale," 1985, p.38.  
 22. Daniel Ortega, quoted in *Pensamiento Propio*, Managua, December 1984, p.10.

To pursue this ideal of democratization, the officers of this new army should also be designated by, and responsible to, the people through processes that assure the political predominance of the popular classes.

"We do not advocate the election of officers by the soldiers but rather mechanisms for maintaining popular surveillance of the army, as well to assure that it is an institution controlled by the people and not one that controls the people." (25)

### The elections and the revolution

Of course, the challenge of thwarting the plans of the contras and the imperialists is more urgent and more immediate. However, the question raised and the suggestion made in the letter of the Christian Base Communities cannot fail to be considered for the future of the revolution. More generally, they cannot be allowed to fade from the thinking of those who are waging a relentless struggle to assure that the seizure of power by the workers opens the way for a project whose success depends in large part on the interpenetration between socialism and democracy. (26)

Having forgotten that elections based on universal suffrage took place during the Paris Commune of 1871, more than a few revolutionary socialists and Marxists were disconcerted by the November 1984 elections in Nicaragua. In fact, the Sandinistas undertook the difficult operation — and the problems were not only tactical — of submitting for popular approval their revolutionary program, as well as its application under the hegemony of the "vanguard party," the FSLN.

This approval was sought not just in the mass organizations, where the devotion and honesty of the FSLN's activists can often be more easily recognized but also in the isolation and "secrecy" of the ballot box. "Sandinista democracy" is not — far from it — limited to elections. But it does not exclude them. As the 1980 slogan, "The people have already made their choice," indicated, the first elections took place in July 1979, through the mass popular insurrection. Some people forget this revolutionary legitimacy, which was also won by the bourgeois revolutions.

Furthermore, the FSLN is conscious of the connotations assumed by elections in the history of Nicaragua, when terror, patronage, and corruption reigned. Then, the only purpose of elections was to provide a new mask for the same dictator. Then, poverty and illiteracy made the formal democratic right to vote meaningless. (Even in Europe, the right to vote was only won for the masses by general strikes, a fact that more than a few "democratic" scribes skip over.)

Back in July 1979, the FSLN promised to hold elections. But it correctly gave priority to meeting the

demands posed by the social aspect of democratic rights. In line with this, "Sandinista democracy" focused first on meeting the basic needs of the masses (literacy, health care, education, jobs, etc.), on involving the masses directly in government through the mass organizations and in the popular defense of the new state, on all the rights inscribed in the various statutes and laws. All of this served to foster real "democratic" conditions for holding elections, which for many Nicaraguans would not only be the first free elections but the first ones of any kind.

The FSLN, thus, integrated the elections into its project. It used them as a second literacy campaign, a political literacy campaign, educating thousands of activists, conducting an intense dialogue with the workers, the peasants, and the population at large. It refused to exclude beforehand any national ideological current. But it rejected the blackmail and conditions put forward by those who — like Arturo Cruz's National Democratic Coordinating Committee — saw these elections as an opportunity for opening up "negotiations" aimed at undermining the authority of the elections and conferring legitimacy on Washington's stooges, the contras, the core of whom are veterans of Somoza's infamous National Guard.

By incorporating elections into the mechanism for institutionalizing the new regime, by giving official status to its opposition, the FSLN chose to pose a whole series of problems that are in part unprecedented in the transition to socialism. To some extent, these mechanisms will continue to operate as a permanent constraint. In fact, the FSLN will have to try to avert votes of sanction against the revolutionary project, votes that could represent a refracted response by some popular sectors to errors committed by the regime, to bureaucratic deformation, to a weakening of its ties with the masses.

In fact, the firmest guarantees on the political level of consolidating FSLN hegemony, even after it has been legitimized by "classical" elections, lie in carrying forward the democratization of society and refining the mechanisms for direct mass participation in its administration. This means, among other things, that the private sector must be prevented from taking advantage of the economic crisis to weaken the workers, and that will require new incursions into this redoubt of the bourgeois forces.

On the other hand, the fact that the November 1984 elections were held in the midst of a war situation is something more that writers with special interests to defend and selective memories have left out of their scribblings.

In the relatively near future, if the imperialist aggression leaves enough room for this, one of the major questions that will arise both for the mass organizations and in the National Assembly will be the linkup between the institutions that the "New Nicaragua" will

create and the organizational instruments in the hands of the people.

In approaching this question, it has to be remembered always that Nicaragua had just emerged from 45 years of dictatorship and from a civil war whose scars had not yet healed when a new war began! In fact, "the Sandinista revolution must take up the task of creating a state, not just as one coming out of a popular anti-imperialist endeavor but also in the most elementary sense, a modern state — from a national army to a modern communications network, from a judicial system to an educational one." (28)

Somoza's state rested almost entirely on the National Guard, a sort of Praetorian Guard, and on institutions that served the interests of the Somoza clan more than the ruling class as a whole, except as regards the repression they exercised against the popular masses. It was, indeed, the backwardness of this state by comparison with a certain economic development of Nicaragua under the impetus of the Central American Common Market that helped to push bourgeois sectors into opposition to Somoza.

Thus, for the FSLN, building a modern state apparatus is one of the most complex tasks. It has at the same time to build up the essential elements of a state apparatus able to direct the urgent and elementary tasks that have to be carried out for a transition to socialism as well as assure that the masses, who in the normal course of things are impelled to raise demands that are often difficult to satisfy, can have a direct influence on, and in, these institutions.

### The role of the Church hierarchy.

Moreover, in building up this state, the FSLN is running into opposition not only from the contras, the imperialists, and their political allies but also from the only centralized apparatus with a popular base that existed under Somoza, the Church. This apparatus, like the hierarchy that directs it, can accept neither the social and cultural transformation of the country nor the consolidation of a new state that is not prepared to leave a space in the civil society for the ecclesiastical bureaucratic machine. This is the driving force behind the counterrevolutionary policy of the top levels of the Church, which

25. "Nous voulons la paix," p 22.

26. On this subject, see the resolution adopted by the Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International in November 1979, the text of which was published in a special supplement to *Intercontinental Press*, January 1980.

27. On this subject see the resolution adopted by the Fourth International, of which a draft was published in a special issue of *Inprecor* given over to the eleventh World Congress in November 1979.

28. On this question see *Pensamiento Proprio*, October-November 1984.

Law (on the Miskitos), including the Statute on the Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans in August 1970 and the Law on Political Parties of August 1983, to say nothing of all the basic social gains made in the same period.

The international press had had a lot to say about the censorship of the opposition daily *La Prensa*. It has not raised the same commotion about the liquidation of all the press with the slightest inclination to independence in El Salvador, which has been accompanied by around 50,000 murders committed by the death squadrons linked to the military hierarchy. It has not taken the trouble to explain that the censorship of *La Prensa*, which gets aid under the table from the imperialists, applies to reports of a military importance and those related to the hoarding of consumer goods and speculation. It said virtually nothing about the almost total lifting of this censorship throughout the electoral campaign.

A little detail somehow gets left out in the international press's accounts of this censorship. It is that the censored pages circulate unimpeded in Managua in the form of photocopies that reach all the diplomatic agencies. Most of all, the "free world" press exhibits a peculiar forgetfulness about its own history. In a "democratic" country such as Switzerland, for example, from the outset of the Second World War the left was very systematically censored.

But Switzerland was far from being under attack. It had simply made a deal with the Nazi regime, offering the latter the use of its means of communication in exchange for "peace," arms contracts for its industries, and an influx of capital into its banks. It is hardly necessary, moreover, to belabor the point about the gagging of the French press more than once during the Algerian war.

From the moment of its triumph on July 19, 1979, the Nicaraguan revolution's strategic position in the "backyard" of the United States imposed the need for military defense, supported and conditioned by all the other mechanisms for safe-guarding and deepening the revolution.

The Sandinista People's Army (EPS) is the product of the fight against the dictatorship. "It is workers and peasants — 50 percent of the soldiers in the army are illiterate — who hold the arms for defending their class interests," Bayardo Arce explained at the beginning of 1980. He continued as follows:

"It is the workers and peasants who hold the main instrument of power, that is, the army and the armed force, not only because of the principles that guide our armed forces but also because of the class composition of our brothers in the Sandinista People's Army, the Sandinista National Police, and the state security forces." (23)

The military power of the new state was, thus, "at the same time as being a national army, the army of a nation



Two young Nicaraguans (DR)

born in the course of the anti-imperialist popular struggle. It is not the army of a party but an army that recognizes the political content — and in the last analysis, the class context — of the plan for the nation given impetus by the Sandinista revolution." (24)

Alongside the professional army, very rapidly, starting in 1980, the FSLN set up people's militias. These formations opened the way for incorporating popular strata into the armed forces and complemented the system of military service. They also made it possible to integrate workers, peasants, students, and members of the liberal professions, on a voluntary basis, into the defense of the revolution.

Moreover, measures of self-defense against those who in practice oppose by force the interests of the people can be taken, if necessary, both by the mass organizations and by the people's institution represented by the militias. The latter express to the highest degree the lack of separation between the army

and the people. This is an example that the professional defenders of Western "democracy" would look for in vain anywhere else in Latin America.

What is more, the very tasks of the army in production, in aiding the peasants — to say nothing of the wearing duties of the struggle against the contras — indicate that it is in essence a means for assuring the survival and development of the country in the interests of the exploited.

The Christian Base Communities explain a challenge facing the EPS. "It is a longer-term one, involving the democratization of the army. It is clear that a professional army will have an important place in Nicaragua for a long time. 'All arms to the people' is a slogan that expresses today an entirely valid road toward democratizing national defense ...

23. Bayardo Arce, *Op.Cit.*, p.30.

24. Carlos M. Vilas, *La revolucion sandinista*, Editions Legasa, Buenos Aires, 1984, p.202.



Sandinista fighters (DR)

provides a channel for a major part of the political opposition to the new regime.

The ability of the mass organizations to intervene in this process of institutionalization depends first of all on their retaining the autonomy from these institutions. Carlos Nunez pointed up the danger that an idea might begin to grow up among the popular masses, as a result of the malfunctioning of the state apparatus and "bureaucratic deviations" that "the state does not represent them [the masses] ... We must, therefore, take into account the reality that to a certain extent the mass organizations sometimes act like parastate bodies because they do not find in the state bodies the receptivity, dynamism and agility necessary for solving problems."

From this, Nunez drew the conclusion that the mass organizations "must also be instruments capable of expressing, with autonomy, the demands of the social sectors they represent. And, therefore, they will have to resort to both the most usual and the most unusual means." (29)

Involvement in the running of the state is a right that the masses have won in their struggle. It is not a concession made by the new regime to the workers, the peasants, and the pauperized urban masses. It is a fundamental right with a great practical importance for any transition to socialism.

One form of such direct participation lies in the discussion of various health and educational programs by the organized users of these services, as well as by the workers in these sectors. One of the most important forms is involvement

in economic management. This is where the apprenticeship in direct administration is the most complicated where inertia, both in agriculture and in the rickety industrial sector, most makes itself felt, where the technical and cultural handicaps have the greatest effect, where the technicians' uneasiness in the face of a dynamic of self-management merits a whole separate study in itself. In this area, the Sandinistas are running into big problems, in particular because they cannot reabsorb the "informal sector" (pedlars, etc.) Their strong point is that they recognize and discuss these questions. This, indeed, is another dimension of "Sandinista democracy."

Finally, the state apparatus cannot function in a neutral way. "Working for the government today demands not inconsiderable sacrifices," (30) given the low wages. The private sector does not fail to try to lure away technicians by offering more attractive salaries. In this way, it is seeking to undermine the administrative functioning of the new regime. But, despite the abnegation of a great many "functionaries," the problem of control over government employees remains unsolved. In fact, this question is being raised publicly:

"As regards the relationship between the government and the party, it is necessary to perfect mechanisms by which government functionaries can have their stewardship examined by the people, as well as means to prevent the government's logic from becoming confused with that of partisan organizations." (31)

This body of questions will underlie

all the discussions on the new constitution and on the nature of the new party to be consolidated. Among other things, in the framework of the powers devolved on the legislature, it will be necessary to clarify the specific decision-making powers of the mass organizations in the areas that concern them and in economic management. This will be one of the key points in the coming institutionalization process.

The FSLN has explained several times that it has been able to draw the essential lessons from the past experiences and to take account quite accurately of the specific context in which the revolution is unfolding. It has avoided the Scylla and Charybdis, of on the one hand, trying to follow an abstract model, and, on the other, underestimating the underlying questions of the transition to socialism.

In the last analysis, the model that will prove valid will be the one that corresponds to the needs of the people, and that the people will defend wholeheartedly against growing attacks of all sorts against the revolution.

For us, this revolution that represents the advances made in the understanding of socialist revolutions has the right to solidarity from every anti-imperialist activist. And at the same time, it also demands that we make a determined effort to draw the lessons of an experience that is becoming part of the heritage of the working people of the entire world. □

29. Carlos M. Vilas, *La revolucion Sandinista*, p. 364.

30. Carlos Nunez Telles, op cit. p. 15 and following.

31. "Nous voulons la paix," p. 16.

32. Idem.



## Ten years after the victory

In April 1975 the US intervention in Indochina was defeated. The largest imperialist power in the world, using the most modern military equipment was not sufficient to crush the independent will of the populations of Indochina in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

In 1979 new military conflict began to break out in the region, this time between erstwhile allies in the revolutionary struggle. The contradictions which had been bubbling below the surface prior to 1975 came to a head. The frontier skirmishes between Cambodia and Vietnam developed into full-scale war; Chinese forces began to penetrate into the North of Vietnam.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the victory of the Indochinese revolution *International Viewpoint* takes a look at the lessons of the imperialist offensive, the liberation struggles and the current Sino-Indochinese conflict. We interviewed Pierre Rousset, author of two books on the subject of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). In the first interview, Rousset talks about the nature of the imperialist war and the lessons for our solidarity work and in the second, about Cambodia, the evolution of the Khmer Rouge and the developments inside the country.

**Question.** Ten years have gone by since the victory of the revolutions in Indochina. The liberation struggles in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos became real symbols for generations of activists in the advanced capitalist countries as well as in colonial countries. However, the victory of these revolutions has rapidly opened up new crises characterised by internal splits and by the eruption of military conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Could we discuss the political lessons of the Indochinese revolutions and how to combine these lessons of prolonged revolutionary struggle against imperialism and for socialism with the lessons of the present crisis?

**Answer.** I think that the experience of the Indochinese revolution offers us many lessons which are interlinked. But in order to draw these lessons it is important to understand the problems in each country concerned and how much the current crisis in Indochina owes to the war. Many people regard the period of the liberation struggles before 1975 as the time of great hope and, completely separate from that, the period after 1978-1979 as a period of disillusion and the Sino-Indochinese war. Each period of course had its own problems that have to be analysed. However, you also have to take into account the policy of the regimes in Indochina, as well as the impact on Indochina of the bureaucratic conflicts between USSR and China. But the general context remains the heritage of colonial and imperialist wars, and, we must not forget today, the revenge policy of imperialism.

**Q.** The war in Indochina has been over now for ten years or at least the imperialist war has. That is a long time. The main parties to the current military conflicts — that is the Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge — are not merely puppets manipulated by Washington. Of course the imperialist powers benefit from these conflicts and try to stir them up, but isn't it to avoid the real issue if you put everything down to the 'heritage of the colonial and imperialist wars'?

**A.** I don't want to avoid the issue. I will try to take on board all these questions. But you have to begin by stressing the long-term effects of the war, because I really do believe that if you don't you cannot understand anything of the current problems. Also, it is important that the lessons we draw today about the crisis in Indochina don't outweigh those that flow from the historic victory against American imperialism. In the current ideological climate, at least in many Western countries, this question is becoming very important.

Lets take an example. If the explanation of the policies pursued by the Khmer Rouge in power can be found mainly outside of the context of the war and its effects, then, according to some activists, they should have been given less support ... or no support at all. If, on the other hand, you understand that the real evolution of the Cambodian Communist Party — the relation of forces between the different factions and the probable evolution of the Khmer Rouge faction were conditioned by the nature of the war imposed

by imperialism, then your conclusion would be different. The more effective the anti-imperialist solidarity, the less are the dangers of repeating the catastrophe. That is, that it is necessary to give more support, earlier on.

**Q.** You mean one should have given more support to the Khmer Rouge?

**A.** No, not necessarily. The Cambodian Communist Party does not only consist of the Khmer Rouge, and the Khmer Rouge is not reducible to the Pol Pot faction. And, in any case, the crisis in Indochina has, I think, permitted a clarification of the debate with the Maoist currents of the 1960s and 1970s over the conception of solidarity.

You have to support struggles and, therefore, you had to support the action of those organisations who were leading and directing those struggles, or else such support is merely abstract. But this does not mean that you necessarily support the policy and the programme of those movements.

The Maoist conception at the time was that support should be given on the basis of agreement with the programme of those organisations in struggle. Thus, one would support a Vietnamese front as much as a Cambodian one, depending on the programmes of the different fronts and parties that led them. Nowadays solidarity action is related to the situation in countries where there are several organisations for example in El Salvador. The solidarity movement cannot decide which one has the correct line. Solidarity is unitary. On the other hand, activists in the solidarity movement can, and should, think about the problems raised in the struggle and the risks involved.

As far as solidarity action goes, I would draw two lessons from the experience in Indochina. The first is that being engaged in solidarity work should not preclude independent political judgements. It should be possible to accompany solidarity work with a dialogue, and unity in action with freedom of expression.

But the other lesson is that solidarity is a very necessary and urgent task. That is why solidarity had to be without preconditions. Those in struggle don't have time to wait. And if they do have to wait, they will have to pay a heavy price for the lateness in the solidarity work. Concretely the American bombing of Cambodia in 1973 was probably the decisive turning point that allowed the Pol Pot faction to take control of the liberation movement. The coming to power of this faction of the Cambodian CP and the development of its policy can be explained also by other factors. But if the international solidarity movement had been able to tie Washington's hands and prevent that wave of bombings, the course of history might have been different.

Q. Isn't that rather hypothetical?

A. Of course. Its like saying if pigs could fly. You can't write a history which has not happened. But equally you should not think that the only development that was possible was the one which actually occurred. You must weigh up the impact of events on the course of these struggles and on the social and political movements.

I will try to elaborate. I was once asked what was my explanation of the Sino-Indochinese crisis. My reply was to explain that it was a combination of factors of a differing order of importance; the effects of the war; the impact upon Indochina of the interbureaucratic conflicts between China and the USSR; the pincer movement policy of imperialism which aimed to nip revolutions in the bud; the weight of the national question and uneven development within Indochina as a whole, which was cut artificially by colonisation; the policies pursued by the national leaderships concerned; the state of the mass mobilisations etc.

My questioner was not satisfied. They wanted to know the main reason why hopes were dashed. I suspect they were thinking of the influence of Stalinism. I don't believe you can explain the crisis of Sino-Indochinese relations as stemming from one main reason. In order to understand its depth and brutality, many factors come into play and it is necessary to see how they combine. But if you absolutely had to separate out one determining factor I would reply that it was the relative isolation of these revolutions. Stalinism is only one aspect of this problem.

Of course, the Vietnamese could not have won without Chinese and Soviet aid, without the anti-war movement in France and then in the United States and without the international solidarity movement. But they had to fight hard to get this support and they had to undergo the experience of many betrayals and desertions. Imperialist war was waged in Vietnam almost without interruption for 35 years. At several points the Vietnamese were in a position to win definitively because of their truly heroic struggle. And by that I mean the Vietnamese people and the organisations who led the fight, above all the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Before 1975 victory eluded them at every one of these points because of international factors over which they had no direct influence. In 1945, they won independence. The French workers movement, starting with the PCF (the French Communist Party) and the SFIO (the name of the Socialist Party at the time) allowed the government to send a powerful expeditionary recovery force. In 1954, after the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu, French colonial power was paralysed and potentially defeated. In Moscow and Peking, the West found willing allies for imposing

a compromise on the Vietnamese — the Geneva Accords which sowed the seeds for the second Indochinese war.

In 1965, South Vietnam could have been liberated. But the American government were able to send another expeditionary force this time with as many as 550,000 troops. They were able to begin massive bombardments in the North.

In 1968, again an insurrection almost took off in the South — the Tet offensive. But Washington was able to give the order for the bombing of Saigon itself through the use of aircraft carriers outside of the range of the liberation forces.

Here also the lesson is a dual one. It is an object lesson in the tremendous resources thrown up by the revolutionary struggle. Vietnam was able to win despite 35 years of imperialist war, despite the powerful intervention of colonial expeditionary forces, despite the direct involvement of US forces, despite the total war that the 'Vietnamised American war' was. It was the first time that the US had been beaten in a direct confrontation and, so abjectly, by the people of an imperialist-dominated, economically backward country.

But Vietnam emerged really hammered by this ordeal. All because at four or five crucial moments at least, they were not able to count on the decisive international support to which they had every right. The Vietnamese were not able to destroy French military or US military power at its source, in the imperialist heartlands. In order to paralyse this military power, they needed the intervention of the French and then the American masses and the support of the international solidarity movement, including in the so-called Socialist Bloc. International solidarity remained way below the quality of the struggle itself. And it is now first and foremost the people of Indochina who are paying the price today of this failure.

Q. But would that have really changed anything even if victory were possible in 1945, 1954, 1965 or 1968? I am not talking about the amount of suffering involved. Obviously, the number of dead, wounded, orphaned and refugees

would have been a lot less. But in terms of the political regime? Would the Vietnamese or Cambodian regimes have been radically different?

A. Of course. Just in passing, for example, the Khmer Rouge did not exist in 1945 or 1954. This specific current was a product of the disappointment of the Geneva accords in 1954 which forced Cambodian communists to officially disappear from the political map of the country. In 1963, and even in 1968, the Khmer Rouge was still very weak and probably did not yet have the political profile that they had from 1973 on. I don't know what the Cambodian regime would have been like if there had been total victory in Indochina at any of those points but, in any case it would have been something very different from what emerged in 1975.

And this is also true for Vietnam even if the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) retains more historical continuity. A revolution involves a population, social classes, a party or several parties and an army. Everything develops in function of the development of that struggle. And the relation of forces between these different factors also changes. We will come back later to the example of Cambodia, which is the really essential issue.

In 1968 again, victory in Vietnam could have been that of a mass insurrection. The population was organised into bodies created for, and by, the insurrection. The line of the VCP effectively combined the guerilla tactic, the war of movement and mass insurrection. In 1975, it was over. Not because the VCP no longer wanted to rely on the mass insurrection in the main population centres but because American policy had succeeded in denying any possibility of that.

A significant proportion of the population had become refugees; repression had destroyed many of the urban and rural underground structures; the working class had been systematically disrupted both socially and economically; and the exhaustion of large sections of the masses was beginning to make itself felt.

A real revolution took place in 1975 but Saigon did not liberate itself. It was

Vietnamese prisoners being led away by American GIs (DR)





The triumphal entry of Vietnamese fighters in Saigon, 30 April 1975, (DR)

passively (and happily) liberated by the armed forces. In the meantime tens of thousands of local revolutionary cadres had been killed. They had to be replaced by cadres who were inexperienced and unrepresentative because they came from other areas. All this affected the situation in Vietnam after the victory very profoundly and constituted one of the most important elements of the difficulties that developed afterwards. A Vietnam victorious in 1968 or 1965, in 1954 or in 1945 would have been a different Vietnam.

I repeat. The line of the VCP was to support insurrection with guerilla action, not to replace insurrection with military conquest. But after 1968, the partial successes of US policy rendered this policy largely inapplicable in certain regions in the south and above all in Saigon.

Q. All that explains the problems immediately following the victory. But ten years later?

A. Ten years later that is still an important element in explaining the situation. One must not think that the effects of such a war on a country like this will be only fleeting. Is ten years really such a long time? Thirty-five years of war, ending in the Vietnamised 'American war', what does this mean in reality? There has never been such a long and total war. The second Indo-

chinese war was without precedent. In it was concentrated enormous military resources in a very small theatre of operations.

The intensity of the bombing was much more significant than that in Europe during the Second World War (see box on page 21). It destroyed both nature and human beings. The effects of defoliants and other chemical products which were widely used still continue to be felt. The war destroyed many elements of the social fabric and created millions of refugees inside the country. This was all due to the profound shake-up of the war and the artificial war economy. These refugees have become completely rootless in the society.

The war affected people and their psychology as well. It affected the different organisations, their way of functioning and the mentality of their members. The Vietnamised 'American war' was a total war because it used any means, military and non military; it was acted out in all areas — military, economic, social, cultural, psychological, ecological. It is in this respect that this war was the most modern and the most terrible that humanity has ever known.

At the time we did not really understand exactly what this war meant. And now, new generations will say; 'the Vietnamese war, I don't know anything about it'. But without understanding what this war meant it

is impossible to understand what is going on today.

Q. But other countries have been destroyed by war and they recovered fairly rapidly. Take Germany after the Second World War for example.

A. The Indochinese war was much more serious than the Second World War for those who went through it. Countries like Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia are very different from Germany. The material strength of Germany was for a time destroyed. The population also suffered badly in other countries in Europe. But the basic potential represented by the education, the skills of the workforce, scientific and technical knowledge, the industrial past, remained. It was on this basis and with the support of the Western powers who feared communist revolution, that Germany was able to rebuild itself as it did.

None of this applies to a country like Vietnam. Economic and social backwardness is aggravated by the disaffection of key sectors of the elite, the intellectual layers, the cadres and the technicians whom the country needs so badly. The effects of the physical, social and psychological destruction of the war are much more profound. In addition, it is necessary to rebuild the country in the face of a policy of open sabotage by the US of course, but also by

China, and in spite of piecemeal aid policy on the part of certain countries in Western Europe.

I think that there we are touching on two fundamental problems. The first concerns the war and the revolution. Our current — I speak for myself at least — had a naive view of the relationship between the two, which led to errors of perspective about the dynamic of the victory. We underestimated, although this might be described as an error of youth, the negative effects of the war by looking only at the depth of the struggle. The most “infantile leftists” even thought that the longer the struggle lasted, the better it was, because the consciousness of the masses was supposed to rise in the crucible of combat.

That is not true, or it is only temporarily true. When the war lasts too long, the negative effects prevail over the positive results of revolutionary mobilisation. In the aftermath of the victory in Vietnam, there has been a decline in the mobilisation, both among the masses and among the cadres, a sort of relaxation after too great and too prolonged an exertion. That has played an important role, including in the spread of bureaucratic phenomena.

One cannot underestimate the impact of a long and total war such as the one in Vietnam. You have to understand the enduring consequences for the country. That brings us back to the problem of solidarity: International mobilisation must help to block such counter-revolutionary wars, or to stop them as quickly as possible after they have started. This is a timely question for Central America and also for the Philippines.

**Q.** And the second fundamental problem?

**A.** It is that the tasks of solidarity do not end with the victory. The tasks of economic and social reconstruction, as well as those of defence, are extremely difficult in backward countries. Here again, international aid is a very important factor, as the example of Nicaragua shows today.

However, partially because of the shock created by the emergence of new conflicts in Indochina and partially also because the leaderships in Indochina themselves underestimated the gravity of the problem, the solidarity movement virtually stopped after the victory in 1975. The Fourth International has adopted resolutions — and continues to adopt them at its world congresses — stressing the need for continuing solidarity with the Indochinese revolutions. But, for many reasons, we have not been able to translate these resolutions into action.

So, among the most important lessons of the Vietnam and Indochinese experience are those that concern solidarity. That is, there must be unity of action respecting the diversity of opinions. And at the same time solidarity is an urgent matter and cannot be subordinated to prior conditions. That is, there is a necessity for internationalism.

Above all, confronted with the disillusion and tragedies of Indochina, we cannot draw the conclusion that less help should have been given. On the contrary, what was needed was more help, quicker and more effective help, and that is what will be needed, moreover, in the future. ■

and a revolution in Cambodia. This real struggle was a component of a deepgoing revolutionary process, a process of permanent revolution that unfolded throughout Indochina. The Khmer Rouge movement arose both out of the national liberation movement and out of the Cambodian, Indochinese, and international Communist movement. This broadly distinguishes Cambodia from other cases that might be mentioned, such as the regime of Idi Amin in Uganda. It is also why this truly disastrous experience poses profound questions for us. In fact, it was the outcome of a struggle with which we had to identify.

However, what happened in Cambodia is without precedent in a contemporary revolution. This is true in all aspects. It is as if the Khmers Rouges wanted to start off from zero in every field. On the level of the economy and material, a lot of goods were deliberately destroyed — from rubber treatment centers to automobiles, and even the furniture of homes in Phnom Penh.

Agriculture was spared — although the number of crops was reduced in order to concentrate more on rice — and so were other basic industries, such as electricity, repair shops, etc.

On the social level, the cities were entirely emptied of their inhabitants, who were removed to rural work camps. The first elements of a new working class began to be built up from the Khmer Rouge peasant army. Even in the country-side, the villages were progressively broken up. Family and religious life were shattered in the name of collectivism. “Labor armies” were often constituted on the basis of age groups.

The whole educational system collapsed and began to be reconstructed on the most elementary basis. On the ideological level, not even the classics of Marxism or Leninism had a place. The ideological production was extremely poor, mainly radio broadcasts. Even in the narrowly political field, if there ever was a state that was synonymous with “a band of armed men” (Lenin’s classical definition), a skeleton of a state, it was the Khmer Rouge state.

Not all of this happened at once, although some of the most draconian measures were taken immediately after the victory, and thus were very badly prepared for, such as the deportation of the people who were then concentrated in the urban centers. There was a bloody factional struggle within the Khmer Rouge movement itself, since, in the context of common ideological principles, there were real political differences. But the whole pattern took form very rapidly, within about two years.

Of course, in retrospect, we have

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## Aborted revolution in Cambodia

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**Q.** Ten years ago, the Khmers Rouges came to power. The experience of their rule, which lasted from 1975 to 1978, was a traumatic one, most of all for the people who went through it but also for all those who felt solidarity with the liberation struggle in Cambodia that was led by the Khmers Rouges. (1)

I would like to take up the basic questions posed by the Cambodian experience, including the problems this terrible experience poses for us as revolutionary Marxists.

You said that the rise to power of the Pol Pot faction was determined by the type of war that was imposed by Washington. Isn’t that too easy an answer?

**A.** I said that the evolution of the Cambodian Communist movement was “conditioned” by the course of the American war, not “determined.” That is more than a nuance. Political history is not a record of inevitabilities. But you have to understand how it was possible for a current such as the Khmers

Rouges to come to power. To do that, you have to consider what the kingdom of Cambodia was like, the impact of the wars and revolutions on a regional scale, and the sort of war the Americans waged. The Cambodian tragedy included exceptional elements. It was really a unique case, and therefore the analysis also has to be specific.

**Q.** Was the Cambodia of the Khmer Rouge really so unique? Wasn’t it just an exacerbated form of what we have seen elsewhere, Stalinism in the USSR, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in China, the “Boat People” of Vietnam, and the invasion of Cambodia?

**A.** Already in that list, you are mixing up very different things. But I don’t think that the Khmer Rouge phenomenon can be really equated with any previous case. That is, moreover, why I hope that it will not be repeated.

There was a mass liberation struggle

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1. For an outline of the history of the Khmer Rouge movement, see the article by Pierre Rousset, “Le radicalisme sanglant du regime Khmer Rouge,” published in *Inprecor*, IV’s French-language sister magazine, No. 122, April 5, 1982.

found the origins of many elements in the Khmer Rouge "ideology" in the existence of racist-nationalist Khmer currents, or the national intransigence of Yugoslavia against the USSR in 1950, when the future Pol Pot visited the country.

The nucleus around Pol Pot had gone through the experience of a very Stalinist CP — the French Communist Party in the 1950s — where the successes of forced collectivization and Stakhanovite industrialization were praised and oppositionists were smashed. The example of the Great Leap Forward at the end of the 1950s in China, followed by the Cultural Revolution and its catastrophic ultraleftism with respect to economic goals and the forms of mass mobilization, were also influential.

However, the Khmer Rouge system was something new, even if it often drew inspiration from the worst and the most caricatural aspects of the historical examples mentioned above. In particular, the overall practice of the new regime was really without precedent.

I stress the *practice* of this regime, because I don't think that the key to the orientations followed by the Pol Pot faction after the victory lay in a theoretical "model" of development applied from the "top down" without any regard for reality by intellectuals who played the role of apprentice sorcerers. The key lay in the power struggles.

If it was decided immediately to deport the population concentrated in the cities — who included many refugees from the rural areas — this was not to make them into peasants. Nor was it to forestall American bombings, otherwise the deportations would have been a passing episode. It was to break up a social milieu that the dominant faction of the Khmer Rouge could not control.

If it was decided to disintegrate family and religious life and break up the traditional rural communities, this was not to achieve a collectivist ideal. It was to destroy the bases of potential social opposition. If it was decided to liquidate successive generations of cadres of the Communist Party of Kampuchea in bloody purges, this was not to resolve an ideological conflict and flush out foreign agents. It was to consolidate the

position of a dominant faction that in 1975 controlled only the top rungs of the party and a few regions of the country.

Q. And you call that a workers state, that is, a dictatorship of the proletariat?

A. Yes.

Q.. Do you really believe that? Are you sure of that analysis?

A. No.

Q. But isn't that a decisive question for determining the line of a revolutionary international? For example, when there is a military conflict with another country, such as Vietnam?

A. I think that it is an important question, but it is not decisive for determining our line. I know that may seem a bit strange, but let me try to explain what I mean.

Why did the majority of our movement characterize the Khmer Rouge period in Cambodia as a workers state? First of all, for a negative reason. Contrary to what a minority of our movement believed, we thought that it was hard to characterize as a "bourgeois state" a state apparatus that started out by liquidating, often physically the bourgeoisie and all social strata associated with it.

In Cambodia, the old bourgeois state was broken up more thoroughly than any one ever had been before. The capitalist economy and even money itself were eliminated, being replaced by administrative distribution and barter, which inevitably led to the appearance of a parallel economy based on the black market. (2)

We also based our position on some positive criteria, flowing from the fact that the origins of this state were in a Communist-led national liberation revolution. Moreover, this state arose in a regional context that was one of a real process of permanent revolution. But it has to be recognized that this sort of approach has its dangers. It defines by elimination. This is not a bourgeois state, therefore ... It also defines by analogy: This state grew



Carnage left by the Khmer Rouge (DR)

out of a revolution similar to the one that transformed Laos and Vietnam.

The specific reality of the Cambodian revolution has to be analyzed more. So far we have not done that except partially. For my part, I have been able to work on the studies done on the refugees and on historical documents by people like Steve Heder and Ben Kiernan, who are recognized specialists on these questions. But I have not yet been able to assimilate the more recent work done by people such as Michael Vickery (3). Even with more study of the specific reality of the Cambodian revolution, we may never be able to go much further than firmly based hypotheses, because we are dealing with a brief and very unstable process.

2. On the debate in the Fourth International on the situation in Indochina see the following articles in *Intercontinental Press*, published weekly in New York until 1982 when it became fortnightly: "Advances in the Indochinese Revolution and Imperialism's response: Fourth International Minority Resolution," in special issue on Indochina debate, No. 21, June 4, 1979; "Was Pol Pot Regime a Workers State?" by Fred Feldman and Steve Clark, No. 7, February 26, 1979; Ernest Mandel, "Behind the differences on the Military Conflicts in Southeast Asia," No. 13, April 9, 1979; and "War and Revolution in Indochina — What Policy for Revolutionists?," by Steve Clark, Fred Feldman, Gus Horowitz, and Mary-Alice Waters, No. 27, July 16, 1979. See also the special summer issue of *Inprecor* in 1979.

3. See in particular Steve Heder, "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Kampuchea," *AMPO*, Tokyo, Vol. 12, No. 3, third quarter of 1980; Serge Thion, Ben Kiernan, *Khmers rouges*, Albin Michel, Paris 1981; Ben Kiernan and Chantou Boua, *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1970*, Zed Press, London, 1982; Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*, George Allen and Unwin/Southend Press, Sydney, 1984.

## THE FACTS

— Between 1964 and 1973 the US dropped 7.5 million tonnes of bombs on North and South Vietnam, including 400,000 tonnes of napalm bombs, that is three times more than the tonnage of bombs used in the Second World War and the Korean war put together.

— In the same period, 3 million tonnes of bombs were dropped on Laos, a country with less than 4 million inhabitants.

— Eighty-six million litres of herbicides and defoliants were dropped on South Vietnam, destroying half the forests.

— One million Cambodians died in the course of the US war between 1970 and 1975.

— 58,655 American soldiers died in Vietnam; the number of Vietnamese dead has never been established precisely, but it must be several million people.



Sihanouk delivers a speech. Today he has allied with the Khmer Rouge against the Phnom Penh regime (DR)

The Khmer Rouge regime lasted barely more than three years, an instant on the historical scale. In three years, the social base of the regime steadily shrank, and the movement in power continually ate itself away in more and more devouring purges. Behind the cardboard facade created by the Khmer Rouge by means of a few authoritarian reforms, the society was disintegrating. This is why the system set up by this regime — the work camps, etc. — collapsed when the Vietnam troops intervened in December 1978 and broke the straightjacket represented by the government in Phnom Penh. When the announcement came of the fall of Pol Pot, the population moved spontaneously en masse to return to their villages, to find their families, or

to go back to the cities.

I think that it is useful and necessary to continue to study what really happened. Maybe it will be necessary to correct or qualify what I say here. It has to be done, because it will help us develop our thinking about important questions regarding the course revolutions may take in countries or regions that are particularly poorly prepared socially and economically for processes of permanent revolution. These problems challenge the theoretical concepts we use, making it necessary for us to clarify them.

However, the Cambodian case was really an "extreme" one, having arisen in really very specific circumstances. It was an unstable phenomenon, which probably could not have been stabil-

ized. It should not be the basis for building up any theory. If it is necessary to find a formula to describe this reality, I would say, as a working hypothesis, that the Khmer Rouge state was a still-born workers state.

I imagine that our debate over the class character of the Khmer Rouge state seems totally otherworldly to a lot of people. It is, if it were given a central importance that it cannot have for the reasons indicated. There are, nonetheless, important questions underlying this discussion, as for example on the nature and the evolution of the Khmer Rouge army. This army not only constituted the base of the new state that emerged from the revolution but over the years it came to represent the essential part of its stable social base. The ones who derived privileges from the regime, other than the unpurged cadres of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, were the soldiers who generally lived in separation from the population, for example controlling several villages from a camp in the jungle.

**Q.** What was the evolution of this army?

**A.** Here, we are probably touching on one of the most important special features of the Cambodian revolution. I don't think that this was a "classical" peasant army, that is, similar to those in China or Vietnam. The dominant faction in this army, which was linked to the Pol Pot faction, came, it seems, from regions that before 1970 had already felt the impact of the market economy but where the social differentiations in the traditional society had remained very little developed. As for Pol Pot's Praetorian guard, it was recruited from particularly backward highland tribes whose support the Khmer Rouge leader had been able to win very early on.

What is more, this army seems to have been particularly marked by the air war launched by Washington, especially by the massive bombing in 1973, which was aimed primarily at the rural population centers, which constituted rather densely inhabited zones. The bombing was intended to break up the social base of support for the military resistance of the liberation movement in the context of the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam. And, in fact, it seems that in this respect at least the American military policy was much more successful in Cambodia than in Vietnam and Laos.

Why was this so? Probably because the Khmer population was very loosely organized both politically and socially but was, nonetheless, not made up of nomadic tribes like those in the highlands of Laos, where there was also ferocious bombing. The social base of the Khmers Rouges was much less solid than that of the Vietnamese forces. And still more important, the village social organization — housing

structure, social groups, cultural groups — was much looser, much more individualist than in Vietnam.

The pagodas, it seems, were virtually the only centers of collective life, while in Vietnam the villages were marked by a considerable social and cultural cohesiveness. This loose social structure in Cambodia is probably one of the elements that explains the particularly devastating effect of the American bombing. It was massive, carpet bombing of heavily populated areas, which broke up a social structure incapable of absorbing such a shock.

It seems that the 1973 bombings and their consequences in a way represented a turn that profoundly marked the Khmer Rouge army. Another working hypothesis is that this army came to be made up, qualitatively more than in the past, of the socially "uprooted." In revolutionary armies, uprooted elements have always been numerous, but in the Khmer Rouge army they seem to have had a decisive weight. These uprooted elements no longer had any village, or any family, owing to the upsets caused by the war. The army less and less reflected a real social base in the villages. More and more, it came to be made up of declassed elements, generally of peasant origin. And it was this army that in 1975 became the underpinning of the new regime. This is one of the factors that make the analysis of this revolution specific and complicated.

**Q.** Why was the 1973 bombing so massive?

**A.** Because Washington concentrated its entire air fleet on Cambodia for six months. It had just signed the Paris Accords on Vietnam and had to stop bombing the latter country. It knew that it was also going to have to give up its grip on Cambodia. So, the Pentagon wanted to take advantage of the time it had left to destroy as much as possible

*One of the Khmer Rouge educational classes (DR)*



a society that it could not force into subjugation. Cambodia in 1973 is one of the many tragic examples over the course of the Indochina war that illustrate the monstrous and criminal character of the American intervention.

The American war in Cambodia was much briefer than in Vietnam or even in Laos. But it was devastating. The American war in Cambodia (1970-1975) took the lives of about a million human beings, out of a total population of around 7 million in 1970. The estimations of the human cost of the policy followed by the Pol Pot regime vary — and it is necessary to take into account the "delayed" deaths from the war, especially in the first months after the Khmer Rouge victory. The estimates of the deaths for which the Pol Pot regime itself is responsible range from 400,000 to a million and a half, with the figures for the period between April 1975 and January 1979 often running between 700,000 and 800,000.

**Q.** Could you summarize the factors that in your opinion conditioned the evolution of the Cambodian Communist movement and prepared the ground for the Pol Pot faction's temporary victory?

**A.** I want to remind you that these are only elements of an analysis and working hypotheses. In my opinion, you have to consider first of all the character of the Cambodian social formation in the stage of development it had reached before 1970. The cities were cut off from the countryside, being inhabited by the elite and emigrants, often Chinese or Vietnamese. There was an agricultural proletariat on the rubber plantations that was cut off from the peasantry because it was made up of Vietnamese emigrants. There was a peasantry that had already rebelled in some regions against the impact of a new market economy and against the exactions of the functionaries and military officers.

But the country had not yet experienced more than the beginnings of the full-blown agrarian crisis that has hit a lot of dependent nations, bringing a structural destabilization in the countryside and not just poverty and oppression. Finally, Cambodia was a country of very strong individualist traditions.

From the political standpoint, the way that the French granted independence in 1953 favored the survival of the semireligious influence of the royal family. And Sihanouk, an autocrat coming from this family, who ruled the country up until 1970, was able to exploit this.

As for the Communist movement, its native Khmer base was still limited. With respect to the social and political forces in the country, the conditions for a revolutionary struggle on the national level were only beginning to ripen. But the country was plunged into a whirlpool of revolution and counterrevolution by the almost inevitable overflowing of the imperialist war in Vietnam.

Such an overflow had already taken place during the French war, before 1954. The Americans themselves precipitated events in 1970, when they first overthrew Sihanouk through Lon Nol and then invaded the country. The revolution was then to begin to move but at a forced pace and with a very fragile social and political base of its own. As I already explained, it was in this context that the 1970-1975 war had tragically disintegrating effects on Cambodian society.

All these tendencies were aggravated by the emergence of deep divisions between the Communist movements in Vietnam and Cambodia, divisions reflected by the rise of the Pol Pot faction. This is perhaps the most important difference from Laos, a country still more backward from a social and economic standpoint.

These disputes had several sources. Temporary divergences of interest appeared on several occasions, as was almost inevitable. This happened for example in the 1960s when the Vietnamese, faced with the American war, temporized with Prince Sihanouk, who held a more or less neutralist position. At the same time, the Khmers Rouges were waging armed struggle against the Sihanouk regime in several areas. The Americans were still far away from these zones. The main and immediate enemy was, thus, not the same in the two cases.

It was possible to surmount these temporary divergences of interest. This was accomplished, moreover, on the military level. After the American intervention in Cambodia in 1970, the Indochina-wide military front was reconstituted. But on the political level unity was not rebuilt, to the contrary.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** Because of the specific evolu-

tion of the currents involved, in particular of the Cambodian Communist movement. But another reason was the impact of the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Vietnamese conflicts. The 1954 Geneva Accords had already been a difficult experience for the revolutionists in Indochina. Moscow and Peking had imposed a compromise that was very costly for all three countries. The conclusion drawn from this by what would become the Khmer Rouge current, which had not formed at the time, was that the Cambodian Communists had been abandoned by everybody and that from then on they would have to go it alone. Moreover, most of the Cambodian cadres involved in the armed struggle before 1954 had taken refuge in North Vietnam, and a lot of those who remained in Cambodia were killed. To an extent, therefore, it was a new party that formed around the group of "returnees from France," including Saloth Sar, alias Pol Pot.

The USSR and China played on these tensions. The Kremlin maintained links with the pro-American puppet regime of Lon Nol right up to the end. China encouraged the "independence" of the Khmer Rouge from the Vietnamese. When the old cadres of the Cambodian movement came back from Hanoi after the American invasion of Cambodia in 1970, they were isolated and then progressively liquidated by the Pol Pot faction. These purges became extensive after 1973. A wider and wider sea of blood separated the Vietnamese from the Cambodian Communists, who feared the power of their neighbors.

When the split between the two movements became definitive in 1975, once the Americans and their local relay regimes were defeated, China gave decisive aid to the Khmer Rouge and to their anti-Vietnamese line. From that time on, the Khmer-Vietnamese clashes were subsumed into the framework of the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Vietnamese conflict and became more and more insoluble.

The impact of the interbureaucratic conflicts initiated in Asia under Stalin and consummated in the Sino-Soviet split at the start of the 1960s became a deadly threat to the unity and revolutionary dynamic of the struggles in the region. The mortal danger that such conflicts represent for liberation struggles is, thus, also one of the lessons that the revolutionary movement can draw from the Indochinese experience.

**Q.** But wasn't there a real danger that Cambodia would be dominated by Vietnam after the victory?

**A.** Perhaps, although the Vietnamese have long been very careful in this regard. They knew about the liquidation of those in the Communist Party of Kampuchea who were close to them. In the confusion surrounding the 1975 events, they could have tried to assume direct control over the new

regime in Cambodia. They did not. Why? One might throw out a lot of reasons, from a conviction that it would have been an error to act that way to a fear that if they did, it would lead to direct conflict with China.

In any case, you have to take account of the national problem and the uneven development in Indochina as a whole, which was artificially cut up by the colonialists. But the "Pol Pot solution" was the worst kind of answer, even from the standpoint of safeguarding the country's independence. This "solution" involved an immediate break between the Vietnamese and Cambodian revolutions once military victory was achieved. It profoundly weakened the revolutionary dynamic in Cambodia itself, precisely because of the relative unripeness of the social conditions for revolution in the country. Revolutionary Cambodia needed to lean on the Vietnamese revolution.

The Khmer Rouge policy, although it generally ran counter to that of Deng Xiaoping in China, made Cambodia a pawn in the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. The determination of the new government in Phnom Penh to eliminate any potential political or social opposition in the country also led it to raise a hue and cry about a "foreign danger" represented by Vietnam, thereby justifying all its hard-line measures. In this way a vicious circle began.

As for the United States, it gradually discovered the scope of the Vietnamese-Khmer split. Delighted with this unexpected stroke of luck, it also started fanning the flames. The military conflict on the frontiers of Vietnam and Cambodia, which started very soon after the victory in 1975, came to degenerate in 1978-1979 into full-scale war.

**Q.** You said just now that it was not essential to have a definitive analysis of the character of the Cambodian state to take a line toward the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. But is this really so? Wouldn't your analysis of this question change a lot of things?

**A.** What I said is that it is impossible to make a "definitive analysis" of this question, and this was still more the case in 1979. It was necessary, therefore, to manage without such an analysis. In such a case, you cannot derive a whole political orientation from working hypotheses, no matter how well founded they are.

**Q.** But are not revolutionary policies toward wars based on a principled position, which is based primarily on the class character of the states involved?

**A.** Yes, in three cases at least. The first is an interimperialist war, in which we take a position of revolutionary defeatism. The second is in a conflict between an imperialist power and a dependent country threatening to turn the latter into a direct colony. In this

case, we defend the dependent country. Finally, in a conflict between an imperialist power and a workers state, even a bureaucratized one. In this case, we defend the workers state.

However, there are other types of conflicts, unfortunately, in which we cannot base ourselves on such a "principled position." One example is a war between two dependent countries, as in the case of Iran and Iraq. Another is a conflict between two workers states, as in the case of China and Vietnam. There is also the case of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

In all such cases, we have to start off from a very concrete analysis of what is really involved in the conflict in order to determine our line. Obviously, it is always necessary to make a concrete analysis, but in the "classical" cases cited before, we can nevertheless start out from a position of principle in defining an orientation. If the concrete analysis is wrong, we set a wrong line. This is what happened to us at the start of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. (4)

**Q.** But this concrete analysis has to take account of the character of the states involved, of imperialist policy, and so forth.

**A.** Of course. But in the case that concerns us here it was sufficient to recognize that there was a Cambodian revolution and that the Khmer Rouge regime was not a mere tool in the hands of the imperialists. At the time, it was not even a pliant tool in the hands of the Chinese bureaucracy. We did not have to say as a certainty that this was a workers state. Nor, conversely did we have to say definitely that it was a bourgeois state because at a given moment Washington, realizing what was happening, started to play Pol Pot against Vietnam, American imperialism's main enemy in the region.

As I have already said, I accept as a working hypothesis that the Khmer Rouge regime was a still-born workers state. That does not prevent me from agreeing with the position taken by our international movement, which has not made the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia a principle. If you started from a principle, without bothering to look at the reality of the situation, you would have to demand the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from the Cambodian workers state and, moreover, not demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan!

However, concrete analysis immediately brings to light a major difference between the two cases. In Afghanistan, the great majority of the population was opposed to the Soviet intervention. In Cambodia, on the other hand, the Vietnamese intervention and the fall of

4. For the position of the Fourth International on Afghanistan, see the resolution "Pour un Afghanistan indépendant, fédéral et socialiste," which was published in *Inprecor*, No. 105, July 6, 1981.



Pol Pot was greeted with relief. That is obviously a big difference.

Q. Nonetheless, at the beginning we called for the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and not of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

A. That is precisely because in the one case the concrete analysis was wrong (Afghanistan) and in the other it largely remained to be done (Cambodia).

Q. You say that the bulk of the Cambodian population greeted the Vietnamese intervention with relief. Didn't they fear that the Vietnamese would stay?

A. Yes. But before anything else they wanted the fall of Pol Pot. The internal resistance was exhausted. It is difficult to find out exactly what the scope was of local or regional revolts against the Pol

Pot government before 1979. But, in any case, they were insufficient. In the wake of the American war, the regime had managed to paralyze the capacity for active social resistance. And the purges had decapitated successive generations of local cadres.

After the liquidation of the "Khmer Vietminh" who were trained in the period of the French war, a number of Khmer Rouge cadres were gotten rid of. Most of the 12,000 people tortured and executed at the ill-famed prison of Tuoi Sleng belonged to the national liberation movement. In a country such as Cambodia that represented a terrible loss. In the eyes of the population, the Vietnamese were the only alternative left. Even today, it seems that the majority tolerate the presence of the Vietnamese because they fear the return of the Khmers Rouges above all else.

Q. Nonetheless, the Khmers Rouges

still have a considerable force. The figure of 40,000 fighters is often mentioned, and it seems that they can operate deep in Cambodia.

A. That's right. But what is surprising about that. They were a regime in power, an army in power. It's natural that there should be something left. They have been welcomed and taken care of in Thailand, where they can still reorganize their forces out of the range of their enemies. They get considerable military aid from China and constant help from Bangkok.

Moreover, it is easy to penetrate deeply into Cambodia. It is a country of vast forests and large mountain ranges, favorable for guerrilla movements. The Khmers Rouges must still have supporters in various places, and so they should be able to count on a support network. Moreover, despite the terror that the previous reign of the Khmers Rouges struck into the village people, the latter probably still help them sometimes, for various reasons. They may be frightened,

## CHRONOLOGY

June 1941. Formation of the Vietminh (Front for the Independence of Vietnam) under the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party.

July 1941. Occupation of strategic points in Indochina by Japanese forces, with the agreement of the pro-Vichy colonial administration.

October 1941. Manifesto of the Vietminh calling for "unity of all antifascist forces to struggle against French and Japanese colonialism until Vietnam is completely liberated."

1944. The Vietminh begin guerrilla war against the imperialist forces.

March 9, 1945. The Japanese army assumes full control, disarms and interns the French troops.

August 17-25, 1945. Following the capitulation of Japan, the people's committees led by the Vietminh take power, first in Hanoi and subsequently throughout Indochina. This is the "August Revolution."

September 2, 1945. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh declares the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). The Vietminh have only a thousand armed fighters.

1945-1946. An unstable situation. Chinese, British, and French troops are in Indochina. The Vietminh negotiates with France over independence, while building up an army of 100,000 fighters.

December 19, 1946. Insurrection against the French in Hanoi. The government of the DRV retreats into the jungle. This is the beginning of the first Indochina war.

May 7, 1954. Decisive victory of the Vietminh over the French army at Dien Bien Phu.

July 1954. The Geneva Conference. The French grant "independence" to the three countries of Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam). Vietnam is divided at the Seventeenth Parallel between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and the pro-imperialist regime of Ngo Dinh Diem in the South. The country is supposed to be reunited after free elections set for 1956. They will never take place, because of the refusal of Diem, backed up by the Americans, who have taken over from the French.

1954-1960. Ferocious repression in South Vietnam: 90,000 executions, 100,000 political prisoners.

May 1959. The Vietnamese Communist Party decides to organize armed struggle in South Vietnam. In fact, it had already begun in a piecemeal way.

December 1960. Formation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam. There are already 685

American "advisers" in the country. Three years later there will be 16,000.

March 1964. The American Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, announces to the National Security Council in Washington that the South Vietnamese region is "on the verge of total collapse."

February 1965. Beginning of intensive bombing against North Vietnam.

March 1965. US president Johnson sends the first combat troops to South Vietnam. They will reach a maximum number of 542,000 in 1969.

1968. The Tet Offensive of the NLF. The liberation forces take Hue and occupy part of Saigon. Johnson decides not to run for reelection. Richard Nixon is elected to the presidency in November on a peace platform. He will begin the "Vietnamization" of the war, which involves reducing the number of US soldiers and making more use of the puppet Saigon army, backed up by US air power. At the same time, the CIA sets in motion Operation Phoenix, in which 650 US agents will direct the systematic liquidation of NLF cadres. According to official American figures, 20,987 "subversives" are killed. Other estimates talk about 100,000 deaths.

March 1970. Overthrow of the neutralist Sihanouk regime in Cambodia, to be replaced by the American puppet Lon Nol.

May 1970. Massive intervention of US troops against the NLF "sanctuaries" in Cambodia. Beginning of the national liberation war led by the United National Front of Kampuchea (FUNK).

1972. Major NLF offensive in South Vietnam.

January 1973. The Paris Accords. US forces withdraw from Vietnam. Massive bombardment of Cambodia by the Americans.

April 17, 1975. The Khmers Rouges take Phnom Penh.

April 30, 1975. The North Vietnamese Army and the NLF take Saigon.

1975-1978. Border conflicts between Vietnam and Cambodia.

December 1978-January 1979. Vietnamese army supported by Khmer rebels invades Cambodia. The Pol Pot regime falls.

February 1979. Chinese troops invade the northern border areas of Vietnam, but withdraw after a few weeks.

they may have a grievance against the Vietnamese, they may consider it opportune or hope for a reward, or simply it may be that they cooperate alternately with every armed group that shows up.

I would say that to a certain extent the Khmers Rouges can operate more easily because they do not represent any immediate danger, they are not about to return to power. The population does not have too much to fear from them, although they have massacred the passengers in the trains they have attacked.

**Q.** Isn't that a rather cynical view of things?

**A.** I am working on the basis of incomplete information. But I think that you have to take into account the depth of the social crisis the old kingdom of Cambodia went through. The Sihanouk regime had begun to go into crisis before 1970, then there was the American war, then the reign of the Khmers Rouges, then the Vietnamese intervention, and now a simmering war. You have to consider the way the population and families have been moved around, the trauma; this is a society that has been completely ripped apart.

Cambodia today is not a gulag. I imagine that there is a doubly arbitrary repression, because there are no legal rules or public control. That is very likely a problem. But political repression is probably directed only against relatively limited circles. In other aspects, Cambodia is a surprisingly free country. There is very little control of economic activity, trafficking and smuggling are generally tolerated by the authorities. This is also a problem because the fortunes that are being made are probably becoming a powerful corrupting agent.

*Khmer Rouge soldiers (DR)*



Where military battles are more threatening, the population is probably subject to war measures. But in the country as a whole, the Vietnamese forces seem to be discreet and the Phnom Penh administration weak. Freedom of trade is certainly greater in Cambodia than in Vietnam.

I don't think that there is really any mass "national movement" against Vietnam in Cambodia. Nor is there any social struggle against the Phnom Penh administration. There is, in fact, passive support by a large part of the population for the existing regime. But only a small minority seems to be giving it active support. The passive support is the result of the desire to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge to power and of the fact that the Cambodian administration is demanding very little from the population (taxes are very low for example).

A cynical attitude toward politics and collective action, individualism, and family economic activity seems to characterize the majority of the population. The society seems less capable than ever of collective mobilizations.

**Q.** Isn't this a very grave problem? How can the crisis be resolved without a very broad social mobilization of the Cambodian masses?

**A.** This is, to be sure, along with the consequences of the international relationship of forces, one of the problems that makes a real solution of the crisis of Cambodian society very difficult. Let's take, for example, the line we have adopted on the international level. We are not demanding the immediate withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces. Why?

On the one hand, because the population is not calling for this. That is important. Secondly, because an unprepared withdrawal of the Vietnamese

forces could signal a sudden resurgence of the civil war, the return in force of the Khmers Rouges; an intervention of pro-imperialist troops, in particular Thai troops, under the pretext of restoring order, and possibly under the banner of Sihanouk; a new mass exodus to Thailand and Vietnam; or an explosive upsetting of the regional relationship of forces. None of these possibilities would lead either to peace or to the resolution of the crisis of Cambodian society.

However, the Vietnamese presence cannot be institutionalized. The population will not accept a prolonged occupation if it feels capable of protecting itself. And as long as the Vietnamese remain in force, any internal crisis will take the form of a national crisis, even if the point of departure for such a crisis is, for example, a social conflict opened up by a strengthening of the already strong bourgeoisie of traders and traffickers.

This is why we have always insisted that every measure should be taken to prepare the way for the fastest possible withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. But this presupposes not only strengthening an independent Cambodian administration and a Cambodian army. Both have been strengthened to a certain extent, but they still do not have any capacity for independent action. For that something more fundamental is required, a revival of the activity — the self-activity — of the masses, a capacity on the part of the masses for collective activity. We are apparently still far from that.

**Q.** We will come back later to the Vietnamese policy itself. What do you think of the scope of the Cambodian crisis?

**A.** I think that it expresses in a dramatic form the body of contradictions that the revolutionary movement has to confront and to which it has to find an answer. This is a real knot of contradictions, the result of the difficulties encountered by a revolution that was accelerated by the impact of war on a country where the social crisis was only beginning to mature.

Here also you can see the weight of the national question in the regional ensembles created by colonialism. This shows, moreover, the pernicious consequences of an imperialist policy that in the face of defeat aimed consciously at weakening the victorious people to the greatest possible extent in order to trap it in a military, diplomatic, and economic vise. The tendency to war contained in interbureaucratic conflicts, and especially the Sino-Soviet conflict in Asia, has made this crisis still more difficult to resolve.

For all these reasons, I don't think that there will be any rapid solution to the Cambodian crisis, and all the more so because it will have to be resituated in the context of the relationship of forces in the region.



# AROUND THE WORLD



## SOUTH AFRICA

### A milestone for the trade unions

Recent developments illustrate the richness of the independent trade-union movement in South Africa. Firstly, there is the actual growth in the numbers of workers joining unions. Between 1980 and 1983 the number of 'African' trade unionists went up by 200%, from 220,000 to 670,000 members. There has also been some progress at the organisational level within the unions towards a process of unity.

Also, workers struggles and trade union mobilisations are beginning to extract substantial concessions out of the employers. This was especially the case at the Sasol factory, a firm making oil from coal, owned by the state. In this firm which has a strategic importance for the regime, 6,000 workers had been made redundant a few

The settlement signed between the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and Sasol will surely go down as a milestone in South African labour history.

Not only has the union managed to get 70 percent of the 6,000 workers who were sacked for participating in the November stayaway taken back, it has also won new rights.

It is remarkable that CWIU even survived this attempt by a semi-state company to crush worker organisation, let alone come out of it with better worker rights.

The most important of these is the formal recognition of CWIU shop stewards who now have the right to represent workers and report back to them during working hours.

The shop stewards also have the right to hold a monthly caucus meeting during working hours and have access to telephones — an important right in plants the size of Sasol.

'Previously there was a lot of conflict in the Sasol plants between the elected worker representatives who were attempting to act like shop stewards and line management who were trying to stop them', said CWIU general secretary, Rod Crompton.

The union has also been given 'unlimited' access to the Sasol hostels together with a full time office in the

months after an important strike on November 5 and 6, 1984. This strike action against the racist and repressive policy of the South African regime mobilised about a million black workers and constitutes the most important political strike in the history of the country (see International Viewpoint, No 65, 10 December 1984).

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU), a member of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) has just scored an important victory in obtaining the reintegration of 70 per cent of the sacked workers and other rights in connection with the union.

We publish below an article about this struggle which appeared in FOSATU News, No. 35-36, February-March 1985.

hostels. Before, the union only had an office for three days a week.

The settlement follows months of negotiations between CWIU and Sasol.

In order to get the company to the negotiating table to discuss the reinstatement of the 6,000 sacked workers, the union launched a national and international campaign.

All the unions involved in the present talks committed themselves to a national strike in solidarity with the Sasol workers.

And in the demonstrations against apartheid in the United States of America, one of the demands has been for the reinstatement of the Sasol workers. American unions have also taken up the issue individually.

On March 2 at a CWIU Congress, attended by all the union's shop stewards, it was decided to move the campaign on to a different footing by accepting the company's settlement offer.

'The settlement does not mean we have given up on the rest of the Sasol workers who have not been taken back,' said Rod Crompton.

'We have just decided to rather continue the campaign from within the plants,' he added.

'Management has agreed in principle to hire a further 5 percent and have said that the door is not closed on the other 25 percent,' he said.

At present, the union is concentrating on rebuilding worker organisation within the Sasol II and III plants.

A joint management/union negotiating committee has been established in order to negotiate other aspects of recognition which are not covered by the settlement agreement. And over the next week or two, union members will be put back on stop orders. ■

## CANADA

APRIL 20

### DEMONSTRATION

TORONTO: Chanting "Yankees out of Central America" and "Viva Nicaragua Libre", over 1,500 people marched through downtown Toronto on April 20 to protest US intervention and Canadian complicity in the Caribbean and Central America.

This was one of several demonstrations in Canada. Others were held in Ottawa, Peterborough, Saskatoon and there was an anti-intervention contingent in the Vancouver "March for Peace" on April 27.

"We have come together to make a statement to our government in Ottawa, and to its so called 'best friend and ally' in Washington" Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition Co-chair Barry Weisleder told the cheering crowd, "We demand an end to America's dirty war in Central America. We demand an end to the brutal occupation of Grenada and the growing militarization of the Caribbean. We demand an end to Canadian complicity in all its forms."

"We must build a mass anti-intervention movement so big and so broad that it will deprive our generals of the money and men to wage war in the interests of corporate profits", he concluded.

The Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition is an alliance of over 75 church, labour, women's, solidarity, and community groups.

The demonstrators listened to speeches by Catholic theologian Gregory Baum, Dan Heap, New Democratic party Member of Parliament for Spadina, and John Donaldson, President of Ironworkers Local 721 and Vice President of the Ontario Federation of Labour. They explained their many reasons for supporting the demonstration but all agreed that what was most important, in the words of Ann Pohl, co-chair of the TAIC, "We support the inalienable right of the people of Central America and the Caribbean to determine their own future." ■

## Abortion is not a crime Spanish women fight back

In the same year as their entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), the Spanish state has also joined the right-wing alliance against abortion rights. It has joined with two other countries in the EEC where abortion is illegal — Belgium and Ireland.

This socialist dominated government has capitulated to the pressures of the church and the right-wing and the tribunal has been able to sabotage the proposed extension of abortion rights.

The following article is reprinted from *La Breche*, 27 April 1985, paper of the Swiss section of the Fourth International.

Since it was written the womens movement in Spain has launched a massive campaign in defence of abortion rights. In Barcelona and Pamplona 15,000 demonstrated in each city, in Madrid 10,000 marched in a week of action from 22-28 April.

Eva LAMAS

The Spanish constitutional tribunal has recently declared against the law on decriminalisation of abortion which had been presented to the socialist government and accepted by parliament. This law would have made termination of pregnancy legal in the case of rape of the mother, the malformation of the foetus or danger to the life of the mother. However, the entire law was declared unconstitutional on the grounds that it did not contain sufficient guarantees under article 15 of the constitution to protect the right to life for 'everyone'. According to the Tribunal only 'ethical' abortions (that is following pregnancy due to the rape of the mother) are constitutional and even then only if the rape has been reported to the police.

In the two other cases, the constitutional tribunal would demand medical guarantees that 'abuse' would be avoided; such guarantees to include a second doctor's opinion, and the establishment of special centres within hospitals authorised to practise terminations. The constitutional tribunal was divided six-six on this and it was the chairperson of this body who tipped the balance in favour of blocking the new law.

Abortion in Spain will thus remain a crime. According to the World Health Organisation, unwanted pregnancies exist for 50% of Spain's 8 million women of child-bearing age. The pregnant woman may first attempt to abort herself using all sorts of products (parsley, saffron, bleach etc.) When they fail to obtain the desired result, they will resort to a 'backstreet abortionist' which costs about 30,000 pesetas (about £160).

The sociologist, Josuna Aguninaga estimates that there are about 32,000 abortions performed in Spain usually with terrible consequences for the health of the mother ending in hospitalisation

and sometimes death.

Every year, a growing number of women go to London or Amsterdam or to the French border in order to obtain abortion in decent conditions. According to official figures given by the British census office 22,999 Spanish women came to get abortions in Britain in 1983. In June, 1984 the constitutional tribunal decriminalised the obtaining of abortions abroad. So under this so-called socialist government only women who are able to get information and money together have the right to a wanted child.

Another possibility for Spanish women is to obtain an abortion in Tangiers. The death in 1983 of a woman with four children who was trying to obtain an abortion in Tangiers revealed the existence of this 'London of the South' frequented every year by hundreds of young Andalusian women.

It is possible to obtain an abortion in Spain but sometimes it can cost 80,000 to 100,000 pesetas (about £485). Because of the legal risks involved in this, it is only a solution for women from urban areas who have access to information and a sufficient income.

After the rejection by the tribunal, some socialist deputies proposed a new bill which would contain a 'social clause', authorising abortion in cases where the pregnancy would cause serious social problems for the pregnant woman. The socialist parliamentary group decided 'that this was not the moment' and rejected the proposal. This rejection by the socialists is more serious than it seems at first because they refused to introduce this 'social clause' into the existing bill, even when the verdict of the constitutional tribunal left that one question open. Under their law the only legal abortions will therefore be on therapeutic, eugenic and ethical grounds. This will affect about 4% of the women who have abortions every year.

According to Empar Pineda, the spokesperson of the commission on abortion of the Feminist Movement in Madrid, 'Now is the time to say to the government, when they legislate on abortion, that their starting point should be the right of women and not the idea that abortion is a crime which they are going to decriminalise in three cases.' (*El Pais*, 18 April 1985).

The coordination of womens groups in Barcelona has called a demonstration for April 25. This mobilisation will be decisive. Not only in the short term for obtaining even this minimalist legislation; but also because many women will still face harassment and imprisonment for the 'crime' of abortion. In 1982, during the famous trial in Bilbao, the mobilisations won an acquittal for the ten women and one man on trial for the crime of abortion. This battle for womens rights is also a battle against the right and against reaction. The feminist movement must not be left alone to fight. ■

