

Nicaraguan Revolution at critical crossroads

By ALAN BENJAMIN

The Nicaraguan Revolution has entered one of its most difficult stages in the aftermath of the signing of the Central American "peace plan" signed in Esquipulas, Guatemala, nine months ago.

Under intense pressure from U.S. imperialism and its mercenary contra army—as well as from the Latin American "Contadora Group" of nations and the Soviet bureaucracy—the Sandinista government has been forced to make numerous political concessions it vowed it would never make.

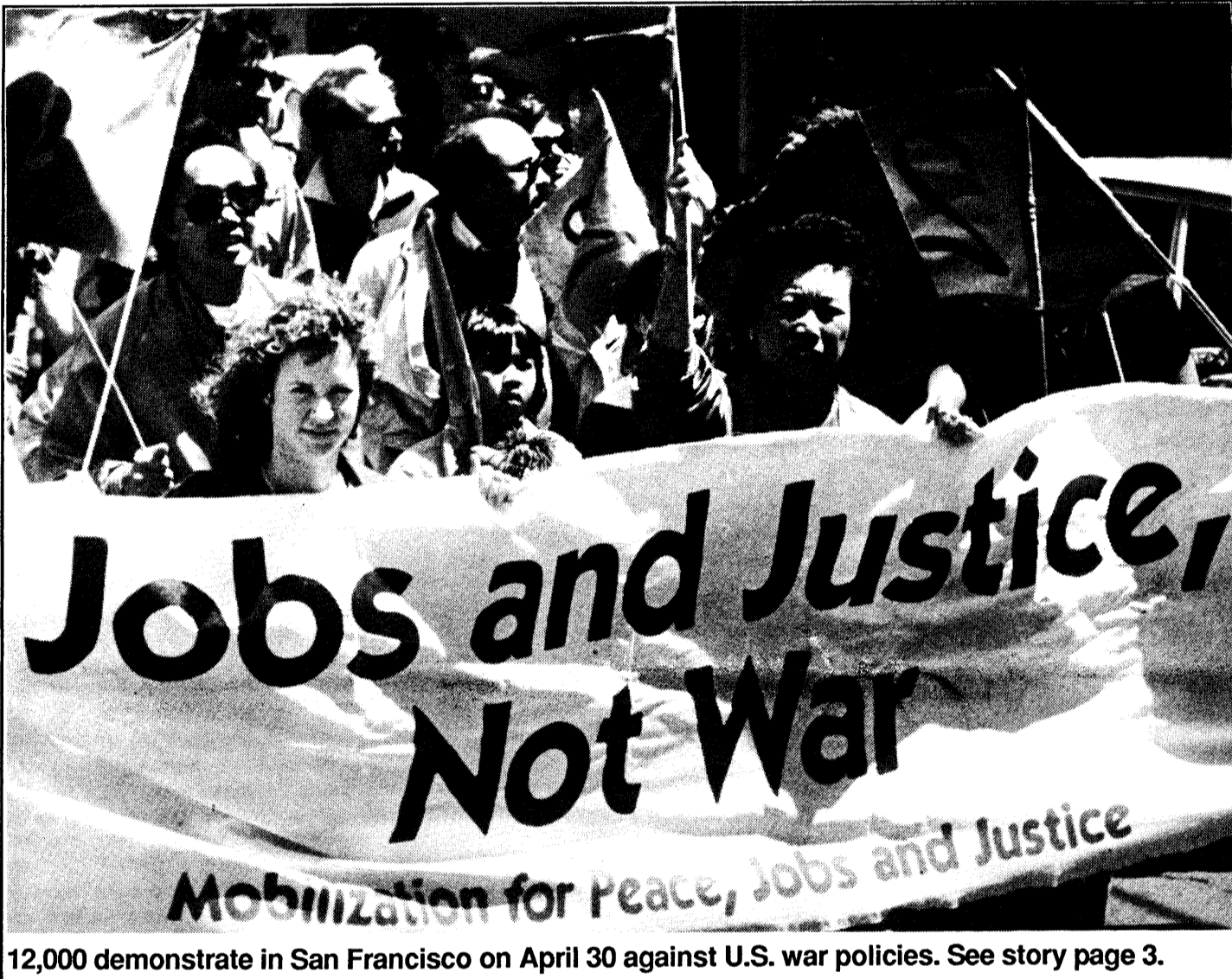
The Sandinistas, throughout these negotiations, have hoped to preserve their monopoly on political power and to uphold the legitimacy of their government.

The U.S. government and its partners, however, have quite effectively been able to wield the sword of "democratization" to give the internal front of the contras, the Nicaraguan capitalist class, more and more space to mobilize against the revolution.

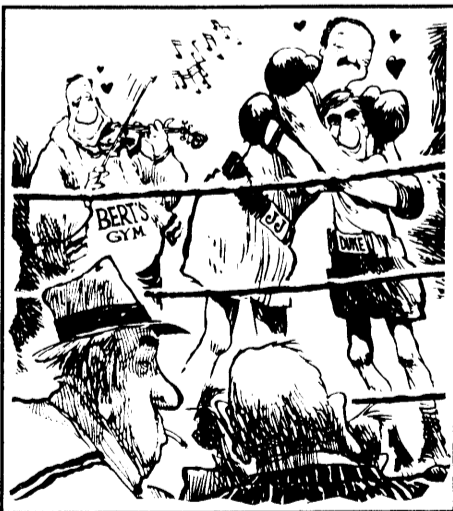
The contras and their internal supporters hope to undermine the legitimacy of the Sandinista government, rebuild a capitalist army—and ultimately dismantle and crush the revolution.

At the latest round of negotiations which concluded in Managua on May 28, the Sandinistas were compelled, for the first time, to accept the key contra demand that "an overhaul of the Sandinista political system was needed to reach a peace agreement." (*New York Times*, May 30)

The contra leaders demanded that the
(continued on page 10)



12,000 demonstrate in San Francisco on April 30 against U.S. war policies. See story page 3.



By JEFF MACKLER

Recent presidential polls reveal that voters prefer Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis far and above Republican George Bush. Bush's campaign has nosedived because of his links to the scandal-ridden White House and its unpopular policies in Nicaragua and Panama.

"What is driving the polls right now," says an analyst for the Gallup Poll, "are anti-Bush attitudes, not pro-Dukakis attitudes."

But millions of people—especially the poor, youth, and many workers—respond to both candidates with a big yawn. A

Jackson finds 'common ground' with Dukakis

typical remark was spoken by a 19-year-old saleswoman to a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter: "I was going to register but just didn't feel it was worth it." She continued, "When it comes on the news, I just change the channel."

Only the campaign of Jesse Jackson has found any enthusiasm among sections of the working class, who take Jackson's promises for good coin. Hence Jackson has been successful in channeling at least a

portion of disillusioned voters back into the Democratic Party, thereby achieving an important goal of his party and the U.S. ruling class.

Speaking as a team

Now, in the final days before the July 19 Democratic Party Convention, Jackson has turned the support received by his campaign to the benefit of Dukakis. The two candidates speak before audiences as a team.

"We are trying to find our common ground," Jackson says.

As the defeated but loyal Democratic Party candidate, Jackson has taken on the task of convincing his supporters that the party—which voted to fund the U.S. war machine to unprecedented heights, voted for contra aid, and co-managed Reagan's assault on U.S. workers—today merits their vote.

In 1984, Jackson's post-primary efforts
(continued on page 4)

Polish strike Armenian upsurge

See articles pages 8 - 9.



Ron and Nancy thank their lucky stars



San Francisco "socialite," Joan Quigley, who claims that she uses "science" and computers to prepare the star charts for Ronald and Nancy.

Is it a "science?"

Scientists and scholars are outraged by this information. They are particularly angry that the news media lets Joan Quigley get away with her "scientific" pretensions without rebuttal.

They fear, and rightly so, that this reflects a dangerous drift into supernatural and other absurdly illogical thinking. A 1986 study by the National Science Foundation found that two-thirds of Americans read astrology reports periodically, and nearly 40 percent think horoscopes have some scientific credibility.

Andrew Franknoi, instructor in astronomy at San Francisco State, compares astrology to "jetology." Jetology is a word he made up for a "belief" that one's fate is influenced by the positions of jumbo jets flying over the United States at the moment of birth.

Franknoi says that "jetology" is just as logical as belief that the positions of the stars, planets, sun, and moon at birth create direct influences over our lives.

Another scientist points out in *The Washington Post* that the



astrologer's "science"—based on ambiguous references to gravitational forces exerted by the planets on people at their time of birth—defies even "common-sense analysis." He explains that the gravitational pull exerted by the obstetrician standing by the delivery table is six times greater than that of all of the planets combined.

Rasputin and the Tsarina

Actually, the most apt commentary on this affair comes from David Kaiser, associate professor of history at Carnegie

Mellon University. He compares the Reagans and their astrologer, Joan Quigley, to Nicholas and Alexandra (the Russian Tsar and Tsarina) and their spiritual adviser, the mad monk Rasputin.

In *The New York Times* of Friday, May 13, Kaiser says:

"This analogy does not suggest that the United States is on the verge of revolution, or that astrologers seriously menace the Republic. Instead, it simply suggests that we, like the citizenry of imperial Russia, should look closely at the imperfections of our political system, the kinds of

people it occasionally allows to rise to the top, and the precautions that might help us avoid further episodes that can only erode our confidence in our leaders and institutions."

David Kaiser goes on to urge that we be more careful about whom we choose to be our elected head of government. What Kaiser doesn't seem to understand is that "we" do not pick the Reagans, the Fords, the Carters, the Nixons—or the Dukakis. These "leaders" are chosen by the capitalist class to do their dirty work.

Both political parties, owned and controlled by the corporate giants of this country, choose the least offensive of the smiling dummies—the ones who are reliable and electable—and then tell them what to do and to whom they are to do it to.

I am not surprised at Nancy Reagan's astrology or anything else she and Ronald might come up with. Like the Tsar and the Tsarina, they are rich, spoiled, and arrogant people. And like the last Russian monarch and his wife, millionaires Ronald and Nancy have used their office for personal gain—as well as contributing to increasing the misery of the working people of this country for the benefit of their class. ■

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

Donald Regan, former cabinet member and President Reagan's chief of staff and close friend, shocked the world when he revealed in his book, "For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington," that President and Nancy Reagan ran the government by astrology.

According to Regan, "Virtually every major move or decision the Reagans made during my time as White House chief of staff was cleared in advance with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes to make certain that the planets were in favorable alignment for the enterprise."

We were to learn later—after the news media tracked her down—that the White House astrologist is really a wealthy

How can movement best defend the Palestinians?

On June 4, a "National Day of Protest to End Israeli Occupation" of the West Bank and Gaza is being organized in major cities across the United States. Tens of thousands are expected to turn out to show their repudiation of the Israeli state's criminal policies, as well as their support to the legitimate demands for self-determination of the Palestinian people.

The Day of Protest is demanding an end to the killing, beating, imprisonment, and expulsion of Palestinians; an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; and an end to the U.S. funding of the occupation. It is being coordinated nationwide by the Palestine Solidarity Committee.

The national leaflet announcing the action correctly points to the \$4 billion a year the United States sends to Israel to sustain its barbarism against the Palestinian people. But then the leaflet points to a dangerously incorrect "answer" to the Palestinian question when it states:

"Recognizing the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is the key to achieving lasting peace with justice. The United Nations International Peace Conference at which all parties to the conflict are represented, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is the only means of obtaining a comprehensive settlement, guaranteeing such a peace. The fundamental aspiration of the Palestinian people is to establish their own independent Palestinian state."

An unacceptable precondition

What the call fails to state is that a precondition established by Israel, the United States, the Arab regimes—and the Soviet Union—for holding a U.N. peace conference is that the Palestinians, namely the P.L.O., accept Israel's right to exist in its pre-1967 borders. They all demand that the P.L.O. accept U.N. Resolution 242.

Calling for an independent Palestinian

Socialist Action Forums:

<p style="text-align: center;">'Revolt in Palestine' Speaker: Ralph Schoenman, author, "Hidden History of Zionism"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cleveland: June 17, 7:30 p.m. Cleveland State U., For info: (216) 429-2167</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Chicago: June 18, 7:30 p.m. 615 Wellington, For more info: (312) 327-5752</p>
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state on the West Bank and Gaza within the framework of such a U.N. peace conference is to call for the recognition of the illegal occupation of Palestine by the Zionists in 1948. It is to call for amnesty for the Zionist state.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza who were polled in 1986 were not so willing to recognize or legitimize the Zionist state.

Of 1024 surveyed by the pro-P.L.O. newspaper *Al Fajr* and the Australian Broadcasting Corp., only 16.9 percent accepted the objective of a two-state solution, that is, the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. A full 77.9 percent preferred the establishment of a Palestinian state in "all of Palestine," essentially calling for the destruction of the state of Israel.

Sixty percent of those polled did say that a Palestinian state on the West Bank could offer an interim solution toward a state in all of Palestine—though 40 percent dismissed this idea out of hand, opting instead to "continue the struggle for ... a state in all of Palestine."

But the poll never asked those 60 percent if they would go along with this "interim" solution if it meant recognizing Zionist Israel's right to exist. It stands to reason that the overwhelming answer would be "no."

The *Al-Fajr* poll is not the only indication of the Palestinian people's deep-seated aspiration for a unitary Palestine. Throughout the recent upsurge, the "Intifadeh," Palestinians have continuously expressed their unwillingness to come to any terms with the Zionist occupiers of their homeland.

There can be no answer to the plight of the Palestinian people until the state of

Israel is dismantled and a democratic and secular Palestine—in which Jews, Christians, and Arabs would live as equals—is established in all Palestinian territory.

The task of the movement in this country is to demand an end to all U.S. aid to the state of Israel.—The editors



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by **Ralph Schoenman**

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Peace, Jobs and Justice rally mobilizes 12,000 on April 30

By AMANDA CHAPMAN

SAN FRANCISCO—The country's largest anti-intervention demonstration this year took place here on April 30. At least 12,000 people marched through the predominantly Latino Mission District to a rally in Dolores Park with music and speakers from the labor movement, the peace movement, and the anti-apartheid and anti-intervention movements.

The demonstration was organized by the Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice—a broad, local coalition of labor, religious, peace, and community groups—around the demands: No U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean; End U.S. Support to South African Apartheid; Freeze and Reverse the Nuclear Arms Race; and Jobs and Justice, Not War.

The demonstration was led by Cesar Chavez, president of the United Farm Workers, and 50 farmworkers. Marching alongside Chavez were other prominent figures including Lt. Robert Demmons, president of the S.F. Black Firefighters Association; Bassam Shilhadeh, leader of the Palestinian Solidarity Committee; Al Lannon, president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 6; Charlene Tschirhart, Northern California SANE/Freeze; and Pat Norman, national co-chair of the 1987 National March for Lesbian & Gay Rights.

The largest of the many contingents marched behind a banner calling for an end to U.S. intervention in Central America and included many Central American solidarity groups and Latino community organizations.

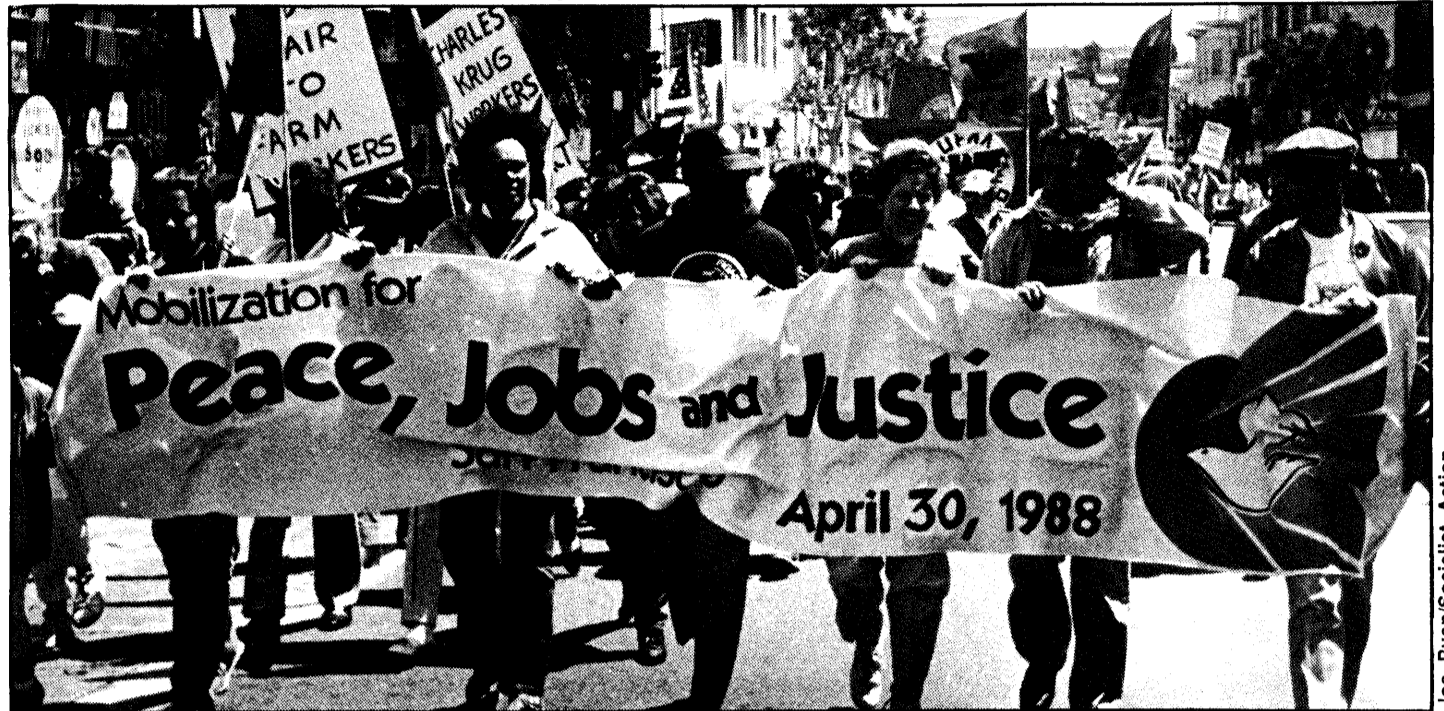
The march was overwhelmingly young, with a lot of students. Many labor activists also participated but there were only a few official union contingents. There was, however, a very large Middle-East contingent.

State of the movement

Past Mobilization events have attracted as many as 80,000 people. Although the demands of the Mobilization are more timely now than ever before, organizers expected a smaller turnout this year. Organizers point to the relative demobilization of the labor and anti-intervention movements that have traditionally been most supportive of the coalition.

These movements are demobilized because many in their leadership think that the Jackson campaign will accomplish the same goals—thereby making mass demonstrations unnecessary. Others believe that the war in Nicaragua is over because of the temporary cease-fire. Both errors result in a decline in participation in building the independent protest movements.

Given this state of affairs, the coordinators of the coalition and the hundreds of volunteers who worked on the demonstration saw it as a great success. Cesar



Joe Ryan/Socialist Action



Joe Ryan/Socialist Action

Chavez summed it up by crediting the Mobilization with "building the kind of broad labor, church, and community coalition that we want to build to make the grape boycott a success."

June 11 National Protests

The Mobilization is going on to organize a march and rally on June 11. This demonstration is in response to a national call for activities to mark the Third U.N. Special Session on Disarmament.

The San Francisco demonstration will highlight the coalition's demands to freeze and reverse the nuclear arms race and for jobs and justice, not war. However, all four of the demands of the Mobilization will

figure prominently in both the publicity for the event and in the demonstration itself.

A June 11 demonstration in New York has been called by the "National Coalition in Support of the Third U.N. Special Session on Disarmament" (SSD-III) and has different demands from those of the Mobilization. It calls to march "To Abolish Nuclear Weapons," "To Stop Military Intervention," and "For Economic Development and Social Justice." These three demands appear very similar to the demands of the Mobilization—although the demand to end military intervention does not specifically target U.S. military intervention in Central America.

In Nicaragua, the political struggle between the contras and the Sandinistas has sharpened, and the Sandinistas have already been forced to grant significant concessions. It is therefore very important for the antiwar movement to keep the pressure on the U.S. government to cease all forms of military and economic intervention in Nicaragua.

The increase in death-squad activity in El Salvador also points to the need to continue pressuring the U.S. government to end all aid to the death-squad regime.

Promote false confidence

Another difference between the demands of the Mobilization and those of the SSD-III National Coalition is the call on the front of the leaflet to "Support the U.N. Third Special Session on Disarmament, ... the total abolition of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000, and ... the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty."

These three demands lead to placing false confidence in the capacity of the United Nations to end the nuclear threat through negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, perhaps in another 12

years.

Rather than giving them another 12 years to discuss the possibility of ending the arms race, we must build a movement now to press, unequivocally, for an immediate end to the arms race.

Another problem with the call for negotiations is that capitalist politicians use the people of Central America or whatever region they are carving up as their bargaining chips. The U.S. government has no business interfering in the political and economic lives of the Nicaraguan people, either through bloody warfare or through negotiations.

The INF Treaty makes hardly a dent in the current stockpile of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it is premised on a policy of peaceful coexistence and detente between the United States and the Soviet Union which allows the U.S. government to continue to intervene throughout the world to promote its imperialist interests.

Nonetheless, both June 11 actions will be important opportunities to express anti-intervention and anti-nuclear sentiment. And both actions will sharply contrast the expanding military budget with the decreasing standard of living.

In San Francisco, the march will be led by survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who will carry the Peace Flame. The march will go from the U.N. Plaza—where demonstrators will assemble at 11:00 a.m.—to Union Square. There will be a rally in Union Square with speakers and entertainment. For more information about the San Francisco demonstration, call (415) 626-8053.

In New York, organizers expect tens of thousands to attend and are organizing for a large cultural component. For more information about the demonstration in New York, call (212) 529-4401. ■

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Chrysler workers narrowly accept early contract offer

By DAVID MARK

DETROIT—Last month, Chrysler workers narrowly adopted the tentative agreement worked out by United Auto Workers (UAW) union bargainers, who agreed to an early contract settlement with the company.

The Chrysler contract was set to expire in September 1988. Reportedly, the company requested the early negotiations after more than 3000 autoworkers demonstrated in front of Chrysler world headquarters against the proposed selling of Acustar, Chrysler's 29-plant parts-making operation.

While the selling of Acustar was stopped, the UAW did agree to open up early negotiations.

Interestingly enough, an initial *Detroit Free Press* tally of 18 key plants showed the contract to have been defeated by a 51.1-percent margin. UAW officials said this rejection was balanced out by approvals at small plants and three larger plants.

"The membership and the leadership of this local have one voice on this: We are not in the market for concessions," Ed Dean, a committeeman at Local 7 (representing workers at the Jefferson Avenue assembly plant) told the *Detroit Free Press*.

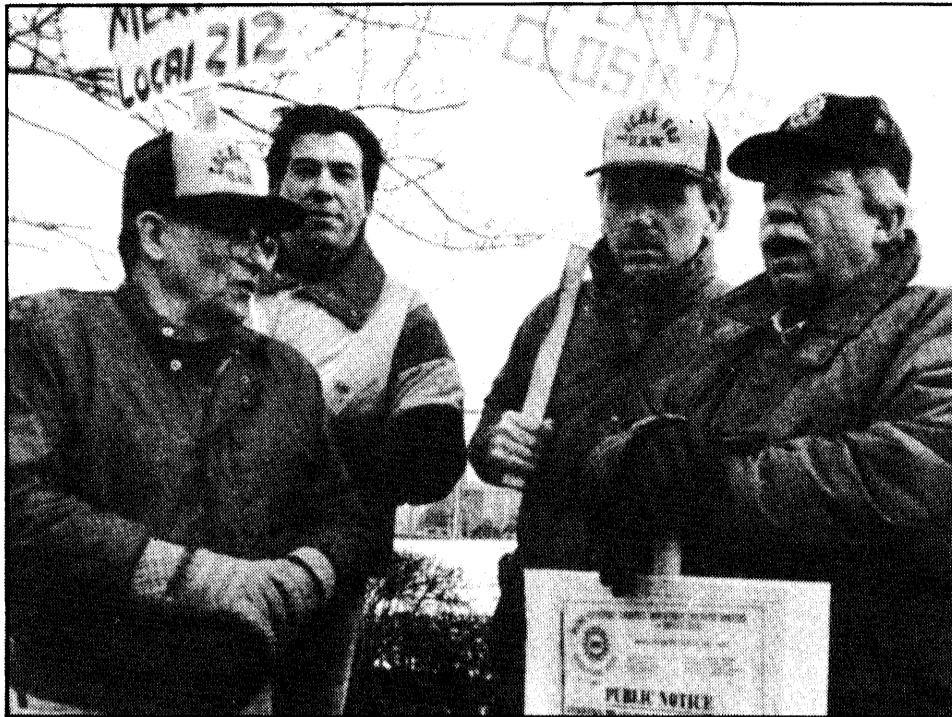
The committeeman knew the feeling of his brothers and sisters well; with only one exception, every plant in the Detroit area rejected the agreement.

Identical to Ford and GM pacts

The narrow margin of approval for the Chrysler agreement (54 percent) contrasts sharply with the large margin of approval by Ford and GM workers on an essentially identical contract in 1987.

In that vote, GM workers ratified the proposal by an 80.7-percent margin and Ford workers by a 72-percent margin. That contract settlement, however, was made before the October stock-market crash.

Moreover, Chrysler workers had the benefit of watching GM and Ford interpret the supposed job "guarantee" provisions of the 1987 contract. (GM and Ford claim that



In February, Detroit-area UAW members protested at Chrysler World Headquarters against proposed Acustar parts division sell-off.

"indefinitely idling" a plant is not the same as closing it, and therefore does not fall under the provisions of the contract.)

The new agreement expires in September 1990—the same expiration date for both the GM and Ford contracts. This puts the Chrysler workers back in sync with other autoworkers for the first time in nine years. This is a positive step because workers at the Big Three auto companies will be able to confront their bosses together in 1990.

Laced with poison

As for the rest of the agreement, most of the pluses touted by the UAW tops are laced with poison. Workers will receive a signing bonus of from \$1000 to \$1500, which is basically nothing less than an attempted bribe to get the workers to vote for the contract.

This, along with an additional 3-percent annual lump-sum payment, will not be figured into the base pay. Therefore, at the

end of the contract, workers will start out negotiating from the same base pay they have now.

Four Acustar plants will be closed. In addition, almost 6000 of the present 7000 workers in Kenosha, Wisc., will lose their jobs to add to the 8100 Chrysler workers currently on lay-off.

In addition, according to company spokespeople, Chrysler workers will have 15 cents in cost-of-living payments held back in order to bring their COLA into line with current Ford and GM workers, who make less.

The union also agreed to implement Modern Operating Agreements, so-called MOA's, which simply mean labor-management collaboration to change work rules and speed up production.

Why early negotiations?

William Mitchell, a pipefitter with 23 years at Chrysler, stated in the *Detroit*

News (May 5, 1988): "I don't know why we had to reach an agreement ahead of time. Why couldn't we have waited until September?"

Mitchell is not the only worker who asked this question during negotiations. UAW officials like Marc Stepp, who heads the union's Chrysler department, attributed the early negotiations to the fact that Chrysler workers just couldn't wait to get in on the good deal that GM and Ford workers got.

But the near rejection of the agreement belies this explanation. In fact, this is the first contract negotiated by Chrysler workers without the expressed threat of a strike.

A more plausible reason for opening negotiations early can be seen in the mutual desire of the company and the union heads to avoid a confrontation in September. They know that the threat of a strike could be especially embarrassing if it were to occur only two months before the elections.

The fact is that the leaders of the UAW play a key role in the Democratic Party. In addition, Chrysler is the only auto company with a member of the UAW on its board of directors. This directly puts the UAW tops in the service of Chrysler.

Chrysler wanted to avoid a confrontation with autoworkers not only for its own aims, but because of what an offensive by Chrysler workers, who were the first major unionized workers to give concessions in 1979, would mean to the American working class. Sections of the working class have begun to fight back against concessions in recent years.

It's time for a change

While the UAW misleaders may have done their part and prevented a showdown with autoworkers, the struggle is hardly finished. The Chrysler workers did make partial gains in some instances. Their vote tells all autoworkers that "the times they are a changin'."

And looking further ahead, autoworkers should draw some conclusions about the Democratic Party that the UAW tops will be asking them to vote for in November as a lesser evil to the Republicans.

Perhaps it's time for a change here too, time for candidates that put labor's interests above the bosses, and time for a movement in the unions to build a labor party and break with the Democratic Party. ■

... elections cont'd

(continued from page 1)

to transfer his popular support to Democrat Walter Mondale met with little success, as Mondale didn't believe it was necessary to even tip his hat to Jackson's constituency. Instead, Mondale eschewed "special interest" groups—that is, working people and the oppressed minorities. He threatened to quarantine besieged Nicaragua.

Four years later, Jackson is hopeful that his proven loyalty to his party, combined with the deeper capitalist-generated economic and social crises in the country, will convince the party's hierarchy to adopt a platform more in keeping with his own.

There is every reason to believe that such concessions will be forthcoming—witness Michael Dukakis' sudden identification with Jackson's social concerns. From the ruling-class point of view, the times require more left-sounding politicians.

"We're discussing a fair return"

Jackson has gone to great lengths to prove his loyalty to the Democratic Party, an institution he recently likened to a capitalist bank.

According to the May 17, 1988, *New York Times*, Jackson informed some 200 top-ranking New Jersey Democrats at a Newark breakfast meeting that, "I have registered more Democrats than any other Democrat alive."

On the same day, Jackson chided the party hierarchy with assertions that his efforts to mobilize the Black vote in 1984 helped to elect several Democratic senators—especially in the South.

Jackson explained what he wanted in

return. "We're not discussing generosity," he said, "we're discussing reciprocity. We're discussing a fair return on our investment."

Jackson continued, "We've got an investment in our party. We're stockholders. You can't get mad and leave the bank. You must change bank officers but not your bank. It's our bank."

In recent days, Jackson has specified what he considers a "fair return." First, he is requesting that Dukakis choose a "progressive" Democrat as his vice-presidential running mate. This is designed to look good in the headlines. Nevertheless, the vice-presidential candidate will most likely come from the party's "center" or right wing, in order to "balance" the ticket.

Jackson also states that he expects to play a powerful role in the writing of the Democratic Party platform. However, only the most naïve in politics—and this does not include Jackson—believe that the adopted platform of the capitalist parties is more than a scrap of paper, forgotten by all the moment the conventions adjourn.

Every Democratic Party platform for the past 40 years and longer has pledged peace while the party waged war across the globe. Every platform has professed fidelity in words to the labor and civil-rights movements—only to advance the interests of the rich in deeds.

Jackson and his campaign managers have something else in mind. They intend to broker the votes of the oppressed for a handful of behind-the-scenes deals which place their favored political friends in positions of power to advance not the majority concerns which Jackson demago-



Socialist Workers Party candidates Mac Warren and Kathleen Mickells

gically expresses, but the narrow interests of the capitalist class.

Need for a labor party

Working people have nothing to gain by supporting the Jackson campaign today or Jackson's man, Dukakis, tomorrow. Their fundamental problems will best be addressed by the formation of a new political party based on a revitalized trade-union movement, a labor party accountable to the rank and file.

The need for a labor party to complement workers' economic struggles in the political arena is understood today by an important but very small minority of the working class.

Such a party is not on the immediate political horizon. But as the attacks on workers deepen, a new generation of militants will develop who will challenge the status quo at the plant gates and in the political arena.

In the meantime, an important statement in support of independent working-class political action can be registered by a vote for the Socialist Workers Party's candidates for president and vice president, James Warren and Kathleen Mickells.

Despite its abandonment of key aspects of its historic revolutionary program, the SWP retains its commitment to building a working-class alternative to the two capitalist parties in this country. ■

By NATALIE TEATINI and
ALEXEI FOLGER

7000 march to support Jay paperworkers strike

JAY, MAINE—On April 30 close to 7000 people from all over New England gathered in this small but now widely-known town to participate in a march and rally in support of the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) Local 14, whose members have been on strike against the gigantic International Paper Company for over 10 months.

The march to the gates of I.P.'s Jay papermill was the largest labor demonstration in Maine's history. UPIU's strike against I.P. is also the longest-running strike in Maine since World War II.

The marchers returned from the plant gate and assembled in the high-school gymnasium for a raucous indoor rally. The strikers heard messages of support from a number of labor officials, including the state AFL-CIO presidents from Maine and New Hampshire, and Frank Myers, AFL-CIO regional president for the New England area.

Local support for the Jay strikers was evident from the numerous local elected officials who addressed the rally. Especially encouraging were messages of solidarity given by unionists from places across the country far from Jay. A letter from Wisconsin AFL-CIO President Jack B. Real praised the Jay strikers as being "in the vanguard of the struggle of all workers."

John Skerts of Ironworkers Local 2055 in Wyoming addressed the crowd and was interrupted by one of the frequent outbursts of feet-stomping applause when he told the story of his union's strike. Local 2055 members walked off their jobs over a year and a half ago, on Oct. 5, 1986, and have been fighting for a decent contract ever since.

Skerts said that when his union heard about the Jay solidarity rally, they decided to come and give their support in person. It was important enough to them, he said, that they somehow managed to scrape together the money for two plane tickets.

Also present were UPIU members on strike against I.P. plants in Mobile, Ala., and Lock Haven, Penn. James Neal of Mobile summed up what seems to be the sentiment of UPIU members everywhere when he said, "It's going to be all of us or none of us. That's the way it's going to be."

Rally speakers had to wait their turn while a band of Local 14 musicians led the audience in singing popular labor songs ("Solidarity Forever") and tunes specially



Alexei Folger/Socialist Action

tailored to this strike ("I.P.'s Got a Union Tiger by the Tail"). The crowd, too, periodically took matters into their own hands and led those at the podium in thunderous rounds of "Scabs out, Union in!"

"It's all one way"

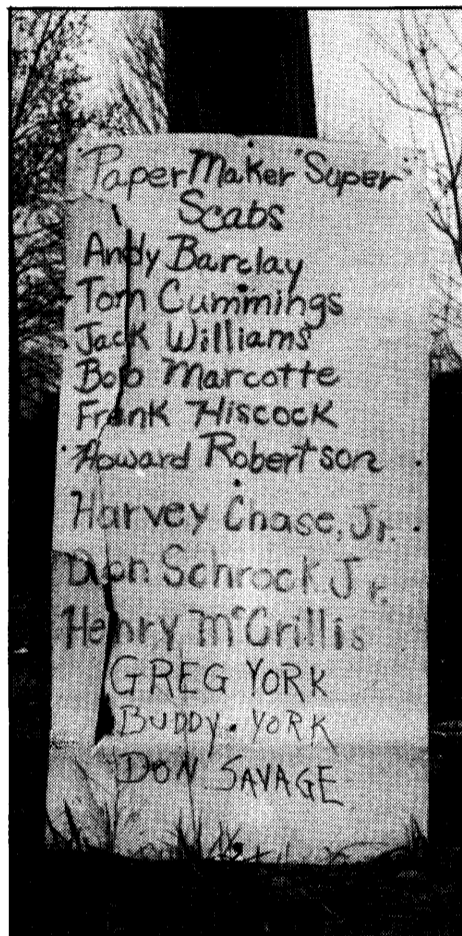
UPIU Local 14 President Bill Meserve had harsh words to describe the conduct of I.P. in recent negotiations. "The bargaining process has become a laughing stock," he said, "it's all one way—their way!"

Company management had made the resumption of negotiations contingent upon the union putting its Corporate Campaign on hold for the duration of the talks. During this time money offers were made to the workers.

Gary McGrane, a spokesperson for Local 14, said, "I.P. tried to buy me out by offering me \$5000 for 10 years' service." One worker commented to *Socialist Action* that this was merely "propaganda to get people to cross the picket line."

In what it considered a gesture of good faith, the union had agreed to go along with the company's demand, only to be offered a ludicrous contract proposal.

The rally followed hard upon the heels of the rejection of the proposal. The negotiations fell apart once the new contract's damaging terms became known



Alexei Folger/Socialist Action

service to a mass-action strategy.

For example, Rogers told the Jay rally: "There has to be some thought of massive non-violent civil disobedience. If the rank and file decide to close the plant down—do whatever it takes—I will be first in line. Corporate Campaign will be behind it all the way."

The Corporate Campaign Caravan is being supported by Jay high-school students whose parents are on strike. Seventy-five students wore strike T-shirts to school one day because, as one of them staffing a Caravan table at the rally put it: "We wanted to let them know that we are a majority."

All students were sent home because they were forbidden to "bring the dispute into the school." However, the student reported that the children of scabs had been wearing I.P. shirts to school without any intervention by school administrators. The students working with the Caravan have launched a campaign to take their message to other high-school students in Maine and the New England area.

Fight with policy-makers

Those who came here to show their support for the Jay paperworkers are well aware that this fight is only one of the many struggles facing working people today. They also know that their battle is not only with individual companies, but with the corporate power-brokers as a whole and the government, which acts in their interests.

Kelly Austin, a union activist at the Bath Iron Works, gave a broad assessment of the situation facing unionists, saying: "There is a trend of union-busting right across this country."

Gary McGrane summed up the position of his fellow strikers when he told *Socialist Action*: "Our fight is with the national policy-makers in this country." ■

'You've got to get the scabs out!'



Alexei Folger/Socialist Action

Roger Sheppard of I.B.E.W. Local 103 in Boston took the podium at the April 30 rally to tell the Jay strikers about site collections members of Boston building trades unions had undertaken on their behalf.

Sheppard received a standing ovation when he told the audience that one collection on one day had netted \$1500 to support the strikers and their families. "I have it right here in my pocket," he said.

Sheppard went on to suggest that Local 14 call for a day of solidarity throughout the New England area: "Why not have a day for Jay in May. If just the building trades in Boston

took collections on that day, we could raise thousands of dollars. Think of what could be raised if all the unions throughout Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire participated."

Commenting on the state of the strike, Sheppard continued: "The theme here has been "Scabs out, Union in." But there's a problem—the scabs are in and the union is out."

Sheppard received a second standing ovation in the space of five minutes when he said: "To win you've got to get the scabs out, and you won't be alone. If you need our help, Boston labor will be there. We'll stand shoulder to shoulder with you to win this fight!"

to union members.

Gary McGrane described the company's proposal. "We felt it was a regression in regards to the previous proposal," he said. "The previous proposal eliminated 500 jobs, and this latest proposal would only allow 60 striking members back to work." The proposal would also have put 60 currently striking members on a preferred hiring list each year.

The strike was originally called to protest a contract which eliminated 500 jobs, reduced pay levels by 13 percent, eliminated premium pay for holidays and Sundays, and did away with the Christmas shut-down. Upper management had also managed to include a 38-percent pay raise for themselves in the same contract proposal!

Rogers' Corporate Campaign

Ray Rogers, of Corporate Campaign, Inc., updated the audience on some of the recent activities of the campaign and mentioned some of the companies which are being targeted because they have interlocking board memberships with I.P. These include Casco Northern, Anheuser-Busch, Coca-Cola, Bank of Boston, and Avon.

Rogers announced that because of a recent Supreme Court action striking down some anti-union laws, it is now possible to ask people directly to boycott companies such as these. He pledged that a formal boycott notice would be forthcoming.

At a solidarity rally held in Boston last February, Rogers had promoted the public-relations tactics of the Corporate Campaign and even went so far as to say, "You don't win strikes on the picket line."

It now seems that the pressure of events, the longevity of the strike, and the militancy of the union membership have pushed Rogers to at least give some lip



Alexei Folger/Socialist Action



Brenda Bishop/Socialist Action

N.Y. pro-choice activists defy right-wing offensive

By BRENDA BISHOP and BELLE KENNEDY

"Abortion is the front line and bottom line of women's civil and constitutional rights. Abortion is the front line and bottom line of the women's movement. We have drawn that line. We will hold and defend it."

With these words, pro-choice activist Merle Hoffman kicked off Reproductive Freedom Week in New York City. The week was called to defend area abortion clinics against a nationally organized offensive dubbed "Operation Rescue."

Operation Rescue represents a new turn in the right's continuing holy war against legalized abortion. Anti-abortionists are now emboldened by the possibility that a new majority on the Supreme Court could

reverse *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 court decision that legalized abortion.

Seeking to develop a new "peaceful" image, the right wing of the anti-abortion movement called upon thousands of its followers to come to New York to shut down abortion clinics through "prayerful" blockades. Their stated goal was to spark a "massive uprising that [would] dominate the '88 political arena" and that would "make child-killing illegal again."

The New York pro-choice community did not wait for the arrival of the "Rescuers" to fight back. The three-year-old Pro-Choice Coalition called for a march and rally on April 29. The turnout, estimated by organizers at between 1500 and 2000, was the largest New York pro-choice demonstration in a decade.

Unfortunately, several groups—NOW,

NARAL, and Planned Parenthood ("Project Defend")—focused not on mobilizing against the anti-abortionists but on escorting women into the clinics, relying on police assurances that they would be kept open.

Cops "lend a hand"

Unsurprisingly, the N.Y.P.D. turned out to be the best friend Operation Rescue had. Police inaction and cooperation enabled the anti-abortionists to shut down targeted abortion facilities on Monday and Tuesday, May 2 and 3, and to halt most morning business at their targets on Thursday and Friday, May 5 and 6.

On Monday, nearly 600 anti-abortionists blocked the entrance to a doctor's office. The cops initially did nothing, then began to remove protesters one by one on

stretchers, taking over four hours. Meanwhile, pro-choice counter-demonstrators were divided into small groups and kept behind barricades.

Although a court injunction forbidding a blockade was in effect on Day Two, the bias on the part of the police became even more pronounced. The handful of pro-choice activists, who reached the clinic doors before the "Rescuers," were forcibly removed by cops.

On the final two days, "Rescuers" continued their blockade despite a strengthened court order imposing fines that could exceed hundreds of thousands of dollars per day. The weekly total of arrests was 1646.

A fanatical minority

Supporters of reproductive rights must expose as a fraud the "peaceful" image claimed by the anti-abortionists. These are the same forces who have been bombing clinics and harassing pregnant women. They only looked peaceful here because they were backed up by a sympathetic police force—the same cops that have been brutalizing the poor and non-white peoples of New York in record numbers.

We supporters of abortion rights, who represent a clear majority in the United States, must not allow ourselves to be outmaneuvered or out-organized by a fanatical anti-abortion minority. The New York experience has shown that the pro-choice movement cannot rely on the police or the legal system to defend abortion rights.

Only a powerful united front—representing all pro-choice forces—can effectively mobilize the thousands necessary to defend abortion rights *before* any future "rescue missions" are even attempted.

Such a movement can work to extend the constitutional right to abortion—pushing further to secure the right to free, safe abortions on demand; adequate state-provided medical care for all; and an end to forced sterilizations.

When Operation Rescue descends upon Philadelphia on July 4 and upon Chicago later this summer, the pro-choice movement must be there to defeat them. ■

By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

From throughout the Midwest and East Coast, chartered buses brought thousands of trade union members and their families to Washington, D.C., for the May 14 American Family Celebration sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Over 150 buses came from New York City alone.

Large helium-filled balloons announced the location of contingents from the Communication Workers of America, International Ladies Garment Workers Union, International Union of Electrical Workers, Office and Professional Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and United Steelworkers of America.

Other sizable contingents came from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Hospital Workers Local 1199; International Association of Machinists; Service Employees International Union; and United Auto Workers.

The rally received considerable publicity in national and local labor publications. The presidents of some 20 international unions attended, and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland was one of the featured speakers. Most participants came on union-sponsored transportation. However, despite this official backing, only minimal effort was put into organizing attendance.

When CLUW first announced plans for this rally, it was billed as an event on the order of Solidarity Day in 1981, which was attended by hundreds of thousands of union members. In the days immediately preceding the event, CLUW spokespersons predicted crowds of 70,000 to 80,000. Yet, actual attendance was much smaller; the crowd was estimated at 20,000 or less.

Speaking for "the family"

Publicity for the rally stated that its purpose was to demand "government action *now* to establish a national family policy," including, "family and medical leave, qua-

CLUW, unions demand 'national family policy'

lity childcare, services for the elderly, comprehensive healthcare, economic justice, and equity in education."

CLUW's aim was to show that so-called pro-family politicians and preachers who oppose such social services do not speak for the American family.

When asked why they had come, however, few participants cited their support for these official demands of the rally. Instead, they expressed the sentiment that it seemed the place trade-union members should be.

On Solidarity Day in 1981, marchers voiced their heated objections to Reagan's attack on the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). At this rally, there was no similar show of support for current victims of the bosses' anti-labor drive.

National Organization for Women President Molly Yard, who pledged her organization's support to the Eastern Airlines flight attendants, was the only speaker who even mentioned any current labor struggle.

Democratic Party electioneering

Although CLUW's founding charter prohibits it from supporting any political party, a major theme of most rally speeches was electing Democrats in November.

Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, best articulated this sentiment when he said, "Roosevelt tried to 'do something. Other presidents tried. This administration hasn't even tried. But you people care, and come November, we're going to make changes. In Washington, we'll have an administration which cares about the poor and homeless."

The speeches were all carefully designed so as not to offend the sensibilities of even the most conservative labor bureaucrat. Thus, while numerous speakers explained

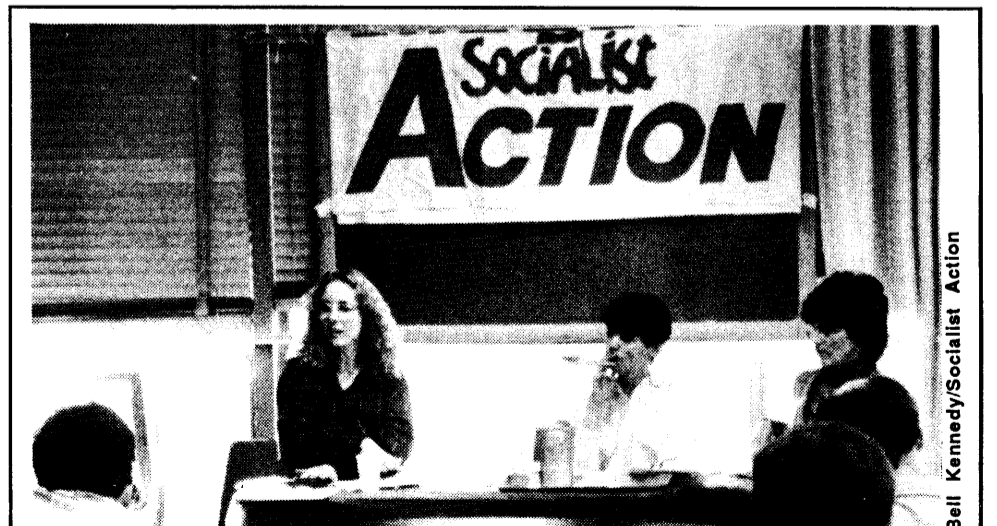
that a decent job with a good wage is needed by everyone, and while many called for an increase in the minimum wage, no speaker mentioned wage cuts and benefit concessions as detrimental to the standard of living of the American family.

Speakers called for passage of the Act for Better Childcare, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Kennedy-Waxman Health Benefits Bill. Yet, despite CLUW's long-standing stated support for reproductive rights, there was no mention of federal cutbacks in abortion funding or right-wing assaults on clinics.

Similarly, although speakers promoted the right of all Americans to decent housing and quality education, no mention was made of increased racist violence.

The numerous Jesse Jackson buttons in the crowd showed the illusions most trade unionists still have that the attacks on their living standards can be ended by electing the right capitalist politician.

All in all, the speakers carefully skirted many of the real problems facing American workers and their families, doing their best to reinforce hopes in the Democratic Party. Nevertheless, the organized labor contingents that did take part show the potential that exists for workers to use their real power and to organize in their own interests as the economic crisis deepens—inevitably shattering the pro-Democratic Party illusions. ■



Bell Kennedy/Socialist Action

On May 13, Students for Socialist Action of New York University hosted a forum on "Women at Work: Today's Struggle for Liberation." Sharing their perspectives at the event were union activists Sandra Rosen and Margaret Kelly—members of Socialist Action. Rosen participated in the Yale clerical-workers strike and in the recent Harvard clerical workers' successful organizing drive.

They spoke of the difficult, yet critically important struggle to organize the 86 percent of women workers who are non-unionized, and of the union's role in fighting for affirmative action, comparable worth, and affordable daycare.

L.A. health activist explains AIDS impact on minorities

Socialist Action member Brad Judd interviewed Dr. Germain V. Maisonet-Rodriguez, who has been in the gay movement for more than 20 years. A student at Columbia in 1967 and 1968 around the Gay Liberation Front, Dr. Maisonet-Rodriguez went on to serve as vice president of the Gay Medical Students Alliance. More recently, he was the medical director of the Los Angeles Minority Aids Project.

Socialist Action: Do you think that AIDS agencies have been able to adequately address the epidemic?

Dr. Maisonet-Rodriguez: At this point, Los Angeles still has a very poorly coordinated AIDS prevention effort. There are private agencies, non-profit ones, county agencies, and numerous others, and I'm concerned at the lack of coordination.

S.A.: What are some of the reasons for this situation?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: I think there is a lack of direction from the national government—and it filters down. There are some very concerned and dedicated people who really want to see something done. But their hands are tied.

The spread of AIDS is the result of many problems we had before, predominantly IV drug use and sexually transmitted diseases. We've not done anything to alter these two epidemics significantly.

Los Angeles has seen over the last three years an increase in the rate of venereal-disease transmission and incidence.

S.A.: Is it possible for the healthcare industry to move to a preventive approach from an interventionary one that only reacts to crises?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: I see certain segments of the industry which may take this on, but overall—no. There is too much money being made from intervention.

S.A.: What do you think of the boycott of Burroughs-Wellcome, the corporation which is profiting from AZT, one of the drugs useful to people with AIDS?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: The boycott strategy is not as well developed by the AIDS activists as it might be. The message that seems to come out to the larger population is, "What's important to me, outweighs what's important to you." So far, we haven't seen the significant coalitions made.

It's not just Burroughs-Wellcome. It's all pharmaceuticals and the fact that medications shouldn't be so expensive in this country.

The other epidemic in this country is the epidemic of cancer. We lose 1000 Americans a day. The AIDS movement should say that AIDS is the result of an overall healthcare problem. It is not the most important problem which must be addressed before all other problems can be addressed.

By reaching out to the majority who don't have adequate care, the AIDS movement can better apply their energies.

S.A.: How can AIDS activists link up with other forces?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: The AIDS movement must get a better sense of overall healthcare for minority groups. Gays are going to see the rate of AIDS drop significantly in the next 10 to 15 years. However, IV

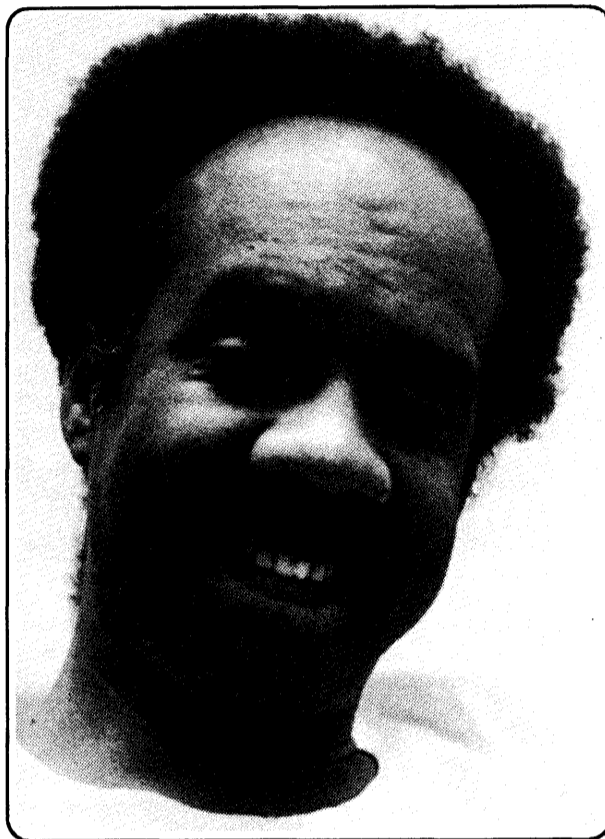
drug use will continue as a major portal of entry for AIDS for the minority community and will continue as long as there are junkies in the poor communities.

S.A.: What about undocumented workers?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: People who are undocumented are getting a disproportionate chunk of the poor healthcare. It's a matter of "blame the victim." People who are undocumented are usually infected here, not in the country of their origin. It's a political issue because they are denied amnesty because of their HIV positivity.

S.A.: Native American health activists have painted a bleak picture of the Bureau of Indian Health's AIDS awareness.

Maisonet-Rodriguez: They say they're concerned, but there is no implementation of activities which



Dr. Germain V. Maisonet-Rodriguez

support that claim. There was someone, Dr. Muneta, an activist who was pointing out the issues. But he was fired.

S.A.: Will there be an explosion of AIDS in the Native American community which we haven't seen yet?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: The explosion is already taking place, and the question is how long the native people will be able to survive? Their numbers are decreasing. Diabetes, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases are already taking a devastating toll.

The reservations have a rate of alcoholism of 80 percent. They have a rate of VD which is 30 times higher than that of any other ethnic group in this country.

S.A.: What else can be done in the gay community?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: One thing that bothers me is that a great deal of the power in the gay community lies in the bars.

Yet many of the workers in the bars are not unionized. Here's a way of getting the unions involved. Get these workers unionized so they can get healthcare benefits, because they are also at risk of getting infected.

Also, they are involved as AIDS educators on the front lines. So why don't we pay these people an adequate wage, stop paying them under the table, and give them benefits?

But we have not thought a lot about that, because too many gay activists know a lot of the money [for AIDS funding] comes from the people who own the bars and bathhouses.

S.A.: What message do you have for AIDS activists?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: Before pointing to any one else and saying that Blacks are homophobic and Latinos are machos, I think the gay community had better get its own house in order, because it can't transmit something it hasn't got. The best sermon is a good role model. Many of the unions have gay healthcare caucuses, and this is a place to start.

We're going to have to develop a new group of gay leaders. Martin Luther King wasn't always accepted by the established civil-rights leadership.

S.A.: When King addressed wider issues like the Viet Nam War and economic justice...

Maisonet-Rodriguez: Many of the Black leaders were the first to say to King, "Why don't you stay in your place, why do you have to talk against the war?" He responded very eloquently, "I have fought too long to end segregation in public accommodations to start segregating my moral beliefs."

I think that a lot of us as leaders or activists in whatever community—whether black, brown, or yellow—have to stop segregating our political beliefs according to gender, sexual proclivity, and class.

We have to deal with class, because certainly in the gay community, the men who are still being infected with AIDS are the poorest.

S.A.: Under Reagan, can healthcare advance?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: I don't want to focus my attention that much on Reagan. ... I don't see that much difference between the Democrats and the Republicans.

S.A.: At the May 7 March on Sacramento, John Dukakis, son of the Democratic frontrunner, was repeatedly booed because of the poor Dukakis record...

Maisonet-Rodriguez: Only \$4 million for AIDS in the entire state of Massachusetts was too well known!

S.A.: If Jesse Jackson were somehow elected, could he carry out the necessary health measures?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: No, because he would have to bow to the incredible power of industry and the military-industrial complex.

S.A.: Can the AIDS issue provide a catalyst for developing a national healthcare policy for the first time toward any disease, or the development of a full national healthcare service?

Maisonet-Rodriguez: We could have said the same about drugs or venereal diseases—and we didn't. Basically, the thinking in this country really hasn't changed.

The first Secretary of Health at the end of the New Deal in the 1940s said he was out to establish a national health service, so the idea is not new.

We will not be able to do anything about health in this country until we recognize what our priorities are and start putting more money into health rather than into instruments of warfare.

L.A. coalition demands AIDS unit at hospital

By KATHLEEN O'NAN

LOS ANGELES—As part of a week of activities aimed at increasing public awareness of AIDS and at demanding a governmental response to the AIDS crisis, a picket-line demonstration and overnight vigil were held at County General Hospital on April 30.

About 75 picketers, organized by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power/Los Angeles (ACT UP/LA), protested the hospital's refusal to install an AIDS ward. Los Angeles General Hospital is one of the few major metropolitan public hospitals which does not provide either an AIDS unit or specialized care in other forms.

A second focus of the demonstration called for an end to the practice of allowing anti-gay religious ministers to have free rein in visiting AIDS patients. These ministers have become notorious for imposing themselves

upon patients against their will. They often attempt to "save" the patients by urging them to "repent for the evils of being homosexual."

After picketing the hospital's main gate, the demonstrators entered the hospital and set up a symbolic "James Baldwin Memorial AIDS unit." Police were called, and they ordered the peaceful vigil to disperse.

Mark Kostopoulos, David Niblett, and John Fall refused to do so and were arrested for "lodging without permission." They are scheduled to appear in court on June 1. For information on their support and other activities, call ACT UP/LA, (213) 668-2357.

The annual Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade and Festival will be held June 25 and June 26. It will include a focus on AIDS research and funding, and AIDS information and health booths. For details, call Christopher Street West at (213) 656-6553.



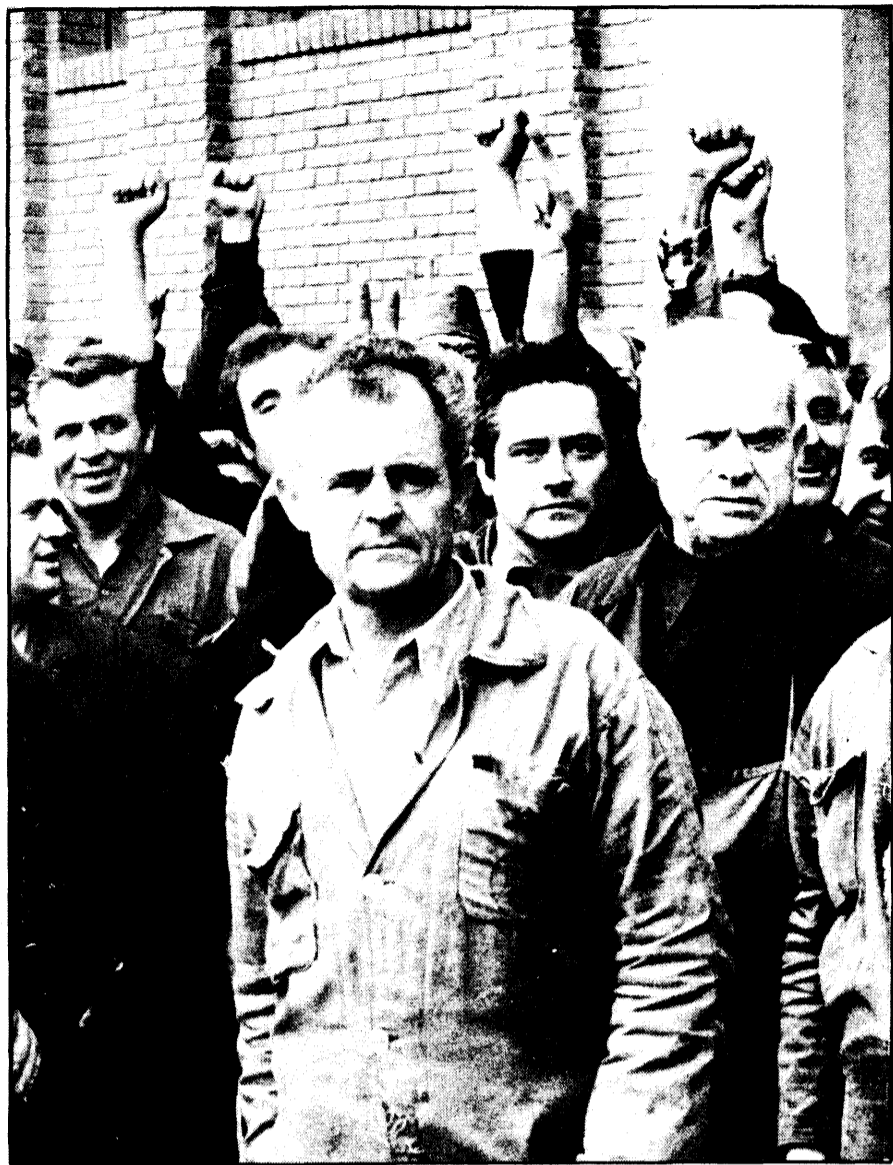
AIDS protest in Sacramento

Over 10,000 gays, lesbians, persons with AIDS, and their supporters marched through rainy streets to the State Capitol Building in Sacramento, Calif., on Sunday, May 1.

Called "one of the largest demonstrations in Sacramento history," the spirited march and rally protested state government inaction on AIDS funding and the scores of unconstructive AIDS measures before the State Legislature.

Other demands included: an end to violence against gays and lesbians; for a war against AIDS; and for statewide non-discrimination legislation for gays, lesbians, persons with AIDS or AIDS-related conditions (ARC), those with HIV-positive status, and those perceived to be at risk.

Polish workers st repulse austerity



Poland: Over 30 years of struggle

Polish workers have fought against the Stalinist bureaucratic machine for over three decades:

1956—Workers at engineering plant in Poznan strike over wages, food prices, and working conditions. As many as 70 killed; hundreds injured. Wladyslaw Gomulka, released from detention in the Soviet Union two years earlier, installed as premier. Promises political freedom and economic reform.

1968—Students like Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski demonstrate for political and cultural freedom after government bans student play.

1970—Forty-two percent of working-class families receive less than adequate diet. More price increases. Demonstrations in Gdansk and other coastal cities lead to Gomulka's fall. Replaced by Edward Gierek, who defuses protests by making incredible promises. ("Every Pole will have a new home by 1985!") This begins Poland's catastrophic dependence on loans from 17 capitalist governments and 501 banks.

1976—Doubling of prices leads to strike wave. Government forced to retreat. But Lech Walesa and other strike leaders fired from their jobs.

1980—Price increases set off strikes. Formation of independent union, Solidarity. Gierek ousted as Premier. Replaced by Stefan Kania, who is replaced one year later by General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

1981—Martial law imposed on Dec. 13. Solidarity banned a few months later.

1985—Government announces price increases for many basic goods. Operating underground, Solidarity calls for general strike but withdraws call when government modifies increases.

1988—Price increases from 40% to 200% lead to series of strikes and factory occupations. Some wage increases. Stalemate on political demand to legalize Solidarity.—C.F.

By CARL FINAMORE

A series of price increases in February and April ranging from 40 percent to 200 percent triggered the largest strikes in Poland since the imposition of martial law in December 1981.

Thousands of young workers participated in strikes at Nowa Huta steel mill, Gdansk shipyards, Stalowa Wola steel mill, Bydgoszcz transport operations, and elsewhere.

The government acted quickly to contain the protests. It settled the economic demands of the initial strikes in Bydgoszcz and Stalowa Wola by granting wage increases of 63

percent and 50 percent respectively.

But the concessions revealed the vulnerability of the regime. The victories inspired the Nowa Huta and Gdansk strikers to add political demands to their economic grievances. The Gdansk workers, for example, demanded legalization of Solidarity inside the shipyard and nationally.

This raised the stakes considerably.

Once the character of the strikes began to expand, the authorities acted swiftly and decisively to disperse the occupation at Nowa Huta. Percussion grenades were reported to have been used—with at least 42 people requiring hospital treatment.

The Gdansk shipyard workers soon ended their occupation after it became clear that national support actions would not occur. It was a stand-off. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity and strike leader, accurately declared it a "truce, not a defeat."

Living conditions getting worse

In the last seven years, martial law has been lifted, a large number of political prisoners released, and an amnesty for former underground Solidarity activists declared. But no real changes in bureaucratic rule by the Polish Communist Party have occurred.

Living standards in Poland have steadily and sharply deteriorated. In 1982, 30 percent of the population lived below the poverty line. The price of flour, cheese, and rice rose from 30 percent to 40 percent in 1985. Later, fuel and energy prices were boosted an average 22 percent to 30 percent.

Today is not any better. The average waiting time for a new apartment is now 25 years. The workweek has been stretched to 46 hours. Long lines and a scarcity of basic food items are an everyday fact of life.

These conditions have spurred a new generation of workers into action. The latest

Armenian upsurge in Soviet Union: National minorities are seeking autonomy & justice

By HAYDEN PERRY

Glasnost and *perestroika* are suffering severe strains as the minority peoples of the Soviet Union demand the national rights promised them by the Bolshevik Revolution. Ukrainians, Latvians, Crimean Tartars, and Armenians are among those knocking on the Kremlin door demanding the right to truly autonomous homelands within the framework of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Generations of Tsarist and foreign oppression, followed by decades of Stalinist betrayals, have generated burning resentment among the scores of national minorities making up the Soviet Union.

The wave of anti-colonial struggles from Eritrea to New Caledonia have kindled national aspirations among all subject peoples. Now talk of "openness" and "restructuring" have emboldened the Soviet minorities to speak up and make demands.

Last February, and again in May, up to 100,000 Armenians marched daily for over a week in the streets of Yerevan, the capital of the Armenian Republic.

They are demanding that the Republic's boundary lines be redrawn to include the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This is a political subdivision of the neighboring Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. The district is populated by 126,000 Armenians,

most of whom are Christians, and 37,000 Shiite Moslems.

A tortured history

The intensity of feeling the Armenians are displaying over a seemingly small boundary adjustment is explained by the tortured history of the Armenian people.

The Armenians form one of the oldest ethnic groups in Europe and Asia Minor, with a 2000-year-old language and culture. The Armenians were a nation when Alexander the Great was marching to India. They occupied an area that now includes parts of the Soviet Union and Turkey.

In the vicissitudes of medieval and modern history, Armenians were conquered by various invaders. In the 19th century, they became subjects of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

As Christian people subject to Moslem rule, the Armenians were never assimilated, and the "Armenian question" was long the subject of desultory debate by the Great Powers. In 1915, the Turks determined to "solve" the Armenian question by the first major act of genocide in modern times.

Up to 1.5 million Armenians were murdered, either by outright slaughter, or by being driven into the deserts to starve. This holocaust has never been admitted by the Turkish government, but it has been central to the consciousness of the surviving Armenians for over 70 years.

About a million survivors regrouped around the ancient Armenian capital of Yerevan, located in area alternately under Tsarist Russian and Turkish rule. During the years of civil war, the Armenians maintained a precarious existence as an independent nation—constantly threatened by invasion by the dreaded Turks.

Revolution guarantees national rights

With the triumph of the Russian Revolution, the Armenians chose, in November 1920, to become one of the 15 autonomous Soviet Republics within the USSR. Prospects for the Armenians—and the other national minorities in the Soviet State—looked good in 1920.

Lenin had said, "The dictatorship of the proletariat has opened up for the first time the possibility of a correct solution to the national question." The Soviets proclaimed the right of every nationality to the use of its own language, the preservation of its culture, the maximum local autonomy, and the right to secede from the union.

Statutes on paper, however, could not alone overcome generations of domination by the European Russians—the so-called Great Russians, who constitute 51 percent of the population of the USSR. Lenin demanded the utmost vigilance by the Bolshevik cadres to repress every manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism.

These principles did not long survive the



degeneration of the revolution under Stalin. Great Russian boots stamped out every independent thought in the national republics. While some minorities retained their language and culture, others were branded traitors by collective guilt.

The Crimean Tartars were accused of collaborating with the Nazis and banished thousands of miles to Siberia. The Baltic states were incorporated into the USSR as subject peoples, occupied by the Red Army.

Under Stalin, race and national prejudices survived. Old antagonisms festered and grew.

Polish workers strike to repulse austerity plans

Poland: Over 30 years of struggle

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1981—Martial law imposed on Dec. 13. Solidarity banned a few months later.

1985—Government announces price increases for many basic goods. Operating underground, Solidarity calls for general strike but withdraws call when government modifies increases.

1988—Price increases from 40% to 200% lead to series of strikes and factory occupations. Some wage increases. Stalemate on political demand to legalize Solidarity.—C.F.

The Gdansk shipyard workers soon ended their occupation after it became clear that national support actions would not occur. It was a stand-off. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity and strike leader, accurately declared it a "truce, not a defeat."

Living conditions getting worse

In the last seven years, martial law has been lifted, a large number of political prisoners released, and an amnesty for former underground Solidarity activists declared. But no real changes in bureaucratic rule by the Polish Communist Party have occurred.

Living standards in Poland have steadily and sharply deteriorated. In 1982, 30 percent of the population lived below the poverty line. The price of flour, cheese, and rice rose from 30 percent to 40 percent in 1985. Later, fuel and energy prices were boosted an average 22 percent to 30 percent.

Today is not any better. The average waiting time for a new apartment is now 25 years. The workweek has been stretched to 46 hours. Long lines and a scarcity of basic food items are an everyday fact of life.

These conditions have spurred a new generation of workers into action. The latest

strike wave spelled an end to the regime's hopes of destroying the legacy of Solidarity.

Reforms disorient Solidarity leadership

Nonetheless, the workers were not sufficiently prepared to respond to the price increases. Solidarity itself was caught off guard.

Although Solidarity union leaders fully supported the strikes, Walesa admitted that they had done nothing to organize the spontaneous outbursts and, in fact, considered them to be premature.

The Solidarity leadership failed to politically prepare the workers to confront the economic-reform measures of the regime. In fact, on the economic level, the current program of Solidarity's leadership is quite close to the regime's "market oriented" reforms.

The National Executive Commission (KKW) of Solidarity has stated that it wants the "economy to be based on the sound foundations of the market, for an individual's success to depend on their work and their abilities." (*Bulletin d'Information Solidarnosc* No. 178, 1987.)

This is quite different from 1981, when the First National Congress of Solidarity called for workers' self-management and democratic control over the planned economy.

The latest policy statement of Solidarity's leadership, in contrast, jibes with Premier Wojciech Jaruzelski's economic plans to experiment with market reforms borrowed from capitalism.

Austerity pays the banks

Understandably, these reforms were drafted at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, representatives of the world's largest capitalist banks. Poland now owes \$37 billion in foreign debt—the largest of Eastern Europe and substantially higher than the \$23 billion owed in 1980.

Quite symbolically, Jaruzelski's 1985 price increases coincided with Poland's request for membership in the IMF. It was a signal to the rich capitalist bankers that the Stalinist bureaucrats were ready to drive forward with austerity.

By raising prices and cutting back the availability of basic consumer items, Jaruzelski is implementing austerity measures common to any capitalist country. They are designed to earn export dollars needed to pay the banks.

This is accomplished by cutting domestic consumption, by decreasing imports, and by slashing wages and social services—in short, by attacking the living standards of the workers.

This prescription is just what the doctors (or bankers) ordered for Poland. Eugenio Lari, director of the World Bank, said: "Poles should support the program of reforms presented by the government. This is a historic opportunity for the Polish people."

And a U.S. State Department official chimed in by describing these attacks on the working class "as being a basically sensible program."

The "market economy"

The Polish Communist Party's embrace of a "radical market reform of the economy" fits in with IMF demands to jettison traditional social benefits guaranteed workers in non-capitalist countries. Introducing aspects of the market economy is an attempt to apply some of the mechanisms of capitalism—the model of a market economy.

But capitalism operates in a fundamentally different way than the economic system in Poland. Working people in a capitalist country do not have any social guarantees to a job, education, healthcare, or housing—unless they can pay for them.

Workers under capitalism are also held responsible for downturns in the economy. If profits are low, the workers may lose their jobs or have their wages lowered. If productivity is down, workers lose their bonuses. Under capitalism, the workers are forced to pay the bill.

How can "productivity" be raised?

It is quite different in non-capitalist countries. Revolutions in Eastern Europe overturned capitalism after World War II. Historic economic advances were achieved for working people, despite the imposition of Stalinist dictatorial political rule.

Essential social necessities such as healthcare, education, and pensions are guaranteed to everyone, regardless of ability to pay. Everyone has a right to a job.

The danger of introducing capitalist market mechanisms in Poland is that the capitalist method of making workers bear the costs of economic slumps also will be introduced.

And that's exactly what is happening—all

Union: Activities are ... & justice

About a million survivors regrouped around the ancient Armenian capital of Yerevan, located in area alternately under Tsarist Russian and Turkish rule. During the years of civil war, the Armenians maintained a precarious existence as an independent nation—constantly threatened by invasion by the dreaded Turks.

Revolution guarantees national rights

With the triumph of the Russian Revolution, the Armenians chose, in November 1920, to become one of the 15 autonomous Soviet Republics within the USSR. Prospects for the Armenians—and the other national minorities in the Soviet State—looked good in 1920.

Lenin had said, "The dictatorship of the proletariat has opened up for the first time the possibility of a correct solution to the national question." The Soviets proclaimed the right of every nationality to the use of its own language, the preservation of its culture, the maximum local autonomy, and the right to secede from the union.

Statutes on paper, however, could not alone overcome generations of domination by the European Russians—the so-called Great Russians, who constitute 51 percent of the population of the USSR. Lenin demanded the utmost vigilance by the Bolshevik cadres to repress every manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism.

These principles did not long survive the



degeneration of the revolution under Stalin. Great Russian boots stamped out every independent thought in the national republics. While some minorities retained their language and culture, others were branded traitors by collective guilt.

The Crimean Tartars were accused of collaborating with the Nazis and banished thousands of miles to Siberia. The Baltic states were incorporated into the USSR as subject peoples, occupied by the Red Army.

Under Stalin, race and national prejudices survived. Old antagonisms festered and grew.

The Moslems dominating the administration of Azerbaijan did not permit the Armenians living there to open churches or Armenian language schools. The Armenians of Nargono-Karabakh are reminded of the oppression of the Turks. They want to join their compatriots in Soviet Armenia.

Old antagonisms revived

Quiet appeals to the authorities in Moscow did not get much attention, even though 100,000 out of 140,000 signed petitions. But thousands of people marching in the streets

of Yerevan could not be ignored. The first response of the Kremlin was repression.

To set the tone, *Pravda* printed an article condemning the petitioners as "anti-socialists." The article was signed by three names, among them that of Paruir Airikyan, a Communist Party member and Armenian correspondent of *Pravda*. In an unprecedented gesture, he sent a telegram repudiating the article. If he had been the author of such an article "it would shame him before his people," he said. He has since been imprisoned.

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STRAJK maj '88

in the name of increasing productivity. The Polish bureaucrats are demanding that the working class pay the price of decades of mismanagement.

Productivity can be increased by giving the Polish workers control over the factories and democratic control of the national economic plan. Workers' control is the answer; not threats of layoffs, decreased bonuses, and plant closings.

While the capitalist banks and governments may be cheering on the Polish bureaucrats, millions of angry and frustrated workers remain poised to challenge the next round of austerity measures. But unless the workers fully understand the risks of market-economy mechanisms, their struggle can easily be sidetracked.

Debate in Solidarity

Blinded by the razzle-dazzle democratic facade of the market economy, the Solidarity leadership has failed to adequately organize a defense against its effects.

For example, Solidarity offered only lukewarm opposition to a referendum in November 1987 which asked Poles to vote approval for the government's economic reform measures. Solidarity was paralyzed from launching an ambitious "vote no" campaign because of the union's ambivalence on the market reforms.

Nonetheless, the referendum was defeated. Many Solidarity leaders such as Adam Michnik and Zbigniew Bujak were "still stunned" by the rejection of the reforms and "unable to understand what happened." (*Liberation*, Dec. 2, 1987)

Voting against the market-reform proposals of the government, the people were marching ahead of many leaders in Solidarity. As a result, a broad debate has opened up.

Many former national leaders of Solidarity are calling for more resistance to the economic attacks on workers and for rebuilding

the union's presence inside the factory.

This orientation poses a direct, if unstated, challenge to the market orientation of Jaruzelski. Others are more explicit in their opposition to the recent policy of top Solidarity leaders.

Igor Lewy, editor of the independent journal *Robotnik* (Worker) and one of the founders of the recently established Polish Socialist Party, wrote in May 1987:

"It seems that the Polish version of *perestroika* will fulfill the dreams of some people by its free-enterprise character and the extent of the re-privatization.

"We will then have an enlightened market communism in which ... limited companies and their corporations will spring up like mushrooms, and social protection for the disadvantaged will be considered another 'error of the past.' It is in that framework that we will have to live and act.

"The cost of the Polish road to capitalism that Jaruzelski and his team want to take in order to save the 'socialist camp' from bankruptcy has to be calculated and weighed up before it is too late."

Capitalism will not be reintroduced into Poland simply through the adoption of incorrect policies which are modeled on capitalist economics. It would take a violent counter-revolution to re-establish the reign of large landowners and millionaire capitalists, hiring and firing at will. Poland is a long way from that.

But the new measures being introduced in Poland will mean a painful reduction in the standard of living of the population and a closer reliance on capitalist bankers.

The powerful Polish working class is capable of reversing this trend. It must begin by opposing the economic reforms of the bureaucracy and laying claim to its own rightful place as master of the economy. ■



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the Armenian protests by combining conciliation with the threat of force. He consulted with Armenian leaders and promised to give serious consideration to their petition. At the same time, he sent 28 plane loads of soldiers to the region.

The Armenians agreed to suspend their demonstrations for a month, while talks went on. Then an ominous manifestation of deep-seated race hatred occurred in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani mobs attacked Armenians in the city of Sumgait, leaving scores dead and wounded.

Again, on May 17, Armenians and Azerbaijanis clashed in the Armenian town of Arrarat. The Armenians responded by a demonstration of 100,000 in Yerevan. Soviet troops were flown in to restore order. The presidents of both the Armenian Republic and Azerbaijan have been removed by the Kremlin.

Gorbachev can no longer ignore the problem of nationalities. The discontent of the minorities could become the most destabilizing aspect of Soviet life. In the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Alma-Ata, and among the exiled people in Siberia, groups are forming, publishing *samizdats*, and being heard.

Defying the bureaucrats

Simple measures of repression will no longer work. Minorities demanding their rights cannot be dismissed as anti-socialists out to restore capitalism. Most protesters call for a return to the true socialism of Lenin. Sometimes officials of the republics, Communist Party members, are among the petitioners.

They feel strong enough sometimes to defy the bureaucrats in Moscow. When the Kremlin sent a Great Russian to be party boss in Alma-Ata, the citizens demonstrated until a native Kazakh was appointed in his place.

While Gorbachev can make concessions of a minor nature, he runs into formidable obstacles in restoring all national rights. The Crimean Tartars now have the right to return from exile, but few can resettle in the

Crimea because there is no provision for housing or jobs. Bureaucrats in the Crimea don't want to be upset by thousands of returning Tartars.

Problems like these indicate that the problems of the nationalities cannot be solved within the limits Gorbachev has set on *glasnost* and *perestroika*. As a Soviet official said in an interview, "If Nagorno-Karabakh is given to Armenia, land on the Black Sea will be given to the Crimean Tartars, and the process will never stop."

The Soviet people do not want the process to stop until socialist democracy is achieved in all phases of their country's life. That will involve extending *glasnost* far beyond the limits set by the bureaucracy. The aroused Soviet nationalities will be one of the levers to accomplish that. ■

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Nicaraguan Revolution at critical crossroads

(continued from page 1)

Sandinistas implement the 17 constitutional reforms drawn up by the internal capitalist opposition before a peace agreement could be reached. These reforms include:

- the call for elections to a new Constituent Assembly,
- the immediate suspension of the military draft,
- the separation of the armed forces from the Sandinista government,
- the dissolution of the Sandinista Defense Committees,
- the return of all confiscated properties to their previous owners, and
- the right to have a private TV channel.

According to Paul Reichler, an American lawyer who was part of the Sandinista negotiating team on May 26-28, "the [Sandinista] government has accepted every single point on the contras's list." (*New York Times*, May 29)

According to Reichler, the Sandinistas, for the first time, were willing to accept changes in the structure of the army and the police, placing "these institutions ... at the full service of national interests, as opposed to party interests."

The Sandinistas, Reichler continued, also offered to reduce the role of the Sandinista Defense Committees and to consider allowing some contra commanders to join the army as officers.

In addition, according to Reichler, the Sandinistas agreed to allow the contras to remain fully armed in the cease-fire zones—and even to conduct military maneuvers—while political talks between the government and the contras are underway.

Talks between the Sandinistas and the contra leadership are scheduled to resume on June 6 and to last another three months.

If by Sept. 1 the contras are still not satisfied with the political "reforms" made by the Sandinistas, they could resume their war against the Nicaraguan Revolution. They would then be able to appeal for increased U.S. military and economic aid on the grounds that the Sandinistas had "betrayed" their promises to "democratize" Nicaragua.

Allowing the contras to keep their guns throughout the negotiations on political issues is a key concession by the Sandinistas. The U.S. government needs to keep the contras on the back-burner to maintain a continued military threat against the Sandinistas to force further concessions.

Nonetheless, at least for now, the center of gravity has shifted from the military war to the "class war" inside Nicaragua—a process some political observers have called



Susan Meiselas

the "Chileanization" of Nicaragua, in reference to the U.S. role in toppling the government of Salvador Allende in 1973.

Shift toward internal opposition

This shift in U.S. policy toward the internal Nicaraguan opposition was spelled out candidly by Sen. David Durenburger (R-Minn.) in a statement on the Senate floor on Feb. 4, 1988. He said:

"The United States should refocus its efforts from the armed opposition ... to support for the internal opposition that has remained in Nicaragua and fought valiantly for democracy for the last decade. Aiding the internal opposition does not simply mean providing money; it means diplomatic support and it means using the National Endowment for Democracy

(NED). This means using a variety of affiliated national and international institutes to their full capacity."

William I. Robinson, editor of the English-language edition of the *Central America Information Bulletin*, spelled out the meaning of this shift in U.S. policy in an April 17, 1988, article published by the Agencia Nueva Nicaragua. Robinson wrote:

"The internal front and the contras have been moving toward an organic fusion. On Jan. 14, 1988, for instance, 12 top leaders of the opposition met in Guatemala City with the 'director' of the 'Nicaraguan Resistance,' the contra umbrella group.

"The opposition is organized into the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinating Committee (CDN); an umbrella group of four small parties; two trade-union federations; several miscellaneous political associations; and the big-businessmen's association, the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), which dominates the grouping.

"The two affiliated trade-union groupings are the Federation of Trade Union Unity (CUS), which is supported by the CIA-linked American Institute for Free Labor Development, and the Nicaraguan Federation of Workers (CTN)."

Robinson continues:

"One important source of U.S. funding is the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), created by the Reagan administration in 1983 to 'promote democracy abroad,' and funded by the U.S. Congress. NED gave more than half a million dollars to the CDN political organizations and the daily *La Prensa* in 1987 alone.

"Recipients of these funds included the CDN parties, *La Prensa*, the CUS, and other CDN-affiliated groups. In November, Congress approved another \$250,000 for NED to distribute in Nicaragua for the purpose of 'strengthening the internal

opposition, particularly the free press and the democratic political parties."

The \$250,000 amendment to the foreign aid bill for fiscal 1988 was sponsored jointly in the Senate by Senators Durenburger, Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), Edward Kennedy (D-Mass), and John Kerry (D-Mass), among others.

Backdrop of economic chaos

One of the factors responsible for pushing the Sandinista government to make political concessions to the contra leadership is the dramatic economic crisis gripping the country.

New York Times correspondent Stephen Kinzer put it this way:

"The reasons Sandinistas made such dramatic reversals [in the Sapoá truce agreement] are varied, but several stand out. The country faces an economic crisis that is becoming explosive and an insurgency that so saps its resources that no material or social progress is possible.

"For reconstruction, Nicaragua needs a major infusion of foreign aid. It is becoming increasingly clear that the Soviet Union is not interested in taking on another charity case. And the West has refused to provide substantial aid because many Western nations disapprove of the Sandinista political system." (*New York Times*, March 26, 1988)

Nicaragua's economy is collapsing toward chaos. According to official Nicaraguan government figures, by December 1987 the average purchasing power of the Nicaraguan workers had declined to 11 percent of what it was in 1980. The maximum official salary is about \$45 a month. The average salary is \$28 a month, or the price of an expensive lunch.

According to the Sandinista daily *Barricada* (Dec. 4, 1987), the contra war and the economic boycott of Nicaragua have cost the country a total of U.S. \$3.5 billion. In addition, half of the government's budget (58% in 1987) has gone to defense.

Business Week (Dec. 21, 1987) noted: "War, a U.S. trade embargo, and falling commodity prices have combined to devastate the country. Exports have tumbled from \$680 million in 1978 to a projected \$260 million in 1987. Foreign debt of \$6 billion [other sources place it as high as \$10 billion—A.B.] is deemed unserviceable."

The annual average inflation rate went from 35.4% in 1984 to 219.5% in 1985, to 657% in 1986, to 1800% in 1987. The growth of the GNP per inhabitant has been negative since 1984. Nicaragua produces too little and has too much currency, favoring the development of speculation and a thriving black market.

As *Business Week* put it: "About 40 percent of the economy is state-controlled. Sandinistas are chronically cash-short. They print money to make up the shortfall. The result: a Weimar-style inflation."

Kinzer's reference to the Soviet bureaucracy's decision to withhold vitally needed aid is also to the point. According to *The Boston Globe* (Feb. 1, 1988), "The Soviet-bloc countries apparently have signaled to Nicaragua that they will not underwrite the economy. Officials announced last week that in 1988, the Soviet Union and its allies would provide only half of Nicaragua's total requirement of about 900,000 tons of oil."

Even Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has publicly complained about the limited character of Soviet aid. According to *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 7, 1988), Ortega told visiting Wall Street financier John Castle that "the Soviet Union had made promises that they had not kept, such as pledging 800,000 tons of petroleum products but delivering only 300,000.

(continued on page 11)

Glossary of Abbreviations

CAUS: Federation of Trade Union Unity and Action, affiliated to the Nicaraguan Communist Party

CDN: Democratic Coordinating Committee, an umbrella group of right-wing parties, organizations and unions

CGTi: Central Federation of Workers-Independent, affiliated to the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party

COSEP: Superior Council of Private Enterprise

CST: Sandinista Trade Union Confederation

CTN: Nicaraguan Federation of Workers, aligned with right-wing Social Christian Party

CUS: Federation of Trade Union Unity, supported by AIFLD and CIA.

FSLN: Sandinista National Liberation Front, the ruling party in Nicaragua

MIDINRA: Ministry of Agrarian Reform of Nicaragua

PCN: Pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Communist Party

PSN: Pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party

SCAAS: Building trades union, affiliated to the CGTi

SNOTS: National System of Wages and Labor

SUTRA-JM: Unified Union of the Julio Martinez workers

UPANIC: National Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua, one of largest bosses' associations

(continued from page 10)

Ortega was also disappointed that he received only 12 armored helicopters. Apparently more were promised."

New foreign investment law

Ortega had invited Castle and seven other U.S. executives, all members of the Young Presidents Organization, to visit Nicaragua in March 1988. Ortega was interested in getting this group to invest in Nicaragua, particularly in the Pacific Coast Montelimar tourist complex, which will include gambling casinos and other amenities.

In the hope of attracting investment capital to Nicaragua, the Sandinista-led National Assembly passed a new foreign-investment law in November 1987. This law was characterized by one foreign economist in Nicaragua as "fitting nicely with the peace process. It legislates for economic pluralism." (*Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 1, 1987)

The law sets no limit on an investment's size nor any ceiling on foreign participation in a project. The law will allow up to 100% foreign ownership in a project if there are not enough national resources to fund it. It also guarantees investors the right to repatriate capital and dividends, protects them against devaluation by promising a fixed exchange rate for their operations, and holds out the prospect of tax breaks.

In return, the multinational corporations doing business in Nicaragua are expected to provide jobs, technology, and exports. Already, a number of multinationals operate in Nicaragua.

According to *Business Week* (Dec. 21, 1987), "Exxon Corp. has the sole oil refinery and is currently the only multinational to repatriate profits in hard currency. Shell, Texaco, and Chevron run gas stations. British American Tobacco makes the country's cigarettes, and a Nabisco affiliate bakes cookies."

"Our economy cannot survive without foreign assistance," said Orlando Nuñez, an

our country are not first put into place." (*Inforpress Centroamericana*, Jan. 28, 1988)

John Castle's response to Daniel Ortega seems to bear out the comments by this COSEP leader. Castle said he would "wait and see" how Nicaragua's process of "democratization" unfolds before considering investing his money in Nicaragua.

New IMF-type measures adopted

On Feb. 14, 1988, in the hope of curbing inflation and propping up the Nicaraguan economy, the Sandinista government decreed a package of monetary and economic reforms similar to the "shock treatment" often imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on debtor nations.

On a monetary level, the new measures changed the Nicaraguan currency (1000 old córdobas were exchanged for one new córdoba) and established a new official rate of exchange of 10 new córdobas to the dollar. This new rate applies to both imports and exports, thus unifying the exchange rate which before ranged from the official rate of 70-to-1 for some imports, to the parallel rate of 21,000-to-1 for internal spending, to an even higher 50,000-to-1 on the black market.

The introduction of the new currency and the new rates of exchange amount to a devaluation of the Nicaraguan córdoba of approximately 500%. This will make the price of imported fuel, machinery, chemicals, and consumer goods much higher.

At the same time, the Sandinista government announced a 10% spending cut. This will result in a layoff of 30,000 of the 80,000 government employees. These layoffs, which come under the heading of "compactación" (or compacting), result from the consolidation of many government functions, reducing the number of ministries from 33 to 11.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 4) reported the government cuts in the following manner:

"Some of the biggest shakeups are occurring in the agricultural ministry, which during nine years of Sandinista rule



Shortages of basic necessities and galloping inflation have devastated the Nicaraguan economy.

behind them, it has been to strengthen the system of mixed economy in our country."

Measures hit poor the hardest

On Feb. 14, the Sandinista leadership also announced the elimination of government subsidies on 30 basic staples. These measures have already had a devastating effect on the workers and peasants of Nicaragua. While wages were increased by about 400% on a one-shot basis, state-controlled prices of foods and basic goods have risen even faster.

According to the April-May 1988 issue of *Envío*, a pro-Sandinista magazine published by the Jesuit Central American Historical Institute of Managua, by March 23, barely one month after the measures were adopted, "the perceived gains in income had already been eaten away by the inflation, leaving the real purchasing power of the wages even below its December

one month. An unskilled worker at the lower end of the wage scale may earn as little as 500 córdobas per month, the price of 12 dozen eggs!

But if the measures enacted by the Sandinistas on Feb. 14 were meant to curb inflation, how could it be that prices have not been brought under control?

Envío gives us a revealing answer by analyzing the concessions the Sandinistas made to the capitalist producers as part of the package of economic reforms. The Nicaraguan capitalists control approximately 65% of the production of the major cash crops. The government's concessions were made through the medium of subsidies and guaranteed prices.

Subsidies for capitalists

Envío writes: "This inflationary effect upon the wages [after the adoption of the Feb. 14 measures] has come not so much from speculation (which has been brought under more control by the popular movement) as it has from the private sector, which continues to press for higher prices for their goods."

For example, according to *Envío*, on Feb. 26, the private Cattle Ranchers' Association demanded a guaranteed price of U.S. \$4.54 per pound of beef, whereas the Ministry of Agriculture (MIDINRA) only offered to pay \$1.45, even though the price on the international market was only \$0.85. After the negotiations, the internal price of beef was set at 22.50 córdobas or U.S. \$2.25. Hence, according to *Envío*, the state made up the difference through a state subsidy paid for by printing more money.

This was also true of the milk producers. They wanted a guaranteed 25 córdobas per liter from the government, when MIDINRA was offering only 10 córdobas, based on their estimates of the average production costs and a small profit. The final price was 13.85 córdobas per liter.

Envío reports that on March 1, with 30,000 bushels of rice in the storage bins of the rice growers and with a real shortage of rice on the market, Mario Hanon, president of the National Association of Rice Growers, demanded "realistic prices" from MIDINRA of 10 córdobas per pound, when the production costs were only 3.50 córdobas per pound. The next day the new price of 6 córdobas per pound was announced, thus permitting a 70% profit to the rice-growers.

According to *Envío*, it would be much cheaper just to import rice. This could have been purchased at 1.40 córdobas per pound. The implicit rate of exchange offered to the rice growers, *Envío* states, was 42.3 córdobas to the dollar, not the official 10 córdobas to the dollar.

The state has also given in to the pressures of the large sugar growers, offering them an implicit exchange rate of 50 córdobas to the dollar, "subsidizing the price of sugar and provoking more inflation," according to *Envío*.

The problem, therefore, according to *Envío*, is "one of paternalism by the government toward the agricultural



Steve Cagan

For now, the focus has shifted from the military war to the 'class war' inside Nicaragua.

adviser to the Sandinista government. "Now the economy can only move ahead if we get aid from the Western world."

But despite these extremely favorable terms, the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is not satisfied. It wants to remove the Sandinista government's monopoly on political power.

A leader of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), L. Ruiz, explained that the new foreign-investment law, "as perfect and well-thought out as it may be—with all its guarantees, concessions, and privileges—will not have a beneficial effect on the country so long as the socio-political conditions that would renew the foreign investors' confidence in

has become a sprawling bureaucracy. ...

"The Ministry of Agriculture will end its role as an investor. ... It is also opening up to the private sector to give new meaning to the country's mixed economy. Although state enterprises and cooperatives have been set up since the revolution, most of the country's production remains in the hands of private producers.

"Large cotton, sugar, and rice growers will now have a direct voice in the agricultural ministry in setting policies that affect them, the Sandinistas say."

Barricada, the Sandinista Front's daily newspaper, spelled out the character of the economic reforms as follows: "If the economic reforms have had any intention

1987 level."

And in the first week of April, the prices of basic staples went up even further. The price of a liter of milk, for example, increased from 6.60 to 12.50 córdobas; rice increased from 4.10 to 20 córdobas; beans increased from 5.75 to 20 córdobas; a pound of powdered milk increased from 27.90 to 65 córdobas; and a dozen eggs increased from 25 to 40 córdobas.

It is important to keep in mind that an auto mechanic, who is a skilled worker toward the upper end of the new 15-step wage scale, makes only 1700 córdobas per month. Yet according to Nicaraguan government estimates, it takes approximately 4200 córdobas to feed a family of four for

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oligopolies." [An oligopoly exists when a small number of producers control the market of a given commodity.]

And the privileged relationship between the Sandinistas and the large capitalist growers is bound to become more of a burden on the Nicaraguan economy in the coming months.

Orlando Morales, a longtime researcher at the Center for Studies on the Agrarian Reform (CIERA) and currently an economist at the Research Center for Social and Economic Development (CIDES), told *Socialist Action* on April 4:

"The monetary reforms have failed to achieve their major goal: putting a halt to inflation. Since Feb. 14, prices have gone up approximately 600%. Inflation in the coming months is bound to rise at an even higher rate given that the new agricultural cycle is about to begin and the large producers are demanding credit to plant their crops.

"In order to meet the demand for credit, the government has announced it will put 10 million new córdobas into circulation. In the short and medium term, until the amount of new money in circulation finds its counterpart in commodities, more inflation can be expected."

Nonetheless, despite all the concessions made to them by the Sandinistas, the Nicaraguan capitalists are still not satisfied.

Doctor Manuel Callejas, leader of the UPANIC (the National Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua, one of the largest bosses' associations), stated: "We have stated our proposals on various occasions: The only solution to the economic crisis is to give us back all the nationalized sector of the economy, i.e., to reprivatize the economy, because we are able to produce better than they [the state] can."

Problems of mixed economy

Doctor Callejas's claim about the superiority of the private sector notwithstanding, it is a fact that the Nicaraguan capitalists have taken their government credits out of the country and have failed to invest their profits to maintain their productive capacity.

According to a report on the "Debt, Stabilization, and Adjustment: 1979-1986" published in November 1987 by the Regional Coordinating Council on Economic and Social Research (CRIES), the flight of capital by the Nicaraguan capitalist class was \$535 million during 1977-79, the time of the heightened war against Somoza, and \$540.8 million from 1979 to 1986.

"The anxiety of the capitalist class following the 1981 Agrarian Reform Law," the CRIES report states, "led the Sandinista government to decide in 1982 to implement a selective and implicit devaluation through the decision to raise the guaranteed price to the agro-export capitalists. But the response of the capitalists to this Program of

Incentives to the Export Sector was very weak, reflecting the great tensions and contradictions inherent in the Nicaraguan model of the mixed economy."

Concretely, the Sandinistas provided U.S. dollars to the agro-export capitalists at the preferential rate of 70 córdobas to the dollar so that they could buy machinery, fertilizers, improved seed, etc. The capitalists, however, would buy the machinery extremely cheaply and would then sell it on the black market for a gigantic profit. The money, rather than being invested in production, most often found its way into a Miami bank account.

According to the CRIES report, the Nicaraguan Minister of Finance mentioned

Barricada (June 7, 1987), also noted the flight of capital due to the two-tier exchange rate. Ortega said:

"This year we estimate we will have a global deficit of 330 billion córdobas and U.S. \$225 million. ... The other components of the internal deficit are the financing of public investments, which account for 80 billion córdobas, and the currency loss due to our exchange rates, which amount to 100 billion córdobas. This latter item is the result of maintaining guaranteed prices which are favorable to the agro-export sector."

It is obvious that one of the major reasons for the fiscal deficit—and for the hyper-inflation—is the U.S.-backed contra

working class that has to bear the burden.

"But a revolution cannot for long continue to demand that those it recognizes as its social driving force accept a fall in their real income and an increasing decline in their living conditions, if sacrifices are not also imposed on the private landlords and the businesspeople who speculate. [emphasis added—A.B.]

"It is only by new advances in the latter direction that what Tomás Borge regrettably called the 'confusion in the minds of the masses about the mixed economy' will be dispelled."

Case of the Julio Martinez group

Unfortunately, rather than transfer the sacrifices of the war onto the shoulders of the Nicaraguan capitalists, the Sandinistas seem to have decided to take the opposite track. One concrete illustration of this is the government's decision to return five of seven companies which it had intervened and administered since 1985 back to the Julio Martinez capitalist group.

The Julio Martinez group is the largest auto import and repair company in Nicaragua. It employs about 600 workers throughout the country in 13 plants. It is privately owned and controlled by a five-person board of directors, four of whom live in Miami.

On June 19, 1985, Nicaragua's Ministry of Labor took temporary control of the administration of seven of the group's companies.

The Ministry acted in response to the workers, who had faced a three-year union-busting drive by the owners. The government declared that the company was carrying out an "employers' strike" that affected the national economy and was damaging the interests of the workers. This was the first time the government had taken administrative control of a private company to stop a union-busting drive.

Specifically, the company had launched a campaign to divide and weaken the union, assigning work to those who opposed the union, while denying work to union activists. This was a big blow to workers' incomes because at that time automotive workers were paid on a piece-work basis with no guaranteed minimum wage.

In addition, the Julio Martinez group received scarce foreign exchange from the government to import auto parts because its repair operations were deemed vital to the economy. The union showed that the company had sold many spare parts on the black market, assigned the rest to non-union mechanics, and denied adequate supplies to union mechanics.

Since 1983, the union repeatedly filed complaints and petitions with the Ministry of Labor protesting the company's anti-union practices. In 1984, agreements were signed between the company, the union, and the Ministry of Labor, but the company violated those accords.

The union, the SUTRA-JM, is affiliated to the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST). On June 12, 1986, the CST led 300 workers from different plants and offices throughout Managua in a march to the offices of President Ortega to demand government intervention.

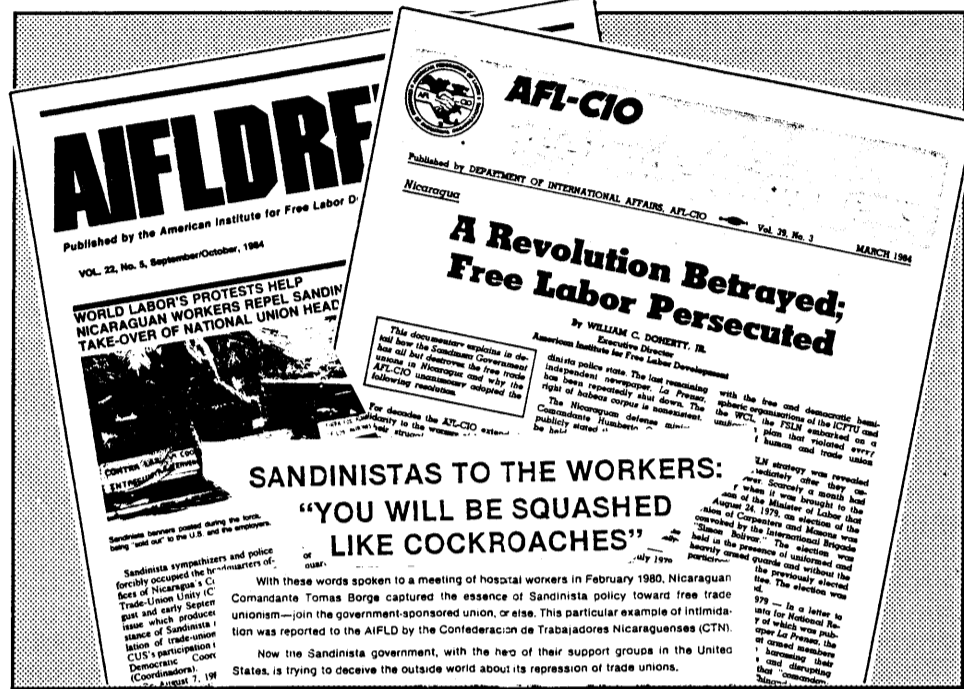
Harvey MacArthur described this mobilization in the July 18, 1986, issue of *The Militant* newspaper:

"For Julio Martinez: Confiscation!" "National Directorate: Give the Order!" and "People's Power!" were the chants of the workers.

"There [at President Ortega's offices], the workers crowded into a meeting room normally used for press conferences by top government officials. There René Vallejos, vice-minister of Labor, said that the ministry had decided to take temporary control of the company if the management did not correct its actions by midnight.

"If it does not change its attitude, we will prepare the technical plans to run the company, and put the administration in the hands of the workers," Vallejos said. He added that the outcome of the Julio Martinez case should serve as an example for other private companies as well. Unions will not be destroyed here," Vallejos said.

"Ricardo Robelo, a regional CST leader, ended by his rousing speech with the call



The AFL-CIO leadership and the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which is funded by the U.S. State Department, have launched a full smear campaign against the Sandinistas.

that the large capitalists often engaged in the contraband of agro-chemicals, which they obtained at a subsidized price from the government. They would sell these chemicals abroad, obtaining dollars which they would later exchange at the black market rate.

The Sandinista government lost enormous amounts of dollars through the two-tier exchange rates to the "patriotic capitalists." The government also offered a guaranteed price to the exporters, even if the price on the world market of a given commodity went down.

Roberto Gutierrez, a high-ranking official in the government, stated that 63% of the government deficit for the first six months of 1987 was due to the foreign-currency loss, or 100 billion old córdobas. This loss was paid for by simply printing up more money—hence contributing to the incredible inflation that has rocked Nicaragua.

Daniel Ortega, in a speech printed in

war. But another factor, which flows from policy choices made by the Sandinista government, is the decision to offer incentives and pay guaranteed prices to the agro-export capitalists.

Source of flagrant inequalities

This incorrect policy, flowing from the Sandinista government's continued commitment to the "mixed economy," has fueled the deficit, the inflation (which affects the workers the most), and the process of decapitalization of the economy.

As Jean Pierre Riel so aptly put it in an article published in *International Viewpoint* (June 16, 1986):

"Economic conditions are made more difficult all the time because of North American aggression. But the source of the most flagrant inequalities lies in the compromises deemed necessary by the Sandinista leadership to maintain a mixed-economy system.

"With a few exceptions, the anti-Somozaist bourgeoisie, dispossessed from political power and from control of the state apparatus, have rapidly come to refuse to collaborate positively and actively in rebuilding the country, or to take their place loyally in the 'alliance for production' that they themselves proposed.

"Since 1980, the Nicaraguan private sector has received a larger slice of government credits (54%) than the public sector (46%). Certain enterprises have benefited, and continue to benefit from substantial tax advantages and even subsidies in dollars. But during this period the overwhelming majority of productive investments have been made by the public sector.

"Taking advantage of the declining effectiveness of the controls instituted by the state—due largely to the war—a number of the beneficiaries of these funds have injected them into speculative areas.

"The cost of this parasitic behavior and sabotage—encouraged daily "in the name of liberty" by the newspaper *La Prensa* or the independent radio station Radio Católica—adds expense to the defense effort. It is becoming constantly more intolerable economically, but also socially and politically.

"It is essentially the rural and urban

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for 'Confiscation!'

"The next day the union called in the Sandinista police to guard the Julio Martinez warehouses after the company tried to remove large amounts of parts and tools. One week later, the Ministry of Labor took over the company's administration."

Workers left in the dark

Beginning in September 1987, however, the government began negotiations with the Martinez family, which crystallized in the Dec. 22, 1987, decision to return five of the seven government-intervened plants to them by Feb. 28, 1988. The two other plants were nationalized, but the company was more than fully compensated for the seized property.

Julio Martinez workers, who had mobilized for three years for the confiscation of the plants under workers' control, felt dismayed. César Moya, the general secretary of the SUTRA-JM union, told the press:

"The Ministry knew that we would never be in agreement with this decision. That is why our union was isolated from the negotiations process. We did not participate in the negotiations. We were only called in at the last moment to endorse the previously worked out agreement." (quoted in *Prensa Proletaria*, January-February 1988)

Many workers complained that they had been left totally in the dark about the discussions underway.

In mid-January, the Ministry revealed that the government had paid the Julio Martinez group approximately U.S. \$600,000 plus an additional 1 million córdobas for the two nationalized factories.

In mid-January, the bosses returned to the company offices at the Plaza Julio Martinez in Managua, declaring their intention to "work to maintain the prestige and development of the company and to cultivate dialogue and stable relations with the workers."

Francisco Rosales Arguello, a company director, said that the "Ministry of Labor came to the conclusion that the causes that motivated the intervention no longer existed." He said that the company would continue in the tradition of Julio Martinez Abarca, the deceased founder of the company, "who was ahead of his time with his social policies of participation."

Idermo Cuadra, the government-appointed administrator, said that by returning the factories to the Julio Martinez group, the "government acquires more credibility with the private sector. ... We need more investments and for this we have to create a climate of confidence for the private investors."

Cuadra said that the companies were in a shambles when they were taken over but that now they were solvent. Rosales, the company director, agreed and stated publicly that he would give Cuadra a diploma of honor and merit.

Unprecedented strike wave

It is in the context of the increased working-class austerity and of the increased political and economic concessions to the capitalists that the recent wave of labor strikes must be placed.

Much has been written in the media about the three-month-long strike of the Nicaraguan building trades workers and auto mechanics, two categories of workers often referred to as the "aristocracy of labor." Many things which have been written about the involvement of the CIA, the reactionary role of the leaderships of the striking unions, and the manipulation by the capitalists of the strike are undoubtedly true.

But it would be extremely short-sighted to limit the discussion of the strike to its manipulation by the bourgeoisie, as most uncritical supporters of the Sandinistas usually do. To do this is to ignore the deep underlying causes of the strike.

Such superficial analyses, moreover, fail to recognize that the misguided policies of the FSLN concerning the mixed economy and the role of trade unions in a transitional society have greatly contributed to driving sectors of the working class into the arms of the capitalists.

To illustrate this point, it is essential to



The demands of the Nicaraguan capitalists include the separation of the armed forces from the Sandinista government and the dissolution of the Sandinista Defense Committees.

examine the current strikes in greater detail than has usually been done by the mainstream or left media in this country.

The current strike by approximately 4500 building trades workers and 400 auto mechanics actually began as a strike of 70 auto mechanics at the VIMSA plant in early February. VIMSA is a mixed-capital auto repair shop specializing in Soviet Ladas and European models. The VIMSA workers' union is affiliated to the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST).

As of January 1988, there had been a series of work stoppages and disputes with management to protest the introduction of new production norms and wages which at the time only affected them. These new measures essentially cut workers' wages by 62.5%.

Whereas in the past the mechanics were paid on a piece-rate basis (they received 40% of what the client paid for repairing a vehicle), they now were to receive fixed wages of 1792.50 córdobas per month. This wage corresponded to level 12 of the National System of Wages and Labor called SNOTS (Sistema Nacional de la Organización del Trabajo y Salarios).

At an assembly of the VIMSA union, 80% of the workers voted to go out on strike, despite the objections of the CST leadership. The remaining 20% decided to stay on the job.

On Feb. 22, after the new monetary reforms were introduced, workers at five other medium-sized auto repair shops, three of them privately owned, and numerous other smaller shops also went out on strike, bringing the total number of strikers to about 400 workers.

Strike against austerity

Among the various provisions of the Feb. 14 government decree, it was stated that all workers would be subject to the SNOTS, the state's wage and productivity guideline. Until then, auto mechanics (and construction workers) had been exempt from the SNOTS—though legally they should not have been.

The reason for this exemption, according to economists interviewed by *Socialist Action* in Nicaragua, is that the government needed certain special government projects (such as the Olaf Palme Convention center) to be built in record time and had therefore allowed loopholes in the law. Building trades workers, for example, were permitted to receive special incentive pay for extra work—a provision not stipulated in the SNOTS.

Of the approximately 400 auto mechanics who went on strike, all but 60 belonged to unions affiliated to the Sandinista-led CST. (Each shop has its own union). The other 60, all workers at the Volkswagen repair shop, were members of the anti-Sandinista Federation of Trade Union Unity and Action (CAUS), which is led by the Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCN).

Because of the opposition of the CST leadership to the strike, the CAUS union, representing initially only 15% of the workforce, became the political leadership

of the strike. Emilio Marquez Acuña of the Volkswagen union became the spokesperson for the strikers in negotiations with the government.

Then on Feb. 29, when the government announced the new wage and productivity scale for the building trades workers (Catálogo de Normas Compactadas), an estimated 4500 workers, led by their union, the SCAAS, also decided to go out on strike at 56 building sites. The SCAAS is affiliated to the Central Federation of Workers-Independent (CGTi), which is led by the other pro-Moscow Stalinist party, the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN).

The wages of the building trades workers, too, were drastically cut from an estimated 4400 córdobas per month to 1236 córdobas per month for a qualified worker and 780 córdobas per month for an assistant. Alejandro Solórzano, the leader of SCAAS, characterized the new wages as "starvation wages."

The SCAAS has demanded that the new decree on work norms and wages passed on Feb. 29 be lifted. The union also calls for a 200% wage increase.

The Ministry of Labor ruled that the CGTi had not followed the arbitration and negotiation procedures specified by law. The government declared the building trades strike illegal and proceeded to dismiss the strikers.

A vital distinction

The Sandinistas have taken a hard line against the strikers and their supporters, denouncing them as supporters of the contras who want to "destabilize the revolution."

On May Day, Daniel Ortega denounced the strikers, saying: "These workers are fighting against the revolution instead of the imperialism of the United States and the contras. They are led by people who have a counterrevolutionary program ... pseudo-leaders who receive money from the CIA."

Much of what Ortega says is, of course, true. The two pro-Moscow political parties

leading the strike are members of an opposition bloc of 14 political parties that are calling for the 17 reforms to the constitution being pushed by the contras and U.S. imperialism.

In addition, the trade-union umbrella organization leading the strike-support work, the Permanent Congress of Labor (Congreso Permanente de los Trabajadores, or CPT), includes the CUS and the CTN, the two union federations supported by the CIA through the National Endowment for Democracy.

It is quite obvious that the Nicaraguan capitalists and their agents are interested in demagogically supporting the demands of the strikers to use as a club against the Sandinista government and to attempt to win the hearts and minds of the discontented workers toward their own reactionary political objectives. In this effort, they know they can count on the collaboration of the Stalinist misleaders.

Yet what drives the strike is not the outside manipulation by the bourgeoisie, but the terrible economic conditions imposed on this layer of the working class.

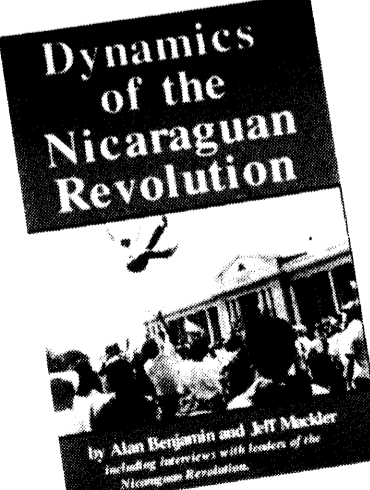
A *New York Times* (April 14) article reported the comments of a construction assistant who earns 26 córdobas a day (while a worker's lunch costs 30 córdobas, a pack of cigarettes costs 39, and an inexpensive pair of shoes goes for at least 400): "It's a question of starving on strike or starving on the job. You absolutely cannot live on that salary."

A relative of a striker is quoted as saying: "They say this is a political strike, but the real cause is that we can't live on what they want to pay."

The strikers don't see themselves as counterrevolutionaries. Most of them consider themselves to be socialists and are proud of the portraits of Lenin and Marx which decorate their union headquarters.

"Ortega says the strikers have 'no class consciousness,'" Orlando Morales told *Socialist Action*. "This is not true. The strikers have sacrificed plenty and are

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willing to tighten their belts even more, as are most Nicaraguan workers."

"But what they cannot accept," Morales continued, "is that the burden of the sacrifices be placed on their shoulders while the capitalists receive government handouts."

Indeed, if the Sandinistas are to avoid driving more sectors of the working class into the arms of the bosses, it will be essential that they understand that the austerity policies they have implemented are misguided, that the economic demands of the striking workers are legitimate, and that a distinction must be made between the misleaders of the strikers and the actual striking workers.

Fissures among reformists

Another aspect of the strike which has failed to get much media attention is the fact that within the ranks and even the leadership of the strike there has been considerable resistance to the interference and manipulation by the capitalists and their supporters.

A number of leaders of the SCAAS building trades union, led by union veteran Francisco Medrano, have begun to publicly distance themselves from the union leadership's political alliance with the parties of the bosses.

Speaking before rallies at the Ministry of Labor, Medrano has obtained loud ovations from the crowd when he has insisted that the strike maintain its economic focus and refuse to take up political demands of "those forces outside the labor movement."

In addition, a split has occurred in the top leadership of the pro-Moscow PSN as a result of the strike, with five leaders of the PSN's Central Committee, led by Juan Gaitán, publicly opposing the PSN's political alliance with the capitalists in the bloc of the 14 political parties.

The resistance to the intrusion of the bourgeoisie in the strike may also help to explain a peculiar editorial which appeared in the right-wing daily *La Prensa* on April 23 attacking the strike leadership and pointing out that the strike was doomed to failure unless it became a rallying point for the 17 constitutional reforms and "democratization."

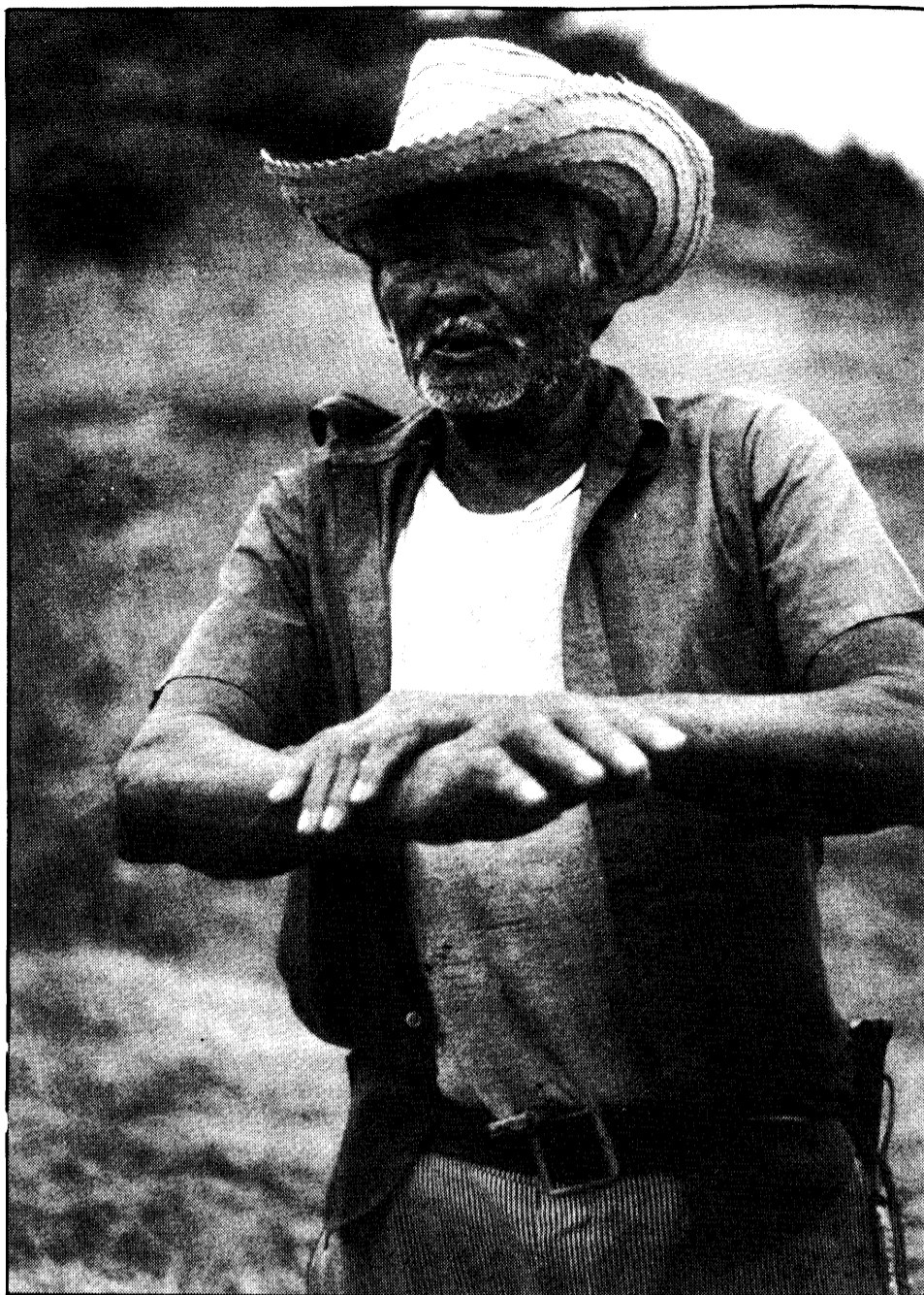
La Prensa's editorial, which was titled, "Workers on strike: Victims of the revolution," states:

"The workers on strike have been victimized by everyone, including by their trade-union leaders who have led them down the wrong path. These leaders called for a partial strike, which doomed the strike from the beginning. ...

"Moreover, the strike has been for the elimination of the government-imposed SNOTS. But the elimination of the SNOTS will not signify an end to the economic crisis the country faces. Our only hope lies in pushing for 'democratization.'"

Hence, according to the major voice-piece of the Nicaraguan capitalists, the economic demands of the strikers are essentially misguided.

Nonetheless, despite the fissures in the counterrevolutionary apparatus, it is obvious that there is still a hard-felt absence of a current within the Nicaraguan workers' movement that is able to



"Distributing the land to these peasant families will require making deep inroads into the property rights of the agro-export capitalists..."

solidarize with the just demands of the strikers, offer an anti-capitalist program of struggle, and at the same time wage a relentless fight to expose the collaboration of the strike leaders with the capitalists and U.S. imperialism.

Proletarian internationalism

The Nicaraguan Revolution is at a critical juncture. With the implementation of the provisions of the Central American peace plan and the adoption of economic policies aimed at bolstering the capitalist mixed economy, the class struggle between the workers and the peasants, on the one hand, and the capitalists, on the other, is bound to heat up.

The FSLN government, if it is to meet the needs of the masses and prevent the dynamism of the revolution from being continually eroded, must break out of the bonds of the mixed economy and take the path the Cuban Revolution took in 1960. This will require the overturn of capitalist property relations, with the working-class and mass organizations, in alliance with the peasantry, becoming the fundamental and democratic decision-making bodies of the new state.

Many of the tasks of the revolution, such as the distribution of land to the landless peasants, remain unresolved. Approximately half of the 124,000 peasant families have yet to benefit from the government's agrarian reform.

Distributing the land to these peasant families will require making deep inroads into the property rights of the agro-export capitalists, who have sabotaged economic production while receiving handsome government subsidies. This would ensure the support of the land-hungry peasants for the revolution and would cement their alliance with the workers, who would be the new ruling class.

It is illusory to expect that foreign investment from the European countries or from the United States will provide the needed input to prop up the economy and salvage the revolution.

Imperialist investment comes with a myriad of strings attached. For the American or European capitalists to provide aid and investment will require what they call a "political climate conducive to investment"—and that can only mean the reversal of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Deepening the revolution by proceeding

on a socialist course and instituting a planned economy is a vital necessity for the Nicaraguan Revolution today.

But even if the Sandinistas were to break with the mixed economy (and therefore with their alliance with sectors of the capitalist class), the dependent and backward character of the Nicaraguan economy underscores the fact that, by itself, Nicaragua cannot break out of the straitjacket of underdevelopment imposed on it by the international capitalist system.

It is illusory—and potentially very dangerous—to believe that Nicaragua can develop economically within the confines of its national borders.

In the last couple of years, for example, whatever progress achieved in increasing agricultural production was more than canceled by the sharp drop in the world price of cotton, one of Nicaragua's major export crops.

In the long run, as well as the short, Nicaragua's fate is tied to the struggles of revolutionary people throughout the world who seek to replace capitalism with a system of social organization and production rationally planned to meet human needs.

Nicaragua can only find the road to genuine economic and social development through the extension of the revolution to the other nations of Central America in the framework of a socialist federation of Central American states.

The vast majority of the workers and peasants of this region suffer under oppressive regimes not unlike that of the Somoza dictatorship, which was removed by the Nicaraguan masses in 1979. Their liberation will require mass revolutionary mobilizations to replace the rule of the minority—the capitalists and the landlords—with the rule of the majority.

The fate of the Central American revolution, moreover, is ultimately connected to the need for the victory of socialism in the developed countries and ultimately on a world scale.

The Central American revolution has received a significant blow with the adoption of the peace plan submitted by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. This plan has effectively isolated the Nicaraguan Revolution from its natural allies: the workers and peasants in the rest of Central America.

The plan's goals—to "pacify" the region, deny any legitimacy to the guerrilla fighters in El Salvador and Guatemala, and isolate Nicaragua—have gone virtually unchallenged. Even the Sandinistas joined the contras in hailing Oscar Arias and Representative Jim Wright (D-Texas), one of the peace plan's most fervent supporters, as they signed the cease-fire agreement in Sapoa last March.

The Sandinistas' endorsement of the Arias plan and their commitment to coexist with the Nicaraguan capitalists within the mixed economy flow from their "nationalist" approach to the problems of the Nicaraguan Revolution and from their reliance on and support to the Latin American capitalist regimes.

This, for example, explains why the FSLN gave political support to Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid in his 1982 election campaign. FSLN Commander Jaime Wheelock while on tour in Mexico stated that Mexico was a "model of true socialist democracy."

De la Madrid, however, proceeded to cut off all oil shipments to Nicaragua under pressure from the U.S. State Department. He also supported the contras' demands for "democratization."

Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks saw their victorious workers' state as the "advanced outpost of the world socialist revolution." They understood that the workers' conquest over Russian territory must be subordinate to the extension of the revolution, particularly to the developed countries of the world.

Their example is the one revolutionists in Nicaragua must follow if the revolution is to withstand all the pressures it has encountered and if it is to be ultimately victorious. ■

Alan Benjamin, editor of *Socialist Action*, recently returned from Nicaragua, where he compiled most of the information for this article.

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Palestine

Dear editor,

I was interested in the interview with Ralph Schoenman in your May 1988 issue in which he discusses the responses to an ad placed in the March 13, 1988, *New York Times* calling for an "end to all aid to apartheid Israel."

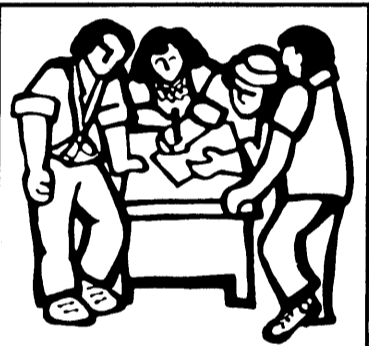
I thought that *Socialist Action* readers would be interested to know that, 18 years ago, I was one of a number of Black American educators, writers, and political activists who also placed an ad in the *Times*. It appeared in the newspaper on Nov. 1, 1970, shortly after King Hussein of Jordan ordered a massacre of tens of thousands of Palestinians living in that country.

Our ad demanded that all aid to Israel be stopped immediately and underscored Yasser Arafat's call for "a democratic, secular, non-racial state where all Palestinians—Christians, Jews, and Muslims—will have equal rights."

The Committee of Black Americans for Truth about the Middle East, which sponsored the ad, received many warm letters of support after the ad appeared. But an equal number of obscene and racist letters were also sent to us from people who professed to be supporters of Israel.

Some letters warned us: "Death to all traitors!" Since that time, I believe, Americans have become more open-minded towards the cause of justice for the Palestinians.

Kwame M.A. Somburu,
Oakland, Calif.



We welcome letters from our readers. Please keep them short. When necessary, they will be abridged.

Elections

Dear editor,

In his article in the May issue of *Socialist Action*, "The real meaning of the Jackson phenomenon," Joe Ryan has decidedly pointed out the traps the Jackson campaign has laid for Blacks and the working class.

Ryan also touched on the dual character of the Jackson campaign, pointing out that a large number of white workers have stepped out from behind their racism and voted for a Black presidential candidate.

I believe Ryan is correct when he concluded: "The 'Jackson phenomenon' is a symptom that the nearly 40-year period of relative working-class conservatism is coming to an end."

But realizing the beginning of the end of working-class conservatism, and having a program that can reach out to those workers, Black and white, that will move even more to the left than just voting for a Black presidential candidate is another matter.

This is where Ryan and *Socialist Action* come up short in all the articles I have read in your paper. You state well what is happening, but you don't state what is necessary to start to bring about a change in consciousness that leads to action—like vote socialist or don't vote at all.

A revolutionary newspaper must do more than just report and inter-



pret the facts. It must, in addition, analyze and give direction to the working class, to raise its class consciousness in the effort to accelerate it on the road to revolution.

This can be done in one way: by raising transitional slogans and demands that cause the working class to think about our situation. This will also begin the groundwork that is necessary, so when the working class starts to move, it will look to revolutionary communism as the answer to its future.

That brings me to the question. What does *Socialist Action* propose that revolutionary workers and socialists do in the 1988 elections? Writing news articles is simply not enough.

Larry E. Murdock,
New York, N.Y.

Nicaragua

Dear editor,

I'd like to comment on a recent article which appeared in the April 1988 issue, titled "Nicaragua ceasefire." While I completely support, of course, the article's call for a complete end to aid to the contras, I found unsatisfactory the article's discussion of demands "put forward last December by a bloc of 14 political opposition parties."

These 17 constitutional demands include amnesty for all political prisoners and ex-Somoza National Guardsmen; an end to Sandinista party control over the armed forces, the electoral process, and the judiciary; the creation of a non-Sandinista army and police; and provisions to strengthen private property.

The article states (without further explanation) that these reforms amount to a call for the Sandinista government to undo the gains of the revolution and capitulate to the U.S.-backed mercenary army.

Instead of such a summary dismissal, I think what is needed on the left today is a nuanced critique of such demands, along with the recognition that some elements of these demands—put forward as they are by both the non-Sandinista right and left—might be legitimate.

By failing to make such a critique, we make it easier for the contras to exploit such demands to their own Draconian, capitalist-imperialist ends.

For example ... what about the alternative of a citizens' army, whose internal structure is democratic and which is answerable to assemblies and councils of the people—the majority being workers and peasants—themselves?

Why shouldn't the major political decisions of Nicaraguan society be made by assemblies—national, regional, and local—of democratically elected and revokable delegates of all the Nicaraguan people, rather than by the nine-man, Sandinista-controlled National Direc-

torate, or for that matter by a "president?"

Such a system would ensure that the contras' real goal, "provisions to strengthen guarantees to private property," would never be enacted. It would give the civil opposition (including the many workers now on strike in Nicaragua) a fair, democratic chance to actually participate in the political process.

Tom Smith,
Jamaica, N.Y.

A National Assembly of democratically elected and revokable delegates from the working-class and mass organizations—to which the FSLN government would be responsible and accountable—would help steer the revolution on a consistent proletarian course.

But the 17 constitutional reforms sought by the contras and their internal supporters have nothing in common with the demands for workers' democracy which you correctly spell out toward the end of your letter.—The editor

Atomic War

Dear editor,

In his January 1988 article in *Socialist Action*, Nat Weinstein correctly identifies Gorbachev's foreign policy as Stalinist—stemming from the theories of "socialism in one country" and "peaceful coexistence." And he correctly warns of the possible betrayal of Nicaragua.

However, Weinstein's argument about the inevitability of atomic war is pessimistic and contradictory. He says, "So long as capitalist economic forces dominate the world, the arms race can only end in nuclear annihilation of life on earth."

But later he says, "Gorbachev announced last January that 11 U.S. corporations have already agreed to enter into joint ventures

with the Soviet government. The plan allows foreign investors to hold a 49 percent equity in Soviet industrial facilities."

"The Soviet bureaucracy," Weinstein continues, "appears to have embarked on a calculated course toward giving world capitalism a material reason for long-term peaceful relations—a foothold within the Soviet economy."

In raising this important question, Weinstein's conclusion contradicts the statement that "the arms race can only end in nuclear annihilation." There could be a rapprochement. And there could be a stable detente based upon arms lim-

itation.

U.S. capitalism is following a policy of production for waste in an effort to sustain its economy. ... The SDI is only a new version of production of military waste as an economic measure. ... This is the outcome of capitalist anarchy.

Atomic war has been impossible as a [U.S.] policy since the Soviet Union obtained the H-bomb in 1954. Detente has been the limit of that policy, because an actual war would be suicidal.

The contradiction in Weinstein's article stems from the Trotskyist dedication to the defense of the Soviet Union, which has failed to recognize the fact that the Soviet Union long ago became able to defend itself.

A correction is long overdue, since it prevents proper exposure of bourgeois demagoguery in both cultivating fear of the Soviet Union and as a means of supporting production for profit through waste by the military-industrial complex.

The task of exposing the demagoguery is inextricably linked to a renewed attack on capitalist anarchy and the need of production for use and not for profit. That goal would encourage and require socialization, thus leading for a struggle for power by the working class. That's the real answer to the threat of atomic war.

Atomic war is possible as an accident or, remotely, as a military adventure. But not as a deliberate policy. The bourgeoisie will not commit suicide in pursuit of economic objectives. That theory is irrational dogma.

Nat Simon,
New York, N.Y.

50th anniversary rally

The National Committee of Socialist Action recently voted to hold the Third National Convention of Socialist Action in San Francisco on Aug. 4-7.

A special convention rally celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International by Leon Trotsky will be held on Saturday, Aug. 6.

The initial list of rally speakers includes Esteban Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson; Jake Cooper, a leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes and bodyguard to Trotsky in Mexico; Claudio, a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International; Pierre Broué, director of the Leon Trotsky Institute; and Aura Beteta, former Nicaraguan Consul in San Francisco.

Other speakers from Mexico, Great Britain, France, Ireland, and elsewhere will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

The meeting of the National Committee, which is the highest leadership body of the organization between conventions, approved reports and resolutions on the national and international political situation, as well as on the organizational tasks of Socialist Action in the months ahead.

These resolutions and counterresolutions will now be submitted to the discussion and approval of the membership during a three-month oral and written discussion leading up to the convention in early August, where they will be voted on.

We encourage readers of *Socialist Action* newspaper to attend the historic 50th-anniversary rally on Aug. 6—which is open to all. All those interested in attending the convention proceedings should contact the Socialist Action branch closest to them. See branch list on this page.—The editors

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How workers almost made a revolution in France

Twenty years ago, in the spring of 1968, France stood on the brink of a socialist revolution. A giant social upheaval had been touched off by a protest movement among university students. The movement rapidly spread to high-school students and to young workers.

Soon, two-thirds of the workforce was on strike. The red flag flew over schools, industrial plants, and several municipal offices. The Fifth Republic of Gen. Charles de Gaulle tottered—and almost fell.

But most workers continued to look to the Communist Party (CP) and to the bureaucratized trade unions to provide leadership for their struggle. Unfortunately, the Stalinist CP was not a fighting party; it was opposed to the workers taking political power into their own hands. The capitalist government was allowed to regain the initiative and to remain in power.

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

On March 22, 1968, police arrested five university and high-school students in Paris. The students, activists in the movement against the war in Vietnam, were charged with having detonated several small explosive charges outside the offices of U.S. corporations.

That evening, a meeting was called at the University of Paris at Nanterre to protest the arrests. The meeting was held in defiance of school officials, who had been trying to limit political activity on campus. When students took over a lecture hall to show a film on Che Guevara, the authorities closed down the university.

In a frantic speech before the National Assembly, the Minister of Education attacked the students. "What sort of machinations did these Nanterre 'madmen' carry on daily?" he cried out. "Under the label 'critical university,' the most absurd lucubrations were voiced in auditoriums renamed, to serve the cause, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Mao Tse-tung, Leon Trotsky!"

On May 3, after several students at Nanterre were threatened with expulsion, students at the Sorbonne (in the center of Paris) organized a solidarity meeting. At the end of the meeting, police invaded the Sorbonne, beating and arresting hundreds of demonstrators.

The government, which had ordered the crackdown, gambled that it would meet no opposition from the Communist Party and the other major left parties. And true to expectations, the CP scathingly denounced the student movement as nothing but "grouplets" and "provocateurs."

But the activists at the universities took up the challenge. "We are all a grouplet!" they cheered—as tens of thousands poured into the streets. On May 6, the student unions called an unlimited student strike. On May 9, high schoolers also walked out.

The "Night of the Barricades"

On the evening of May 10, the students and striking teachers organized a large march to demand freedom for the jailed activists, withdrawal of the police from the Sorbonne, and full political and trade-union rights. Other banners proclaimed, "End the police state!"

The march swelled to over 60,000 as bystanders—including many young workers—joined in. When the demonstrators reached the Sorbonne, they found it surrounded by police ready for battle. After a few clashes, barricades went up throughout the Latin Quarter.

The police attacked, using truncheons and chlorine gas. Finally, early the next morning, the final barricades had been breached.

The government won the "battle," but public opinion was aroused against it.

The Communist Party had voiced its opposition to the student strike. But now the "grouplets" were clearly getting out of hand. The CP had to try to assert its control. During the "Night of the Barricades," word came that the CP had decided to support the students' struggle.

On May 13, the CGT (the major union federation, dominated by the Communist Party) and the CFDT (a union federation of left-Christian origins) called a one-day general strike and a mass demonstration. Over a half-million workers and students took part in a march through Paris.

That night, students occupied the Sorbonne and declared it an autonomous "people's university." A democratic general assembly met daily to manage the university and to carry on the struggle. This Sorbonne "soviet" became the prototype and the nerve-center of some 400 popular "action committees" that were set up in the neighborhoods of Paris alone.

Sit-down strikes

The Communist Party leadership continued to issue statements warning the workers and students against any "adventurist" acts. But it was too late to hold back the tide of rebellion. On May 14, workers began a sit-down strike at the Sud-Aviation plant near the city of Nante.

The following day, some 200 young workers occupied a Renault parts plant near Rouen. Delegates set off for the giant Renault manufacturing complexes at Flins in the Seine Valley and at the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. Workers there



were convinced to join the strike; red flags were raised over the rooftops.

By the following week, over 9 million workers were on strike. A few plants were reopened later under control of the workers. Farmers unions mobilized their members to help feed the strikers. In some towns, strike-support committees (inspired by the students) supervised the distribution of goods—and even directed traffic in the streets.

As workers laid down their tools at factory after factory, the union leaders of the CGT tried desperately to maintain their control. They hoped to negotiate some wage gains quickly in order to convince the workers to go back to work.

On May 26, the union tops worked out a deal with the government in which the workers would receive a 35-percent raise in the minimum wage (to 60 cents an hour). But when the union leaders carried the terms of the settlement to the occupied factories, they were jeered.

Twelve days after the first sit-down strikes began, a reporter for *The New York Times* visited Boulogne-Billancourt. He commented that now "there is a marked change in the Renault factory here, and it is summed up in the two words of a sign over the main gate: 'Worker power!'"

"The sign," the reporter continued, "symbolizes the new realization among the rank and file in this southwestern suburb of Paris that striking workers throughout France may be capable of forcing not only sweeping economic changes, but political ones as well." (May 29, 1968)

"Adieu de Gaulle!"

Indeed, on the same day in the heart of Paris, as many as 800,000 workers chanted together, "Adieu, de Gaulle!" The CGT had reluctantly called the mass demonstration. Now for the first time, the bureaucrats of the Communist Party and the unions they dominated were permitting political slogans to be raised in the streets.

Pushed to the wire, the Communist Party advanced the slogan of a "popular government" in which its representatives

would share power with the capitalist class.

In contrast, the Revolutionary Communist Youth (JCR, a Trotskyist group with tremendous influence among the students) pointed out: "The government we want must spring from the strike committees and action committees of the workers and students."

But de Gaulle refused to say "adieu." He had been allowed some breathing space; now he took measures to strengthen the forces of the bourgeoisie. Loyal army units were placed on alert, ready to march on Paris. Armed police began to attack some of the weaker strikes. Many left-wing organizations, such as the Trotskyist groups, were banned.

At the same time, de Gaulle knew that only the powerful Communist Party was capable of "normalizing" the country (that is, convincing the workers to return the factories, stores, and utilities to the capitalist class).

Accordingly, the CP (and the other reformist mass parties) were offered a carrot. The National Assembly was dissolved and snap elections were called—to take place in two weeks.

Once again, the CP proved amenable. The party proclaimed a "victory" and geared up for the electoral campaign. Striking workers were urged to settle for limited "economic" gains—and to go back to work. When police broke through the picket lines at the Renault plant at Flins, the CP said nothing. By the end of June, the strike wave was over.

The CP justified its treachery by arguing that the workers were not yet ready for "revolution." But the Stalinists chose to ignore a fact that had become clear to millions—only consistent mass action could force the Gaullist government to yield on their demands for justice.

During the rapid pace of events, the embryo was formed of a nationwide movement for workers' self-rule. But no mass-based revolutionary party had been constructed that could guide the working class to a more advanced level of struggle. That task still lies ahead. ■